

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Anti-imperialist paper of the Revolutionary Communist Group

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City AA beats Embassy police ban

On 2 July City of London Anti-Apartheid Group regained its right to demonstrate, non-stop, outside the South African Embassy. The Daily Telegraph announced that Cannon Row police had 'no bottle'. Full report page 5.



BOB GANNON

4000 MARCH FOR VIRAJ



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Newman leaves: the Met goes on

Kenneth Newman's fifth annual report on the Metropolitan Police reveals that he is leaving behind a police force equipped and trained to deal with any threat to the system the police protect.



Key to Newman's strategy has been the creation of links between the police, the public and various social agencies. Police consultative groups now exist in all but two - Hackney and Newham - London boroughs (Report, p3). There are nearly 7,000 neighbourhood watch schemes involving 1.25 million people (p4). Newman is adding business watch, hospital watch and cab watch schemes (p4). Newman has successfully accustomed people to the police 'working with' a wide variety of groups: 'statutory and voluntary agencies such as tenants' associations, welfare services, housing authorities and NACRO...' (p5). These ever growing links not only help to associate 'community leaders' directly with the police but also provide raw intelligence. The second element of Newman's strategy has been the centralisation, reorganisation and computerisation of the Met. This is now almost accomplished with the installation of

Of 35,260 searches under PACE, only 6,092 (17%) resulted in arrests (p131). No wonder Newman complains 'officers had difficulty in establishing evidence that would satisfy judicial scrutiny as to... "reasonable suspicion"' (p14). 19 road checks involving 4,557 vehicles being stopped resulted in no arrests at all (p132).

DIUs (divisional information and intelligence units) in every area (p8) and the planning stage for the forcewide CRIS (Crime Report Information System) completed. The final installation of computers was completed in February this year (pp8-11). Over 300 officers are engaged wholly in area surveillance work. These include TSG (Territorial Support Group) officers marking the integration of the intelligence-gathering and fast response aspects of Newman's strategy (p8).

On 24 November 1986 the Special Operations Room was set up in Scotland Yard. This is a headquarters team to control 'public order events' (p18). The Met are now looking for 'suitable sites for locally based area control rooms' (p18). This network will analyse the raw information, organise the deployment of 'riot squads (eg TSGs) and order the use of plastic bullets, CS gas etc. On top of all the paramilitary equipment it had already, the Met has acquired 1,500 long truncheons in the last year and has 24 armoured Land Rovers on order (p37).

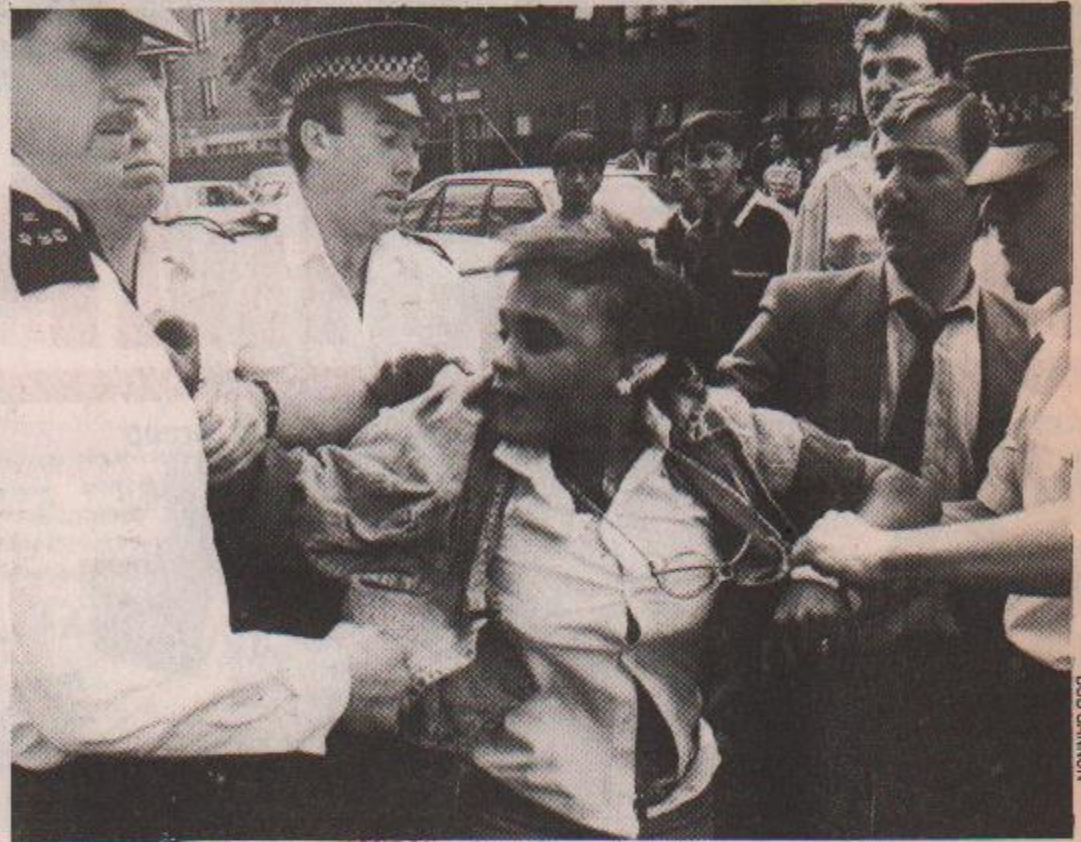
The target of all this collaboration and reorganisation is very obvious. Newman admits the growing hostility to the police in an extraordinary passage:

'... the police encounter almost daily a phenomenon which has been labelled "slow rioting". This is manifested... in hoax 999 calls to entice officers into ambush attacks by disaffected youths, in the growth of assaults on police, in forcible intervention by gangs of youths to obstruct police arrests and in wilful damage to police vehicles left unattended...' (p24).

The cases cited for particular mention are revealing: Operation Condor when 1,342 cops descended on Brixton in 15 simultaneous raids and made 80 arrests (pp27 and 137); the Wapping dispute where an average of 300 cops were deployed daily with up to 2,148 deployed at one time and 1,375 arrests were made (pp21, 38 and 137); and the City Group Non-Stop Picket whose 30 demonstrations - eight ending in 'disorder' (attacked by the police) and 54 arrests - and continuous picketing 'is a considerable drain on our resources' (p39).

To meet these and associated threats, Newman demands more officers and more money (pp21/2). Having reconstructed the Met to meet any potential threat to British imperialist law and order, he now wants an expansion of the state's forces of violence.

How he intends to use new resources was further revealed in the police shootings in Plumstead on Thursday 9 July. Two men - Michael Flynn (24) and Nicholas Payne (29) - were shot dead by the elite PT17 squad. A third robber was wounded and has a bullet lodged in his spine.



A young black woman in Tower Hamlets experiencing the Met's 'standards of professionalism'

The cop who did the killing was wearing a bulletproof jacket and crouching behind a bodylength bulletproof shield. He fired at a range of less than ten yards. Every detail of the robbery was known to the police in advance. In February the same squad killed Denis Bergin (29) in an operation identical in every significant detail.

The killings follow the adoption of a Home Office policy in February for the creation of elite police gun squads on 24 hour call. Newman responded by converting D11 into PT17, giving it a much higher profile and a licence to kill. In less than six months, PT17 has killed three times. In 7,779 armed robberies involving firearms in the last five years (1982-1986) no one has been killed by armed robbers (p153).

Having accustomed the public to the sight of armed police coldbloodedly murdering robbers, Newman will have much less difficulty in unleashing his killers against the working class and oppressed.

Terry O'Halloran

Five go to jail

On Thursday 16 July five Metropolitan Police officers were sent to prison for their part in the brutal assault on five schoolboys in North London, August 1983.

PCs Edward Main, Nicholas Wise and Michael Gavin were given four years for assault and conspiring to pervert the course of justice; PC Michael Parr got 18 months for conspiracy; and Sergeant Colin Edwards got three years for conspiracy and misconduct.

It took the Police Complaints Authority two and a half years to fail to find the culprits. Then a massive public outcry forced Newman to sacrifice these thugs in order to forestall any exposure of the systematic thuggery of the Met.

Within weeks the assailants were discovered.

Two of the attackers are still in the force having been granted immunity. Five thugs are off the streets but there are 27,005 left.

Terry O'Halloran

Of 5,093 police complaints completed, only 141 (3%) were upheld and 20 (0.4%) led to disciplinary action (p108). Newman in uncharacteristically humorous vein, says 'There is much more open discussion of ethics and condemnation of those officers who fall below the highest standards of professionalism.' (p6).

KINNOCK TO THE RESCUE

Airey Neave MP and Captain Robert Nairac of the SAS are heroes of the British ruling class. Both men directed covert operation in Ireland - kidnappings, killings and bombings carried out by British forces on both sides of the border to try and defeat IRA resistance. Nothing could be more calculated to sting the Establishment therefore, than an expose of their murderous activities. Especially given that the expose came during a traditionally non-contentious maiden parliamentary speech.

Ken Livingstone's speech was based on information from two former officers in British intelligence, Captain Fred Holroyd and Colin Wallace. They have revealed the organised slaughter that is British covert operations in Ireland.

■ Nairac had close links with loyalist death squads. Accompanied by members of the UVF he crossed the border and shot John Francis Green, a Republican. Later he showed his colleagues polaroid photos of Green's bloodstained corpse.

■ The same gun used in this killing was found at the scene of the Miami Showband Massacre when three members of the Band were butchered in 1975.

■ MI5 involvement with the Kinvara Boys Home scandal and their backing for the loyalist UWC strike in 1974, which they hoped would damage the then Labour government.

■ Neave's involvement with Nairac and the secret services to discredit both Labour and Tory governments.

■ Secret service involvement in a sectarian murder campaign designed to wreck negotiations between the government and the IRA in 1975. Eighteen civilians were murdered during a truce lasting twenty six days.

Wounded that the truth should be emerging about Neave and Nairac, Thatcher quickly leapt to their defence calling them 'gallant', 'honourable' (which only goes to show just what

Thatcher and co's standards of honour are) and demanded that Kinnock repudiate Livingstone. And the boy from the Valleys duly obliged, at least those who could interpret his verbiage think he did. He said 'It is fair to reflect that since very grave allegations, probably unfair allegations against a former MP who died in tragic circumstances and an officer of Her Majesty's forces who was murdered, have been made by people outside (of the Commons) then it may be reasonable to reflect on the Government's decision not to make a response to that.'

So, despite Livingstone's best efforts, the honour of the ruling class was saved. But has 'golden tongue' Kinnock poured enough custard over these murderous events to obscure them for good? We think not.

Jim O'Rourke/Maxine Williams



The NUM is to hold a national ballot on industrial action against the Coal Board's 'disciplinary code'. 13,000 NUM members at 15 pits in South Yorkshire are on strike against the suspension of five miners at Frickley pit. In a related dispute Ted Scott, branch secretary at Stillingfleet colliery, Selby, North Yorkshire, has been dismissed under the new code.

Coal Board out to destroy power of NUM

Early on in the '84 strike we drew the conclusion that the government's offensive in the coal industry was political rather than economic; that the real purpose was to break the power and influence of the NUM.

Although the miners lost the strike, the government did not succeed in breaking the union. Bit by bit it has rebuilt its infrastructure, despite the fact that British coal management has relentlessly pursued the union and presented one obstacle after another in its reconstruction.

Of late, signs are that a new offensive is being launched aimed at provoking renewed conflict and sorting the NUM out once and for all. Three major

thrusts, all bearing the hall-marks of the government's Wheeler plan have been delivered.

One is the non-negotiation of hours and conditions. The NUM has settled a pay demand in 1982 and hasn't got near the negotiation table since. All sweetheart deals are worked out with UDM indulgence and then imposed unilaterally on the NUM.

Along similar unilateral lines the Board have imposed a new disciplinary code. This 'code' takes industrial relations out of the realm of conciliation and puts it along with disciplinary actions usually confined to breach of mine regulations. 'Raging up' or walking off the job now become a sackable offence. An argument in the street or a scrap in a club, nothing to do with the industry is also now subject to dismissal.

The third plank of the assault is the 'flexible working' arrangements, six

day coalings and in the case of the Geordie coalfields - 9 1/2 hour shifts. The Margam project has eight years of development before we get to the question of how many days it'll turn coal. However it would look like the coal board are prepared to lop off the North Eastern field if they don't accept immediate extension of hours. This question looks like becoming the first flash-point of our resistance, although nobody will be riding into the battle with unlimited optimism. The union has not yet recovered from its last struggle and the fabric of the organisation is far from strong.

To knock back the new offensive we will need a far greater degree of solidarity from the labour movement than we had last time. As the miners steel themselves for renewed hardship, few have confidence that it will be forthcoming.

Dave Douglass

Labour councillors are furious with the Centre because we organised an occupation of Camden Town Hall which forced the Council to make cash payments to claimants during the DHSS and Dole Office strike. The Council said the unemployed should starve during the week long strike 'in solidarity' with the civil servants. The real reason was that they didn't want to pay out claimants in case they couldn't get the money back from the Government. But when 300 people stormed the Council chamber and held it for six hours they had no choice but to give in - everyone got paid.

But since then the Council's been out for revenge. When we occupied Camden Social Services 6 weeks later during another civil service strike councillors hit the roof. The Centre's funds were immediately suspended and an 'investigation' was ordered into the Centre's activities. We have been attacked for so-called abuses including demonstrating against the Labour and SDP pre-election stunt 'Hands Across Britain' and for slamming Labour's million jobs in two years policy for being more about bogus training schemes than real jobs. All this has infuriated the local Labour establishment but of

course our chief crime in their eyes was daring to take action against the Council.

The result of the 'investigation' is a foregone conclusion. It will call for closure of the Centre. We won't let that intimidate us. We are fighting to maintain an organisation that fights for all the unemployed - with no restrictions. We know we can win. More and more are joining the occupation. We're telling Camden Council: Hands Off Our Centre! We will not allow our voice to be silenced.

Mick Gavan
Co-ordinator, Camden Unemployment Action Centre

Camden Council vs Claimants

Camden Unemployment Action Centre is defying Camden Council and staying open! To make sure the Council gets the message claimants are occupying the Centre 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We've already foiled one attempt to throw us out and we're confident we can resist any others.

POLL TAX

Taxing the poor to pay the rich

'The poll tax is not radical, it's reactionary and regressive' said Edward Heath, expressing the doubts in sections of the Tory Party about Thatcher's proposed replacement of rates in England and Wales with a poll tax. This step has already been taken in Scotland.

Under the current rate system a household of four adults in Lewisham might pay £694; under the poll tax they would pay over £2,300. This would be applied without regard to ability to pay.

Thatcher herself stands to save £1,931 on the rate bill for her Dulwich retirement home.

Some Tories, with an eye to the devastation of the Tory Party in Scotland, are getting worried about losing their seats. They know that the poll tax was a major factor in Scotland.

The poll tax is not aimed at shifting the rates burden from the better-off

to the poor, but also at reducing even further the power of local authorities. Business taxes would be calculated nationally and paid directly to the government. The government would then distribute the money to local authorities.

The poll tax would lead to the disenfranchisement of the poor: no poll tax, no vote. The measure is estimated to be more than twice as expensive to administer as the present system. This confirms that the poll tax has little to do with economics and much to do with politics.

Simone Dewhurst

CHERNOBYL

One year on

Just over one year after the tragic accident at Chernobyl, two events show the world the contrasting responses of the Soviet Union and Britain to nuclear accidents.

The Soviet Union in its quest for answers to the events at Chernobyl has put the former plant director, the chief engineer and four others on trial for 'violations of technical security'. The official Soviet inquiry blamed the disaster on a series of unauthorised and reckless experiments by staff at the reactor.

At the same time the British ruling class in its quest for profits has been trying to dump powdered milk, contaminated by Chernobyl fall-out, on Third World countries. The government of the Philippines has already sent a shipment of powdered milk back to Britain because it had higher than acceptable levels of radiation.

While the Soviet Union continues its

investigation into Chernobyl and its effects on the human population, in Britain the nuclear industry carries on ignoring and covering up the dangers to human life. According to a report from the 'National Radiological Protection Board' the fact that the incidence of child leukaemia is three times higher in areas next to nuclear plants has nothing to do with radiation discharge from those plants.

These clusters of child leukaemia around Sellafield and Dounreay, and the atomic weapons plants at Aldermaston and Burghfield, are, according to these apologists for the nuclear industry, pure coincidence.

For the Soviet Union, Chernobyl has brought about an increased awareness of the effects of radiation and possible nuclear explosions on the human population. For imperialism, Chernobyl has meant nothing but an excuse to attack the Soviet Union while they carry on making a profit at any price.

Bob Shepherd

THIRD WORLD DEBT

Midland bank faces £450m loss

British banks have been forced to respond to growing pressures to substantially write down Third World loans. On 16 June NatWest, Britain's strongest and most profitable bank started the process when it announced an increase in its loan loss reserve by £466m to £827m, equivalent to 30 per cent of its £2775m loans to the Third World and other countries like South Africa in financial difficulties. This follows Citicorp's decision on 19 May to increase its reserves by \$3bn. (See 'Politics of Profit' FRFI 69).

By 7 July, Midland, the weakest of the major UK clearing banks with the largest exposure in the Third World, announced a massive £916m increase in its loan loss reserve to £1.19bn just over 27 per cent of its £4.3bn loans to 30 countries in financial trouble. This will mean a loss of £450m for the year. Before the end of July, Barclays and Lloyds will follow suit and give details of their intended write down of Third World loans.

The banks will ask the Inland Revenue to allow all the new provisions against their Third World debts to be written off against tax. Thus making sure that British taxpayers make a significant contribution to keeping down their overall losses.

In order to finance its dramatic increase in loan loss reserves Midland has gone to the market to raise further funds with a £700m rights issue. It will also sell its Scottish and Irish subsidiaries to the National Australia Bank for £317m. The Glasgow-based Clydesdale Bank, the Northern Bank of Ulster and the Northern Bank (in the 26 Counties) represent assets of £4.5bn and earned profits of £47m for Midland last year.

David Reed

Since its disastrous move into the United States in 1980 when it acquired Crocker National Bank and some \$2bn of rather insecure Third World loans, primarily in Latin America, Midland has gone from one crisis to another. In 1986, after Crocker's disastrous performance, it was sold to Wells Fargo for \$1.1bn. However Midland retained all Crocker's Third World loans. It has now been forced to sell its Scottish and Irish subsidiaries. As a result Midland has seen its total assets fall from a peak of £61.5bn in 1984 to an estimated £49bn in 1987.

Some £15bn loans are outstanding to UK clearing banks in the Third World and other countries (such as South Africa) which face payment problems or have been forced to reschedule their loans. Third World debt is being traded in the secondary market at an average discount to their face value of between 35 and 40 per cent. Many countries will be forced to default on their debt. Already the loan loss reserves of the major imperialist banks (25 per cent in the US, 27 to 30 per cent in the UK) are below the discounted rate in the secondary market. The crisis is far from over.

Thatcher drives home her election victory

The Tories have put forward a legislative programme which will accelerate the attack on the living standards, conditions of employment and political rights of millions of working class people. They will continue the assault on all potential forums of opposition outside parliament by by-passing local democracy, in particular Labour controlled local authorities in the inner cities, and by new legislation to undermine further basic trade union organisation. Thatcher is determined to consolidate her electoral base among the rich, the middle classes and better off sections of the working class through tax cuts and further privatisation of public assets.

The Local Government Bill 1987 will force local authorities and other public bodies to put out for tender specified services to private contractors. This means wage cuts for already low paid workers, poorer employment conditions and a deterioration in the services provided. Local authorities will be prohibited from imposing 'non-commercial' conditions on contractors such as equal opportunity clauses, thus worsening job prospects for black people and other oppressed workers. The proposed Poll Tax will shift the rates burden away from the rich to the poor and take even more financial power away from the already heavily rate-capped local authorities.

The proposed 'major reform of housing legislation' will establish a free market in rented housing, stripping local authorities of much of their own housing. This means increased homelessness and a return of the Ratchmanism of the 1960s. Education legislation will allow schools to opt out of local education authority control and be funded by central government. London Boroughs will be allowed to opt out of the Inner London Education Authority and run their own services. Charges for some school activities will be legalised as part of an attempt to create a two tier education system - one for those who can pay and another for those who can't.

Legislation will be introduced to remove benefits from young people who refuse a place on the Youth Training Scheme. Trade Unions will be forced by statute to hold ballots before calling strikes. Scabbing will be legalised as individuals can ignore majority decisions. An immigration bill will be introduced to deny entry to spouses and families of immigrants unless they prove that they will not make demands on the council for housing or claim any benefits. The right to appeal on being refused entry, or threatened with deportation as an 'overstayer' will be abolished.

Labour remains a loyal, respectable opposition

The Labour Party has made it clear that it will redouble its efforts to win back the allegiance of the very people Thatcher's legislative programme is designed to accommodate - semi-detached Britain, the middle classes and better off sections of the working class.

So Glenys Thornton, chair of the London Labour Party, said:

'The party needs to begin to look again at its appeal, or lack of it, to the more prosperous, employed, averagely-earning homeowner who possibly owns shares on a modest scale, perhaps even in a firm that was formerly in the public sector.'

Peter Hain, once of the left, argues that Labour should be far bolder in appealing to the self-interest of skilled workers and 'go the whole hog,' giving employees a statutory right to shares in their companies and tenants the chance to control their council estates. Margaret Hodge, Labour leader of Islington Council, argues that efficient services are necessary and must 'take precedence over trade union interests or jobs'. Municipal socialism is dead.

Kinnock intends to destroy any opposition inside the Labour Party. By introducing 'one member one vote' for the selection of MPs in the constituencies, but not for policy making in the conference where the reactionary Trade Union block vote is decisive, the left-wing of the Labour Party will be rendered totally ineffective.

Forging fighters for the battles ahead

The working class is fundamentally and irrevocably split between a privileged upper layer, politically represented by the Labour Party which will not fight Thatcher and the growing ranks of the poor and oppressed. No political party represents the interests of the poor, the low paid, the unemployed and oppressed in this country. Inevitably, this section of the working class will find ways and means to give expression to its anger and defend itself against Thatcher's unremitting offensive.

Black and white youth will take to the streets and confront the police, the most direct and immediate agents of Thatcher's offensive against them. In his final annual Metropolitan Police Report, Newman has admitted that the police encounter a daily phenomenon which he calls 'slow rioting', and includes hoax calls to ambush policemen, damage to police cars and direct intervention by groups of youth to prevent police arrests. The street con-

A new kind of movement

frontations with the police in Cheetham Hill, Manchester, Chapeltown, Leeds and Sparrowhall Estate, Liverpool are typical of this development outside London.

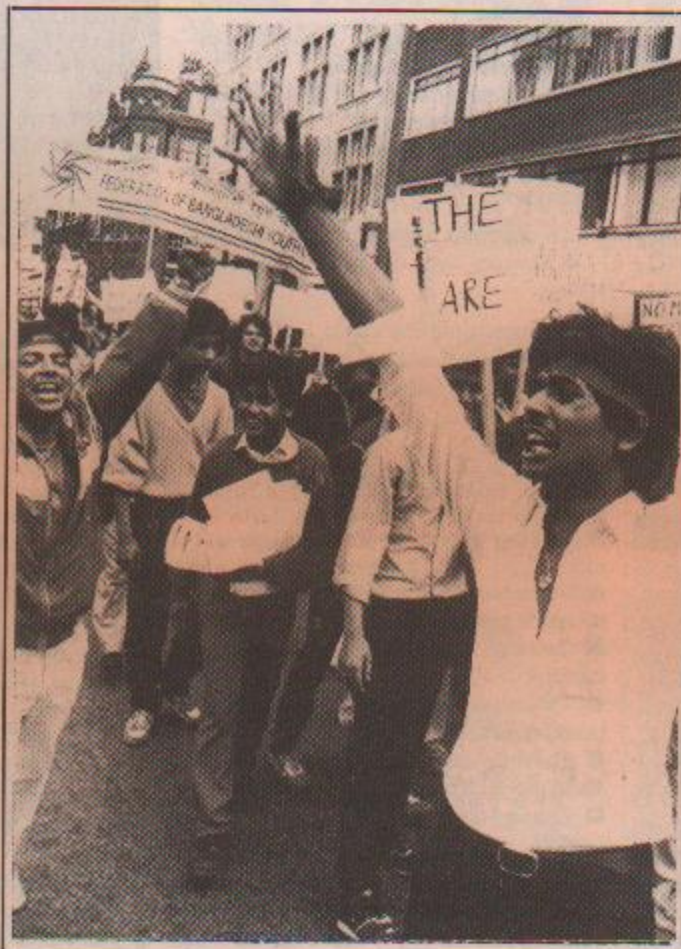
Other sections of the working class will see their battles in a less immediate and longer term way and seek to find a politically organised form to promote their fightback. The centre pages of this issue show how individuals and groups whose struggles have been ignored, betrayed or sabotaged by the traditional labour organisations have found a way forward and begun to make progress and even win some battles. They are having to fight alongside new forces in a new way, not just because of the reactionary character of the official labour movement but also because of the backward character of the traditional British left.

The British left is caught in a time warp. It yearns for the days of the post-war boom when traditional trade union militancy was effective in promoting the interests of broad sections of the working class. This left recognises only trade union struggle as authentic working class struggle. Its measure of militancy and success relates only to trade union disputes and strikes.

The last eight years of Thatcher have however dramatically curtailed the fighting ability of these traditional forces. This means the economism of the

left inevitably ties them to a movement suffering defeat after defeat - the official Labour and trade union movement. Civil servants and teachers, for example, have caved in since the election because, given the limited political framework of their struggle, they are totally unable to conceive of a way of defeating a Tory government so entrenched in power. The Yorkshire miners are meeting the same problem. While they want to fight back, they are tied to a trade union movement and a political party which will do everything in its power to force them to back down.

The left's economism not only takes them down a path which can only result in defeat and demoralisation, but also prevents them even recognising, let alone joining, a movement capable of inflicting a defeat on Thatcher. The SWP, the CPGB, and Militant were not fighting racism on 11 July when 4,000 people joined Manchester's biggest ever anti-racist march against deportations. Such a struggle is beyond their political horizon - it is not called by the official movement. For the same reasons they were not alongside City AA when it campaigned against and eventually defeated the Metropolitan Police ban on pickets outside the South African Embassy.



BOB GANNON

The traditional British left has only recently acknowledged the importance of the struggle in South Africa and then only because of the much higher profile of the black trade union movement over the last few years. Inevitably they will miss the vital lessons of that movement.

It is eleven years since the black school students began the process which will lead to the revolutionary overthrow of the racist South African regime. The struggle began with students, soon involved the whole community and now has at its centre the mighty movement of the black working class organised in fighting trade unions. *That movement of the working class is so powerful because of its links with the community, with the liberation movements, and its promotion of the people's political programme to destroy the racist apartheid state.*

What needs to be learnt from the South African struggle is the vital importance of the organised working class taking up the fight of the community here: against racism and, in particular, the deportation of black communist Viraj Mendis; against unemployment; against cuts in public services and against police repression and violence. Trade unionists will have to break from the shackles of old style politics and from their traditional arena of struggle, and fight back with other sections of the working class against Thatcher's onslaught. In doing so they will not only win important victories but also find real allies for their own struggles against job and wage cuts, against deteriorating conditions and against crippling anti-union laws.

We need a new kind of movement which fights on very different terms with very different priorities to the old movement. It is in this context we can see the significance of campaigns that continue to challenge Thatcher and have won small but important victories since the election - City AA's Non Stop Picket and the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign.

These campaigns have been built from below among ordinary people prepared to fight back, among black people, the unemployed and oppressed. The Labour MPs, councillors and trade unionists who have supported these campaigns have done so on a principled basis. The campaigns are open and democratic, with no bans and proscriptions and no limitations on the right to sell political literature etc. They have been built in opposition to the narrow dogmatic tradition of the British left, which would have confined them to the organised Labour and trade union movement or not built them at all.

The RCG has fought to create and develop the broad alliance of forces that are involved in both these campaigns. This new tradition of political work must be carried over into other struggles. A strong communist movement in Britain needs to be built to do this. Join us now!

Workers strike against apartheid

South African Transport Services (SATS) is the South African government's largest state corporation. It employed 271,342 workers in 1981, having assets totalling R10,186 million (£3,086 million at commercial exchange rate). And it is against this giant that the newly formed South African Harbours and Railway Workers Union (SAHRWU) pitted itself from March to June this year.

Such was the vengeance by the rulers against the 22,000 workers that when the settlement was announced, it was COSATU's Secretary, Mr Jay Naidoo, who spoke on behalf of its affiliate. This was because almost the entire leadership, 30 out of the 39 leaders who comprised the negotiating team, had been detained under the Emergency laws. This is apart from the hundreds of SAHRWU members who have been arrested for holding meetings, which the rulers regarded as illegal, to discuss their future. The terms of settlement included the reinstatement, with full benefits, of all those who the authorities had 'dismissed'.

This meant that Mr Andrew Nendzama, from the City Deep depot, would get his job back. It was his dismissal that brought about the strike. Outwardly the issue was trivial in that this car driver had failed to bring in R40 on time. The real reason was that Mr Nendzama was an active organiser for SAHRWU. The workers rightly saw the arbitrary dismissal of their colleague as the beginning of an all out attack on their union.

WORKERS ON STRIKE

The workers' strike began around 10 March. By April 15,000 workers were out from 23 cargo and freight depots. They were joined later by the 6,000 strong Postal and Telecommunication Workers Association (POTWA). The Municipal Workers threatened a solidarity strike if the matter was not settled soon. The General Workers Union gave the SAHRWU workers an assurance that none of its members would scab. By the end of the month there were 22,000 out in 80 depots. In other parts of South Africa where the railway and harbour workers did not join, there was evidence of go-slows as gestures of solidarity.

The strike brought to the surface other grievances of the workers:

- First was 'naked racialism'. Said Mr Justice Langa, President of SAHRWU, who was detained after he made this statement: 'I soon learnt that racial jibes and insults are part of the vocabulary at my workplace, but these were directed at one section of the workers - the black workers.'
- Secondly they wanted a living wage and decent housing conditions.
- Thirdly the migratory labour system.

A strike against SATS was a strike against the government. It was a strike at one of the vital arteries, namely the transportation system. That is why, unlike previous strikes in other industries, it was a total war against the working class. Not only the legal instruments of coercion, namely the army and the police, were brought into play, but also the secret ones, namely the vigilantes and trained commandos who specialise in burglary and bombing. The South African Broadcasting Corporation, hitherto silent about workers' organisations, now came out full blast against COSATU for harbouring the workers and supporting the strike.

WHITE PROPAGANDA

The Botha government, having read manuals on counter-insurgency, actually tried to win the hearts and minds of the township people as well as families of the striking workers by placing paid adverts in papers read by the oppressed people. One such was the *Weekly Mail*:

'South African Transport Services: Judge For Yourself. For six weeks SA

KARRIM ESSACK

Transport Services warned strikers that they would receive no pay for no work. SATS was extremely patient during this time:

During the strike:

- SATS continued to provide transport to and from places of work where applicable.
- Worker benefits ie travel concessions were not withdrawn.
- Medical, housing and pension benefits were not suspended.
- SATS maintained an open door policy for negotiations and went out of its way to get workers' representatives to come to the negotiating table.
- Strikers were not locked out at any time.

At the same time it accused SAHRWU's leaders, whom it labelled as instigators, of perpetrating the following acts:

- Preventing strikers from returning to their jobs.
- Preventing them from earning wages to provide for themselves and their families.
- Making false promises that they would pay strikers if SATS refused to do so.
- Canvassing membership through intimidation and assault.
- Causing violence to spread to civil unrest.
- Threatening the lives of thousands of innocent people.
- Causing damage worth millions of Rand to SATS property and equipment.
- Causing disruption of train services.

SATS workers replied and pointed to the crux of the problem, namely the management's archaic approach of negotiating with puppets instead of union leaders who had the support of the majority of the workers in the region. Also they said that SATS used the police and army to harass, intimidate and finally to try to force many of the workers back to work at gunpoint.

Some of the points raised by the SATS bosses were true. Losses ran into millions of Rand and the strike caused widespread disruption. Commuters had great difficulty in getting to work. But the people supported the strikers for they knew it was a strike against apartheid.

The SATS bosses soon showed their true colours. When arrests of workers and detentions of their leaders had failed they dismissed the entire workforce of 16,000. This was not only brutal and draconian but also illegal because the management had no such power. But it showed up its cant, hypocrisy and doubletalk.

WHY DID THE BOSSES CAVE IN?

The question is why did SATS management make a 180 degree U-turn of re-employing those whom it had dismissed a month earlier. The answer could be provided by an interview given by Deputy Information Minister Stoffel van der Merwe and Dr Kobus Neethling to Marietta Kruger and seen on TV on 13 May. The issue was why was there an increase in 'unrest incidents' in April 1987.

Neethling: 'Yes it is a trend that actually started at the beginning of the year but in April it became clear that SOWETO area remains an area of high unrest. But last month we had the East Rand and Witwatersrand areas which showed strong signs of unrest.'

Kruger: 'What type of incidents? Do



Founding conference of COSATU

they differ from previous months?'

Neethling: 'Yes last month differed to a degree from previous months. You know stone-throwing remains the most dominant. I think stone-throwing remains about 50% of all types of incidents. But last month arson was very high, very much higher than any of the previous months.'

Kruger: 'Doctor, do you think that the transport strike was an element?'

van der Merwe: 'I think that the transport strike was used as an opportunity, especially when one considers its original cause. It was used as an opportunity to implement the instructions they had received, to cause more disruption, especially in communication, transport and the post office. There were primary targets. The strike was used as an opportunity.'

The rulers made a rare admission, albeit grudgingly, that armed struggle had entered into the struggle of the transport workers. What they called arson was the destruction of 65 railway coaches during the 90 odd days of strike. This was professionally done. At times coaches would be set on fire almost simultaneously at different places on the railway line from Nigel on East Rand to Soweto some 40 kilometres away. This caused disruption and havoc and led to further losses. So side by side with the legal struggle there appeared the underground armed struggle.

The top leadership of SAHRWU was detained, scores of militants were arrested but coaches still went up in flames. This made the far-sighted sections of the rulers very nervous. For what they were witnessing was an armed detachment of the working class, organisationally separate and distinct, but putting itself at the disposal of the workers. Unlike Ndugu Langa and his colleagues, none of the underground had been arrested.

It is this that sent chills down the spines of the rulers. Consider the implications. If the workers have their armed detachments when they are on strike, then why not the peasants and township dwellers when they are being expropriated. And why not the entire oppressed people? Why should they not have their own armed forces.

Already in the townships there are armed units which are dealing with collaborators, spies and informers.

Intervention on the side of the workers is then an extension of the activities of those

who believe that freedom could only be won through the barrel of the gun.

The SATS bosses have given in only in order to continue the struggle on a different plane with more sophisticated tactics of divide and rule. Attempts to isolate the 'extremists' from the workers have begun with the trial of those workers who estab-

Karrim Essack is a South African revolutionary currently in exile in Tanzania. He escaped from South Africa in 1964 after periods of bannings and detentions. He is a regular writer on revolutionary developments in Southern Africa.

lished People's Courts to try scabs and informers.

For the SAHRWU workers, the lesson of the strike was clear. It was UNITY that brought them victory. For the oppressed the message was clear. It is possible to win small battles and skirmishes against the enemy if proper tactics are applied.

South Africa Roundup

MINERS TO GO ON NATIONAL STRIKE!

■ On 13 July the South African National Union of Mineworkers voted, by a stunning 95% in favour, for all out strike action in 45 gold mines and collieries. This historic decision demonstrates the increased readiness of the black working class to confront the apartheid state and its imperialist backers. The strike, expected to start at the beginning of August, follows a derisory response by the Chamber of Mineowners to a series of political and economic demands by the union.

■ The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), with a total membership of 130,000, began a national strike on 14 July. The union is fighting for a minimum wage of R4 an hour compared to the R2.61 an hour offered by predominantly British and American multinationals in the metal sector. Within one hour of the strike beginning the racist state declared it illegal, a last minute decree was issued in the Official Gazette. NUMSA advised its members to return to work, pending a Supreme Court challenge, to avoid mass detentions of union activists.

■ Both unions are affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). COSATU is holding its annual conference at Witwatersrand University. The main programme for delegates will be to advance the right for a living wage and to discuss the adoption of the Freedom Charter. Jay Naidoo, General Secretary of COSATU, stated on a recent visit to London 'We are prepared to negotiate once the State of Emergency has been lifted, all forms of apartheid have been dismantled, the ANC is unbanned and Nelson Mandela released.'

■ The Botha regime is desperately seeking ways to break the powerful community rent boycott. The regime has, so far unsuccessfully, canvassed employers to deduct

rent owed from the wages of employees who observe the boycott. Some 80 Soweto families have been evicted in the last year, including 10 evictions on 2 July alone. The 'comrades' are organised to resist the evictions and the furniture is immediately returned to the homes as soon as the apartheid police and the 'kitskonstabels' have left.

■ The South African-backed commission of 'enquiry' into the plane crash that killed President Samora Machel of Mozambique has fraudulently declared 'pilot error' as the cause. Britain and America were represented on the commission, whilst the Soviet Union and Mozambique refused to take part in the cover-up. The commission rejected the evidence of clear activity by the South African Defence Force in the area of the plane crash, and the view of Mozambique that it was the SADF who set up a false navigational beacon. The apartheid army was put on full alert the day before the murder of Samora Machel.

■ Fifty white South Africans, led by the former leader of the PFP van Zyl Slabbert, have met an ANC delegation in Dakar, the capital of Senegal. Thabo Mbeki, the political secretary and National Executive member of the ANC, reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to the armed struggle against the apartheid regime.

■ In Swaziland, an apartheid death squad has murdered Mr Cassium Make, member of the ANC executive, and Mr Paul Dikeledi, a prominent member of the ANC. The men were shot in a taxi after it had been forced off the road.

■ As the struggle against apartheid reaches new levels of intensity Thatcher has again 'kissed apartheid' and vetoed a proposal to support 'one person, one vote in South Africa' at the EEC foreign ministers summit.

Adam Bowles

Embassy cops lose again!

On 2 July the police ban on pickets on the pavement outside the South African Embassy in London was defeated. In the eight weeks from 6 May, police made 172 arrests of picketers who peacefully protested on the pavement. During the campaign Chief Inspector Gilbertson of Cannon Row Police Station made boastful claims that the ban would not be lifted until a court instructed him to do so. On 2 July the ban was lifted, not by the courts, but by the demonstrators who exposed in practice that the ban was an act of political censorship which could not be tolerated.

PEOPLE VERSUS THATCHER'S BULLY BOYS

Every Friday night after 6 May demonstrators from the Non Stop Picket, held in Duncannon Street across the road from the Embassy, crossed the road and were arrested and charged for breach of Commissioners Directions and Police Obstruction. Every week the picket grew in size as news spread that the police and the Embassy were up to their old tricks.

On the anniversary of the Soweto uprising, 16 June, Paul Boateng MP addressed the picket and pledged his support for the campaign. On 2 July four MPs - Tony Banks, Harry Cohen, Allan Roberts and Dennis Canavan, mobilised by Peter Tatchell, showed their practical support for the picket and opposition to the ban by crossing the road with other picketers. This move threw the police into a total tizzy.

Embarrassed by the situation and by the television cameras, Superintendent Little of Cannon Row argued that the Commissioners Directions did not apply to MPs and that he would only arrest members of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. He was arguing effectively that under the ancient Metropolitan Police Act (1839) he could make City Group into a proscribed organisation. Tactical blunder followed tactical blunder until Little was forced to create a barriered area on the pavement for the picketers.

The MPs stayed in the same place outside the gates of the Embassy and at their request were joined by Norma Kitson and David Reed. At 12 noon the MPs departed to the Commons, but Norma and David stayed in place until they were arrested at 12.30pm. Apparently they were law abiding while the MPs were present, but law breaking as soon as they had gone.

By now Little could think of no legal excuse why the picket should not remain on the pavement outside the Embassy, and after threatening the picketers with a 'review', he and his senior officers retreated to Cannon Row. In practice the demonstrators had broken the ban and exposed the real reason behind it - to rid the pavement of the Non Stop Picket on behalf of the Embassy. The picket has continued on the pavement directly outside the Embassy gates ever since.

NO BOTTLE

By Sunday 5 July, police officers from Cannon Row were informing picketers that morale was at 'rock bottom' back at base. And following the appearance on the picket of five more MPs - Joan Ruddock, Dennis Skinner, Bob Clay, Clare Short and Dawn Primovolo, the *Daily Telegraph* (9 July) reported that a Met officer had spilt the beans: Cannon Row police had 'simply bottled out'.

It soon became clear that Cannon Row was not only lacking in bottle but was proving to be a great embarrassment to the big boss, Sir Kenneth Newman himself. Whilst Newman was orchestrating a carefully timed press campaign for more resources to 'fight crime', down the road at Cannon Row, hundreds of police were being deployed on a weekly basis to arrest peaceful demonstrators. Three days after the ban was defeated, responsibility for policing the picket was handed over to 'A' Division police.

The question has also been raised that all the arrests were in fact illegal, since police have no powers of arrest for either charge. Somewhat hastily, senior officers are

The first case against David Markovitch and Tim Perry for breach of Commissioners Directions and police obstruction is still being heard at Bow Street as we go to press.

The first case under the Public Order Act (Section 14) from 6 May ended in a bizarre verdict from Magistrate Barrington Black at Highbury Magistrates court. After the defence case had already started, Chief Inspector Gilbertson, the chief prosecution witness, was called to the witness box again in order to refute his earlier evidence. Over lunch, after he had finished giving evidence, Gilbertson was informed by the prosecution barrister that his evidence was directly in contradiction to the evidence of the arresting officers.

Gilbertson claimed three times under cross-examination that the defendants, Carol Brickley, Norma and Steven Kitson and Councillor Adrian States were definitely standing in front of him on the demonstration in Duncannon Street when he imposed the condition under the Public Order Act. The arresting officers testified that the defendants were already outside South Africa House, with the exception of Inspector McCrieff from the TSG, whose evidence was remarkably similar to Gilbertson's.

Realising he was out on a limb, and that the photographic evidence proved him wrong, Gilbertson re-entered the witness box with a computer print out of timed radio communications between police at the Embassy and headquarters at Cannon Row. This proved that the defendants had left the Duncannon Street demonstration ten minutes before the Public Order Act was imposed.

The computer print-out, which the police were anxious that the defence barrister, Vera Baird, should not see, contained other, more fascinating information. Throughout the day the police were logging movements of various picketers, especially RCG members, and the print-out contained communications between South African Embassy officials and the Foreign Office, the contents of which were not revealed in court.

To everyone except the magistrate, CI Gilbertson had been revealed as at best 'unreliable' at worst a bare-faced liar. After hearing evidence and seeing photographs that showed that the picket was not angry as the police had claimed, the magistrate found that the police had grounds for placing the condition and that the defendants were properly informed, even though they had already formed a separate

CAROL BRICKLEY

justifying their actions under Section 25 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

On 2 July, when 4 MPs demonstrated outside the Embassy, James Aptaker, City AA Defence Officer was framed for criminal damage of a police camera. The police video team were, as usual, pushing and shoving picketers in order to record only the bits of evidence which suit the police. James objected to their behaviour verbally by pointing out what they were doing in front of the press and TV cameras. The cameraman dropped his camera and then accused James of doing the damage.

IN THE COURTS

Although the campaign to win back the pavement has succeeded in practice, the important battle in the courts still goes on.



Under attack we fight back...and win

'The force led by the black working class in South Africa is a liberating force. It is felt here and City Group is a response to that force. It is because of the persistence, and the fight in emulation of the young black people of South Africa who are dying, the young people in City Group refuse to give in to police intimidation. City Group is sharing in this liberating spirit.' David Kitson, former political prisoner.

'Under Attack We Fight Back and Win!' is the message from City AA's rally, demonstration and Annual General Meeting held on the weekend of 4/5 July.

The rally gave living expression to a slogan of the RCG 'Britain Out of Apartheid! Apartheid Out of Britain!'. Norma Kitson chaired a platform uniting many forces fighting for liberation in South Africa, in Britain and across the world including the PAC, the Revolutionary Communist Group, the Tamil Action Committee, Sharon Raghup, wife of framed prisoner Engin Raghup, the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, Peter Tatchell and many more.

Mr Maharasingam of the Tamil Action Committee spoke of the inspiration of Nelson Mandela and the South African freedom fighters: 'Nobody dies in that country - the white South Africans may think that they are killing them - no, they are spreading this revolution throughout the whole world!'

Sri Lanka, Brazil, South Korea... the dictatorships of the rich and powerful are being pushed back but it is in South Africa where imperialism, and British imperial-

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM

ism in particular, will be forced to make a vigorous and possibly final stand. David Reed of the RCG pointed to the significance internationally and for the British working class of the revolutionary movement in South Africa:

'The South African revolution threatens to become the new centre of working class revolution worldwide. It is led by a working class that has no ties to imperialism and which, in the words of Marx in the (Communist) Manifesto, has nothing to lose but its chains.'

Speaker after speaker emphasised the common cause between supporting our brothers and sisters fighting for freedom in South Africa and creating a movement in this country capable of defending the people. City AA directly connects giving solidarity with organising the fightback

here as Convenor Carol Brickley made clear:

'We see a situation in South Africa which is more polarised than ever before. The future can only be an escalation of the revolutionary war against apartheid. The white minority have declared their commitment. Black people will fight back. That political situation is part and parcel of the reason for our existence, because over the coming period the existence of groups like City AA will be ever more vital.'

'But if you can't fight, or won't fight, for your rights in Britain what hope is there that you will fight and build solidarity with the people in South Africa who are fighting for their rights.'

City AA defeated the police ban and will go forward with its Non Stop Picket because, as Peter Tatchell said, 'Everyone I've ever met from South Africa says that the picket is the biggest external inspiration for the people in South Africa.'

The City Group Singers shone. The rally marched to the rhythms of Batucada Mandela to the racist Embassy and a victory celebration on the pavement won back for the people.

Sunday's AGM got down to evaluating the experience of the Non Stop Picket and plans for the future. One member put a series of motions directed at undermining the political leadership of the RCG in City AA. One backward motion proposed that petitioners on the picket are not allowed to

demonstration outside the Embassy. He went on to find Carol Brickley and Norma Kitson guilty, and Adrian States and Steven Kitson not guilty on grounds which no-one could possibly understand since they had all acted in the same way. The verdict will be appealed.

The case would have considerable consequences for future demonstrations, factory pickets, or indeed any public assembly, if anyone could possibly take the absurd conclusions of the magistrate seriously.

While the Public Order Act case was being heard and on the final day of the Old Bailey trial of Holloway police who beat up schoolboys, Metropolitan Police were engaging in their own variety of public disorder.

On Tuesday 14 July Horace, a black picketer, was arrested after being racially abused by a white South African and was charged under Section 5 of the Public Order Act. On Friday 17 July Tunde Forrest, a black picketer, was arrested after a similar incident during which he was assaulted by a white South African. Neither of the racists were charged.

Simone Dewhurst, an RCG member, who was chief steward at the time of Tunde's arrest was arrested by Diplomatic cops for merely asking what was going on. In the police van she was severely beaten up and threatened: 'we are going to strip search you again'. The police regard Simone as a particular target because she is suing police for illegal strip search and assault during an arrest last winter. Simone was examined at a hospital where it was reported that she was extensively and badly bruised on the arms, back, thighs, head and her arm was x-rayed for a suspected fracture.

Ever since paint was thrown at the Embassy on 6 May, police have argued this was the fault of everyone associated with City Group. By their own argument they are all guilty of racist harassment and serious assault on young women. The Holloway gang of thugs were not the only 'bad apples' - the whole orchard is rotten.

sell papers 'other than those directly financing City Group', a move to political censorship of FRFI that goes against the non-sectarian and democratic principles on which City AA was founded. An amendment from the WRP (Workers Press) merely changed 'directly financing' to 'produced by': an acceptance of the censorship. The motion, and the amendment, fell through lack of a proposer.

The WRP put a series of motions and amendments but withdrew several of them: an amendment changing 'the heroic fight back of the black people' to 'the heroic fightback of the South African working class'; a motion on the Moscow trials; and a motion criticising City AA's defiance campaign as 'individually confronting the police'. This last amendment was withdrawn doubtless because the methods of mass mobilisation motivated by the RCG and other comrades proved successful in breaking the ban. It is a pity that the WRP comrades did not openly argue their position, it is important that political strategies are argued and fought out.

The AGM resolved to build national support for the Non Stop Picket and to make the picket the Speakers Corner for all people fighting injustice. We sent a special message of solidarity to COSATU, the largest trade union federation in South Africa, which has come more and more into the frontline of resistance.

City AA's programme of action will use our victory in returning to outside the Embassy to focus attention on our brothers and sisters leading from the front in South Africa. City AA calls on all its friends and supporters to pledge time on the picket this summer and to mobilise now for the demonstration to free Moses Mayekiso. The revolutionary movement in South Africa has set a high standard to live up to.

FIGHTBACK AGAINST POLICE RACISM

SMASH BRITAIN'S PASS LAWS

Unite Shakeel Ahmed with Barbara and Natalie!

For more information contact: Syed Rahman Defence Campaign, Bangladesh House, 19A Bush Lane, Longsight, Manchester (telephone: 061-225 4012)

Sarah Ricca

Defend Alvado Samuels

Cheetham Hill



Evening after 9 July fighting

In Cheetham Hill on 9 July what started as just another event in the continuous cycle of Manchester police harassment of the community turned into a pitched battle as black and white youth defended their community.

NICK LEWIS

Just after 10pm Karl Lynch, 19 year old black man, was stopped outside the Apollo pub in Heywood Street. An eye-witness told FRFI that 'When Karl got out of the car the "community policeman", Piekos, just kept provoking him. Karl tried to back off but the police wouldn't let go.'

A large crowd gathered. When the police grabbed Karl people defended him. The police began to grab at people standing by. Sharon Wood, 17, was attacked by the police. Cyril Onwuzuligbo told FRFI what happened. He told the policeman 'to stop strangling her. The next thing I knew I was grabbed around the neck from behind and four policemen threw me into the back of a police van with the girl.'

The youth fought back. One youth told FRFI 'cars were turned over and set alight. SPG vans were driving up Heywood Street and we started to bombard them with anything that we could lay our hands on.'

Then they came in with armoured vans, just like Belfast. A policeman's arm was broken in the process.

The youth drove the police out of the area. Immediately, according to the *Manchester Evening News*, 'special contingency plans - created after the Moss Side riots of 1981 - were put into motion with police from other divisions brought in...'

At 1am Tony Dyce, 30, was arrested when eight police officers burst into his home. Karl Lynch, Sharon Wood, Cyril Onwuzuligbo, and Tony Dyce were all held overnight. Karl Lynch is in custody in Strangeways prison. The others were released on bail but placed under a 7pm to 7am curfew and have to report four times a week to the police.

Cyril and Tony spoke to FRFI about the events of that night. Tony said: 'The police wanted trouble last night, there was a

'striped', two unmarked police cars, a dog unit and a Sherpa van at the top of Heywood Street. Down the bottom there were two more Sherpa vans. And this was before anything even happened. Every night the police drive around in their riot vans, up and down, all the time, they are just looking for someone to harass, to cause trouble.'

Cyril added: 'I have been charged with assaulting PC Piekos when I was already in the back of the van long before Piekos had ever been hit. What the *Manchester Evening News* printed today has shown me that I'll never buy that paper again. They have just printed what the police have told them to print: a pack of lies.'

The following day the police saturated the area with armoured and riot vans together with both marked and unmarked police cars. As the evening wore on a large crowd gathered at the Apollo pub. Chief Superintendent Walter Elder, commander of the Collyhurst division, came to talk to them. Finding a less than warm welcome, he informed the crowd that he 'couldn't give a fuck if you live here or not. I don't get paid top wages to stand in the street and talk to the likes of you. If you were anywhere else I'd have you nicked. You should be thankful - I've had councillor Harris [Labour] on my back demanding that the Apollo is closed down, now we don't want that to happen do we?'

Elder claimed that 'the general public in the area appreciated the police attention given to Cheetham Hill.' The *Manchester Evening News* described the police as 'Heroes of Mob Hatred'. The 'general public in the area' saw the situation somewhat differently. Tony Dyce said 'To say that we "appreciate the police attention given to Cheetham Hill" is a disgrace. They haven't interviewed anyone around here. How can anyone appreciate police driving around 24 hours a day telling you to fuck off and pulling monkey faces at you?'

Asked what caused the events, everyone was agreed 'the police. It's all their fault what happened last night. The police are always beating people up and harassing people around here. They just want to practise their new weapons on us. That's why they keep driving around and trying to provoke us and calling us fucking niggers.'

The people in Cheetham Hill have no illusions about what they are up against. As Cyril Onwuzuligbo told us: 'The law, the judges and the police are useless to me. They are not on my side and they never will be on my side because there is no such thing as equal rights in Britain. The rights are on the side of the rich, of the police.'

Liverpool

On 22 June black and white youth on the Sparrowhall estate in Liverpool also fought back against police harassment. Clashes started after a police patrol chased youths driving a Porsche into the estate. People, on hearing of the chase, came onto the streets to cheer on the driver of the Porsche.

Police reinforcements arrived and tried to disperse the onlookers. They threatened the crowd with arrest but were met with a volley of bricks and bottles. Youths gathered on the street corners and continued to stone the patrols that had swamped the estate, injuring four officers. Six youths were arrested and another officer was hospitalised after brutally attacking one of the arrested.

Speaking to FRFI after the incidents a number of youths complained of the 80% unemployment and constant police harassment at Sparrowhall. Whilst we were speaking to them a police patrol drew up and stayed until we left. If it hadn't been for the fact that the youth had stood up and fought back the night before, we would probably have been arrested.

Pat (Liverpool RCG)

Barbara and Shakeel married 2 years ago in Pakistan. Due to illness during pregnancy Barbara had to return to Britain where she gave birth to their daughter, Natalie. Natalie has never seen her father who was refused entry to Britain under the 'Primary Purpose' rule. Barbara was not prepared to accept this. She chose to fight. The VMDC helped her to set up a campaign. In May Barbara attended her appeal hearing. Those inside saw her subjected to humiliating cross-examinations, as every intimate detail of her relationship with Shakeel was dragged through the courts.

On 1 June Barbara heard that her appeal had been rejected. The Home Office adjudicator decided that Shakeel did not really love Barbara, that his relationship with her was superficial, that the primary purpose of his marriage was to gain entry into this country, not to be with his wife and child.

Barbara is determined to continue her fight until she and Natalie are united with Shakeel.

For more information contact Barbara Ahmed Defence Campaign, South Manchester Law Centre, 584 Stockport Road, Manchester 12. *Sarah Ricca*

Syed Rahman will stay!



Syed Rahman

Syed Rahman, a Bangladeshi who came to Manchester after his wife moved here, had his passport stamped giving him indefinite leave to remain under the '12 month' rule. This allows foreign husbands of British resident women to stay if the marriage lasts for 12 months after the man arrives in Britain. Syed's marriage lasted the required period so the Home Office stamped his passport. But instead of returning the passport to him they kept hold of it. On hearing that his marriage had broken down - after the 12 month period - they returned his passport with the words 'endorsed in error'. Even by the Home Office's own racist laws Syed is entitled to stay here. In its determination to deport black people the Home Office has again broken its own rules.

But like Barbara Ahmed, Syed Rahman is fighting back. With the help of the RCG and VMDC he has set up a campaign. On Sunday 14 June the campaign held its public meeting which was strongly supported by the Bangladeshi community.



Alvado Samuels

Alvado Samuels is under threat of immediate deportation. He came on a visit to Britain in April this year to see his father who is ill with cancer. He has not seen his family in Britain for 24 years. On arriving at Heathrow Airport he was immediately arrested. Immigration officials stated they were not satisfied with his reasons for coming to Britain.

Since then Alvado has been summoned to Manchester Airport twice not knowing whether he will be allowed to stay with his sick father or be bundled onto a plane to Jamaica. On his second trip to Manchester Airport on 16 July 40 VMDC and RCG supporters turned up in solidarity. Home Office hirings refused to accept letters about Alvado's father's health and he eventually had to go through the humiliation of stripping to show his scars from a recent operation.

The Alvado Samuels Defence Campaign will fight for his right to remain with his father as long as he wishes.

For more information contact: ASDC, c/o Immigration Aid Unit, Room 13, Level 7, Manchester Town Hall, Manchester.

Virman Man

Home Office tries to break up family

Two young brothers face deportation to Pakistan despite the fact that their family live in Glasgow. 10 year old Faryad Sher and 11 year old Alyas Sher lived in Pakistan with their grandparents until June last year when their grandfather died and their grandmother became too infirm to look after them. They then came to Glasgow to be with their parents.

The Home Office claims that the two boys are not Mrs Bibi's children. Mrs Bibi has proof that the boys are her own. She has several documents and has also taken two blood tests which prove that the boys are her own. Despite these facts, the Home Office is still prepared to deport the boys to Pakistan where there is no one to look after them.

Gerry Martin

Chapeltown

For two successive nights youths in Chapeltown, Leeds fought the police. On 21 and 22 June police were drafted in to the area. On Sunday 21 June a barricade was thrown up for a short time across Chapeltown Road. The police came under a hail of stones and some petrol bombs. They sealed off Chapeltown with roadblocks. There were similar scenes the following night. The only sex shop in Leeds was gutted by fire, a relief to many local residents who objected to its presence. It had been used by the police to spy on local people at the Hayfield pub.

CHAS ANDREWS

The clashes were sparked-off when Marcus Skellington was violently arrested and charged with damaging a police car. To many youths this was the final straw. The police had been stopping and harassing people on a much greater scale over the preceding days. In the early hours of Wednesday morning the police launched a series of raids and dragged in nearly 30 youths for questioning. Nearly all have been charged with possession of petrol bombs, stealing fuel from vehicles or attempted burglary. Most have been refused bail and are either in prison or in local authority care.

FRFI supporters attended a meeting called by the Community Relations Council (CRC) on Tuesday 23 June. They had opened up their normally closed meetings to the police. Superintendent Ellis was the police spokesperson - he had tried to frame the Bradford 12. Ellis was allowed to address the meeting and claimed to be ignorant about the causes of the clash and asked the 150 people to tell him.

The meeting divided into two camps: the police, the CRC and the police's 'community leaders' on one side and the people

of Chapeltown on the other. The police referred to the important role the community leaders had played in calming the situation. Everyone kept on demanding to know who the police meant but they refused to identify them. Cedric Clark, a local Labour councillor, came under particular attack from the youth for siding with police and trying to answer questions for the police. The mood was clear - people had had enough of the police and also of those who are called community leaders and side with the police to further their own careers. As one youth said, 'we don't want no more pressure'.

As Marcus Skellington's mother said, 'Something has got to be done... The voice of the youth has got to be heard. The youths out there won't stand for someone innocent being arrested and beaten up.' This determination and message needs to be translated into organisation that will fight to defend those arrested. Just as the police attack on Chapeltown has not ended on the streets so must the defence of the community be taken further into fighting in the courts and giving a voice to people's demands through political organisation.



On Sunday 28 June, over 200 people marched in an angry demonstration to protest against the deaths of Mohammed Parkit and Neneh Jelloh as a result of detention in Marylebone Police Station. FRFI was one of the number of organisations supporting the march organised by the Bengali Workers Action Group.

CAMPAIGN ROUND-UP

Support from the Philippines

On 2 July, Viraj was visited in Sanctuary by internationally known Filipino priest and revolutionary Father Edicio de la Torre. Father Edicio spent 9 years in jail under the Marcos regime. He visited Viraj on behalf of the Institute for Popular Democracy. In Viraj's visitors book he wrote:

'I hope that the struggle, although difficult and long, will result in a victory for justice. We support you and admire your stand, not just in Britain, but in your own country.'

VMDC organises gospel concert

The VMDC gospel concert held in July was a great success for many Christians. Over 200 people arrived at the Church of the Ascension. Among the speakers was the Bishop of Hulme. Lem Sissay, a black poet brought the concert into perspective with some poetry about the struggle of black people in South Africa. Other contributors were Paul Weller and Deacon John with his stirring African drums. And of course Viraj Mendis who spoke of the

common struggle between communists and Christians dedicated to justice and freedom.

*Peter Dungey
VMDC Church support committee*

VMDC Moss Side Social in the West Indian Centre

On 25 June, the VMDC went out to the local community in Moss Side with an enormously successful social in the West Indian Centre. Over 300 people listened to poetry music and speeches and danced in solidarity with Viraj. This was part of the campaign's work to build up its ties and connections with the local community. Many who came to the social were next seen on the demonstration.

Australian TV plans documentary on Viraj in Sanctuary

Australian TV is planning to produce a documentary on Viraj. They wanted to buy the Brass Tacks programme. But it proved cheaper to make a new programme themselves. This is capitalism. The VMDC nevertheless welcomes the increased publicity this will bring to the struggle internationally. West German TV are also planning to produce a programme on Viraj. They filmed the entire demonstration on 11 July. The technicians being anti-racists gave a copy to the VMDC for our files.

What they said...

The 11 July VMDC demonstration revealed the power of the VMDC's stand against the Home Office's attempt to deport Viraj Mendis. We print here extracts from three of the main speakers - Viraj Mendis, Father John Methuen and David Reed (RCG)

VIRAJ MENDIS

'When John Selwyn Gummer, the ex-chairman of the Tory Party asked me if I will accept the decision of the High Court I said 'No, how can I accept the decision made by the British judicial system when Britain is the main supporter of the Sri Lankan regime which will execute me ...

The reason (the government) gave for (bringing forward the Judicial Review) was that the longer the campaign goes on the more it will 'undermine community relations in Manchester'.

What do they mean by this? It is obvious that the Home Office hasn't the slightest interest in the welfare of the black community in this country. In fact they deport 50 black people every week.

What do they mean by community relations? What they mean is that the VMDC is giving a political lead to black people who are struggling against deportations and against racism. Not only that - they realise that the VMDC has the potential to give a political lead to all the poor and oppressed who live in areas like Hulme and Moss Side. This is what the ruling class call subversion. If you organise against oppression that is for them subversion ...

The Campaign has reached a stage where it is not just about one person, but it has the potential of turning into a national campaign against all deportations ...

This march shows what can be done - it is a historic alliance of forces against racism - communists, Churches, Tamil organisations, Irish Republican bands, women's organisations, lesbian and gay groups, trade unions, political organisations etc. But the march is only a beginning, the struggle is long and hard. Let us start by giving the racist Home Office and the government a well earned defeat. Thank you for being here.'



From his Sanctuary Viraj speaks to contingents from the Indian Workers Association, Manchester and Tameside NALGO, Leeds and Stockport Trades Councils, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Birmingham Troops Out and hundreds of others.



CHARLIE BAKER

DAVID REED

'... It is precisely because Viraj is a black communist and a member of the RCG that the Thatcher government is so determined to deport him.

It is not just the fight against racism which is at stake. It is a fight against an imperialist government, an imperialist state which can be nothing other than racist. British imperialism has plundered ... the oppressed nations of their wealth, leaving such poverty that black workers were forced to seek work here to survive. Once here black workers face continuing and unrelenting racist oppression - a double oppression both from racism and class exploitation. It is this double oppression which inevitably forces black people to take a leading, vanguard role in the struggle against imperialism, for justice, freedom and socialism. It is precisely because Viraj has chosen to fight back, refused to be a victim, chosen to strike back and organise others in that fight that the immigration appeals Chief Adjudicator ... turned down his appeal ... It terrifies the ruling class that black people will not only fight back but also take up the struggle of others, giving leadership to the struggles of the oppressed, of the poor, the unemployed, and all those prepared to fight back against Thatcher's repressive regime ...

Viraj Mendis personifies this fight - that is why his struggle has a resonance throughout all sections of British people.

But there is another reason why Viraj's fight is so dangerous to the British ruling class. It is a fight that also refused to bow down before the election requirements of Kinnock's Labour Party. It refused to be dictated to by a Labour Party which regards black people, the poor, the oppressed, the unemployed fighting back as a political embarrassment, and has attacked any section of the Labour movement which has attempted to take their side. Those Labour MPs and councillors who

relate to Viraj's campaign have done so on a principled basis or not at all.

Yes, the alliance of forces in the VMDC has been built in a new way - and Viraj's organisation - the RCG - has played a central role in pushing it in this new direction. Whether Viraj wins next week, or next year or in five years, something new is in the process of being created - and we must never go back.

This new direction has been achieved by principled, open, democratic and non-sectarian campaigning. It has been achieved because we have made a fundamental break with the narrow dogmatic tradition of the British left which would have confined the VMDC to the organised Labour and trade union movement - a movement in retreat, unable to break the stranglehold of Kinnock and Willis. The new direction has been achieved because we have recognised that the fightback has to be built from below - from the people in action.

The RCG has fought to create and develop the alliance of forces that is the VMDC: the local community, black organisations, religious organisations and individuals, political organisations, some Labour MPs and some Labour councillors, trade unionists and other progressive forces.

Viraj's victory will be a victory for us all. It will be the beginning of that new movement in Britain which will link British people with the oppressed people fighting to destroy imperialism in Sri Lanka, in South Africa, in South Korea, in Brazil and in many other parts of the world.

Our day will surely come. Viraj Mendis will stay. Deportation no way.'



David Reed speaking for the RCG. Other speakers included anti-deportation campaigns - Som Raj, Farida Bibi, Lisa Huen, Syed Rahman, Marion Gaima, Alvado Samuels, Barbara Ahmed - as well as Walter Silcott, Liz Denver (City AA), Linda (VMDC Lesbian and Gay Group), Les Huckfield (MEP), Father Henry (Church of Ascension), Martin Pagell (Physically Impaired against Segregation), Anne Neale (Kings Cross Women's Centre) and others.

FATHER JOHN METHUEN

'Today Viraj Mendis has been in sanctuary for just over 200 days. The church's resolve is as strong as it ever was. We offered sanctuary to Viraj in order to save his life.

The Home Secretary has asked me to 'accept his decision so that arrangements can be made for his return to Sri Lanka.' But if we believe that Viraj is in danger of losing his liberty, of losing his safety, of losing his life, then we can never turn around and say 'Well we don't care so much about your liberty, your safety or your life anymore. You had better go back to your death.'

That is an option that, please God, no Christian, no human being could accept: certainly not *this* Christian, *this* human being and the members of *this* church ...

Support for the sanctuary has grown. I have been very heartened by the groundswell of encouragement, good wishes, donations and prayers that continues to flow in from individual Christians and whole churches up and down the country; and from as far away as Italy and the United States ...

Amnesty International last month reinforced their support for Viraj's case by

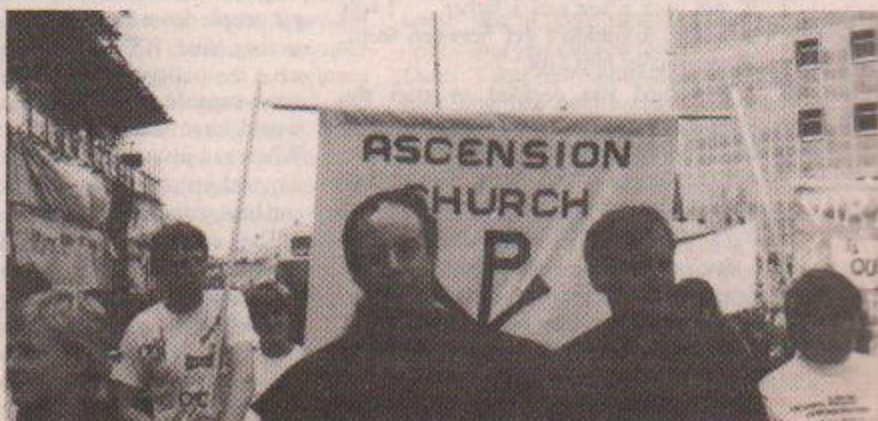
publishing yet another very disturbing report on disappearances, detentions and torture in that divided and unhappy land.

The World Council of Churches has sent me a telegram deploring any attempt to send anyone, Sinhalese or Tamil, back to Sri Lanka while the present civil war lasts. Letters continue to arrive from Sri Lankan citizens describing their own horrific experiences and imploring the church to maintain the sanctuary and to honour its absolute commitment to Viraj Mendis ...

On the very day that the Home Secretary wrote to say that he found no reason to reverse his decision, a Judge in the High Court granted a Judicial Review of Viraj's case. At the very least this means there must be a *doubt* in reasonable people's minds as to whether justice is being done. And *doubt* as to Viraj's fate were he to be deported.

The Home Office cannot be allowed to put that doubt to the test because if they're wrong Viraj's blood would indelibly stain the conscience and laws of this country for ever. Viraj's blood would give the lie to our much vaunted British traditions of justice, compassion and common sense. Viraj's blood must never be used to score political points; to solve embarrassing dilemmas; or further to divide our already divided society.

Viraj Mendis must stay!



VIRAJ MENDIS, RCG member, black communist, now stands as a national symbol of black people's fight against the racist immigration controls. The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign is inspiring people throughout Britain and creating an unprecedented alliance of communists, anti-racists and religious people.

On the eve of the 11 July VMDC demonstration Viraj spoke to *FRFI* about the remarkable growth of the campaign and the RCG's role in it.

'In a sense, what is happening to me is an extreme expression of what is happening to the people here. I am disposable. They are even willing to deport me to my execution, so little regard do they have for peoples' lives. But the campaign has shown, both in the community and nationally, that it is not so easily disposed of after all. It has allowed all those opposed to racism and the system to take an active stand. It has scored victories against Maggie Thatcher's government - despite their efforts they have failed to deport me. So it is not surprising that the campaign is gaining wider and wider support.

Viraj sees the role of the Revolutionary Communist Group as vitally important: 'If not for the work of the RCG, there's no way you could imagine the campaign would have reached this stage. At every turn the RCG has not only played a leading political role, but also helped sustain the day to day organisational work which is the bread and butter of any campaign.

'The RCG's political lead has been essential to the growth of the campaign. We have the support of black and white working class people, trade unions, peace groups, womens' organisations; we have support from Winston Silcott and Republican prisoners, we have support from the Labour Party NEC, the Liberal Party leadership, Amnesty International and a wide range of Church organisations. In my view it is only with the RCG's involvement that this has happened. It is only a communist organisation that can avoid ultra-leftism

'it's got the seeds in it, the beginnings of a real movement ... the only way it can come about and be built is with the lead of a communist organisation'

and build a non-sectarian movement which is democratic and, at the same time, take a principled stand against racist immigration controls. Only a strong communist organisation can steer such campaigns forward.

'The VMDC is also proving that it is capable of being the basis for a national anti-deportation movement, it's got the seeds in it, the beginnings of a real movement. Such a movement will be an integral part of a revolutionary working class movement. The only way it can come about and be built is with the lead of a communist organisation. This is why I have never stopped putting a lot of my effort to build the RCG. It is the only communist organisation in this country which is able to lead a serious anti-deportation movement.'

The interviews were conducted by Eddie Abrahams, Auriel Fermo, Nick Lewis, Terry O'Halloran and David Reed

SHARON RAGHIP, working class woman, drawn into political struggle by the state's attack on her husband, Engin. Battling to free her husband and the other framed Broadwater Farm prisoners, Sharon's experience is invaluable for others who will have to follow her path.

Engin Raghip was arrested on 24 October 1985 after police had gone to his family's home looking for stolen goods. He had no idea why he was arrested, neither did his family. He was questioned for three days without access to a solicitor. He was 19 years old at the time.

Sharon Raghip lived through the nightmare of Engin's arrest, remand and framing. Initially he was charged with affray and released on bail. 'I was pregnant at the time and because of all the worry I lost it. Two weeks after I lost the baby they came up and said the prosecutor wanted to see Engin down the station.' It was 7 o'clock in the morning and Sharon asked when he would be released. 'Oh, he'll be home by 8 o'clock.' 8 o'clock he wasn't home. I got the baby up and went down the station. They said Engin was charged with murder. I just said "that can't be right". The policeman said "he's appearing in court at quarter to ten you don't have to be there." I turned round and said to the copper, "well, I'll be there - don't you worry about that".

Their son Dogan will be four years old in November. 'Sometimes during the night he wakes up and cries for his Dad and he turns round and says to me, "Mum, what's prison?" ... it's hard ... him and Engin, I've never seen a relationship like it, not with a son and a father ... I was outvoted, I couldn't get between them. Dogan misses him a lot ...'

Why had she decided to start the campaign (now into its fourth month) to free the framed Broadwater Farm prisoners? 'Because I'm not prepared to sit here and let Engin do 15, 20 years for something he never did in the first place.'

She said the police had got away with the frame up for a number of reasons. 'First of all the media had a lot to do with it. Right from the time they were arrested, until well after they'd been sentenced. Even me, before Engin got arrested, I used to read

'they ain't heard nothing yet from me'

Send support and solidarity to the framed Broadwater Farm prisoners:

Winston Silcott, (B74053), HMP Wormwood Scrubs, PO Box 757, Du Cane Road, London, W12 0AE (serving a minimum of 30 years)

Engin Raghip, (B78270), HMP Wormwood Scrubs, PO Box 757, Du Cane Road, London, W12 0AE (serving a minimum of 20 years)

Mark Braithwaite, (B78965), HMP Chelmsford, Springfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6LQ (serving a minimum of 20 years)

the *Sun* and papers like that, and anything I read in them I believed, or anything I saw on the TV I believed. So I think the whole idea of getting these three people was well planned before the trial even started. Because of the media and because of the coverage the whole case got, it was obvious the public was going to accept it.'

Sharon explained why she hadn't started the campaign as soon as Engin had been arrested. 'Because I didn't believe that they'd do it. I didn't believe that they could put people down on no evidence for as long as they have. If I had known just exactly what the police were like and what they were capable of doing, I most probably would have campaigned from day one. Whereas I just sat here and fretted everyday and just said, they can't do it, in the end he's going to get out.'

The campaign to free the framed prisoners has collected 7,500 signatures. They are aiming for 30,000 by early next year when they have been told the appeal might be heard. She told us how they are going about the work. 'First of all by petitioning, getting as many signatures to

say that the public don't think that the case was right. After that, if the appeal fails it won't stop, it will continue, whatever we come up with.' We asked Sharon how the campaign was collecting signatures. 'Attending big meetings and demonstrations, attending little meetings. Meetings for other framed prisoners; meetings for people who are being deported; strip search meetings; miners meetings; ordinary Labour meetings, election meetings. Then there's just actually walking down the street and stopping people and telling them what it's about.'

We asked how they were going to go about letting the public know what happened. 'Well, first of all by leaflets which we've started printing already. We've had one that we made up. And then we hope to follow that up with another one about facts that actually happened in the court case. Then they've got the Burnham report that is going to be launched which tells a lot about the court case and we're hoping to distribute that everywhere [former US trial judge Margaret Burnham observed the trial]. Other ways, public meetings; going out on the streets stopping people. Even if you only tell ten people in one day it's still ten people more know what's going on than before.'

Sharon and the relatives are working with the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign. She has argued at the meetings for more work on the streets to get signatures and let people know what's going on. 'To me a defence campaign means you go out of your way to defend these lads', she said. 'It doesn't matter who it is, you go out of your way to defend them. It's no good one person going to a meeting and it's no good even five people going to a big demonstration, because if you think about it, it takes two minutes to explain what the petition is all about - some people don't understand what has been going on at Broadwater Farm and you have to explain it. So two or three minutes

for each person, the time adds up and you don't get as many as you would if they just signed straight away. So you need more, you need groups of people to go to the big demonstrations.'

We asked Sharon if she had approached her MP Bernie Grant who has just been elected to Parliament. 'I've written him a letter. I did approach him during an election meeting and he said that he was in full support and wants a public enquiry into everything including the trials and that he'd sign the petition after the election. I wrote him a letter inviting him to a family meeting to take part in discussions with the family. But I haven't had a reply and that was two weeks ago. The matter has to be raised in Parliament and I'm sure there's a lot of MPs that know what's going on. Diane Abbott said she was in total support of our case, yet she wouldn't sign the petition. Engin's barrister, he was Shadow Attorney General of the Labour Party, John Morris, and we haven't heard a squeak from him about it. It just shows that people up there are not prepared to put their careers at risk. So that's what I'm going to see Bernie about. I want to see if he's different.' Bernie Grant has yet to publicly back the campaign.

Sharon told us she was concerned that the youth at Broadwater Farm get involved in the campaign to free the framed prisoners. 'The police came in and attacked their estate. They should be involved in this campaign and in the defence campaign. Yesterday when I went to see Martha [Osamor] I mentioned to her about the young people on the farm. She said the best thing to do is write them all letters and give them petitions and ask them to get their friends to sign it. So maybe that's one way of doing it. It's a good thing to set up a Civil Rights Movement but the real issue is the Broadwater Farm youths. It can't wander away from the main issue. That's not going to happen.'

Sharon was sure that the campaign

would grow. '... more and more things are happening in this country to people more and more injustices are taking place all the time, every single day. Like the Saturday before last, a young boy was killed in Dalston police station and then his girlfriend who was five months pregnant killed herself. That is injustice. The never killed just one person, they killed three: her, him and the baby. So it's happening all the time and I think now that a lot of people are starting to realise. People have turned round and said to me "I think they should all be hanged". You feel like doing them in. But what's the worth? They're not worth wasting energy on, these people. You just walk away and they're more demoralised than you are. Sometimes it does get you a bit down when you get people talking like that. I've had couple of rows at meetings with people over it, but in the end I've always seemed to bring them round and they've signed and said, send us some more information. So if that's what it takes ...'

Has she changed in the last two years? 'Put it this way, people call me a hard bit now. Before I was such a happy person always mucking about. Now, well I ain't happy now, it's as simple as that. They put Engin down for life they might as well have shut me in there with him and his son. I've just read Norma Kitson's book [Where Sixpence Lives] and that was very good to read. It just makes me realise how lucky I am, because what the woman's been through. I wouldn't have been standing ... I would have been standing I suppose, but she's so brave she's really brave. I would have gone mad especially him [David Kitson] being another country and me being over here.'

'But I would fight back. If all the time just sat here and thought 'oh no, how would I go to get him out? I'd end up going mad altogether and that would be no good to him, no good to my son and no good to my family. So I'd rather just carry on and try and do everything I can to make sure that they don't get away with it. It's a hard fight but I've only just started, they ain't heard nothing yet from me, wait until I really get going.'

BOB GANNON



FO

Urging fighters for the battles ahead

On these pages we publish interviews with people who are involved, each in their own way, in resisting the growing attack on the working class and oppressed. Each represents a different element of the movement which must be built and a different experience of political struggle

'that's the way you isolate the leadership and win people to your position'

PETER TACHELL, Labour left-winger, played an important part in the defeat of the police ban on the Non-Stop Picket. His frank account of the Bermondsey byelection and his view of the role of left MPs in the struggles to come makes an important contribution to the discussion.

The Bermondsey byelection 1983

'During the byelection I was virtually bound and gagged by the principle of party accountability. On the issue of lesbian and gay rights the official policy was a one line statement saying that Labour supports

greater equality for lesbians and gays. I used that as a pretext for a whole range of radical legislative reforms covering the age of sexual consent, child custody for lesbian mothers, anti-discrimination laws and so on.

'In some situations where I was being baited by obviously hostile press such as the *Mail*, *Sun* and *Express*, at the request of the local party I did refrain from going into such explicit detail and just reiterated my broad support for the principle of homosexual equality.

'I was in a situation where I couldn't speak out as freely as I wished. And, particularly on the issue of my own homosexuality, that was quite a tortured and painful experience because on the one hand I was authorised to give full support for lesbian and gay rights but not to disclose my own sexuality to the media.

'The other big problem was that I was left totally isolated. In mid-1982 I approached a lot of prominent people on the left and said that there was a good argument for me coming out as gay and

turning the tables on the media by saying 'so what?' Not a single person supported that idea. Ever since the election there's been a non-stop stream of people saying that I should have come out. But at the time they didn't say that.

'At the time no one in the Labour Party, apart from Michael Foot a couple of days before the election, attacked the 'queer-bashing' campaign against me. None of the leading lights of the left publicly stuck up for me or opposed the 'gay-baiting' campaign. Although privately they were repelled and revolted by it.

'In the whole period I felt incredibly alone and isolated. I'd been bashed by Fleet Street because I was a gay left-winger; I was battered by the lesbian and gay movement for not coming out; I was regarded as something of an embarrassment by the right and soft left in the Labour Party; and I was largely disowned by Militant in my own constituency.'

Peter Tatchell felt that the Bermondsey experience had produced positive results in raising lesbian and gay issues in the

Labour Party but also saw the recent attack on lesbians and gays as part of the right ward move of the Labour Party.

'Yesterday at the Greater London Labour conference we held a picket in support of the Positive Images campaigns by Ealing and Haringey councils. A large number of delegates refused to take leaflets or blurted out accusations like "No thanks that's what lost us the election..."'

The Labour left and the way forward

'It's quite significant to me that despite the third term of Thatcherism, despite increased powers to the police, we have recently overturned the police ban on demonstrations outside the South African embassy. That's a victory for free speech and civil liberties. I believe there's a whole range of issues like that where we can organise people and mobilise people to

defeat Thatcherism and its agents.

'I don't see that there's a granite wall between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activity. To me the two are interdependent. Unless left MPs represent and articulate the feelings of a genuine movement of people outside of Parliament then they have very little power or authority. And it is only when they are an organic part of a much broader social movement, which in a sense they only act as spokespersons for, that their role can become pivotal and of real value in the struggle.

'Many people on the left in the Labour Party are consumed with the battle to win votes on committees and to win places on committees. As far as the Labour Party is concerned I don't see the choice as between accepting the leadership or leaving. I think the way forward is to remain inside the Labour Party, by all means critical of the leadership, but essentially putting one's energies into fighting and winning the struggles of the movement. That's the way you isolate the leadership and win people to your position.'

'that means that the British working class has a future'

NORMA KITSON, South African and life-long fighter against the apartheid regime, founder member of City Group, combines her experience of the national liberation struggle in South Africa with her experience of the political struggle in Britain.

CAROL BRICKLEY, RCG and FRFI Editorial Board member, Convenor and founder member of City Group, discusses the way forward and the lessons of City Group with Norma Kitson. She played a leading part in City Group's victory.

How City Group beat the police ban

Norma 'We had all the key ingredients that make a campaign successful: a large number of committed people; a tight organisation; an achievable objective; and a very well thought-out campaign.'

Carol 'It wasn't a few people challenging the ban but a growing number of people. And that was very clear to the police and to the government. The final straw came when MPs came down to the picket. The police were in a cleft stick because we were certain to get publicity. That would, in turn, make the campaign grow even stronger. They couldn't cope with it.'

Norma 'We're laying the basis for much tougher fights that will come. By educating people, both on the South African situation and the extent of British collaboration, we're forging fighters for the battles ahead.'

After the election

Norma 'What did the Labour Party have to offer? What did it have to offer the oppressed? What did it have to offer a fairly rich and improving working class? I



don't see it in relation to Thatcher or not Thatcher. I see it in relation to imperialist Britain.'

Carol 'I see it in relation to Thatcher. The last eight years has been a process of revealing the split in the working class. The have-nots are a growing force. At the same time Thatcher is a ruthless and clever representative of imperialism. She's managed to destroy a whole layer of leadership of the working class who've controlled struggles during the post-war boom.'

'Obviously the clearest expression of that is the trade union movement. The turning point came with the miners' strike. That spelt the end of any kind of progressive role until that leadership is expelled, thrown out, destroyed...'

Norma 'You say that Thatcher has been the cause of that, but you can't let the Labour

Party off the hook. Kinnock's helped...'

Carol 'But Kinnock's part and parcel of the process...'

Norma 'The way I see it is that in the face of Thatcher you have a diminishing Labour Party: diminishing in terms of socialist policy; of permitting left views inside it. You could ascribe all that to Thatcher but I also see Labour's move to the right...'

Carol 'But that's not enough of an answer. There's no doubt in my mind that the new realism in the trade union movement preceded what happened to the Labour Party.'

section of the working class. That's what the Labour Party is.'

Norma 'Thatcher is a shorthand way of saying imperialist ruling class in Britain. I don't want there to be any misunderstanding that the Labour Party was once some progressive force. From my perspective it has never been in relation to South Africa. If you look at who is hitting out at the leaders of the working class, like Arthur Scargill, it's the ruling clique in the Labour Party.'

Carol 'Overall you're right. But if you don't recognise the qualitative change over the last eight years then you're missing quite a vital dynamic in what's happening. Of course the Labour Party, has always played a pro-imperialist role. But over the last eight years even the dearly-held principles of the trade union movement - like not crossing a picket line - have all gone out of the window. That represents a real qualitative change in the leadership of the working class movement in this country. Obviously it's still part and parcel of their fundamental role throughout the imperialist epoch but you have to recognise that something quite structural has happened.'

'What's important is that we fought our battle with that section of the labour movement within the Anti-Apartheid Movement in 1985. The battle continues but not as a debating point - it continues out on the streets. We fought that battle and came through it as an independent force retaining a voice. We weren't defeated.'

'What City Group is standing for - and it's very small compared to what's required - is a new tradition, a new layer of leadership, a new level of participation in struggle. All we're doing is pointing to the way a future movement will grow.'

Norma 'The philosophy of the AAM is 'liberal' in the South African sense. Liberals have a very defined view of how they

see South Africa. It's all parliamentary, qualified vote and so on which I think the AAM would be quite happy to incorporate. But although they can survive in Britain today, they can't survive in Britain tomorrow. That movement is in decline.'

Carol 'The AAM's strategy is only a reflection of the new realism in the trade union movement. The solution, in the AAM's terms, is to put enough pressure on the apartheid regime for it to relinquish its power. As a communist I think that that is no strategy at all. It will be defeated and end in a compromise where the ruling class wins out.'

What about the future?

Norma 'I feel totally optimistic. There are always some people on the sidelines sneering at the struggle. Even in South Africa there were people who sneered when the Freedom Charter was adopted. There's nobody in City Group now who does not know that if you fight well-organised campaigns you can win them.'

Carol 'I feel more optimistic than I have for a long time. I think a layer of obstacles in our way are being removed in practice. The leadership of the Labour Party and the trade union movement are placing themselves at a greater and greater distance from the majority of working class people - a large number of whom are unemployed and unrepresented. They are going to find a leadership. It will be outside Parliament, outside the structures which the labour aristocracy has built for itself. That means that the British working class has a future.'



Colonel North: lying like a trooper

The last stand of Col. Ollie North

'I came here to tell you the truth — the good, the bad and the ugly'. American people must understand 'that ours is a nation at risk in a dangerous world'. But with people like Ollie North around don't worry, 'I'll be glad to meet Abu Nidal on equal terms anywhere in the world, OK'. 'We didn't lose the war in Vietnam. It was lost right here in this city.' So it was, with the FBI closing in that Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North took his stand and kept on shredding to the last.

Like an audience at a cult movie the public cheered at every favourite line. Tourists queued for seats at the Congressional hearing, pundits argued over the characters and the films: now it's Clint Eastwood, then it's Gary Cooper. Most agreed the performance owed as much to Jimmy Stewart as to John Wayne. Either way, the lonesome pioneer and his gallant band of patriots were fighting on the new frontier — Nicaragua.

Somewhere on the cutting-room floor are the shots you are never meant to see. There is retired US General Secord who was previously a go-between as a heroin courier in Laos; then there is another former general, Singlaub, who headed an outfit of ex-Nazis and psychopathic torturers; and Eugene Hasenfus and the cocaine runs; former British Tory councillor and

friend of Thatcher Major David Walker; and their bank accounts. These and many more such stars barely made the final picture, but they were central players in the original script.

There is one reason above all others for their omission: no section of the US ruling class opposes the policy of global subversion and counter-revolution that Oliver North stands for, and the anti-imperialist movement in the USA, as in Britain, is still too weak to pose a real challenge to that policy. Thus, an international gangster of the highest order who had a hand in the invasion of Grenada, the bombardment of Lebanese villages, the bombing of Libya and murders all the way from the Gulf to Central America becomes what his President called him, 'a hero'.

Trevor Rayne

Brazilian poor riot against fare increases

On 29 June Rio de Janeiro demonstrators fought running battles against a 50% rise in bus fares. They set fire to 30 buses and smashed windows of 200 more. The riot police moved in with tear gas and batons, as have been used to break recent strikes at ports, oil refineries and banks.

For millions of workers existing on the minimum wage equivalent to £30 a month the fare increase represented 10% of their take home pay. The ferocity of the people's reaction forced the government to back down on the fare increase.

This latest action followed the biggest demonstration in Brazil for 8 years when crowds gathered in protest, surrounded and threw stones at President José Sarney's car. The government reacted by re-introducing a national security law used during the country's 21 year military dictatorship, which can impose curfew and martial law.

The trade union movement is now planning a national strike for 12 August against their loss of earnings. Union leader Jair Meneguelli said 'The government is pushing the working class into a general strike... In my view there exists only one way to get advances — that is to increase our capacity to organise and get people in the street'.

Brazil has a \$111bn foreign debt, the largest of any developing country. Over the next two years the interest on scheduled repayments is estimated at a total of \$14bn. This repayment alone will consume almost the entire trade surplus gained by massive cut backs in domestic consumption.

The government has imposed wage freezes, cut food, milk and electricity subsidies, but still imperialist banks and Brazilian capitalists demand further sacrifices from the masses.

Many of the trade union leaders appear tied to the process of constitutional reform promised by the establishment and fear that an explosion of anger from the poor will halt this process and lead to a return of military rule. Meanwhile, the dispossessed of Rio and Sao Paulo are organising raids on the supermarkets. The hunger cannot wait.

Amanda Collins

Nicaragua faces US war of destruction

The crucial importance of Nicaragua as an example to the whole of Latin America has led the US to use all means short of direct military intervention to crush the revolution.

ANDY PRICE

Continued US support for the contras, and an extensive trade war have been used to create havoc in the Nicaraguan economy. The US government now realises that the contras do not possess the forces nor the necessary degree of support from the people to attempt a military coup, but they play a vital role in the long process of trying to wear down the Sandinistas. Economic sabotage of key electrical installations and other targets such as bridges and cooperatives has been directed by CIA operatives. Medical institutions and schools are particularly favoured by the contras. Of the 12,000 civilian casualties in the war, 166 teachers and 52 doctors have been killed in contra attacks.

As well as suffering the cost of such actions the people also have to waste resources on defence. Over 40% of last year's budget was spent in this way. The US has

now equipped the contras with Red Eye heat seeking missiles, threatening more havoc and damage.

The trade embargo has also had a drastic effect. The US market which used to absorb 70% of Nicaraguan exports is now denied to them and industries such as pharmaceuticals are operating at way below capacity. A government report on the direct and indirect cost of US aggression up to 1986 gives the figure of \$3.9 billion, double the country's GDP.

The economic strain is felt most acutely in the capital Managua, whose population has more than doubled to over one million in the last five years as its relative peace attracts displaced peasants from the war affected zones. Services have never really recovered from the 1972 earthquake and now the waste disposal and urban transport services in particular are unable to cope.

Worse still, with wages in the state sector insufficient, many workers are leaving

their jobs to work in the black market. Economic strategy has been reduced to pure survival. Since last year new investment has been halted, social spending curbed and some subsidies reduced.

On the diplomatic front the US having scuppered the Contadora plan is stalling on a plan put forward by Costa Rican President Arias, which would effectively force the Sandinistas into negotiations with the contras. The US is determined that it will continue the economic and military war against Nicaragua, which is successfully holding back the rebuilding programme, until it forces the Sandinistas to the negotiating table on US terms.

The role of the British government in supporting US political, economic and military intervention in Central America and Nicaragua in particular has to be condemned. Though Britain has few direct economic links in the area it is the threat of socialist revolution throughout Latin America posed by the success of the Sandinistas which is worrying for British banks and multinationals.



POPPERFOTO

Haitian workers strike against junta

An indefinite general strike begun late in June gathered momentum in July in response to General Henri Namphy's violation of the new constitution, which was approved by the majority of people in March. Namphy's military-civilian junta removed an electoral commission set up to oversee forthcoming elections, transferring its role to the Ministry of the Interior, and outlawed the country's major trade union group, the Autonomous Federation of Haitian Workers (CATH).

After a week of demonstrations and flaming barricades in towns across Haiti, 22 people were reported dead and scores wounded by US-equipped troops who used live ammunition on the demonstrators. This brutal repression provoked a mass demonstration in Port au Prince on 10 July with crowds demanding the removal of Namphy and his US backers.

In a public expression of its desire not to be seen backing another round of despotism in Haiti the US State Department said it would withhold further aid unless steps towards democracy are taken. The junta responded and said it would reinstate the electoral commission. However, a US official despatched to Haiti warned that any 'radical change' in the composition of the junta would result in the suspension of the \$100 million aid, saying that calls for Namphy's resignation were a 'fairy tale' wish for a 'utopian solution'.

US imperialism is caught in a trap of its own making. Their support for the Duvalier dictatorship resulted in the destruction of all viable opposition forces that might contend to be instruments of US policy. Free elections today would not result in a government to Uncle Sam's liking. The constitutional arrangements agreed in March have become a liability to the US as organisations like CATH gather strength, and the US fumbles around trying to form the sort of alliance of stooges it has foisted upon Grenada.

Nicki Rensten and Trevor Rayne

SRI LANKA

Tigers fight invasion

ITV's 'World in Action' programme, 29 June, gave us a rare glimpse of the reality of the Sri Lankan government's war against the Tamil people in their struggle for self-determination. Constant helicopter gunship patrols over the Jaffna peninsula, hospitals full with Tamil children burned by chemical weapons, hospitals hit by Sri Lankan artillery, bulldozers flattening Tamil villages to create 'a no-mansland', British mercenaries, systematic rape, and an angry woman, 'They are dropping bombs on the very people they are saying they are trying to liberate'. But through it all was the people's support for their vanguard fighters, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Having occupied the 35 mile long Vadamarachchi strip of the Jaffna peninsula, the Sri Lankan government is revealing its long run intention of making the Tamil people a minority in their own homeland. People are being driven off the land and settlements bulldozed. If they can 'pacify' the area then Sinhalese settlers will be drafted in. However, the Tigers are combining successful guerrilla tactics with full-scale pitched battles to drive the invasion force back.

The Sri Lankan army is attempting to consolidate its communication chains from camp to camp across Jaffna. The Tigers are responding with siege, ambush and land mines. Having unilaterally declared a ceasefire at the end of June to facilitate the arrival of Indian food aid the Tigers were forced to launch a defensive counter-attack against the major military camp at Nelliadi in the Vadamarachchi region. Nelliadi was being used as a base for search and destroy missions, bombard-

ment of neighbouring villages and general terrorisation of the Tamil population. On 5 July Nelliadi was razed to the ground by Tiger units. Over 100 Sri Lankan soldiers were killed.

Jayewardene's response to the successful struggle of the Tigers has been more sea borne troop invasions, more aerial bombardment, more rounding up of the youth and their transportation to the south, more killing. It is clear that the Sri Lankan government has no intention of reaching a peaceful settlement. It intends to enforce a military solution. In this context it is all the more disgusting that the recent meeting of the Aid Consortium in Paris, which includes Britain, the IMF and World Bank, saw fit to maintain its aid quota to the Sri Lankan government. This aid finances the \$600,000 a day Sri Lankan army war. Only Norway saw fit to express concern about what the aid was being used for.

Trevor Rayne

Amnesty reports on torture

Systematic torture, indefinite detention, regular disappearances and murder. These are the indictments that Amnesty International levels at the Sri Lankan government in its latest report on the island 'Recent Reports on "Disappearances" and Torture', issued in May.

It quotes from the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances which lists Sri Lanka along with Argentina, Columbia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Lebanon and the Philippines as having the worst record of people being 'disappeared' in the world. At least 3,000 people are recorded as being held in detention for political associations, including left-wing Sinhalese. The government has 'routinely resorted to torture during interrogation'. Many are detained indefinitely and held for several years without being tried.

Amnesty condemns the Sri Lankan government for failing to respond to a previous report issued in September 1986, for failing to present information on the

disappeared, and for refusing to acknowledge that 'disappearances' have taken place. Furthermore, 'Despite the resolution of the UN Commission of Human Rights in March 1987 calling on the Sri Lankan Government to give the... Red Cross access... to carry out activities for the protection of prisoners no such access has yet been granted'. The report details prisoners having their genitals probed by red hot iron rods, asphyxiation, suspension by the thumbs, toes, beatings etc.

The Sri Lankan government's publicity agents Saatchi and Saatchi do the same job for the Conservative Party. If they can sell Sri Lanka they would sell poison if the price was right.

Trevor Rayne

Unfinished business in South Korea

It cost the Police department \$7 million in tear gas alone but after a month of demonstrations and street fighting, 'People's power' was victorious in the Republic of Korea. On the face of it everyone seems satisfied: President Chun Doo Hwan agreed to direct elections by the end of the year to choose his successor; his deputy, Roh Tae Woo, is acclaimed a national hero; over 500 political prisoners have been released; the *International Herald Tribune* declares 'US officials pleased with role in Korean events' and prices soar on the Korean Stock Exchange.

It is as if hard bargaining had resulted in a generally accepted fair deal. But the fates of capital and labour, imperialism and the right of nations to self-determination are not long reconciled. This latest expression of 'People's Power' has a long history in South Korea: in 1960 it led to the overthrow of Syngman Rhee; in 1979 it preceded the assassination of Park Chung Hee; but above all it was Chun's brutal suppression of mass protest in Kwangju in

May 1980 that left 2,000 people dead that stained the legitimacy of his regime and led to this June's mobilisation. Since Kwangju students have burnt the stars and stripes flag, occupied American Cultural Centres and set US company buildings ablaze. Again, as in every other rising since Korea was occupied by US forces, June's call for democracy went up with the cry for national reunification, the only basis for democracy in the south. This is the unsettled business at hand.

CHUN'S SCHEME

On 13 April, President Chun decided to postpone all debate on the constitution and means of choosing his successor until after the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. On 10 June Chun named former schoolmate and fellow ex-general Roh Tae Woo as the next President. Students across south Korea exploded. Chun's manoeuvre exemplified the arrogance and corruption with which the mass of people associate his regime. Corruption in business: the economy is dominated by 12 cartels that are interwoven with the military, and Chun's family in particular; and corruption in the political system: while half the population live in Seoul, Pusan, Taegu and Ichon only 50 out of 184 assembly seats are elected from these cities. By such gerrymandering and the occasional bribe, Chun could ensure that he and Roh and their Democratic Justice Party remained in power until the end of the century.

PEOPLE'S POWER FORCES US INTERVENTION

The dynamism of Korean 'People's power' was extraordinary and inspiring. Almost every city saw mass protests. Police stations were attacked, riot police disarmed, buses commandeered, city centres taken over. While it is true that students formed the vanguard, they drew in many sections of society.

It was the scale of the protest that brought the US government running and forced Chun to back down. Within a week of the protests beginning the middle class were backing the students. This restricted

the occupying army south. By the end of December 1950 the whole territory north of the 38th parallel was liberated. Within a year the US had lost more manpower and equipment than they lost on two fronts fought in the Second World War.

NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL

Five days after the launch of the joint Korean and Chinese counter-attack US President Truman threatened to use nuclear weapons. At the time US intelligence agencies reckoned the Soviet Union had 10-20 atomic bombs to their 400. On 6 December 1950 nuclear weapons were installed on the US fleet in the Mediterranean.

Later MacArthur was to say 'I would have dropped between 30 and 50 atomic bombs - across the neck of Manchuria'. He said he planned 'to spread . . . from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea . . . a belt of radioactive cobalt . . . It has an active life of between 60 and 120 years.' By mid-1951 the Korean War focussed on the 38th parallel. On 10 July 1951 armistice talks began.

In November 1952 Eisenhower was elected US President on a promise to 'get us out of that mess' The US Joint Chiefs of

LEIGH O'CONNOR & TREVOR RAYNE

the actions of the police. As Chun blustered about declaring martial law the US Assistant Secretary of State was despatched from Washington on 21 June. Gaston Sigur quickly gained assurance from the military that they would not declare martial law (they wanted no more Kwangjus on their hands.) He met the leadership of the opposition Reunification Democratic Party, Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung, and satisfied himself of their pro-US stance. Sections of the business community complained that Chun's intractable position was doing economic damage. On 29 June Roh appeared on television to announce that he and the DJP would support the popular demand for direct presidential elections. Roh was hailed as the nation's saviour.

Chun had been caught in a pincer movement by the military and a section of the bourgeoisie, both acting at the behest of the USA. As in Haiti and the Philippines the US government had preserved intact the institutions through which it continued to rule.

THE NEXT ROUND

Well might the US officials feel pleased with themselves. The likely Presidential contenders are Roh, who served with US forces in Vietnam, and one of the two Kims, both of whom are fiercely anti-communist and whose party draws its main backing from a section of the bourgeoisie and the middle class. However real democratic advances are not possible with the US occupation in force. Significant on 9 July, the concessions having already been wrung out of Chun, half a million Koreans attended the funeral of a student killed during the protests. They took complete control of Seoul city centre and attacked government buildings, US and Japanese flags were ceremoniously burned. One student said 'We will continue to fight. We have no faith in the government and we must form our own government.'

Behind the mass demonstrations is an alliance, including industrial workers, landless peasants, students and clergy. It operates partly underground with a multi-layered structure that allowed it to mobilise even when its apparent leaders were arrested. The Movement demands an investigation into the Kwangju massacre, repeal of anti-union legislation, release of all political prisoners including those convicted of communist subversion, and the breaking of dependence upon the US and Japan. None are acceptable to the US or its Korean military stooges. The people and the teargas will be back.

Staff continued to press for a nuclear attack to break the stalemate. On 20 May 1953 Eisenhower agreed that if the 'UN' position in Korea deteriorated they should be used.

Armistice was finally agreed on 27 July 1953. 478,700 napalm and other bombs had been dropped on Pyongyang alone; one bomb for every citizen; 8,000 bombs for every square kilometre; 7.8 million gallons of napalm drenched the north in flames.

A third of the entire US ground forces had been deployed; a fifth of the US Airforce; the US Pacific Fleet; the Royal Navy; and troops from sixteen other countries. One and a half million imperialist troops were killed, including 405,000 from the US. Yet for the first time in over 100 years, the US ruling class signed an agreement without victory.

Imperialism had been fought to a standstill. Only nuclear blackmail held the revolution at the 38th parallel. The Vietnamese liberation forces stepped up their struggle to defeat the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. However over the next 20 years the US was to send 312,000 ROK troops to Indo-China. These included the current President Chun Doo Hwan.



Students take on armoured state thugs

Korea: a front line struggle for national liberation

TREVOR RAYNE

During the Korean War the US forces, and their allies, dropped more bombs on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK - the north) than were dropped by all sides throughout Europe in the Second World War. They threatened nuclear attack. They would stop at no barbarity to contain the spread of socialism in the oppressed nations. The Encyclopaedia Britannica puts the total of deaths in the war at four million.

Japanese capital had used Korea as a source of cheap labour and a stepping stone for its imperial ambitions. In 1910 Korea was formally annexed to Japan. After the defeat of the 1919 rising, in which 25,000 patriots died, communist leadership of the national liberation struggle began to develop. In 1932 Kim Il Sung formed the Anti-Japanese People's Guerrilla Army: the armed struggle was born.

On 15 August 1945 the Japanese occupiers surrendered to the joint Soviet/Korean forces. On 6 September the DPRK was declared. Two days later a US invasion force under General MacArthur landed in the south.

MacArthur declared US military rule south of the 38th parallel. Japanese officials and laws were employed to enforce the occupation. People's committees, organs of peasant and worker rule, were smashed. Revolutionaries were jailed and killed. Syngman Rhee, after 34 years' exile in the USA, was installed as President of the Republic of Korea (ROK - the south) in 1948.

Guerrilla struggles broke out in the south. Between 1945 and 1950 an estimated 100,000 died fighting the occupation army and its stooges.

The Red Army left DPRK in 1948. Land reforms and sexual equality legislation were implemented. In 1949 two ROK battalions and a navy ship mutinied and went over to the DPRK. Some 370,000 Koreans left Japan for the DPRK. Socialist advances in the north were encouraging the struggle in the south for the removal of the US occupiers and the reunification of Korea.

In 1949, having failed to 'roll back communism' in Albania or prevent the victory of the Chinese Revolution, the US and British ruling class were determined to save Syngman Rhee's regime.

When full-scale war broke out on 25 June 1950, the British media portrayed it as an 'unprovoked North Korean attack'. In truth the Korean People's Army (KPA) counter-attacked after a long series of incursions across the 38th parallel by ROK forces. Within one and a half months the KPA had liberated 90% of Korean terri-

Korea, like Cuba, Central America and Southern Africa, is on the frontline of the battle for national liberation. It has been there since 1945 when, as in Vietnam and Germany, the US and British ruling classes drew a line through the country beyond which socialism was not to advance; and behind which they would prepare to 'roll back communism'.



tory and 92% of the population. Rhee and the US occupation forces had retreated into an enclave around the port of Pusan in the far south. As they fled they massacred an estimated 200-400,000 people. The British Labour cabinet considered prosecuting David Winnington of the *Daily Worker* for reporting this. James Cameron resigned from *Picture Post* when his reports of crucifixions by ROK forces were suppressed, and Rene Cutforth's BBC news reports on atrocities were censored.

LABOUR JOINS THE WAR

As soon as the war broke out Labour Prime Minister Attlee placed Royal Navy ships in Japanese waters at the disposal of the US command. Two battalions were sent from Hong Kong and raised to infantry brigade strength. The Commonwealth contingent included troops from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa. Seven thousand British soldiers were sent to Korea: total casualties claimed were 793 killed, 2,878 wounded and missing.

The Korean War raised the British defence budget to 14% of the national product. Labour's social policies were sacri-

Forward base Korea

'The security of South Korea is directly linked to that of the United States.' Ronald Reagan 1983.

The Republic of Korea is locked into imperialism's military and economic strategy. Militarily it is a US bridgehead on the Asian mainland and a forward defence position for Japan. Economically it is a low cost industrial base in the global division of labour, with the fourth largest foreign debt in the world - \$47 bn. Over eighty per cent of all foreign investment comes from the US or Japan who together consume over 50 per cent of its exports.

Nowhere on earth are nuclear weapons concentrated in such a density as they are in south Korea: over one nuclear weapon for every 100 square kilometres, or four times the density of their deployment throughout the NATO countries. 40,000 US troops are permanently stationed in the Republic of Korea.

fixed; symbolised by the 50% charge on NHS spectacles and dentures in 1951. Components for atomic bombs were shipped from the US to Britain for the first time.

On 13 September 1950, operating under the banner of the UN, the imperialist forces launched a massive assault. By the end of 1950 the US Airforce grounded its bomber fleet: 'there are no more targets in Korea'. Schools, factories, hospitals, theatres, towns and villages were bombed to dust. By mid-November the 'UN' forces occupied Pyongyang, capital of the DPRK, and had reached the border with China.

Together with the KPA, the Chinese People's Volunteers counter-attacked on 25 November. Aside from the Chinese communists' understanding that imperialism sought to destroy the Chinese Revolution, they recognised a debt to their Korean comrades. Kim Il Sung and many Korean communists had fought alongside the Chinese communists against the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in the 1930s. A senior KPA commander, Mu Jong, had been on the Long March. 200,000 Koreans had fought with the People's Liberation Army in the Chinese Revolution.

The Korean and Chinese forces drove

The first trial of strength between the Provisional Government and the Soviets occurred on 17 April. Foreign Minister Miliukov's Note of 18 April, assuring the Allies that the Russian army would be relied on '... to fight the world war until a decisive victory.'

The Menshevik-SR bloc sought to give the Note a favourable 'interpretation', but the soldiers faced with a return to the front had little interest in such casuistry: Miliukov's intentions were unambiguous enough. On 21 April the demonstration called by the Bolsheviks was strongly supported by workers from the Vyborg District and by armed soldiers. In the bourgeois districts the forces of the counter-revolution – the armed officers, the cadets and the gilded youth – began to mobilise openly for the first time.

Civil war seemed imminent. But the masses immediately heeded the Soviet's call not to hold further demonstrations. With the addition of a few anodyne phrases to Miliukov's Note suggesting that the war was not for annexation or conquest, it considered the matter 'settled'. The reassuring formulae of the rewritten Note were accepted in the Soviet by an overwhelming majority.

Yet the episode demonstrated the reality of the Soviet's own statement to the people: 'We alone have the right to give you orders'. With the masses, it was the Soviet and not the Provisional Government which held the power and the authority. But what should the Soviets do about the Provisional Government?

The government itself posed the question point-blank, on 26 April, appealing to the Menshevik-SR bloc to participate. After considerable vacillation, the lure of ministerial office proved too strong. On 1 May, the Soviet EC decided by 41 votes to 18, with only the Bolsheviks and a small group of left-Mensheviks against, to enter the government.

THE FIRST COALITION

The Menshevik-SR bloc had six ministries out of 16, including Agriculture, (Chernov, SR) Labour, (Skobelev, Menshevik) and War (Kerensky, Popular Socialist).

Perhaps over-excited by their dizzy rise to ministerial eminence, they made some very rash promises indeed. Before he returned to the routine activities of a 'socialist' Minister of Labour opposing strikes, asking the workers to exer-



straint – Skobelev threatened 'We'll take the profits, we'll take 100 per cent'.

In the eyes of the non-Bolshevik masses, the entrance of the Menshevik-SRs into the coalition seemed a step forward. Some of the officers had a long and honourable record of Socialist activity. Tsereteli, who became leader of the bloc, had spent many years as a labour convict; and in 1916 both he and Chernov had been on the left wing of the anti-war socialist movement. Perhaps the socialist masses would gradually crowd out the bourgeois ministers (Miliukov had been forced to resign on 2 May), leading to an all-socialist government which could grant their demands without further struggle.

The real significance of the coalition, as yet hidden from the masses, was contained in one clause of the new government's Declaration: 'the need to prepare the army'... for defensive

JULY DAYS

THE PEOPLE REACH FOR POWER

4 July 1917 – the decisive moment: above, the First Machine Gun Regiment appeals for support; left, shooting on Nevsky Prospect; below, demonstrators in Petrograd; right, Kronstadters set off for Petrograd.

In the factories, the capitalists struck against the revolution by means of a lock-out. Between March and the end of July, with increasing momentum, 568 factories were closed down with the loss of 104,000 jobs. In the South Russian coalmines, the owners deliberately sabotaged and disorganised production.

The Bolsheviks' solution was simple and straightforward: 'Make the profits of the capitalists public, arrest fifty or a hundred of the biggest millionaires... for the simple purpose of making them reveal... the fraudulent practices which... are costing [Russia] thousands and millions every day.' (Lenin CW 25 p 21).

The appeal of the Bolshevik slogans was shown at the first conference of Petrograd Factory Committees (30 May-3 June), when the Bolshevik resolution won 80% of the votes. The workers' section in the Petrograd Soviet was already a Bolshevik majority; and in the Moscow Soviet the largest party, with 41% of the seats.

Kronstadt was the chief naval base, protecting the approaches to Petrograd. The 80,000 strong Baltic Fleet was an explosive combination of class forces: in 1917, 25.4% of the sailors were working class, and over 90% of the younger officers came from the nobility; and in the pre-1917 period discipline was so harsh that a rating remembered that the very name of the Governor General sounded 'like the crack of a Cossack's whip'. From the beginning of May Kronstadt was dominated by the Bolsheviks – their refusal to enter the coalition meant they bore no responsibility for its increasingly unpopular policies.

But in Russia as a whole, the Bolsheviks were still very much a minority. At the first All Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies (3-24 June), the Bolsheviks (105 delegates) were still a long way behind the

Srs (285) and Mensheviks (248); three quarters of the delegates were prepared to ratify the coalition.

THE JUNE DEMONSTRATION

While the Congress was in session, on 9 June, the Bolsheviks' Military Organisation proposed a mass demonstration against an offensive, under two slogans: 'All Power to the Soviets', 'Down with the ten capitalist ministers.'

The Congress passed a resolution forbidding demonstrations for three days, on the grounds that 'concealed counter-revolutionaries want to take advantage of the demonstration' which was 'a Bolshevik conspiracy to overthrow the government and seize power'. Recognising the authority of the Congress, the Bolsheviks prevailed on their supporters to accept the decision.

Feeling, however, the need to demonstrate their supposed popularity, on 12 June the Menshevik-SR bloc authorised a demonstration for 18 June under their slogans – 'Universal Peace' 'Immediate Convocation of a Constituent Assembly' 'Democratic Republic' – not daring to demand support for coalition with the bourgeoisie or the renewal of the offensive. Its leader, Tsereteli, boasted: 'Now we shall have an open and honest review of the revolutionary forces...'

True enough – about 400,000 workers and soldiers came out in an unarmed demonstration – but under the Bolshevik slogans: 'Down with the offensive!' 'Down with the ten capitalist ministers'. Only 3 small groups carried banners bearing the slogan 'Confidence to the Provisional Government', until they were forced to lower them by the angry demonstrators. Demonstrations in the provincial towns showed the same picture, if less sharply drawn.

THE OFFENSIVE

On 12 June the Congress of Soviets gave Kerensky approval to resume military operations. Only the Bolsheviks voted against. Launched on 18 June, at first it made considerable advances – but against empty trenches and undefended positions. When the Austrians made a stand, the Russian army went into headlong retreat, with commanders at the front reporting mass desertions and collective refusals to obey orders.

The Bolsheviks were the only party to oppose the offensive in advance: a resolution of greeting to the advancing army at the Petrograd

less success with the soldiers – at this point only a few isolated regiments are definitely pro-Bolshevik. The supporters of the Provisional Government spend the day frantically rushing round Petrograd in a search for loyal troops, but can only find 100 men.

4 JULY

20,000 armed Kronstadters set off for Petrograd. They march to the Bolshevik HQ in Ksheshinskaya's Palace, where they are greeted by Lenin. He calls for All Power to the Soviets, and appeals for firmness, steadfastness and vigilance.

From there they march along the Nevsky Prospect, the Petrograd equivalent of Bond Street. As the Kronstadters reach a street junction, provocateurs fire from the windows and attics of the houses at the rearward of the demonstration. Panic! Rifles fire into the air, at the ground, marchers scatter and disperse, reforming only when the invisible enemy is silenced.

There is only one, quite small-scale pitched battle between revolutionaries and their opponents. Cossacks open fire upon workers and machine gunners – on both sides 13 are killed, and 32 wounded. In all the skirmishes and random shootings, 56 people are killed and 350 wounded (contemporary estimates).

The marchers approach Tauride Palace, home of the Petrograd Soviet. Peasant sailors seize Chernov, demanding a re-distribution of the land. A worker shakes his fist in his face: 'Take the power, you son of a bitch, when they give it to you.' He may be killed on the spot – but with Trotsky's help, the crowd calms down and he is freed.

This is an elemental popular movement surging out of party control. But there is no attempt to make an insurrection, by seizing the key centres of power (railway stations, post office, banks etc). As the Chernov incident shows, the demonstrators wanted Soviet power, were opposed to the Soviet leadership but not yet strong enough to overthrow that leadership.

5 JULY

The tide begins to turn against the revolutionaries. At 2am the offices of Pravda are sacked by an unruly mob of officers and students. Two hours later, the 3 most backward guard battalions arrive at the Tauride to defend the Soviet against the Bolsheviks. At their head is the



Soviet had a substantial majority (40%) against.

At the end of June, therefore, the problem faced by the Bolsheviks was not that of gaining support – it was how to restrain the masses from rushing into a premature insurrection. Already on 21 April, sections of the Bolsheviks had come out with the premature slogan 'Down with the Provisional Government'; on 17 May the Kronstadt Soviet passed a resolution supported by the Bolsheviks declaring itself to be the sole authority.

Lenin's speech at the All-Russian Conference of Bolshevik Military Organisations (20 June) warned: 'One wrong move on our part can wreck everything... If we were now able to seize power, it is naive to think that having taken it we would be able to hold it... we are an insignificant minority... the majority of the masses are wavering but still believe the SRs and Mensheviks.' (A Rabinowitch *Prelude to Revolution* 1968 p 121-122). The test was soon to come: the 'July Days'.

3 JULY

As the offensive fails Kerensky gives orders for regiments from Petrograd to be sent to the front. Stormy protests from the garrison soldiers, led by the 1st Machine Gun Regiment, calling for an armed demonstration. Its only Bolshevik officer, who may in fact have been a provocateur, does not attempt to hold the soldiers back. Delegates from the regiment arrive at Kronstadt at 2pm to appeal to the sailors for support. The Bolsheviks' most popular speaker, Semyon Roshal, is shouted down when he tries to restrain the crowd.

Other delegates go round the Petrograd factories and by 7pm all are out on strike. They have

Izmailovsky Regiment, instrumental in destroying the Petrograd Soviet in 1905.

How has the Menshevik-SR bloc managed to find loyal troops? From the previous afternoon, the rumour has been spread that Lenin is a German spy. The first morning editions of the bourgeois press duly oblige. A wretched Black Hundred rag, *The Living Word* carries the banner headline: 'Lenin is a German spy!' An official fabrication written by two notorious scoundrel-mongers, it is based on the 'evidence' of a former police agent and a speculator.

At 7.45am the 300 sailors and 200 machine gunners in Ksheshinskaya's Palace are ordered to lay down their arms. They retreat to the Peter-Paul Fortress, but agree to leave with their arms. The Menshevik conducting the negotiations (Lieber) is still unsure of his ground. But as increasing numbers of loyal troops arrive, Lieber grows more and more vengeful and insists that the Bolsheviks leave unarmed.

6 JULY

Cossacks and other reactionary regiments, containing pro-Tsarist and Black Hundred supporters, arrive from the front. At last the Menshevik-SR bloc has found enough loyal supporters to prevent any further demonstrations. *Pravda* and *Soldiers Pravda* are suppressed, party organisations driven out of their premises and forced to go underground.

In Lenin's view, this was 'something considerably more than a demonstration and less than a revolution.' But is this a definitive victory for the counter-revolutionaries? Will they seize the opportunity to destroy the Bolsheviks? Or are the inner forces of the revolution strong enough to overcome this setback?

DAVID ALLEN

HEALTH CUTS HURT THE OLD THE SICK AND THE HANDICAPPED.

THERE IS A BETTER WAY -
Fianna Fail



Unions more reactionary than employers?

Short Brothers, the Belfast based aircraft firm, shut down production and laid out its largely loyalist workforce on 31st July. The dispute was over the issue of loyalist flags being flown in the workshops. The company insisted on the flags being removed and, saying it would 'not compromise' on the issue, threatened to close the factories permanently.

Short's 'conversion' to anti-discrimination is not altruistic. US orders are in jeopardy. This results from a growing campaign in the US on the basis of the MacBride Principles, a set of anti-discrimination principles relating to the Six Counties. Short's stand on the issue of loyalist flags is doubly useful for them: it satisfies public opinion and disguises the more profound issue of long-term employment discrimination which has resulted in a workforce containing few Catholics. The loyalist workers were furious and mounted pickets but were forced to return to work within five days.

Despite the shoddy motives for Short's stand, it has pointed to the irony of a situation where capitalist owners are more willing to oppose the most blatant examples of loyalist bigotry than are the Northern Ireland trade unions. The unions have consistently refused to oppose discrimination in the Six Counties and have frequently colluded with it. IDATU is suspended from ICTU after its leader Joe Mitchell dared to tell the truth about the Six Counties 'union mafia'. Indeed at this year's Irish Congress of Trade Unions conference, a motion in favour of the MacBride Principles was not passed but instead remitted for consideration. This such a basic issue of democratic rights should prove unpalatable to the Six Counties unions shows how deeply afraid they are to confront loyalism and the political issues of British rule in Ireland.

Maxine Williams

Massive health cuts attack poor!

Massive health cuts have highlighted the political and economic bankruptcy of the Twenty Six Counties regime. Imperialism's puppet ruling class in the South has responded to the deep economic crisis by tightening the screws on the Irish working class. The country is up to its neck in debt to the imperialist banks - every Irish citizen owes \$2,900 to foreign banks, the highest figure per person in the world. Despite unemployment of over 20% (much higher among youth and in the cities) and emigration running at over 50,000 a year, the new Fianna Fail government has made fresh attacks on the poorest sections of the community.

In an amazing display of cynicism, the government has betrayed all its election pledges after only five months in office.

- Fianna Fail election billboards proclaimed: 'Health cuts hurt the old, the sick and the handicapped'. Three months later they announced a package of health cuts totalling IRE56 million, including 2,000 job losses and charges for routine treatment.

- In opposition Charles Haughey de-

JIM O'ROURKE

nounced the Anglo-Irish Agreement as 'unconstitutional', 'offensive' and a sell out of Irish sovereignty. Last month he met Mrs Thatcher in Brussels and agreed to maintain collaboration.

- In opposition Haughey denounced the Single European Act as a threat to Irish neutrality. In May Fianna Fail TDs were ordered to vote in favour of it.

- The government has implemented the 1984 Criminal Justice Act which gives the

police sweeping new powers. Suspects can now be held 20 hours without charge and no longer have the right to silence.

But it is the battle over health cuts which has best expressed the anti-working class character of Ireland's establishment parties. The cuts mean closures of hospitals and clinics, 2,000 redundancies and a minimum £10 charge (to a limit of £100) for every appointment or night in hospital. When in power Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Labour Party have all attacked the working class. But when in opposition they pose on issues like the health cuts as champions of the people. Fianna Fail TDs actively campaigned against health cuts before they formed a government in March. Now, many vote in favour of the cuts nationally while claiming to oppose cuts in their own constituencies!

It is the health workers and working people, those who will suffer most, who have independently organised a mass campaign against the cuts. On 17 June 40,000 people joined in protests all over the Twenty Six

Counties and a mass 20,000 strong demonstration was held in Dublin. 9,000 doctors went on strike for a week. The issue threatened to bring down the government until the opposition parties backed down in the Dail. Now new cuts have been announced in education.

No bourgeois party in the Twenty Six Counties will take action against the forces that create poverty in Ireland - imperialism and Irish capitalism. All of Ireland's tax revenue is used up just paying interest on the national debt. IRE664m of tax remains uncollected - more than ten times the amount of the cuts - but tax dodging is an accepted perk of the self-employed and the rich. Foreign companies continue to plunder the economy, taking advantage of state subsidies and then pulling out leaving thousands unemployed. But with serious working class opposition to the cuts building up and the issue of imperialist domination of the country ever lurking in the wings, the Irish ruling class has no cause for complacency.

'Our bodies are used to penalize us'

'Ella and I are held in Durham's H Wing and despite the fact that we don't leave the building for any reason, we are systematically strip searched, at least four times a month. The British government is using women's nakedness to tyrannise them. We feel that our bodies are used like a weapon to penalise us, with the intention of making us collapse under the pressure'.
(Martina Anderson, Irish POW)

It is now one year since Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson were moved from Brixton Jail to Durham's notorious H Wing following their conviction in the 'seaside bombings' conspiracy trial. Since 1985 they have each endured 450 strip searches. This widely condemned practice is a form of sexual harassment and psychological torture which the British government uses to try to degrade and humiliate women - particularly Irish women - political prisoners.

Strip searching has been used in the Six Counties since 1982 when it was introduced in Armagh Jail allegedly on security grounds. Despite the thousands of strip searches since then all that has been discovered is a £5 note, a phial of perfume and a letter! The searches are often accompanied by brutal beatings. Today, in the new high-security Maghaberry Prison, strip searching continues unabated. Pregnant women, elderly women, very young women (some only fifteen), women having their period - nobody is spared. Mairead Farrell, a POW released from Maghaberry in 1986, describes the strip search which took place on the day of her release:

'The only way to beat it is to mentally turn off. The screws even make remarks about your body... They looked me up and down for a few minutes, they look all over your body. They told me to lift my feet one by one and she felt the soles for a few seconds... They feel the inside and

outside of your legs. You stand there nude and freezing while they feel every item of your clothing... It's a very degrading experience'.

The British government has not only met continuous protests about strip searching in the Six Counties with a deaf ear, but has introduced systematic strip searches into jails in Britain. While they were on remand in Brixton Jail strip searching was used against Ella and Martina as part of a campaign to prevent them from preparing an effective defence for their trial. Ella wrote:

'Prison officers rub my hair and ears and, like an animal, I have to lift my feet... they have told me they can lift my breast forcibly if they decide to and even probe my body folds. They can touch any part of me at all.'

This harassment has continued in Durham Jail. Durham is a male prison and 'top security' female prisoners are held there in H Wing. H Wing used to hold male prison-

ers but was closed in 1971 after prison protests there forced a government inquiry to conclude that no 'country with a record of civilised behaviour' could tolerate it. In fact after a face lift this wing, virtually unchanged, now houses women prisoners. So much for 'civilisation'.

As three Irish POWs pointed out in a letter to the recent Durham demonstration against strip searching, this degrading practice is used against men as well. In Wakefield Hugh Doherty and Nat Vella are currently staging protests against conditions which deny them all privacy during visits. In addition, they are subjected to strip searching both before and after visits including physical probing of mouth and anus.

Despite years of brutal treatment Irish POWs in Britain's jails have shown their courage and spirit of resistance. As Martina Anderson wrote to the Durham demonstration on 13 June: 'If we haven't collapsed by now I don't think that we ever will'. The campaign against strip searching must continue until the British government is forced to end this barbaric practice.

Grace McDonagh, Maxine Williams

Send messages of solidarity to Ella O'Dwyer (D25135) and Martina Anderson (D25134) at HMP Durham, Old Elvet, Durham DH1 3HU.

Write letters of protest to the Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London, and to your MP.



Durham march against strip searches

'Ella and Martina are stronger than the Brits!' 1,500 people joined a march to Durham Prison on 13 June in solidarity with Ella and Martina and against strip searches. Women's groups predominated on the march, which stopped for ten minutes outside the prison. The lift of drums and flutes from the Republican bands floated across to the notorious H Wing where the women are held, until the police threatened arrests under the Public Order Act and the march was forced to move off to the rally.

In a message, Ella and Martina asked 'Is a life sentence in British jails a life sentence of sexual torture?' There were messages of support from Irish POWs, other prisoners and speakers included Isobel Anderson, Iranian Womens Association, Chilean women and Broadwater Defence Campaign. Sharon Raghup spoke powerfully about how meeting Paul Hill (Gulldford 4) in the Scrubs had inspired her husband Engin (one of the Broadwater framed prisoners) to continue his fight for justice. She called for a movement to defeat racist state frame ups.

Karen from VMDC read a personal message from Viraj Mendis. Viraj has received messages of solidarity from 116 Republican POWs, the latest from a woman Maghaberry. Republican prisoners see Viraj as someone who is fighting the same enemy, so it is sad to report that the march organisers tried to prevent Viraj's message being read out on the grounds that he was not a woman fighting imperialist violence. But Viraj has taken a stand against imperialist violence; that is why he is in danger of his life. It was only after a 20 minute argument that Karen got the right to speak. Likewise, Simone Devhurst, RCG member, who was strip searched at Cannon Row Police Station when she was arrested on the Non Stop Picket outside South Africa House, was also stopped from speaking on behalf of CIRA. Whilst we respect the right of women to organise events, this sort of divisive behaviour is in nobody's interests. Oppressed groups cannot win justice alone we must all work together.

John Currie and Jim O'Rourke

USSR: What is glasnost?

The Waking Giant. The Soviet Union Under Gorbachev

Martin Walker. Michael Joseph. 1986.

Reorganisation and the Party's Personnel Policy. The Report and Concluding Speech by the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee at the Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee January 27-28, 1987.

Mikhail Gorbachev. Novosti Press 1987.

WHAT IS GLASNOST?

What is happening in the Soviet Union under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev? What is the meaning of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (reorganisation)?

It is highly regrettable that the book by Martin Walker, *The Guardian's* Moscow correspondent, and no more than an honest liberal, gives more insight into the state of the USSR than does anything written by the British left. The only attempt to analyse the question at any length (Frank Furedi's *The Soviet Union Demystified*) is riddled with ignorant anti-sovietism (see *FRFI* 66).

Other Trotskyists seem to think it sufficient to offer a string of quotations from Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*, first published 51 years ago (see, for example, John Rees, 'Whither Gorbachev?' *Workers Press* 21 March 1987) or meaningless phrases about 'Stalinism with a human face' (*Workers Press* editorial 25 April 1987).

Walker's book gives us the opportunity to draw attention to some of the key features of Soviet society as reported by Walker and analysed by Gorbachev, as a basis for understanding current developments.

A NEW INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

In one of his first major speeches (December 1984), Gorbachev told the Soviet people that they had to achieve a new industrial revolution, which would require the same national drive and political commitment shown during the period of the first five year plans, from 1929 (Walker p37).

PATRICK NEWMAN

The problems facing the USSR were identified as a loss of momentum in the economy, with the appearance of 'elements of stagnation and other phenomena alien to socialism', which had an adverse effect on social, cultural and intellectual life (Gorbachev p9).

These problems must be seen in the context of the overall achievement of the Soviet Union. The *guaranteed* minimum wage is 80 roubles (£72) per month. The average monthly rent for a flat, including heating, is £9, 90p will buy 5kg of bread, or 10kg of potatoes, or 6kg of cabbage, or 3 litres of milk (Walker p 166). Thus even the poorest have a *guarantee* of shelter, warmth, enough to eat, and cheap transport, an achievement utterly impossible under imperialism.

Yet there are problems for socialist planning. In 1961 Khrushchev promised the Soviet people that they would overtake the USA in 20 years. In relation to the targets set, this has proved true: the Soviet Union produces 80% more steel than the USA, 78% more cement, 42% more oil, 55% more fertiliser, twice as much pig-iron and six times as much iron ore (Walker p53). This is a tremendous achievement. Yet the civilian economy has failed to keep pace with new technological developments, in plastics, chemicals and, most of all, computers.

Furthermore, whereas Soviet industry has in the past grown extensively now is the time to grow intensively, to make much more effective use of automated production lines and robots and improve the quality of Soviet products (Walker pp58/9).

In order to raise productivity and increase efficiency, there must be a much more systematic application of science to the economy (Gorbachev p59). A quarter of the world's scientists are in the USSR, with 1.5m full-time science research workers in 1984. Yet half of the high-level scientists work in higher education, where they carried out only about 10% of all research projects (Walker pp66/7).

Central to Gorbachev's solution is a reduction in the cost of the arms race. Defence uses the best factories, the best raw materials, the best brains, and expenditure amounts to 12% of Soviet GNP (Walker

p125). He aims to play off the imperialist countries, particularly in Europe, against each other and the US, and to make serious overtures to China (Walker pp120ff). There is considerable continuity here with previous Soviet foreign policy. The most striking differences concern the internal regime of the Soviet Union.

THE REFORMS

Gorbachev proposes to open up the factory management to election by secret, direct ballot (Walker p94; Gorbachev p31); to make the party and party officials more democratic and more accountable (Gorbachev p35); to promote more women to leading positions (ibid p41); and to display special tact when dealing with the national minorities (ibid p43).

Far from *glasnost* being '... so welcome to people like Thatcher ...' (Cyril Smith, 'Stalin's purge of youth leaders' *Workers Press* 18 April 1987), their 'welcome' masks their dismay. At a time when political rights are being eroded in Britain, the leaders of the Soviet Union are attempting to extend the participation of the Soviet people in the political process. Can it seriously be claimed that Mrs Thatcher 'welcomes' TV coverage of Soviet workers electing the management of their factories, when the internal regime of those British factories which have survived her rule is becoming increasingly oppressive?

But can *glasnost* alone bring about *perestroika*? The reforms will undoubtedly meet strenuous opposition from the self-seeking careerists entrenched within the CPSU, as Khrushchev found to his cost. In the artistic and cultural field, it will give those who are opposed to Party control of the arts, such as the new director of the Soviet film industry, Klimov, the opportunity to air their reactionary views about 'artistic freedom'; and will be welcomed by factory workers for giving them greater opportunity in management.

But is this enough? Can the problems facing the Soviet Union be analysed in abstraction from the current stage of the struggle against imperialism? Without wishing to set one against the other, Gorbachev's approach is noticeably different from that of Fidel Castro (see *FRFI* 63 and 65), which sets the problems of Cuba firmly in the context of the international struggle against imperialism.

Overcrowding crisis grows

British prisons are bursting with prisoners. Prisoners have protested at Dartmoor and other prisons. Prison officers are balloting on industrial action at Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs. Tory Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, on Thursday 16 July announced an early release scheme which would reduce numbers by about 3,500.

On Friday 3 July there were 50,349 prisoners - excluding 620 being held in police stations - in accommodation for 41,655. Within a week it had reached 51,029. In 1987 the prison population has risen by an average 180 a week. The Home Office would have to build a new prison the size of Dartmoor every three weeks just to keep pace.

The figures are still accelerating. In the four weeks up to 3 July, the weekly increase was 267. In the last week it rose by nearly 400. If this figure were maintained the 3,500 about to be released would be replaced in nine weeks.

Local and remand prisons are carrying the heaviest burden. Leeds is 209% overcrowded; Leicester 200%; Birmingham 198%; Lincoln 190%; Reading 190%; Oxford 181%; Bedford 180%; Manchester 174%; Dorchester 170%; Gloucester 165%.

HURD'S PLANS

Hurd plans to increase remission to 50% but only for prisoners serving 12 months or less. The quid pro quo for this, however, is a threat to remove remission for certain categories of long-term prisoners.

Rollerstone army camp, being convert-

ed into a prison, will be opened early. Further temporary camps, including a prison ship, are being considered. A 'strong outsider element' will be included in a new Home Office prison building board. 'Outsider element' is code for privatisation of building contracts.

Hurd has no intention of really improving the conditions of prisoners. Even with the early releases there will still be 47,500 prisoners in accommodation for 41,655. He is using the crisis as an opportunity to increase sentences for long-term prisoners, expand the prison building programme, re-introduce prison hulks, and introduce privatisation.

This is a recipe for a continuing long-term increase in the prison population and a continuing deterioration in the physical conditions and civil rights of prisoners. Prisoners should not be fooled by Hurd's 'emergency' programme.

A serious programme would include real reductions in sentences across the board; 50% remission for all prisoners; automatic annual parole reviews for life sentences with written reasons for decisions; abolition of Leon Brittan's restrictions on parole rights.

Terry O'Halloran

AFRO-CARIBBEAN PRISONERS SUPPORT COMMITTEE

The Afro-Caribbean Prisoners Support Committee has recently been established. Prisoners, ex-prisoners and relatives who want to contact the committee should write to the address below:

50 RECTORY ROAD, LONDON, N16

Sanctuary movement in the United States

The National Celebration of the American Sanctuary Movement. Cedri (European Committee for the Defence of Refugees and Immigrants) Report. Available from CEDRI, B.P 42, 04300, Forcalquier, France. (Ten francs)

After having to suffer, in the media US and British propaganda about the 'persecuted refugees', from the Soviet Union, this report produced by CEDRI about the real refugees in the USA and the Sanctuary Movement in defence of them is very refreshing.

The eight page typewritten report has such a challenging message that - as a result of it being discussed in the anti-deportation Working Party Meeting, the Manchester Evening News had a front page 'shock horror' story about this.

As the report explains:

'The Sanctuary Movement started in 1982 in the border state of Arizona, close to Mexico, when people in the ecumenical religious community in Arizona saw that many refugees from El

Salvador and Guatemala were being captured by the INS (Immigration and Nationalisation Service). The INS put them into detention centres with big high fences and barbed wire, and the majority were deported back to El Salvador and Guatemala where they faced death.' So the people in Arizona at considerable sacrifice, defended the refugees. They arranged legal defence and paid \$5,000 per refugee to 'bond them out'.

The report goes on:

'Out of 1,400 refugees that they helped almost no one received political asylum, and so they decided that they were not going to collaborate any more with the government system because it was not just. And that's how a small Presbyterian church in Tucson, Arizona, declared sanctuary and said 'this is sacred ground; INS, stay out!'

This example snowballed. Today 335 church parishes and synagogues have declared themselves 'sanctuaries'. Now churches that are not on the Border are involved. A system of transport called 'underground railways' (a term used by the Anti Slavery movement in 1850) are

VIRAJ MENDIS

used to transport refugees thousands of kilometres. Over twenty major towns including San Francisco, Berkeley, Santa Fe and Seattle have officially declared themselves 'sanctuary towns', and refused to permit their municipal administrators and police force to co-operate with the Federal INS.

A conference held in September 1986, had over a thousand people from every kind of religious community. The movement is growing rapidly. The Reagan Administration is calling the refugees 'brown hordes' and criminalising the sanctuary movement. Undeterred the movement is working out political strategy and tactics to move forward.

The people involved realise that it is predominately white and middle class. To its great merit it understands its weakness and is making every effort to involve the oppressed black people in the USA in it.

This report is essential reading for anyone involved in the anti deportation struggle in the UK. After reading this the importance of a victory for the VMDC sanctuary becomes clearer.

Danny Williams under attack

On 3 May at 11.15pm in Parkhurst Prison, Danny Williams was playing his radio when a screw came in and told him to turn it down. He did. Five minutes later he was told to turn it off. He refused and a 'posse of screws' rushed into his cell and viciously attacked him. He was thrown naked into a strip cell with no bedding and had to spend all night doing exercises to keep warm. He was in the cell for 16 hours during which time an Assistant Governor verbally abused him and the psychiatrist said he was suffering from 'stress'.

Two days later Danny was forced against his will to the hospital wing, F2 (a transit point for mental institutions, see *FRFI* 68). He was in a cell next to the office and for 3 days and nights screws kept up a bombardment of noise. He was moved back to segregation unit and endured the same barrage of noise from screws under instruction to drive him mad.

On 18 May Danny was again brutally attacked by a group of screws. He tried to defend himself and was beaten unconscious. When he came to he was naked with a black eye, cuts and weals all over his body and was unable to move his neck. He heard other prisoners banging on the cell doors and screaming out his name. When a psychiatrist came in to see him he was so shocked at his injuries that he just rushed out.

Danny was in Pentonville jail for a week so prisoners at Parkhurst couldn't see his

injuries. From here he was not allowed to send a letter to *FRFI* about this persistent brutality. He was then transferred to Albany where a Board of Visitors hearing would not grant him legal representation to defend himself. He refused to take part in the sham court and lost remission.

Danny is now in Wandsworth. He is being denied visits, letters and personal property. He sends a big hello to all the prisoners in Parkhurst and Albany - the black brothers and Irish POWs.

Readers should send cards to Danny and letters of protest to the governor of Parkhurst Prison and the Home Office. Danny Williams, HMP Wandsworth, PO Box 757, Heathfield Road, London SW18 3HS. The Governor, HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX. Home Office Prison Department, Cleland House, Page Street, London SW1.

Lorna Reid

PROTEST AT STRANGWAYS

Dear FRFI,
In early May, during an exercise period in one of the yards in Strangeways Prison, 350 inmates staged a sit-down protest. The protest was against the prison conditions, where, on some wings, cells built to accommodate one prisoner now hold four men!

The protest lasted over an hour, during which time an ultimatum was given to the protestors to stand up and go back inside the prison wing before an alarm bell was sounded. Assurances were given that no punishment would be given to any prisoners obeying this demand, and yet most black prisoners amongst the three hundred who went back inside were singled out and put down the block (punishment cells).

The fifty prisoners who stayed on protest were forcibly dragged off the yard by mass numbers of screws - many of whom apparently were drafted from outside, for the purpose of brutalising those showing resistance to the regime.

Many prisoners have been sadistically beaten for their part in this protest and shunted off to other prisons to isolate those men in Strangeways who have the courage and determination to fight back. Two prisoners who have been hammered for their part in the protest are Mr Macdonald and Mr Zenli. Please write messages of solidarity to these prisoners.

Ex-prisoner

HM Prison, Strangeways, Southall Street, Manchester M60 9AH

WATCHDOGS

Dear FRFI,
'Zionism the second apartheid' (FRFI 69) by Eddie Abrahams exploded all the myths surrounding Israel. A recent pamphlet 'Israel and South Africa: Zionism and Apartheid' reveals further many of the connections between these two fascist states.

For instance, two months after the United States - Israel Free Trade Agreement was signed in 1985:

'Israeli officials were in South Africa encouraging South African manufacturers and exporters to set up shop in Israel... you can bring in totally assembled products.



WE WILL ALL WALK FREE

Dear FRFI,
Due to the appeal in FRFI 69 for letters of support to be sent to the three framed Broadwater Farm prisoners, I responded to it, and wrote a letter to Winston Silcott and Engin Raghip in the Scrubs. I received a letter back from Winston yesterday and he explained to me how they were grateful to receive my letter. He went on to tell me about the showtrial.

Contrary to anybody else's beliefs I found Winston to be a very nice guy, polite, grateful and strong. He assured

me that Engin and himself 'would not give up their fight as they know they are right'. I didn't expect a reply, as I stated in my letter of support that they would probably have other more important commitments, ie appeals etc, etc. So it was a very nice surprise to hear from them.

Winston expressed very deep concern of how 'the people' should campaign to prove their innocence. If the people rally and prove his innocence, then one day they will all walk free.

In the struggle, One Love,
Jimmy Butler
(HM Prison Frankland)

although the free trade agreement calls for at least 25 per cent added value to qualify. Bring your products in, we'll put a *Made in Israel* label on them and off they go. Off they go to all the municipalities in the United States that have managed to have neighbourhood campaigns and get the South African goods off the shelves... Israel has the same agreement with the EEC, all its industrial products come in duty free. Now that South African fruit has been banned from the United States and looks likely to be banned from the EEC as well, the Israelis are undoubtedly going to get back into the fruit exporting

business.'

Behind both Israel and South Africa stands imperialism. As the Palestine Liberation Organisation spokesman Faisal Aoudha states, 'The link between South Africa and Israel is that South Africa is the watchdog against communism in Africa, while Israel is the watchdog against communism in the Middle East.'

Watch out watchdogs!

Israel and South Africa: Zionism and Apartheid, £1, ISBN 0 947918 02 7, from CAABU, 21 Collingham Road, London SW5 0NU.

Andy Higginbottom
London

MOAT HOUSE HOTEL STRIKE

Dear FRFI,
On 2 April at Moat House Hotel, Liverpool, 49 full-time and 13 casual workers were sacked on the picket line and have been there ever since. Liverpool RCG went to support the strikers.

Management claim that the strikers have broken their contract. The strikers said they found this newfound respect for a contract of employment laughable. Since taking over from the Holiday Inn the management have reduced one worker's hours from 40 to 24; reduced sick pay entitlement from 15 days a year to five and then only at the management's discretion; failed to replace worn uniforms; scrapped all bonuses, including a free weekend's holiday that staff got under the previous employer. This was the management's idea of honouring a contract when they took over the hotel.

The management have offered to buy the strikers off but the strikers have said that they won't sell their jobs. They were offered an undisclosed sum, through ACAS, if they agreed to call off the picket line. The management thought it was causing them embarrassment and losing them business.

The strike has had support from other trade unions, large companies and the public in general. Conferences have been cancelled, deliveries turned away, guests have booked out. The strikers are determined to win but need more support.

The shop steward who spoke to FRFI had little faith in the Labour Party if it came to power. He said he could see through the shit which the Labour Party is made of.

Send motions of support and money to: Sid Pearce, Bar Staffs Organiser, TGWU, 37 Islington, Liverpool 3.

Paul
Liverpool RCG

STRANGE COMPANY?

Dear FRFI,
How, I wonder, do Trotskyist supporters of banned Polish Trade Union Solidarity reconcile their support with the facts about Solidarity? The latest news about this Trade Union is that it seems to be implicated in the Irangate scandal! Oliver North, notorious 'rambo-esque' anti-Communist, used Solidarity officials to divert Soviet rifles and Sam-7 missiles to the Contras. Were Solidarity a progressive force, it would seem to be keeping strange company - aiding these fearless warriors of imperialist reaction.

However, this would be ignoring the basic facts about Solidarity. They argue for a restoration of 'welfare capitalism' in Socialist Poland. They argue for an end to the planned economy - a basic precept of a

socialist society. They would encourage competition between firms - bringing back all the old horrors of the struggle for profits, markets, 'productivity' and unemployment. These are strange demands for a Trade Union.

It is worth noting that the leader of Solidarity, Lech Walesa, sent a telegram to Mrs Thatcher and Mr McGregor congratulating them on the defeat of the miners' strike. Is this a good example of working class internationalism and solidarity?

The Trotskyists argue that Solidarity is a mass organisation of the Polish working class, and should therefore be supported. Oswald Mosley was the leader of a mass organisation within the working class. Would they support him? Or do they simply wish to see the destruction of the socialist camp?

Yours in struggle,
Leigh O'Connor
London

Send letters to us at FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

CHEETHAM YOUTH DEFY POLICE

Dear FRFI,
The indestructible spirit of Cheetham's Black African Youth Commune has yet again defied an attempt by the Greater Manchester Police to humiliate, subdue and dominate. The latest action unfolded 10pm on 9 July.

Karl Lynch was stopped in his car intimidated by community policeman 'Piekos the Hero' and other officers who became physical with him. He remained calm and unaggressive. Moved by feelings the onlookers intervened.

The police, who don't like to be questioned themselves, reacted by lashing out and trying to manhandle more people. A girl of 17, Sharon Wood was detained by a hold that would have killed her. Cyril Onwuzuligbo protested against the violence and was detained himself.

From there a street battle began with Cheetham's young Afro-men, women and empathisers fighting for their rights, including life itself. Having learnt a lesson from Liverpool 8 the youths erected barricades. Heywood Street has hosted such a scene previously and it is not the young peoples' fault that it has reoccurred.

In 1981, youth and police battled it out on Heywood Street. Then the trouble-makers in blue had to make a truce. Politicians tried to retrieve the losses and created another opportunity for the blues to move in and get the job done.

Cheetham's Black African Youth Commune

Join the RCG

• Take the side of all those struggling against imperialism—Join the RCG!

• A movement must be built in Britain in solidarity with the struggling peoples of Ireland, South Africa, Palestine, Central America. Help us to do this—Join the RCG!

• A movement must be built here in Britain which stands with the oppressed fighting racism, repression and poverty. Help us build this movement—Join the RCG!

• A movement must be built which challenges and defeats the treachery of the opportunist leaders of Britain's Labour and trade union movement—Join the RCG!

I wish to join/receive more information about the RCG

Name _____
Address _____
Tel _____

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

GLASGOW VMDC
Meets fortnightly at the Scottish Asian Action Committee offices, 537 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow
Next meetings: Wednesday 12 and 26 August at 7.30pm

GLASGOW FRFI
holds fortnightly discussion groups.
Next meetings: 5 and 19 August.
For details write to FRFI, c/o Box 10, 340 West Princes St, Glasgow

DUNDEE VMDC PUBLIC MEETING
6 August, 7.30pm
Showing 'Brass Tacks' programme
For details of venue write to Dundee VMDC Support Group, PO Box 27, Dundee, DG1 9DR

DUNDEE FRFI
supporters groups meet fortnightly.
Next meeting 23 August, 8pm, DASS offices, High Street, Dundee

ORGANISE TO FIGHT!
★ FRFI Street Rally ★
Saturday 25 July 11am-3pm
Free Speech Area
Outside Wood Green Library Wood Green, London, N22 (nearest tube Wood Green)
★ Speeches ★
★ City AA Singers ★
★ Bookstalls ★
★ Displays ★

RCG PUBLIC MEETING
Free the Framed Prisoners
Thursday 20 August 7pm
for details of venue phone 01-837 1688
Speakers: Sharon Raghip (Free the Framed Broadwater prisoners), Mike Russell (RCG) VMDC
Organised by Manchester RCG

HARD-HITTING
Dear FRFI,
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VMDC SHOWS ITS POWER

4000 DEMONSTRATE IN MANCHESTER

On Saturday 11 July, Manchester saw its biggest anti-racist march ever. 4000 people marched behind the slogans 'Viraj Mendis will stay! Stop all deportations now!' The size and variety of all those organisations, groups and individuals who were demonstrating was testimony to the defence campaign's broad and democratic base, and reflected the widespread opposition to Viraj's deportation.

ADRIAN LEVY/PAULINE HARRIS

As the opening rally in Crown Square grew, Karen Roberts on behalf of the VMDC welcomed contingents and coaches from Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Cardiff, Derby, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Newcastle, Southport, Wolverhampton and elsewhere. A brilliant and colourful hand-painted banner featuring a massive portrait of Viraj, led the demonstration as it marched to the sanctuary in Hulme. It was followed by the Manchester Revolutionary Communist Group banner in recognition of the RCG's leading role in the campaign. Church and religious organisations marched next to communists. An Irish Republican band from Glasgow marched beside anti-deportation campaigns, City of London and other anti-apartheid groups, women's groups and lesbian and gay organisations. Political organisations and trade unions marched together with community groups and solidarity organisations.

It was a historic demonstration. It was joined by a contingent of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam with their banner,

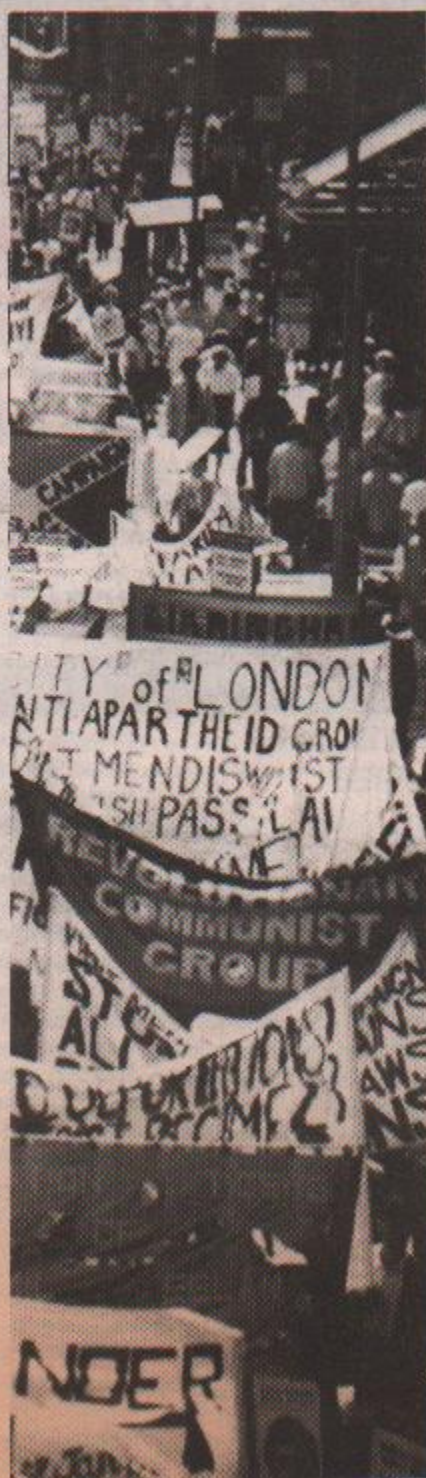
Marching as representatives of the Tamil people fighting for self-determination they made a stand in solidarity with their Sinhalese comrade, communist and supporter of the Tamil struggle. As their contingent passed the Church, they took their banner to the window from which Viraj was greeting the march and raised their arms in a clenched fist salute. The Republican band played the Irish national anthem in honour of Viraj.

Among the speakers at the final rally chaired by Sarah Ricca were Father John Methuen, David Reed on behalf of the RCG, Anwar Ditta, Sharon Raghip from Broadwater Farm and many others. All the speakers, at both rallies, echoed the point by Pauline Harris speaking for the VMDC 'When we are fighting for Viraj, we are fighting for ourselves.' While Viraj was unable to attend the open air rally he did speak at it! The VMDC rigged up a microphone from the Church. To enormous applause Viraj told the demonstrators: 'The campaign has reached a stage where it is not just about one person... it has the potential of turning into a national campaign against all deportations... the march is only a beginning...' During

and after the final rally City AA Singers, Waduku, who sported Non-Stop Picket T-shirts, Friends of Dorothy and other bands performed to the marchers.

The VMDC demonstration proved that a fightback against racism is possible. Most of the left groups, such as the SWP however chose to be absent from the march. They have refused to work with the campaign claiming that Sanctuary was a backward step. They are wrong, as the presence of 4000 people proved. The British left, tied to and dependent on the bankrupt official labour movement, refuses to even recognise Viraj's struggle, the struggle of a communist and the VMDC as a part of the working class fightback against Thatcher. The left has isolated itself from what is one of the most significant challenges to the government's racist attack on the working class.

The demonstration on 20 December 1986 which marked the beginning of the sanctuary was 500 strong. Six months later 4000 people marched for Viraj and against all deportations. Following the demonstration dozens of people have come to the Church to offer help on the rota and do work for the campaign. Six black youth from the community came to meet Viraj, shook his hand, told him they had seen the march and wanted to join the campaign. As the VMDC's support grows, the Home Office will become even more isolated. Our message to them is simple - if they think the 11 July march was large they've seen nothing yet!



Thousands march in Manchester

CHARLIE BAKER

JOIN THE

**VIRAJ MENDIS
★ DEFENCE
CAMPAIGN!**

There are VMDC Support Groups in:

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

**VMDC Appeal
£4,000 needed**

The VMDC has become a mass national campaign of organised opposition to the Home Office and its racist immigration laws. To win Viraj's right to stay we need money. The mobilisation for the 11 July demonstration and Judicial Review cost a great deal. We intend to expand our work even further. To do this and cover our costs we urgently need £4,000!

★ Send donations to: VMDC c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL (cheques and POs payable to VMDC)



The Prime Minister and a sodden Dennis cringe as their Jaguar speeds past the Downing Street picket.

15 JULY JUDICIAL REVIEW

Home Office on defensive

Since Viraj went into Sanctuary on 20 December 1986, the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign (VMDC) has rapidly developed into a significant national force. During the same period, the Home Office, in its determination to deport Viraj to Sri Lanka, has become more and more isolated.

EDDIE ABRAHAMS/CHRIS PROCTOR

In January this year David Waddington confidently claimed in a TV interview:

'... we have simply got to wait until he comes out, until he sees sense.'

Two months later, concerned by the growth of the campaign, the Home Secretary Douglas Hurd, intervened directly. Concerned that the VMDC's success would inspire a national 'sanctuary cam-

paign' he attempted to pressurise Father John Methuen to betray Viraj. He wrote to Father John in March claiming that the VMDC:

'... apparently has as its aim the encouragement of anyone subject to a deportation order to seek sanctuary in a church. I cannot believe that this sort of tactic is welcome to anyone who believes in upholding the law.'

The Home Office did not reckon with the

principled stand taken by Father John and the congregation who voted, following this letter, never to force Viraj to leave the Sanctuary. Neither did the Home Office reckon with the energetic and organised work of the VMDC which enormously expanded its influence in the local community and nationally.

By July, the Home Office was so worried by the growing strength of the campaign that it obtained an injunction to bring forward Viraj's Judicial Review by 3 months to 15 July. In a letter to the courts, the Home Office explained:

'This matter has attracted very considerable public attention particularly over the last 6 months... The applicant has a large support organisation and

there has been a polarisation of opinion in the Manchester area... The Secretary of State fears the community relations in the area will deteriorate so long as the circumstances remain as they are.'

When the Home Office speaks of 'polarisation' and 'fears that community relations' will 'deteriorate' they are in fact acknowledging the power of the campaign during Sanctuary. This power was shown when the VMDC, in March, successfully fought off attacks by the fascist thugs incited by Waddington and the racist media. It was shown at the 500 strong national conference in April and the 4000 strong national demonstration in July. It was shown in the 23 and 30 June Brass Tacks programmes. Following these Father John Methuen received over 150 letters, 90% in support of Viraj. Equally significantly *The Times* (24 June 1987) reviewing the 23 June programme counselled:

'... there is more political danger in the Government sticking to its guns than in quietly giving way.'

Whereas in January the Home Office was confident of slowly but surely wearing down the campaign and the Sanctuary, 6 months later, it is the Home Office which is being worn down.

When the Judicial Review began on 15 July it was accompanied by a massive wave of popular support and publicity for the campaign. A press conference at the Church of Ascension on 10 July was reported by national and local media. West German and Australian TV began documentaries on Viraj's struggle. The 4000 strong demonstration was followed by a mass lobby of Downing Street on Tuesday 14 July. Paul Boateng who had earlier in the day spoken at the VMDC press conference in the House of Commons along with Keith Vaz MP, declared at the Lobby:

'... Viraj Mendis has become the symbol of the tens of thousands of people who are victims of immigration laws and who are in danger of their lives...'

Paul Boateng and Diane Abbott joined a



CHARLIE BAKER

VMDC delegation which delivered 15,000 more petitions to Number 10. As the Review started over 150 supporters of the campaign demonstrated outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London.

Inside the Royal Courts, VMDC barristers and solicitors, supported by a full public gallery, challenged the legitimacy of the Immigration Tribunal's rejection of Viraj's appeal against the Home Office deportation order. The Tribunal has relied on a worthless guarantee from the Sri Lanka High Commission that Viraj will not face persecution if he returns to Sri Lanka. The Judicial Review hearing took two days and the result is not expected for another two weeks. In a letter to the Manchester Council for Community Relations, Timothy Renton, David Waddington's successor, has pledged that the Home Office will abide by the decision of the Review. The VMDC on the other hand will only accept VICTORY. Recognising that even the right to a Judicial Review was won through determined campaigning, the VMDC will consolidate and develop its support to win Viraj's right to stay and develop a movement against all deportations.

More on the VMDC on page 7