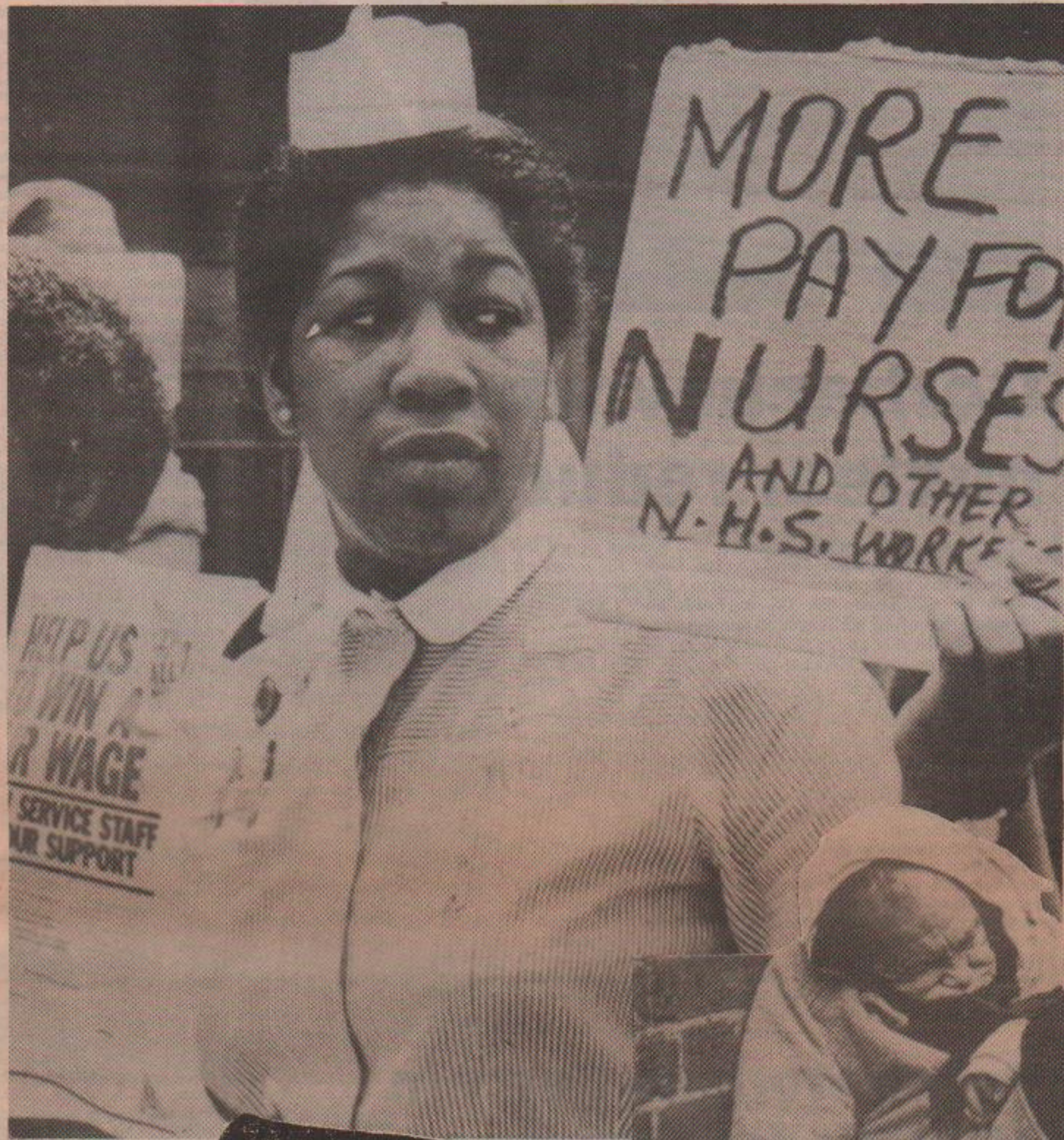


FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!



Revolutionary Communist Group
 No 74 January 1988 (unwaged 20p) 40p
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REPATRIATION
*another
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LIFE OR DEATH? THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WELFARE STATE

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BIRMINGHAM SIX

Crown appeals to judges' bias

The Appeal of the Birmingham 6 has ended and judgement is due in the New Year. The case presented by the men's lawyers has overwhelmingly proved that the six were framed and that their confessions were extorted by threats and violence.

Of particular importance was the evidence of former policewoman, Joan Lyness. At first she testified to the Appeal that she had merely seen the men roughly handled. Later she dramatically re-appeared in the witness box to say that she had concealed some of what she had seen because threats to her family had frightened her. She had seen armed officers in the cell block area; three officers in a room with one of the six who was then kned in the groin; heard the men called 'murdering bastards'. Beatings and intimidation were also confirmed by former police officer Thomas Clarke.

The forensic evidence, so crucial to the original case, was shown to be riddled with doubt. Dr Frank Skuse, who conducted the forensic tests that were said to have been positive for nitroglycerine, cut a sorry figure in the witness box. He had been forced to resign as a Home Office forensic scientist because of 'limited efficiency'. He had been asked by the Home Office since January 1986 to write down his test methods and results but had only done so two weeks before the Appeal. Skuse originally told other scientists that he had used a 1% caustic soda solution for the tests. Using Skuse's method scientists had obtained a positive result from the nitrocellulose found in everyday substances. Skuse now claims he used a .1% caustic soda solution. Using this, another scientist found that to get a positive result from nitroglycerine, a swab would need to contain 500 microgrammes of nitroglycerine - 'a bucketful'.

In answer to all this, the Crown case was pathetic indeed. There were no witnesses and it consisted of the Crown counsel, Mr Igor Judge simply making unsubstantiated assertions for several days as he reviewed the evidence. He said that even if Dr Skuse evidence was discredited there remained strong scientific evidence. What is it? He said the new witnesses, such as Thomas Clarke were 'not credible and wholly unreliable'. He said that allegations of assault were fabricated. He asserted that the men had sympathy with the IRA which, even if true, is hardly sufficient to convict them. He said the original prosecution case was 'overwhelming'. And that was that. Either the government is supremely confident that the Appeal will be unsuccessful or they have given up the struggle and they are not usually known to do the latter.

The attitude of the Judges indicated the problems faced by the men and their lawyers. Of the idea that the police had fabricated the case, Lord Justice Stephen Brown said disparagingly: 'They would have had to organise a conspiracy, to commit a heinous crime of perjury and forgery. There must have been an editor-in-chief, a script writer'. Lord Justice O'Connor said that he was 'mystified' about why the police should use violence. Lord Justice Lane granted an injunction preventing a TV programme re-enacting parts of the Appeal using transcripts as it would 'undermine public confidence'.

By any reasonable standards the Appeal has succeeded in demolishing the case against the Six. But by any reasonable standards they would never have been convicted. British justice towards the Irish does not operate on reasonable standards. The Appeal itself was forced out of the British Home Office by pressure, particularly in Ireland. The Twenty Six County government's needed to have something to show the Irish people in return for the concessions

they have made to British imperialism in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Partly this was caused by domestic opposition to the Extradition Act which asked whether, in the light of the cases like the Birmingham 6, it was safe to hand Irish people to British courts. The Extradition Act is now in place. Whether the pressure that wrung the Appeal from the British government is strong enough to win a successful outcome, remains to be seen.

Maxine Williams



The Birmingham Six

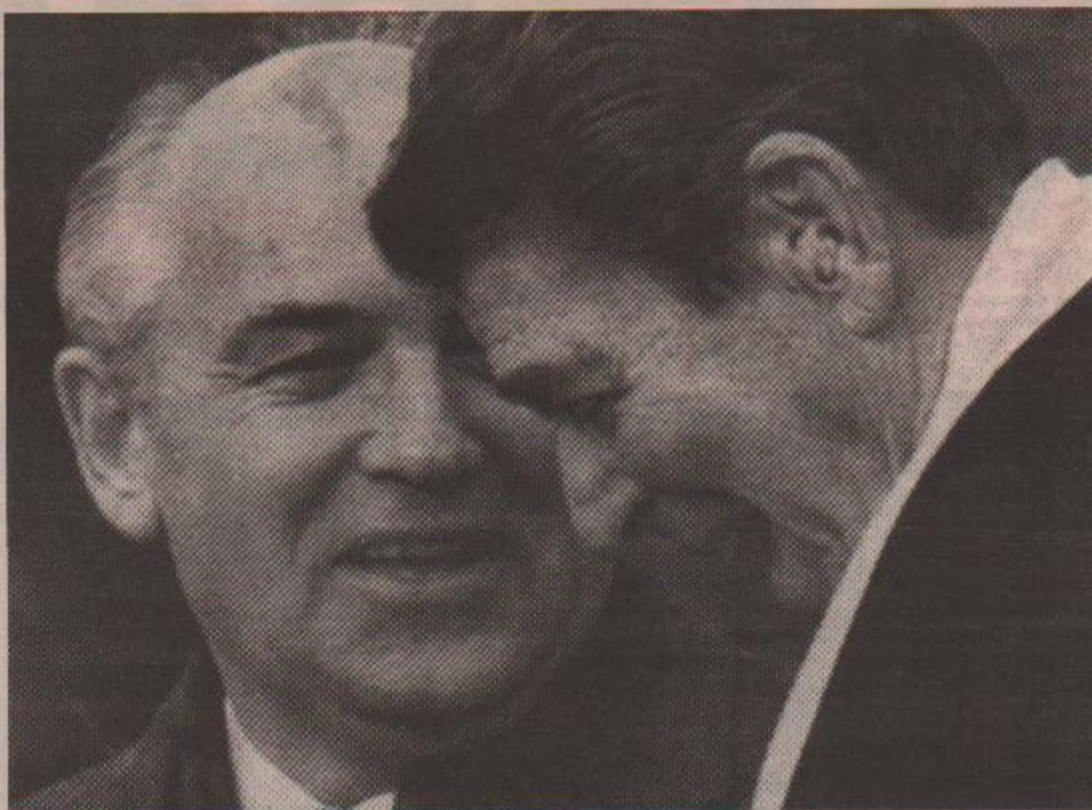
South Korea election fraud

South Korea's first direct presidential elections for 16 years ended in victory for Roh Tae Woo, military dictator Chun Doo Hwan's chosen heir. Roh received 37% of the vote, while his two main opponents Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung together polled 51%.

It was only the mass popular revolts in May and June that forced Chun to call the direct elections of 16 December. But both main opposition candidates represented only sections of the South Korean ruling class. Viciously anti-communist and anti-working class they sought to achieve power in the hope of subduing the emerging mass popular movement. In entering the field separately they sacrificed the struggle to remove the military dictatorship to their own narrow ruling class interests.

Every day since the elections thousands of people have clashed with the police enraged by the massive electoral fraud which helped put Roh into the presidential seat. The government has now banned all demonstrations. However, the oppressed masses will continue to fight for democracy and freedom.

Eddie Abrahams



Gorbachev and Reagan: one small step to arms control

Gorbachev wins first nuclear reduction

At the Washington summit Gorbachev and Reagan signed the INF (intermediate nuclear forces) treaty. Under the treaty all land based short and medium range (300 to 3,000 miles) weapons are to be eliminated: 436 US warheads and 1,575 Soviet warheads, some four per cent of all nuclear weapons.

The treaty has yet to be ratified by either the Soviet Union Supreme Soviet or the US Senate. The Supreme Soviet is already committed to accepting the treaty. In the US, however, representatives of the military and of the arms industry are opposing ratification. George Bush, Vice-President, is the only one of the six Republican presidential candidates to support the treaty.

If, as seems likely, the treaty is ratified, there will be a three year period for the missiles to be destroyed. During this time, and for ten years after, inspectors from both countries will be able to demand on-site visits to verify that the agreement is being honoured.

Gorbachev has made it plain that he sees this treaty as a first step to the

elimination of all nuclear weapons. He is pushing Reagan for a 50% reduction in strategic nuclear weapons: START (strategic arms reduction talks). The only condition that Gorbachev is placing on these proposals is that the US adhere to the ABM (anti-ballistic missile) agreement for at least ten years. This would confine US 'Star Wars' research to the laboratory.

Reagan has, up to now, refused to back down on 'Star Wars'. US imperialism believes it is in its interest to undermine the ABM agreement and push ahead with 'Star Wars'.

While the treaty was being signed the British government was forced to admit that there were cruise missiles at Molesworth as well as Greenham Common.

Margaret Thatcher hypocritically welcomed the INF deal as a 'Christmas present' to the world. Thatcher has opposed every step towards this agreement. She is pressing ahead with the modernisation of Britain's own weapons. She has made it clear that she does not intend to let go of any more nuclear weapons.

'We believe there should be no further reductions in nuclear weapons in Europe until we are nearer parity on conventional weapons and chemical weapons have been eliminated.'

The Warsaw Pact countries have proposed a reduction of one million troops in Europe and an agreement on the world wide elimination of chemical weapons. As usual Thatcher's hypocritical words are a cover for arms build-up not arms reduction.

Bob Shepherd

Polish Workers Party in struggle for popular support

In the referendum (28-29 November) the PUWP set a high target of democratic approval, stating that the measures would only be carried through if supported by 50% of those eligible to vote. After all, in the June election Thatcher was supported by no more than 30% of the voting population

The result - a 68% turnout, with 67% voting for economic reform and 69% for political liberalisation - was a setback for PUWP. Although the turnout was higher than the 60% predicted by the government, the overall result shows that there is still a very long way to go to win the majority of the Polish people to support the socialist government.

In the last eight years Poland has suffered the worst economic crisis ever undergone by a socialist country. National income declined by 4% in 1979, and by a further 0.5% between 1981-85. Only now has the economy recovered to its 1979 level. During this period there were two rises in the price of basic foodstuffs - 15% in 1984, 8% in 1986. As an exercise in democratic participation the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) decided to hold the referendum to seek approval for a programme of economic sacrifice - a 110% rise in basic foods - and for measures of political liberalisation.

The major problems - the enormous debt to the imperialist banks and the inefficiency of the capitalist sector in agriculture - remain unres-

olved. Poland's \$36bn foreign debt has risen by 38% since 1980.

While the Soviet Union suspended all payments for five years from 14 August 1981, the imperialist banks continued to exact re-payment of interest. Their politicians intensified the pressure, by enforcing economic sanctions.

'Sanctions won't work' is the objection to sanctions against South Africa. But against a socialist country - well, that's a different matter! And work they do.

Two years of economic sanctions by the US, enforced a mere ten days after the declaration of martial law on 13 December 1981, caused an estimated \$12.5bn damage - equivalent to half the foreign debt.

Socialist Poland is held to ransom not only by imperialist bankers and politicians, but also by the capitalist sector in agriculture. Ever since collectivism was reversed (at the end of 1956), the capitalist sector has been responsible for 70% of food production. The state has had to compensate for the gross inefficiency of small-scale capitalist agriculture by means of large subsidies, to prevent

the price of food rising too rapidly.

The PUWP will continue to search for a way to win the support of the majority of the people to defeat the crisis - unfortunately, the referendum shows how difficult this will be.

Patrick Newman

Police gun team kills again

On the evening of 22 November, the Metropolitan Police received detailed information about a robbery that was planned to take place the following day in Woolwich, South London.

They knew that at ten o'clock a BMW would hold up a security van in Hare Street. From there the car would drive to a row of garages in Sunbury St, where they would change from the BMW to a Mercedes. It was there that the elite PT17 gun squad were to lay in wait for them. Robbery Squad officers watched the robbery take place, waiting until the BMW drove away before pursuing it. As it drove into the garages, the crack murderers of the Met went into action.

Unfortunately for the police there were witnesses to the killings. One described the unit of six PT17 officers firing 'three or four rounds each. They were lined up like a firing squad.' A woman who witnessed the killing from her fifth-floor flat saw the PT17 unit armed with revolvers and pump-action shotguns standing in an arc by a wall. As the car stopped they opened fire, riddling the car with bullets. The man that got out of the car was shot to the ground. Another in the car was shot through the shoulder. 'They dragged him out of the car and tied his hands behind his back... an armed policeman moved in and said with his weapon pointing directly at the robber, "move an inch and I'll blow your brains out".' One policeman was slightly injured.

This latest killing came only 24 hours after Glyn Davis (29), a man involved in a custody battle over his daughter, was trapped and then killed in a country lane by two police marksmen.

On 9 July 1987 two armed robbers were shot dead by the elite PT17 squad. A third had a bullet lodged in his spine. Like the Woolwich robbery, every detail of the robbery was known to the police in advance. In February the same squad had killed Denis Bergin in an operation identical in every significant detail. 'These killings follow a decision made by the Home Office in February for the creation of elite police gun squads on 24 hour call. D11 was converted into the much higher profile PT17 and effectively given a licence to kill. Since February PT17 has killed four times. Even according to the Metropolitan Police, in 7,779 armed robberies involving firearms in the five years 1982-1986 no one has been killed by armed robbers (see FRF170).

Nick Lewis

Labour joins attack on lesbians and gays

On Monday 14 December lesbian and gay people disrupted parliament during the debate on a Tory amendment to the Local Government Bill forbidding local authorities to 'promote homosexuality or publish material for the promotion of homosexuality' or to 'promote the teaching in any maintained school of acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'.

The Labour Party front bench has responded by supporting the clause whilst proposing further amendments to 'protect' the civil rights of lesbians and gays. This is rather like supporting capital punishment provided there is 'protection' of the executed. Labour front bench spokesperson Jack Cunningham said of the Tory clause 'We don't want to change that in any way, shape or form'.

Labour may yet bow to pressure and retreat from this outrageously reac-

tionary position but its attack on lesbians and gays began immediately after the general election with Patricia Hewitt's notorious letter claiming that the issue had lost Labour votes.

On Saturday 12 December the offices of Capital Gay were firebombed causing £20,000 worth of damage. The Tory amendment and Labour's homophobic reaction are jointly responsible for this anti-gay violence.

Terry O'Halloran

LIFE OR DEATH?

the destruction of the Welfare State

■ POLL TAX

Six million people will be better off. 30 million worse off.

- A working class family with two school leavers living in Tower Hamlets will have to pay £42.38 per week. Private tenants will pay through their rent: a single person living in an inner London bedsit will pay an extra £10.68 per week rent.
- Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland, will only pay £5.76 to £7.69 per week, for his villa in Edinburgh. Margaret Thatcher will save £1,900 on her Dulwich mansion.
- The government claims that the unemployed will only pay 20% of the poll tax, they are lying. The unemployed will get an 80% rebate calculated on the national average of £224 and not on the actual poll tax they have to pay. An unemployed person living in central London will have to pay £372 or £7.15 a week extra rent.
- Defaulters will be forced to pay (a) the full amount that they 'owe', (b) interest on the debt, and (c) either a £50 fine or 30 per cent of the amount owed whichever is the greater.
- 'Deliberate' defaulters can be sent to prison.
- Information about every adult in the country will be kept on a national

computer register linked to the electoral register, income tax, national insurance, driving licence databases and police records. Failure to register on time will result in a £50 fine. Avoid paying poll tax and you lose your right to vote; your right to any welfare benefit; your right to any public service requiring proof of identity.

• The Labour Party is already planning how it will implement the poll tax. Pat Lally, leader of the Labour controlled Glasgow council, said: 'People may have to be paid to inform on neighbours trying to dodge the new community charge... If the government penalises councils for not collecting enough money then such a scheme, although morally repugnant, would be seriously considered.'

• The Uniform Business Rate (UBR) will be set and collected by central government increasing government control of local authority funding (England) from 44% to 75%.

The material on this page shows the savage character of Thatcher's attack on the working class. In every field - housing, education, health, poll tax, public transport - Thatcher is systematically dismantling the welfare state.

Her aim is to drive all public services into such a state of decay that semi-detached Britain will support the shedding of some functions and privatisation of the rest. Semi-detached Britain, bribed with tax cuts, can afford mortgages, private health, private transport and so on. It is the poor, the most oppressed who bear the brunt of this attack.

The scale of Thatcher's onslaught has exposed the cruel deception of social democracy. The organised Labour and trade union movement, intent on appealing to the same constituency as Thatcher has proved completely incapable of defending the working class.

Left labour councils are implementing cuts, the left-led ILEA is attacking teachers, the NUT suspends militant members, Glasgow Labour councillors prepare to implement the poll tax, similar examples could be cited in every field of struggle. This treachery is clothed with talk of 'realism' and some even distinguish between 'Tory' cuts and 'caring' cuts. On 14 November 1987, Diane Abbott MP, referring to Camden's racist housing policy, said that if there must be cuts, they should be 'non-racist' cuts.

There is no such thing as a 'non-racist' cut. All cuts are racist, sexist, anti-working class because it is black people, women, Irish people, the unemployed and the poor who need council housing, state schools, state health provision and so on.

FROM RATE-CAPPING TO RACISM

When Ken Livingstone sold out the struggle against rate capping by setting a rate for the GLC, he was deciding to side with the Labour Party led by Kinnoch rather than with the working class. Few councillors, like those in Lambeth and Liverpool, were prepared to be surcharged putting their own privileged existence at risk.

Labour councils then tried to avoid this choice by accounting tricks. That failed. They were once again forced to choose: defend their own positions and their corrupt party or defend the working class. One after another they have decided to save their own skins. Camden Labour council has gone from opposing rate-capping to promoting racism.

CAMDEN: A CASE IN POINT

In September Camden council ruled that Irish homeless families would not be offered accommodation if there was accommodation available to them in Ireland. Nine families have been repatriated so far.

Councillor Adrian States, one of the 11 Manifesto Group Labour councillors who are fighting this racist policy, told FRFI 'It is a policy of discrediting the homeless and ethnic minorities in order to cut expenditure. It is racist.'

This descent into blatant racism by Camden council reveals the racism inherent in social democracy. Councillor Graham Surety, Manifesto Group, told the protest march on 5 December 1987 'Camden Labour council is carrying out the historical role of the Labour Party in perpetuating racism.' As Adrian States told FRFI, what is happening in Camden is 'Kinnockism in action'.

DEFENDING OURSELVES

The racist anti-working class behaviour of Camden council can be found, in one form or another, anywhere that social democracy is forced to choose between defending its own privileged existence and defending the working class.

Some on the left whilst attacking Labour point to the trade unions as the way forward. Camden shows this to be an illusion. The local unions have split, NALGO is opposing the council, NUPE is supporting it. Behind this split is Camden's threat to sack employees who oppose council policy. ILEA is issuing similar threats. Hospital doctors, nurses have been threatened. Everywhere, those who resist are threatened.

Political organisations tied to the Labour Party cannot be relied on either. The Irish in Britain Representation Group has opposed campaigning against Camden's repatriation policy for fear of losing its council grant.

There is resistance. Mothers in Camden have twice occupied the social services office. Labour councils across London are regularly picketed. Women chained themselves to the radiators on the day that Bolitho maternity unit in Penzance was due to close. They are still in occupation - complete with Christmas decorations, a phone, a bank account and arrangements for postal deliveries and refuse collections.

Such acts of protest are taking place in many areas but if protest is to become resistance certain lessons must be learned.

The resistance must be based on the most oppressed, the direct victims of Thatcher's assault, drawing in those trade unionists, Labour Party members and others who are prepared to fight. The most oppressed must be in the driving seat. This is the only guarantee that the movement will be both effective and protected against the treacherous influence of opportunism.

This page was produced by Terry O'Halloran from articles by Alexa Byrne, Gordon (nurse), Nick Lewis, Terry O'Halloran and Ruth (ex-student nurse). Information and background material was provided by CAPITAL Transport Campaign, Jo Dobson (Shelter Press Officer), HASSLL, National Federation of Housing Associations, Councillor Adrian States and Councillor Graham Surety.

■ EDUCATION

The Education Bill will break up the state school system. It will give councils the right to 'opt out' of ILEA and parents the right to take individual schools out of local authority control.

- 'Opting out' will allow the better off to create good schools for their children. It will allow, as Dewsbury shows, racists to create apartheid in

education. The poor, unemployed black people will find their children dumped in sink schools starved of funds.

- ILEA is being forced to cut spending by £180 million in the next year at a cost of up to 2,500 teaching posts and 6,200 ancillary posts. Teacher-pupil ratios in primary schools will fall from 1:17 to 1:30. Already London teachers are twice as likely to change jobs or leave education as teachers elsewhere. The cuts in education ensure that state schools will deteriorate so badly that support for 'opting out', for those who can afford it, will grow.

operation was cancelled five times. Two other children died in similar circumstances in Birmingham. An average of one child a day is being turned away from Charing Cross Hospital.

PAY

Nurses get special rates of pay, over and above their basic for working nights, bank holidays and weekends. This is to be abolished in favour of a flat rate of £1.20 per hour, a wage cut for many nurses. The way is being paved for nurses to cover wards 24 hours a day instead of one shift covering days, and one night.

- Nurses will have to work rotation early, late and night shifts: the effect will be to reduce the total number of nurse/hours.

• The threatened closure of the Bolitho maternity unit in Penzance would mean women having to travel 50 miles to give birth. Edwina Currie's solution? 'Let them travel by taxi'.

• Margaret Thatcher suggested that health authorities could avoid bed closures by refusing to pay their bills. So you can have a bed but no sheets, food, medical supplies etc.

■ NHS

Over 3,000 hospital beds closed this year. 90% of hospitals have a chronic shortage of nurses.

- Waiting lists have risen to 48,000 for urgent and 640,000 for non-urgent operations. 11,000 operations a year are not performed because of staff shortages.
- The Office of Health Economics says that between 1980-86 the NHS was underfunded by £900 million.
- 30,000 nurses quit every year.
- Promoting better health proposes £10 charge for eye tests; £3 for dental checks.
- David Barber, Birmingham hole-in-the-heart baby, died after his

	(£pa)
Staff nurse (RGN: national average):	8,600
Police Constable (national average*):	11,499
Police Constable (Metropolitan Police):	16,103
Nursing officer (top scale):	12,955
Inspector (national average*):	15,294
Inspector (Metropolitan Police):	22,597

*excludes housing and other allowances.



■ KINGS CROSS: KILLER CUTS

Thirty one people were killed in the Kings Cross fire on 18 November: the deaths were caused by the cuts.

- Since 1984 the lifts and escalators maintenance budget has been cut by 45% from £11 million to £6 million. Escalators are now overhauled an-

nually rather than every six months. After the inquiry into the Oxford Circus fire LRT cut more than 100 cleaning jobs. LRT is pressing ahead with automatic exit gates which will mean 1,200 job losses and even greater obstacles to escape in the event of another fire.

A fairly typical shift

'I am a second year student nurse with ten patients to look after on a busy surgical ward.

'One patient returned from theatre an hour ago. She needs complete observation for body function every half hour. She is quite awake and upset. She wants attention now and painkillers. I tell her I will help her as soon as I can.

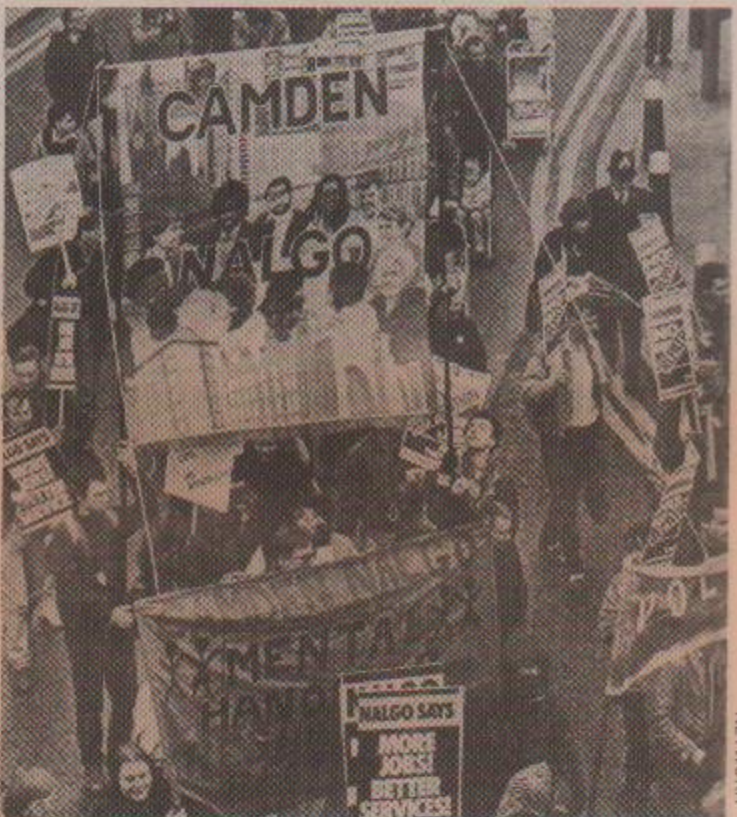
'I have to go to theatre and collect an 80-year-old woman who has had the toes on her right foot amputated. Her pulse is weak, blood pressure low and she looks ill. She needs quarter hourly observations. The theatre nurse hurries me out. She needs the bed space for another patient. 'On the ward again, I tell the already frantic enrolled nurse who is in charge about this

patient. She phones the doctor. It is 2.30pm. The patient develops urinary retention and her intravenous fluids are running too slowly.

'Two of my other patients are bed-ridden and need to be turned every 2-3 hours to prevent bed sores. They are both incontinent. One is wet but I cannot get to her. Others call out for commodes, bedpans, the telephone.

'My other post-operative patient wants help with a wash before her husband comes to visit.

'The 6 o'clock observations are due, then the drug round and the suppers to give out. 'The relatives of the old lady want to know how she is. I cannot tell them much as the doctor has not come to the ward yet. She arrives at 6.45pm after being in the theatre all day.'



■ HOMELESS

Homelessness in England has increased from 57,200 households in 1979 to 103,000 in 1986: 80% increase.

- In London it has increased from 12,440 to 28,970: 133% increase
- In the five years to 1980 17,000 council houses were built in London every year. Now the average is 4,200.
- In the 15 months to 31 March 1987 the number of households in bed and breakfast (B&B) in London doubled to just under 8,000.
- Spending by London boroughs on B&B has risen from £8.5 million (1983/4) to an estimated over £100 million this year. Money spent on B&B in 1986/7 would pay for 12,000 council homes.
- Since 1979 Housing Improvement Programme (HIP) allocation (the sum central government allows local authorities to borrow for their housing programmes) in England and Wales has fallen from £4,849 million to £1,412 million: a cut of 70%.
- Lewisham's HIP allocation has fallen by 77% per dwelling. As a result Lewisham built no new homes in 1986/7 and has no plans to build any. Homelessness in Lewisham has risen from 500 households (1978/9)

to 1,302: 160% increase.

• Camden's HIP allocation has fallen by 75% from £75 million to £20 million. Camden now has 12,000 households in B&B at a cost of £17 million.

• 7,792 households are packed into 530 B&B hotels. One central London hotel owner makes £700,000 per year on 150 beds.

• B&B is rising by 300 households per month.

• The Housing Bill will allow landlords to buy council homes. These will not be allowed to return to public ownership.

• The Bill will remove rent controls and weaken security of tenure. A market rent on a £45,000 property in the south east is £86 per week: 15% higher than the equivalent mortgage.

• Housing benefit is to be cut by £450 million and capped. A nurse living in a one bedroom flat in London would have to spend an extra £26.35 per week on rent: £38 of her/his income.

• The Bill will apply only to new tenancies thereby directly inciting the new Ratchmans to drive out existing tenants in order to create 'new' tenancies.

• The Bill will create Housing Action Trusts (HATs) to take over council estates and sell them off to private landlords. Neither tenants nor councils will have any say in the matter.

NEWS
NOTESDollar falls through
Reagan's budget
cut safety net

While no further dramas have occurred since the dramatic crash of the world stockmarkets on 19 October 1987, the volatility and instability of both the world foreign currency and stockmarkets remain.

On 20 November the US administration announced that an agreement had been reached to cut the federal budget deficit by a total of \$76bn over the fiscal years 1988 and 1989. \$30.2bn will be cut in 1988 and \$45.8bn in 1989. The \$30bn cuts for fiscal year 1988 include \$5bn asset sales, \$9bn tax increases and some \$13bn spending reductions, of which \$5bn are defence cuts. In fact only \$23.8bn would qualify as reductions under the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law - a law passed in Congress which would have triggered automatic cuts of \$23bn if no agreement had been reached. No wonder the agreement had to be announced with great pomp and ceremony with emperor Reagan flanked by the top leadership of the Republican and Democratic parties in Congress. For the emperor has no clothes, nothing



substantial was, in fact, being offered.

Not only is there some doubt as to whether this agreement will ever be implemented but, even if it is, it is highly unlikely that the budget deficit in 1988 will be less than the \$148bn recorded in fiscal year 1987. Not long after the play acting was over reality returned.

On 30 November the dollar plunged to a record low on the world currency markets. On 3 December West Germany and Britain announced interest cuts to halt the dollars slide. The British rate of 8.5 per cent was at its lowest level since March 1984. The markets were unimpressed. That same day on Wall Street the Dow Jones index fell 72.44 to 1776.53, its lowest level since the stockmarket crash on 19 October (1738.42).

On 10 December the October US trade figures were announced and showed a record monthly deficit of \$17.63bn, far higher than the worst expectations and some 25 per cent up on September's \$14.1bn. The dollar plunged to a new record low of 128.75 yen. This time however the stockmarkets did not respond.

The major imperialist powers also appear to be prepared to ride out this latest storm. As we go to press no date has been given for the much heralded meeting of the Group of Seven major imperialist countries to co-ordinate policy.

David Reed

Christmas
Solidarity for
Broadwater
Farm Prisoners

Fifty people joined a four hour picket of Wormwood Scrubs on Saturday 19 December with a message for framed Broadwater Farm prisoners Winston Silcott, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite - 'you are not forgotten at Christmas'. Relatives and friends were joined by FRFI and the BPCJ. They marched to the back of the prison. Hearing slogans such as 'Free the framed prisoners! Free them now!' prisoners joined in. Winston's father, Walter, and Engin's wife, Sharon, were among those who addressed the picket. The picket was jeopardised when the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign's van failed to arrive to take the relatives to the Scrubs. Luckily Engin's brother had his work van which allowed them to get there and organise the event.

Nicky Rensten

Prisoner
beaten after
operation

FRFI 71 exposed the inhumane and degrading treatment Martin Foran has been subjected to in British prisons. Following a hunger-strike in 1984, Martin suffers from an incurable bowel illness which led to his being given a colostomy operation last year. Due to severe beatings immediately after the operation, it has not been successful. Martin's wife wrote to FRFI to say that his condition was so bad that he was planning to go on hunger strike again to force the prison to give him proper medical treatment.

In August Martin was sent to court for having 'kidnapped' a prison officer at Wandsworth prison in April 1986, again to draw attention to his medical condition and the pain he was suffering. The Home Office refused to hand over his medical records to the court and the case was adjourned while an order was served compelling them to do so.

On 26 November the Old Bailey sentenced Martin to a further six years in addition to the eight he is already serving. This latest piece of 'justice' enforces the fears of Martin's friends and family that his condition will continue to be ignored and any attempts made at highlighting his pain will be replied to with brutality; and that, untreated, he will deteriorate and may even die.

The conspiracy of prison authorities, courts and the Home Office to torture Martin Foran cannot be ignored and we ask all our readers to take up the case.

Send messages of support and solidarity to: - Martin Foran C51796, HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX.

Send urgent letters of protest to the Governor at Parkhurst and to the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd at the Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1.

As Christmas approached God once again blew into the ever-open ear of Manchester Chief Constable James Anderton. Anderton spoke thus: 'Criminals should be flogged until they repent. I'd thrash criminals myself most easily.' (*Woman's Own*) The case of Elsa Hannaway (see report this issue) shows that Anderton's cops have also heard the word of the Lord and what Anderton means by 'criminals'.

On 26 November Liverpool's Labour-controlled police authority gave Chief Constable Kenneth Oxford an early Christmas present. They agreed to increase the tactical aid group, armed with CS gas and plastic bullets, from 15 to 32. They threw in an armoured car and some bullet proof shields for good measure.

On 27 November bankrupt (in all respects) ex-Tory MP Dudley Geoffrey Stewart-Smith told the London Bankruptcy Court that the rightwing Foreign Affairs Research Institute is mainly financed by the South African government. Stewart-Smith disclosed debts of £150,388 and no assets.

In November Minister for Trade, Alan Clark, urged private sector companies to carry on trading with apartheid. He said that Britain had 'done very well' by increasing exports to South Africa by 11% in the first nine months of 1987 earning a surplus for Britain of £206m.

Seumas Milne, our favourite AAM hack, was behind a move in December in NUJ London Farringdon branch to put a motion to the forthcoming NUJ conference condemning the NEC for supporting Friends of Moses Mayekiso. City of London branch, backed by London Freelance, is putting a motion congratulating the NEC. LFB is also calling for support for the Non-Stop Picket. So there should be some flying fur come April.

The Central Statistics Office's Economic Trends published on 18 December revealed that the top 10% of income earners increased their share of total post-tax income from 23.4% (1978/9) to 26.5% (1984/5), a greater share than that of the whole bottom 50% of income earners. Their share fell from 26.2% to 24.9%.

In November and December the attack on the media accelerated. Thatcher obtained an injunction against Radio Four's innocuous security series; continued to seek an injunction ordering Duncan Campbell to reveal his GCHQ sources; and won a Law Lords ruling ordering

Independent journalist Jeremy Warner to reveal his sources on insider trading. Warner now faces imprisonment. Meanwhile Northamptonshire cops, without divine intervention, are seeking an order under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act to force photographers and news organisations to hand over unpublished film and photographs of the Wapping police riot on 24 January 1987.

AZAPO

On a recent visit to Britain, Haroon Patel, Central Committee Member of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) spoke to FRFI. The Azanian People's Organisation has an estimated membership of 60,000 including youth and women's support organisations. AZAPO like other Africanist and black consciousness organisations in South Africa has played an important and central role in the recent struggles, yet it receives very little publicity in Britain and no mention or support at all from the British Anti-Apartheid Movement. We are pleased to be able to inform our readership about AZAPO and its role in the struggle for liberation and socialism in South Africa. A message of solidarity was sent from the Revolutionary Communist Group to AZAPO's recent national conference.

Why was AZAPO formed and what is its overall political perspective?

AZAPO was formed in 1978. It was formed to maintain a continuity between the 17 Black Consciousness Organisations which were banned in 1977 as a result of the popular upsurge of the 70s. We learned from the political experiences of organisations like the ANC and PAC which were banned in the 1960s. You will remember that there existed a very large political vacuum from 1960, up to 1968, after which people like Steven Bantu Biko founded the South African Students Organisation and the Black People's Convention. But of course it took eight years to find a new form, a new means of organisation to express the political aspirations of the people and their resistance to the apartheid system. What was significant in 1978 was that we were able to form AZAPO in less than a year.

The political programme of AZAPO is encapsulated in the following views and positions. Firstly we believe that our struggle must be directed against the historically-evolved system of racism and capitalism in South Africa. In other words

AZAPO including all those groups affiliated to the National Forum, who subscribe to the Azanian Manifesto, have identified the black working class as the driving force of the struggle. We base ourselves on the principles of anti-racism, anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, non-collaboration with the ruling class and the independence of working class organisations, particularly their freedom from bourgeois influence. We are also aiming at the creation of an anti-racist, socialist worker republic of Azania. In other words a unitary Azania that will take into account that our land has been Balkanised and many parts of our country have been deformed by so-called homelands. We work on the slogans of one person one vote majority rule, one Azania, one Nation.

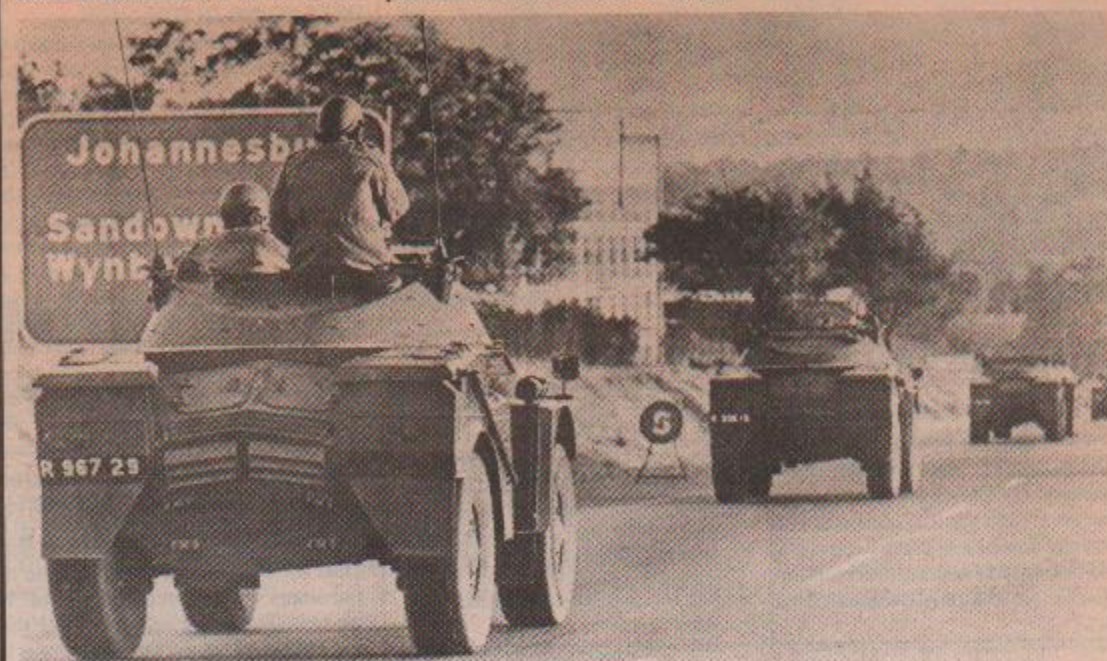
What role has AZAPO played in the recent period of struggle, say since 1983?

It is clear that the recent period dates from the Rand Revolt in 1983/4. After 1976 the South African government tried to make so-called 'reform' attempts, not only at a political and constitutional level, but

Movement, our student wing, was engaged in the fight against bantu inferior education. The situation is more complex than the view presented internationally. Nobody took into account that what you had was the encouragement of an indefinite boycott which took place over two years. We differed from an indefinite boycott. Boycott is one weapon in the arsenal of the oppressed people, if it is not correctly used it can work against the oppressed people.

AZAPO in the last two years has begun to concentrate its work on the two trade union federations, NACTU and COSATU. We played a vital role in supporting the union CAWUSA, which went out on strike early this year. We tried to link up with the Railway Workers and played a very important role in the Post and Telecommunication workers strike. We made attempts to integrate various community and political organisations in support of the great mineworkers strike.

The two federations that played an important part in the unity talks aimed at a single federation of trade unions in our country were FOSATU and CUSA. Also at that time there



Armoured cars approaching Alexandra township, June 1977

we are saying that there is an organic link between the system of capitalism and racism, and that therefore we have to fight simultaneously against apartheid and capitalism. We do not believe that you can make a separation between the democratic demands of the revolution and the social aspect of the revolution. Nonetheless we also emphasise that there cannot be a subordination of the national question to the social question, or indeed the other way round. There has to be an equal emphasis on both.

For us the South African problem, political as well as economic, is a reflection of the world wide crisis of capitalism. In fact in South Africa it is only exacerbated by the fact that the economic system exists on the basis of racism which denies all democratic rights to the majority of the people.

also in terms of the labour movement through the findings of the Wiehann Commission. Since 1983 there has been the mushrooming of several organisations, amongst them the United Democratic Front, allied to the political positions of the ANC. Also you have the National Forum which we describe as a left socialist alliance which is leaning towards the development of a united front. There is also the regroupment of Africanists under the banner of Azanian National Youth Unity.

AZAPO undoubtedly played a significant role in the campaign against the tri-cameral parliament in 1983. Some people may not be aware of this but we worked in conjunction with certain sections of the UDF, at least I can cite examples from the area where I come from. After that there was the severe crisis in education. In 1985-6 the Azanian Student

existed general allied workers unions which were putting forward the political position of the UDF, which was still to be formed. There were also unions created by the Labour Secretariat of AZAPO and others formed by groups of Africanists. By late 1983 these unions formed themselves into AZACTU.

At the unity discussions our view was that certain questions must be resolved: the relationship with the national liberation struggle; what was its view on worker control, democracy, etc. Unfortunately differences emerged and AZACTU was excluded from the final round of talks. CUSA pulled out in protest at this exclusion.

So, when COSATU was formed in 1985 it was able to regroup over 600,000 workers. As a political organisation we said that the attainment of unity was a step in the right

SPEAKS TO FRFI



The Soweto uprising: Students march in support of detainees, August 1976

direction. We played an important role in the merging of AZACTU and CUSA - now known as NACTU. We are certain that both federations, NACTU and COSATU must keep their doors open because there may still exist the possibility of one federation. It is important for both federations to aim towards unity.

Could you say more about the differences which prevented unity.

The eventual difference which emerged was on the definition of workers leadership. COSATU talks of a working class leadership which would include all people who owe an allegiance to a working class struggle. The NACTU federation, or AZACTU-CUSA as it was then, says that leadership must be defined in terms of the black working class in the country. This is born out of the different positions developed over the historical experience of the struggle. There are white workers in the country, they sell their labour power. You will have some sections of white workers who are oppressed. Very briefly, historically, white workers have always organised to defend their rights, to defend the status of the labour aristocracy, which in South Africa is created through discrimination. It has constantly identified with the Nationalist Party. They should have been the allies of their class brothers. They have not developed a revolutionary consciousness to merge with the most important section of the working class.

Why did AZAPO oppose the visit of Senator Edward Kennedy to South Africa?

Senator Kennedy like many other liberals - those who represent the interests of imperialism, had to come

to South Africa when the struggle was reaching new heights. Our view was that the Kennedys and such as the Eminent Persons Group were all trying to find new avenues for a negotiated settlement. They aimed to link up with the UDF. Some of its sections have hoped for a National Convention. Kennedy also wanted to contact liberals who support the racist parliament - they were going to discuss the future of South Africa.

We also had to look at the role of the Kennedy dynasty - in Cuba, Vietnam, the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. The aims of international imperialism remain the same even if they adopt different methods to subvert socialist development. We felt it was an important opportunity to raise the consciousness of the working class about the nature of imperialism.

We also discussed with people like Desmond Tutu and said that while you have the right to talk with people like Kennedy, we also have the right to protest against the visit. We organised massive demonstrations. The UDF in the Western Cape region boycotted a meeting by Kennedy.

You are on a tour of Britain at the moment. What is its purpose?

We need to work within the reality as it exists in Britain. Everything that happens in South Africa is equated to the ANC. Any support given to the struggle is equated with support given to the ANC. It is our purpose to encourage acceptance at every level, and especially at a ground level, that in South Africa pluralism is a reality. If you want to give meaningful support to the struggle you have to understand this.

I should clear up a number of points. While we may have certain

fundamental differences with the ANC and PAC, we acknowledge their role historically and in the present in terms of their influence on the mass movement. We are working on a non-sectarian basis in relation to the liberation movements and also towards the international solidarity movement. We also want to link up with all those people who genuinely want to take up a struggle against sectarianism which may exist in certain parts of the majority movement.

Of course we are not here to interfere with the internal politics of Britain. Nonetheless we reserve the right to make some comments on the situation. We hope that the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, as a result of a struggle within it, will begin to adopt a new position in relation to the South African revolution.

We are also here to rigorously pursue the complete isolation of apartheid. We have heard a sickening argument from Western Governments, particularly Thatcher and Kohl, that the economic boycott will hurt black people most. All of a sudden they have a concern for black people, but really it is concern for their super profits. This is hypocrisy. It is also arrogant. It seems to suggest that black people, and especially the liberation movements who are agreed on the question of an economic boycott, has not researched or studied the consequences. It will hurt black people, we are not going to lie about that. But we have suffered for the last three centuries and continue to suffer. We would rather have an economic boycott than continue to suffer under apartheid and capitalist exploitation.

In the recent period there has been a very high degree of repression. What

would you like to see in Britain in response?

It is imperative to continue with the campaigns which exist. It is necessary to identify different organisations which suffer repression. In 1986 AZAPO suffered the detention of over 650 of its cadres. This was not known anywhere internationally. We know that it is politically correct to call for the release of all political prisoners, but we are also sensitive to the fact that for people to identify and be involved in a real campaign of solidarity it is necessary to identify individuals or organisations. That is OK as long as it is in conjunction with calling for the release of all political prisoners.

I just want to state that in the case of the campaign calling for the release of Moses Mayekiso, the position of AZAPO is to support the campaign. We were not surprised that certain organisations decided not to, calling it a 'personality cult'. We don't think that is true. Moses Mayekiso symbolises the most advanced sections of leadership of the working class in our country.

There has been a generalised repression. In 1985-6 the UDF were amongst those who experienced the highest degree of repression. If you carefully analyse the situation, because of the political divide in South Africa between those who are talking of a national democratic struggle and those are fully rooted in the struggle for socialism, because of the change dynamically taking place at a ground level, there will be new alignments and regroupments. As a result we believe that the focus of repression will shift. This year alone 850 people from AZAPO were detained. On 10 October the Azanian Manifesto was banned. It cannot be distributed or discussed.

AZAPO and NACTU activists recently detained:

Thami Meerwa	— AZAPO and NACTU member
Thabo Sehume	— Central Atteridgeville AZAPO
Thabo Mafihla	— President Azanian Youth Organisation
Silly Mosupye	— Secretary Atteridgeville AZAPO
Kedibone Meso	— Regional Secretary-Treasurer Azanian Youth Organisation
Dennis Ndlovu	— Chair AZAPO-Mamelodi
Brutus Manana	— National Organiser Azanian Youth Organisation

Sharpeville 6 must not hang

The Sharpeville Six, Theresa Ramashamula, Mojafela Regina Sefatsa, Francis Don Mokhesi, Reid Malepo Mokoena, Duma Khumalo and Moses Diniso, have had their appeal against the death sentence rejected. They could be hanged at any time.

They were charged with the murder of a stooge councillor during the uprising in Sharpeville in September 1984. The charges are a frame-up intended to resist apartheid. The prisoners have alibis and they were tortured in detention. Theresa Ramashamula is the first woman to be sentenced to death in a political trial.

City AA has held several pickets and events protesting against the death sentences. Pickets of the Embassy have been supported by PAC representatives in

Britain. On Friday 18 December, picketers from the Non-Stop Picket marched six times between South Africa House and Downing Street. Further protests are planned.

On 16 December the AAM held a picket outside the Embassy attended by 200 people including RCG and City AA supporters. Nevertheless the AAM managed to conduct the event in their usual sectarian fashion, refusing to allow all organisations to speak. Their loudhailer failed to work but even then they would not use the Non-Stop Picket's megaphone because they would have had to allow others to speak. The megaphone was, however, used by the ANC speaker at the end of the picket. Saving the lives of the Sharpeville 6 requires maximum unity, which unfortunately the AAM is blocking.

AAM moves along the sectarian road

The AGM of the Anti-Apartheid Movement held in Sheffield on 28/29 November 1987 voted:

- Not to support all forces fighting apartheid and racism in Southern Africa.
- Not to support or affiliate to any of the existing campaigns for the release of Moses Mayekiso and his four comrades on trial in South Africa for treason.

LORNA REID

The AGM was attended by 350 delegates. It was the first to be held on a delegate basis since the constitutional amendments were passed at the 1986 AGM. The new constitution excludes ordinary activist members from the AGM in favour of delegates from affiliated organisations like the Labour Party ensuring that the AAM leadership maintains control by excluding political opposition within the movement. Having finally excluded the main force of political opposition within the movement, City AA, from the AGM, the AAM leadership was clearly looking forward to holding an AGM that would accept the narrow and sectarian boundaries they have imposed on the movement. However, they were not to have it all their own way.

Motions before the conference called for support for the campaign to release Moses Mayekiso and his four comrades, to support all the forces fighting apartheid and racism in Southern Africa, to support the Non-Stop Picket and the campaign fought by City Group to win back the right to demonstrate outside the South African Embassy.

RCG delegates from London, Manchester, Leeds and Dundee attended the AGM. We fought alongside delegates from the SWP, Workers Power and Greenwich, Westminster, Exeter, Fife, Glasgow NW, Dundee, York, Leamington Spa and Stockport Anti-Apartheid groups on the principle of non-sectarianism. The Standing Orders Committee did all in its power to keep serious debate off the conference agenda.

Greenwich AA moved a motion calling on the AAM to support other organisations fighting apartheid (like the PAC, AZAPO and the Cape Action League) in South Africa and Namibia as well as the SACTU and SWAPO. This important motion was taken at the end of Saturday's agenda and defeated with no time for discussion. Motions in support of the Non-Stop Picket and the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign were deftly manoeuvred off the end of Sunday's agenda.

On trade union solidarity the AAM entrenched its sectarian position by rejecting the London RCG amendment to include support for the independent trade union federation NACTU, formerly CUSA/AZACTU, which has a membership of 400,000. Andy Higginbottom, delegate for London RCG, and secretary of City Group, said,

'Delegates should know that going on in South Africa are major debates on the connection between the struggle to end apartheid and the struggle for socialism and in particular the role of the black working class... Delegates may remember the strike at SASOL in 1985. The chemical workers there are in two different trade unions, one is affiliated to COSATU, the other is affiliated to NACTU. They co-operate and work together. There have been many other examples of similar co-operation in support of the various strikes this year. The problem with the original motion is that it will only support those in South Africa who subscribe to the Freedom Charter. NACTU should not be denied solidarity. If you support all those fighting apar-

theid you will support the amendment.'

Seconding the amendment Lorna Reid speaking for Dundee RCG said 'An effective movement against apartheid must support all forces fighting apartheid.'

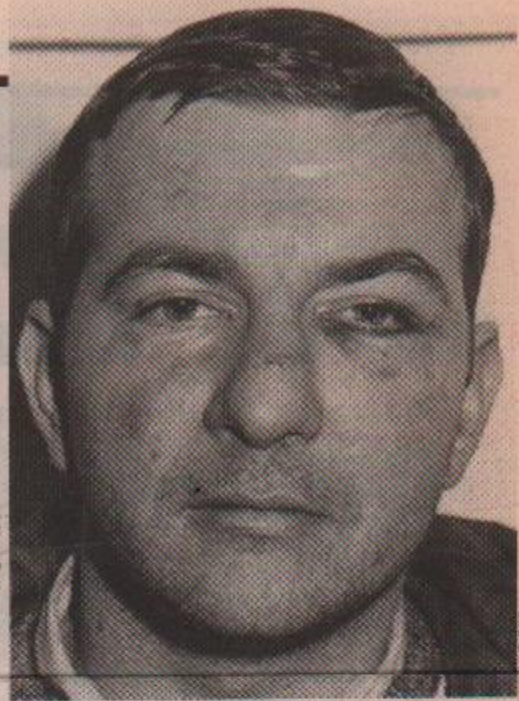
Prior to the discussion Mathe Diseko, speaking for SACTU attacked our amendment as '... part of the government's attempts to destroy SACTU... The binding document is the Freedom Charter and anyone who is attempting to change that is suspect.' Comrade Diseko has every right to call for support for SACTU. He does not have the right to demand that we support *only* SACTU, nor to claim that anyone who differs is 'suspect'. Such behaviour is not the hallmark of a democratic organisation. SACTU's views on which forces the solidarity movement in Britain can and cannot support were being explicitly expressed when SACTU issued a statement to the trade union movement condemning the campaign for Moses Mayekiso on totally sectarian grounds. This is in opposition to NUMSA and COSATU who support action to free Mayekiso and the Alex 5.

The AAM leadership was unable to marginalise the combined forces campaigning for the release of Moses Mayekiso at the AGM and was forced to change its position of complete silence on the issue to 'recognising the importance of the trial of Moses Mayekiso'. This however was as far as the AAM was forced to go. They voted against affiliating to or supporting any of the existing campaigns for the release of Moses. The SWP's sectarian refusal to work with City Group for Moses Mayekiso undoubtedly weakened their own call for a non-sectarian approach to the issue at the AGM.

City Group's decision to make Moses Mayekiso a public campaigning issue was instrumental in raising the pressure on the AAM. The lesson for all the forces who genuinely want to build an effective movement against apartheid is that such a movement has to be based on unity in action.



Above: PC AD125. Left: Jimmy Brosnan who was beaten by off-duty police officers.



Official & unofficial police thuggery

At 1.30am on Sunday 6 December two black members of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, Tunde Forrest and Ronald Tomlinson were viciously attacked by police officers on the non-stop picket. Just over a week later, on Monday 14 December two other members, Adam Bowles and Jimmy Brosnan, were attacked late at night on a tube train by men claiming to be off duty police officers. Jimmy Brosnan is Irish and he was beaten unconscious. In both incidents City AA members were racially abused as well as violently assaulted. Ronald and Adam are members of the RCG.

CAROL BRICKLEY

THE OFFICIAL ATTACK

Ronnie and Tunde told FRFI that they left the picket at about 1.30am and walked over to the steps of St Martin in the Fields church. There they noticed a white man with a placard supporting the apartheid regime who was abusing a black passer-by. Tunde and Ronald walked over to the man to ask him what he was doing, but as they approached a police officer, PC-AD125, came from behind them and said to Tunde, 'I'm going to nick you, nigger'. He then hit Tunde across the head with his helmet, threw him to the ground and punched him repeatedly. PCAD125 weighs 22 stone.

A large number of police then arrived, five of whom continued to punch and kick Tunde. He was then handcuffed, dragged along the ground and thrown into a police van. Witnesses say that he was screaming with pain and bleeding. Meanwhile Ronald returned to the picket to let them know what was happening. Police officers chased after him and arrested him. Inside the police van Ronald was punched in the face, kicked in the groin and PCAD125 pressed his thumbs into Ronnie's eyes.

Inside the van PCAD125 arranged for his fellow officers to mark his own face, so that Ronald and Tunde could be charged with Actual Bodily Harm. The abuse continued inside Cannon Row Police Station until both men were released. Both of them attended hospital after their release. City AA mounted a picket of Cannon Row police station later that day and again one week later to protest against police racism and thuggery.

Both Tunde and Ronald are regular supporters of the Non-Stop Picket and Tunde in particular has faced relentless police harassment. In the space of 12 months, he has faced five assault charges and has been acquitted of all but a minor offence.

THE UNOFFICIAL ATTACK

Adam and Jimmy attended a City Group meeting on Monday 14 December. Afterwards they went to the pub for half an hour and then went home on the Piccadilly line tube. At Green Park, where they changed tubes, they were followed by 3 men who had been in the same carriage on the Piccadilly line, one white, two black, and in the tunnel between the platforms, these men, claiming to be police officers stopped Jimmy and told him they were arresting him for being drunk and disorderly. He was not. They handcuffed him,

punched him in the face and poured a bottle of spirit over his head. They took him to the Victoria line platform, saying that they were taking him to Stockwell police station. Adam accompanied them.

The beating continued on the train. When the train arrived at Vauxhall the 'policemen' dragged Jimmy off the train, shouting to the driver to keep the doors open as they were police. They dragged Jimmy along the corridor, and one of them took Adam separately to the foot of the escalator. Meanwhile, out of sight, the two other 'policemen' beat Jimmy unconscious and left him lying there covered in blood.

Adam was also handcuffed, told that he was being arrested for assault, and then dragged up the escalator. Half way up Adam, concerned about Jimmy, broke free hurling himself down the escalator. At this point the three men disappeared. Adam found Jimmy in the passage unconscious. Both were taken to hospital.

A FAMILIAR PATTERN

There is no way of knowing if these two events are connected or if the three men who attacked Adam and Jimmy are police-officers, special branch, hired thugs employed by the South African embassy or any combination of these. What is certain is that since the non-stop picket began, a pattern of events has emerged.

When the police are engaged in their official orchestrated campaigns to remove the picket from outside the embassy, the level of harassment, both petty and very serious, by individual police officers falls. When these strategies have failed, as they did this Summer when the police ban was humiliatingly defeated, then police harassment of women, black people, lesbians and gays escalates.

Both City AA and the RCG will ensure that the officers involved in both these incidents are not allowed to get away with their racism and thuggery. One thing they should all know by now is that, after more than 600 days, the Non-Stop Picket will not end or be intimidated.

City AA is appealing to anyone who was travelling between Green Park and Vauxhall on the southbound Victoria Line between 11.30pm and midnight on Monday 14 December, and who may have witnessed any part of this incident to contact City of London Anti-Apartheid Group on (01) 837 6050.



Heat of the night?

With the onset of cold weather City AA non-stop picketers once again lit a brazier on the pavement outside the Embassy at midnight on 11 December. The brazier kept the picketers warm for about 2 hours before the police (sitting in their van with the heater and engine going) decided that a crime was being committed. The picketers waited expectantly for the usual crew to arrive from Cannon Row with fire extinguishers and prove that the spirit of Scrooge still lives. But they hadn't reckoned on Inspector Benn who called for the Fire Brigade.

The fire officers, however, dubious about the task, drove round Trafalgar Square, shook their heads and drove quickly back to the Fire Station. Not to be defeated, half an hour later the police van from Cannon Row arrived along with 10 hefty coppers and 2 dustbins full of water. Gallons of water were thrown onto the criminal brazier - all to no effect, the brazier would not go out, but instead belched columns of noxious smoke. Deciding that it was better to die from smoke than let the picketers win, the police loaded the brazier into the van with hordes of coughing policemen.

Asked by City AA's solicitor to explain the illegal removal of the brazier, Chief Inspector Burroughs, who is proving to be an admirable successor to CI Gilbertson (LSE), said that an obstruction was being caused by the heat preventing passers-by walking down the pavement! At 2am! CI Burroughs educational background is, as yet, unknown, but he obviously has not yet passed his exam in 'Lying Convincingly'.

Carol Brickley

New Immigration Bill

A racist attack on black families

When Douglas Hurd introduced his new Immigration Bill in Parliament, he claimed it was merely closing 'loopholes' in the 1971 Immigration Act. In fact, the Bill is a serious amendment to the 1971 Act. For thousands of black families it will mean brutally dashing any remaining hopes of living a united and normal family life. Closing 'loopholes' will mean further undermining limited legal rights to fight deportations. It will mean closing Britain's doors to all but the wealthy and privileged.

EDDIE ABRAHAMS AND
KIM COLEMAN

The 1971 Immigration Act guaranteed Commonwealth citizens settled here by January 1973 an absolute right to bring their families to Britain. The new Bill 'eliminates the advantage conferred by the 1971 Act'. In racist Britain wealth alone will confer rights to a normal family life. With this new proposed legislation only those who prove they will have 'no recourse to public funds' have a chance of uniting with their families.

Vicious as the 1971 Act was, it did contain rights to legally appeal against Home Office decisions. The new Bill removes these rights for anyone who has lived in Britain for less than 7 years. It also promises to remove the right of appeal for black people who on trying to enter Britain



Douglas Hurd

find the Home Office has challenged their right to settle here. It is in fact taking forward the process of criminalising those who fall foul of Britain's immigration laws. The new Bill will also make 'overstaying' a 'continuing offence'. In 1982 the House of Lords ruled that this 'offence' could be committed only once. Now black people will be prosecuted for each day they 'overstay'.

The published Bill does not care to conceal its racism. Its second clause 'prevents a polygamous wife with the right to abode in the United Kingdom from exercising that right'. Not even on the Home Office's own racist accounts do polygamous wives present an 'immigration problem'. There are only about 25 a year. This clause has been included only to whip up a disgusting racist chauvinism against black people. Not surprisingly, Clause 6 exempts European Community (ie white) members from any of its restrictions.

Socialists in Britain must join the campaign to fight this new Bill as part of a movement to defeat all immigration controls. The RCG is organising a speaking tour across the country to discuss the Bill. Come to these meetings and join us in our fight.

Black workers fight racist council

Over 100 people disrupted a Leeds Council Education Department meeting on 25 November in protest against its long-standing racist policies. Of 19 posts advertised in the department, 17 have been filled - none by black people and selection procedures were conducted by an all-white, male panel.

In response to the protestors' anger Labour councillors, including the chair, walked out and the police were called. The demonstrators fought to be heard and after Tory councillors agreed to listen, the chair and others returned.

A week earlier black education workers

in Chapeltown refused to cooperate with the department's all white management because of the lower pay for black staff compared to white, and lack of promotion. 'We are sick and tired of being given the "race" posts at the lowest levels of the service'.

The black workers have formed the 'Chapeltown Community Action Group' and are organising against the Department. Their demands are: the 17 appointments be declared void; the posts be re-advertised and the selection/interview committee includes black people and women.

Alexa Byrne

Police assault Glasgow anti-racists

On Saturday 28 November four members of the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign (VMDC), including FRFI supporters, were violently arrested in Glasgow at a picket of the fascist British National Party (BNP). A march and rally opposing the BNP meeting had been organised by a number of anti-racist groups including the Scottish Asian Action Committee. Over 400 people turned out to march through Glasgow city centre.

The fascists were meeting in the nearby Ingram Hotel. Around 100 people formed an

impromptu picket, attacked immediately by the police, who arrested the four claiming they had tried to 'storm the hotel'. Three have been charged with obstructing the footpath and resisting arrest. The fourth faces three charges of police assault and one of attempting to release a prisoner.

It is vital that the four are defended. The RCG will participate in a defence campaign on this issue making its long political experience available to defeat this latest police attack.

Glasgow FRFI

Law Lords new threat to Tamils

On 16 December five Law Lords gave racist Home Secretary Douglas Hurd the power to deport six Tamils to persecution and possible death in Sri Lanka. Their decision overrules the Appeal Court judgement of Sir John Donaldson, Master of the Rolls, that asylum should be considered, on the basis of the Tamils' fears for their safety. Hurd is being allowed to ignore all the independent evidence of torture, murder and atrocities committed against the Tamils and their supporters.

The precedent has now been set for the wholesale deportation of asylum-seekers and refugees. In future they can simply be turned away at the port of entry without the right of appeal. Another 500 Tamils are among the 6500 refugees who will be anxiously waiting to hear the result of an attempt by the six Tamils' lawyers to take the case to the European Commission of Human Rights to prevent the deportations.

The Law Lords' decision brings into question Britain's signing of the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees - which

specifies that decisions should be made based on the applicant's statements rather than on a judgement of the situation in the applicant's country of origin. It is quite clear that the judgement made by Hurd and the ruling class will be based on their political affiliations to the country of origin, and upon their desire to prevent black people from coming to Britain. For the ruling class considerations of life and death of black people do not enter into the equation.

Virman Man

Black community under siege

The Manchester police headed by James Anderton - who wants to flog prisoners until they beg for mercy - have used the tragic death of Elsa Hannaway as a passport to arrest 1,200 black people in Moss Side and the surrounding areas.

SONIA HUGHES

On 30 October, Mrs Elsa Hannaway from the Manchester black community was brutally murdered in Whitworth Park. A wanted poster was designed so vague that any black person with rastafarian locks, wearing a black, green and gold tam, could be mistaken for the alleged killer. Using their 'investigation' as a pretext, the police arrested 1,200 black people. They conducted dawn raids on houses, smashing in front doors and searching people without

warrants. Many of those arrested had all their clothes confiscated for 'forensic tests', while others were detained for up to three days with only paper suits to wear.

The simmering anger of the local youth expressed itself at two mass meetings. Local community leaders were attacked along with Manchester City Council for doing nothing about the police attacks. RCG members received enthusiastic applause when they stressed the importance of the youth organising themselves and placing no reliance on those who claim to be leaders.

VMDC defeats police march ban



Police attempt to disperse demonstration

Over 300 people assembled in Piccadilly Gardens on 27 November to defy the police ban on this regular Friday night VMDC demonstration. The VMDC march was caught in a 9 day ban on all marches invoked specifically to halt the pro-Irish Manchester Martyrs march of Sunday 22 November. After an hour's rally, the majority of those assembled linked arms and stepped into the road to begin the regular march.

ADRIAN LEVY

Some quarter mile down, a horde of foot and mounted police barred the route and attempted to forcibly disperse the demonstration. Their threats of mass arrests frightened no one. Distressed by the VMDC's determination and the presence of TV, radio and newspaper crews, the police retreated and allowed a further rally to take place hoping the march would then voluntarily disperse. They were wrong.

Denied, for the moment, the ability to walk on the street, the marchers took over the pavement and continued singing and chanting slogans. To no avail the police again blocked the route and threatened arrests. Escorted by some 60 demoralised police the marchers eventually arrived to a great welcome at the Church.

The VMDC's mobilisation to defy the ban exposed the cowardly role of the Labour controlled Manchester City Council.

When Manchester police chief Anderton first applied for the ban, the Policy Committee agreed immediately. A week later this same Council issued an 'angry' statement denouncing Anderton's 'sinister abuse' of the public order laws.

At the rally the SWP and RCP opposed making a stand. The SWP used their speech to attack the VMDC 'advising' against any attempt to march and instead proposing petitioning and leafletting! Unwilling to challenge the police the SWP and RCP, rolled up their banners and left just as the VMDC registered a success in the struggle for democratic rights. We hope that the SWP and RCP comrades having assessed the VMDC's successful action will not make the same mistake again.

1987 THATCHER'S ONSLAUGHT

1987 saw the return to power of the most reactionary Tory government of the post-war period with the second largest majority since 1945. They were re-elected despite record levels of unemployment, 16 million people living in poverty and public provision of education, health, housing and transport no longer meeting the needs of millions of people.

An array of legislation introduced in 1987 or planned by this government for the future threatens devastating consequences for millions of people.

- Fowler's **Employment Bill** is essentially a scabs charter. It is the fourth legislative attack on trade union rights since 1980. Young people who either 'voluntarily leave' or are 'dismissed' from training schemes will lose their right to benefits. The **Social Security Bill** will take benefits away from those who have not worked for 2 full years and single payments for those on social

security will be abolished along with the death grant.

- Baker's **Education Bill** will allow the rich to opt out of the declining and purposefully underfunded state schools.
- The **Poll Tax** will be introduced to crudely rob the poor to give to the rich and threatens to disenfranchise sections of the working class and oppressed.
- The new **Immigration Bill** will further restrict the right of entry of black people to join their families, deny them any appeal in the courts and cut off welfare benefits. Refugees of brutal regimes will continue to be denied entry.
- The **Housing Bill** is a Rachman's Charter which will turn whole estates over to private landlords, deregulate rents in the private sector and throw thousands of low paid and unemployed out onto the streets.

Coupled with myriad spending cuts, Thatcher is remorselessly pursuing the in-

terests of her own class. Only the stock-market crash has slowed the rush to sell off cheaply millions of pounds worth of publicly owned industry.

Part and parcel of the Tory strategy is the legislation which tries to ensure that any protest is stifled.

- The **Public Order Act**, introduced in 1987 limits the right to demonstrate and has given the police extraordinary powers to criminalise political protest.
- The **Criminal Justice Bill** will strengthen the powers of the judiciary, abolish the right to challenge juries and threatens to remove the right to silence.
- Harsh sentences have been passed on those who have dared to stand up for their rights - intended as a warning to those who might protest in the future. In 1987 Winston Silcott, Engin Raghup and Mark Braithwaite were framed for the murder of PC Blakelock at Broadwater Farm. They have so far been



IN THATCHER'S BRITAIN THE POOR GET POORER

denied the right to appeal.

- Thatcher continues her efforts to deny the British public the right to know about or protest about the criminal activities of the British secret service. Employees in the public sector - nurses

and doctors - are threatened with the sack if they try to speak out against the consequences of spending cuts.

No one but the rich and powerful will be safe from Thatcher's onslaught.

1987



DAVID REED & LORNA REID

1987 BUILDING THE FIGHTBACK

A REAL OPPOSITION

A real working class opposition can only be built from below. To succeed it has to break with the rotten, backward prejudices of an essentially racist and pro-imperialist British Labour movement. Its methods must be those of the oppressed sections of the working class: open and democratic action amongst the people, out on the streets and at points where it can lead to the most effective and direct action against the Thatcher regime.

That this method of political work can even now hold back Thatcher's onslaught is shown by the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign which has for one year resisted all plans to deport Viraj Mendis to Sri Lanka. Resolutely defying the government, with Viraj taking sanctuary in a church, and basing itself on the working class community in Hulme, especially that part involved with the church, the VMDC has won broad based support throughout Britain, including the churches, trade unions and the Labour Party.

City AA's non-stop picket outside the South African Embassy has for over 20 months been the focus in Britain of effective opposition to apartheid and its British backers, resisting all efforts of the Thatcher government, the police and the official and unofficial forces from the South African Embassy to have it removed. Starting from the core of young working class people, black and white, City AA, with open and democratic methods of work, has gained the support and commitment of broad layers of opposition to apartheid.

At the centre of both these campaigns lies the communist politics of the Revolutionary Communist Group and its newspaper *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*

1987 LOYAL OPPOSITION

4000 MARCH FOR VIRAJ



WHERE IS THE OPPOSITION?

The humiliating defeat of the Labour Party in the 1987 election has only served to force it further to the right as it tries to appeal to the middle class and better-off sections of the working class. At its conference in September 1987, the left were further marginalised, their attacks on the leadership being mere cries in the wilderness as Kinnock consolidated his hold on the party.

A Labour programme which will appeal to the '£400 a week docker who owns some shares, a house, a car, and property in Marbella' has taken precedence over the needs of the 16 million who live in poverty. Kinnock has taken on board the backward, chauvinistic and reactionary prejudices of the labour aristocracy, who long since shifted their allegiance to the Thatcher camp: on national security - 'if a secret's worth having it's worth keeping'; on Ireland - Kinnock described the RUC murder of eight unarmed IRA volunteers at Loughgall as a 'significant victory against the men of terrorism'; and on the proposed ban on local authorities pro-

moting homosexuality or the teaching in schools of the acceptability of homosexuality Labour has joined with the Tories in an anti-gay and anti-lesbian crusade while claiming to defend gay and lesbian rights. In the 1987 election, Labour categorised the 'gay issue' as a vote loser among the middle class and labour aristocrats.

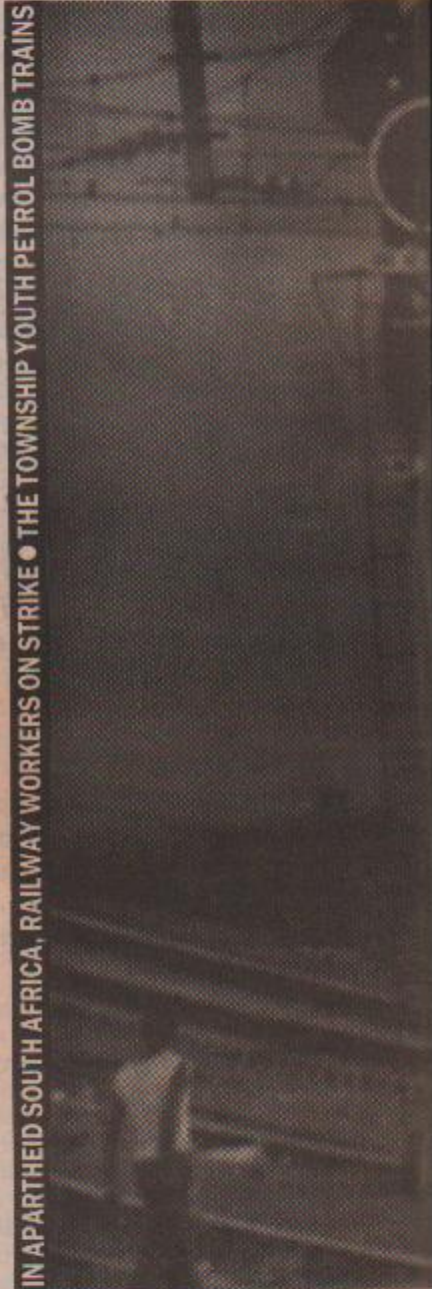
Throughout the year the Labour Party has totally failed to provide a focus of effective opposition to the Thatcher government and it is unlikely to ever do so. Some Labour councils are now enthusiastically implementing drastic spending cuts on behalf of Thatcher. Social democracy under pressure exposes its real class character as previously radical Labour councils like Camden attack the poor and resort to racist policies, forcibly repatriating homeless Irish people.

As the consequences of Thatcher's policies are dramatically highlighted by events like the Kings Cross fire disaster and the deaths of babies waiting for life-saving operations in NHS hospitals starved of funds, it is not the Labour Party leading the public protest but outraged professionals and public sector workers, some previously Thatcher's supporters, now faced in their working lives with criminal neglect.

Outraged professionals and Tory backbenchers will only go so far as their class interests allow. Real opposition has yet to emerge. There are some signs of it as women in Penzance occupy a maternity hospital faced with closure, nurses take to the streets in Truro, and opponents of the cuts in Council services, tenants and the homeless occupy Council Chambers and disrupt Council meetings in Manchester, Camden and Westminster. Pockets of opposition are emerging, but they are still few, lacking political leadership and direction, some easily falling prey to the opportunist grip of the official Labour movement and its left allies.



KINNOCK-KISSING BABIES



IN APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA, RAILWAY WORKERS ON STRIKE • THE TOWNSHIP YOUTH PETROL BOMB TRAINS

1987 IMPE

1987 - CLOSE TO THE BRINK

1987 has sharply exposed the relative economic decline of US imperialism. At the beginning of 1987, the USA became the world's largest debtor nation, dramatically illustrating the rapid erosion of US imperialism's economic strength in relation to its imperialist competitors, in particular Japan and West Germany. This year saw the Reagan administration implement trade sanctions against Japan for the first time since the second world war. A trade war is on the horizon. It was this background and the fear that the massive US debt resulting from its growing current account and budget deficits would force the US economy, and following it, the world economy, into deep recession, that led to October's stockmarket crash.

The crash exposed the fragile foundations of capitalist prosperity. The capitalist system, as one commentator put it, 'is alarmingly close to the brink'.

IMPERIALISM'S COUNTER-REVOLUTION

While imperialism does not feel strong enough to directly involve its own forces in destroying Socialist and progressive regimes, its support for counter-revolution in the form of 'low-intensity warfare' has been stepped up in 1987 through its backing for reactionary regimes and counter-revolutionary armies.

In Afghanistan and Nicaragua US imperialism's financial and military support of counter-revolutionary gangs is putting unbearable strains on the economic and social development of these countries, forcing their governments into political concessions in order to halt the war. In Angola and Mozambique the same process is taking place as imperialism's representative in the region, South Africa, through its support for UNITA thugs and MNR bandits, continues to inflict severe

economic and social damage. The support of the Cuban internationalist fighters has been a crucial factor in preventing the imperialists from totally devastating Angola.

In Ireland, the Enniskillen bombing was used as the pretext for increased collaboration between British imperialism and the puppet Haughey regime in the Twenty Six Counties in an all-out attack on the Republican Movement. The reality of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is now clear - increased co-operation between the two governments to destroy all effective opposition to the British occupation of the Six Counties of Ireland. A difficult year lies ahead for revolutionary forces in both parts of Ireland.

THE PEOPLE FIGHT BACK

In the Philippines the US-backed Aquino government has increasingly resorted to

low intensity operations and the use of terror-gangs to destroy the people's movement. Coup attempts by the military have only served to shift the government further to the right. However, Aquino has been unable to halt the progress of the National Democratic Front and its armed wing the New People's Army.

In South Korea massive street protests by thousands of students, workers and church radicals forced elections on the regime, and pushed the military dictator President Chun Doo Hwang to step down. As we go to press the results show that Chun's hand-picked successor Roh Tae Woo has been elected with 37 per cent of the vote amidst accusations of fraud. The people's movement will fight on when Roh Tae Woo continues along the lines of his mentor.

In Palestine the brutal might of Israel, imperialism's puppet in the region, has not crushed the fighting spirit of the Palestinian youth in occupied Gaza and the West Bank. That unconquerable human spirit of

those fighting for justice shows itself as the youth take on the Israeli army with stones and petrol bombs.

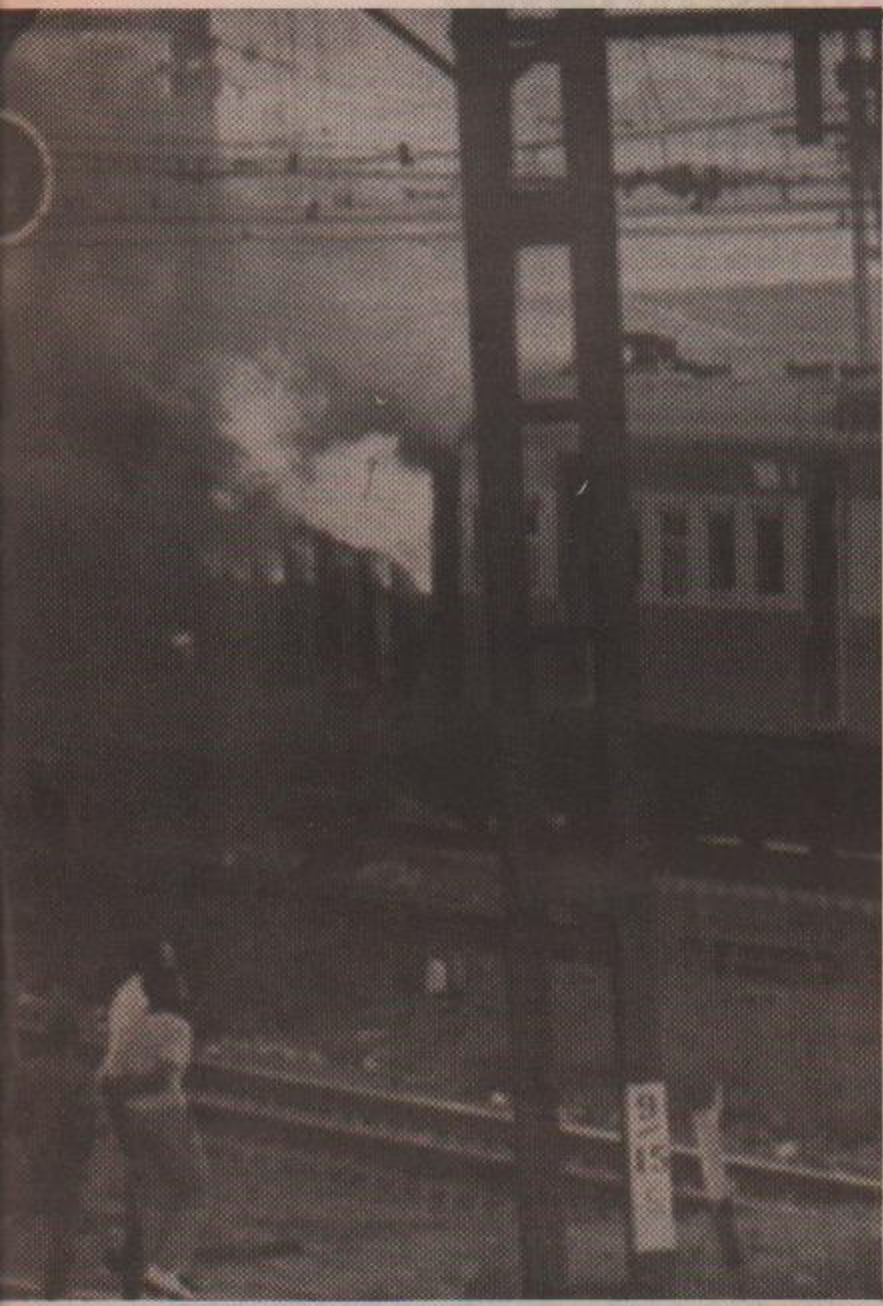
In Sri Lanka the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam faced not only the Sri Lankan army, backed by British imperialism, but also, under the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement faced the murderous assault of the Indian Army. Forced from their stronghold in Jaffna, the Tigers are regrouping to continue guerilla warfare against Indian and Sri Lankan armies.

In South Africa, the brutal repression and mass detention without trial of thousands of political activists, the banning of political organisations and draconian censorship have made open political organisation almost impossible. This is the pressure that is the background to the ANC meetings with sections of the Afrikaner ruling class and liberals in Dakar. However the fighting spirit of the people has not been crushed but turned to new outlets and taken on new forms.

1987 saw the trade union movement take

the centre of the stage - 300,000 striking miners resisted the might of the racist regime and the mining companies for three weeks, demonstrating the enormous potential of the black working class. The strike staged by the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union against the victimisation of one worker ended in victory as the workers supported by sections of the township communities forced the South African Transport management to reinstate the 18,000 sacked workers. Despite the regime's concentrated attempts to destroy the people's movement, 1987 has seen the emergence of a focus of opposition centred around the organised working class.

Whilst we go into 1988 confident that the socialist countries, the working class and oppressed peoples will be able to halt the imperialist offensive, we also recognise the urgency of building movements in the imperialist countries which will take the side of the socialist countries and oppressed peoples fighting imperialism.



IMPERIALISM ON THE BRINK

In 1987 the total debt of Third World nations exceeded \$1 trillion (£1000bn). It has become economically and politically impossible for these nations to pay back this debt. By May this year, the major US banks were forced to massively increase their loan loss reserves and to declare that the real value of their Third World loans were at least 20-30% below their book value. By the end of June, British banks followed suit. Three of the major British banks reported losses for the six months to 30 June. The crisis is far from over and the coming US recession will inevitably bring it to a head.

PRESSURE ON THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

The stalemate between socialism and imperialism of the last few years still exists with no significant change on either side. Imperialism is however stepping up its relentless pressure to break that stalemate and regain the initiative. Given that there is

no sign of any countervailing force against imperialism internally - from the essentially backward working class movements in the imperialist countries - this is putting great pressure on the socialist countries themselves, the people's republics and the liberation movements.

The Soviet Union desperately needs a halt in the arms race to end the massive drain on its economic resources which is holding back the political, economic and social development of the country. This is behind Soviet concessions in the recent arms negotiations and the growing pressures on the Soviet Union to pull out of Afghanistan and limit support for Nicaragua. Perestroika, the attempt to restructure the Soviet economy through greater reliance on market forces, and glasnost, the necessary opening on the political front, are further expressions of the desperate need for the Soviet Union to advance economically to be able to withstand the escalating economic, political and military challenge of imperialism.

1988 ORGANISING FOR THE FUTURE

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST GROUP

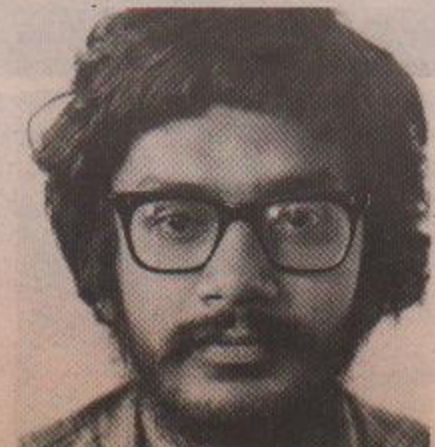
This year the political resources of the RCG have been mainly directed into two political campaigns: City of London Anti-Apartheid Group's Non Stop Picket and the VMDC.

In spite of the opposition of the official AAM and their allies in the Labour Party and trade union movement, City AA has built a 5,000 strong March for Mandela in March and a 1,000 strong March for Moses Mayekiso in October, while maintaining the Non-Stop Picket outside the South African Embassy. On 2 July, after over 170 arrests, it defeated a seven-week long ban on protests outside the Embassy imposed by the police. Starting from Thatcher's rejects - young, unemployed, black and white - City AA has won to its side thousands of supporters determined to see effective opposition to apartheid.

It is City AA's weekly, open and totally democratic meetings to organise its activities, and its non-sectarian approach to solidarity work - supporting all trends of the liberation movements in South Africa and Namibia and working with all trends of the solidarity movement in Britain - which have laid the foundation for its success. City AA also defends all those arrested on its activities, mostly successfully - of the 566 charges from 376 arrests so far heard, 87 per cent have resulted in acquittals.

This year the consistent political work of City AA has shown many anti-apartheid activists, as well as sections of the movement in South Africa, that the sectarian character of the official Anti-Apartheid Movement is a major obstacle to solidarity. The issue of Moses Mayekiso was a decisive turning point. The AAM and its trade union and Labour Party allies condemned the campaign as a 'personality cult'. Fundamentally for them, Mayekiso has the wrong politics - he rejects the politics of the South African Communist Party, the most influential political force in the British AAM. The movement in South Africa however, regards Moses Mayekiso as a central political figure who

symbolises the unity of the community-based struggle and the trade union struggle. For this reason the trade union federation, COSATU, passed a motion supporting all campaigns in defence of Moses Mayekiso. COSATU has struck a mighty blow for a principled solidarity movement here in Britain.



VIRAJ MENDIS • IN SANCTUARY

The VMDC has organised along similar lines to City AA. During the year of Viraj's sanctuary in the Church of the Ascension, it has organised a major conference in April attended by 500 people and a 4,000 strong demonstration against deportations - the biggest ever in Manchester. It has repelled racist attacks on activists and the church, and through its example has given courage to other anti-deportation campaigns. Throughout the year the VMDC, strongly backed by the priests and congregation of the Church of Ascension, has brought to the public's attention the iniquities of Britain's racist immigration laws. Through its determined and non-sectarian campaigning methods it forced onto the agenda of this year's Labour Party Conference, a motion, passed unanimously to defend Viraj's right to stay in Britain.

If the pockets of resistance now emerging against the Thatcher government's attacks are to be turned into an effective movement, the lessons of the organisational and political experience of City AA and the VMDC must be spread. It is when communists put to the fore the interests of

oppressed that such campaigns, while not immune to the pressures of opportunism, are capable of fighting and defeating them. The Revolutionary Communist Group over the next year will attempt to take these lessons to the newly emerging struggles of the working class against Thatcherism.

The RCG has argued that if a new movement is to be built it must be centred on two principles. First, it must start from the most oppressed sections of the working class, defending and pushing forward their interests. Second, it must forge an alliance with the oppressed masses fighting imperialism all over the world.

Our newspaper, *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, throughout 1987, has consistently given voice to the political interests and political struggles of the most oppressed sections of the working class in Britain. At the same time, it has informed our readers of the crucial, heroic struggle of oppressed peoples fighting for freedom, justice and democracy against imperialism. In the last six months representatives of these movements have been given a political voice in Britain. Through the pages of FRFI they have offered to the British working class the lessons of their struggles and in return demanded solidarity and support. From Luis Jalandoni of the National Democratic Front (Philippines), leaders of the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, women relatives of Irish political prisoners, to leaders of different trends in the South African movement, links are being established with the vanguard fighters against imperialism in different parts of the world.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism will continue to build these links recognising that it is the unity of the working class in the imperialist countries with the working class and oppressed masses fighting imperialism in the oppressed nations which offers the only possibility for creating a world free of poverty, racism and injustice. We enter 1988 confident that the forces for socialism will be strengthened and that this unity can and will be built. The RCG is determined to be at the centre of these forces fighting to build the movement in Britain.

JOIN US!



NICARAGUA

Sandinistas defend their revolution

The US ruling class is determined to wring concessions out of the Sandinista Front and undermine the Nicaraguan revolution. Having effectively, militarily defeated the contras, the Sandinistas will face an enemy wielding enormous resources and able to wage a definite war.

TREVOR RAYNE

Nicaragua the cost of the US sustained contra war has been: over 45,760 lives since 1979; one in ten of the workforce in military service; \$2 billion in lost production; half of government expenditure diverted into defence; soaring inflation and illicit markets.

These costs amount to enormous pressure on the Sandinistas to make concessions to gain peace. That is why they signed the Central American Peace Plan on 7 August.

Predictably, indirect negotiations, on 3 December, held in the Dominican Republic, ended in stalemate. The Sandinistas proposed a month long ceasefire during which the mercenaries would surrender their weapons and, in return, the Sandinista government would pardon all counter-revolutionary prisoners, suspend the State of Emergency, and allow contra elements to take part in legal political life. The contras estimating that they stand little chance in the open political arena are intent on weakening the main pillars of the revolution. Thus they demanded a reduction in the Sandinista army; the dismantling of the neighbourhood defence committees (the basic unit of people's power in the Nicaraguan state); and the breaking up of the agricultural cooperatives and their militias.

Like Cardinal Obando, the intermediary in the Dominican Republic, the contras called for direct face-to-face negotiations and a Christmas ceasefire. The last ceasefire, unilaterally called by the Sandinistas, from 5 October to 5 November, won over hundreds of contra defectors but was used by the CIA to mount a massive munitions airlift and by the contras to launch a wave of brutal attacks on civilians as they sought to expand their field of operations.

This time Ortega was firm:

'Our position is that we cannot give a truce to the contras... We are going to continue fighting them tooth and nail...'

US SEEKS TO FOMENT DIVISIONS

Five years of American support for the contras as a military force failed to gain them a political role in Nicaragua, but now... the Arias peace plan [is seeking] the same end... (The Washington Post)

Under US pressure Costa Rican President Arias and Honduran President Azcona demanded that the Sandinistas negotiate with the contras, although they were not obliged to, under the plan, until the contras lay down their arms. On 5 November President Ortega told a mass meeting in Managua that the Sandinistas were prepared to enter indirect negotiations. Such talks run the danger of boosting morale and providing them with a platform from which to appeal to the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie.

The Sandinistas have outstripped all other signatories in their compliance with the Peace Plan. They pardoned 985



Top: President Ortega of Nicaragua. Middle left: political prisoners being released under the peace plan. Middle right: President Arias of Costa Rica. Bottom: Nicaraguans bury another comrade murdered by the Contras.

political prisoners, including 200 former Somoza National Guards. Understandably, among a people that has lost 100,000 in ten years of fighting, this provoked bitter opposition from some supporters of the revolution. President Ortega also accepted that the contras be allowed 'humanitarian aid' from independent sources and invited Speaker of the US Senate, Democrat Jim Wright, to join Obando as a mediator in negotiations.

Throughout these manoeuvres and Sandinista concessions the Reagan administration has been threatening a \$270 million aid request for the contras in the New Year in the hope of extorting yet more concessions.

No doubt the US ruling class is hoping to foment divisions in the Sandinista Front. The Sandinistas are an alliance of different class forces: workers, peasants and elements of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie outside the Somoza family

oligarchy. It is composed of different political trends: communists, revolutionary social democrats and Christians of assorted orientations. If, reasons US social democracy, the Central American presidents place enough demands in support of the contras on the Sandinistas then the weight and legitimacy of the contras will grow and sections of the Sandinistas, facing an alternative of unending war, may relent and make concessions that lower the guard of the revolution.

Imperialism never gives up. The Nicaraguan revolution has survived all that has been thrown at it: the consciousness of the revolutionary workers and peasants has strengthened as a result of the counter-revolutionary war. Concessions would not have to be made at all if there was a real, active anti-imperialist movement in the capitalist heartlands, able to force social democracy either out of the way or into opposition to counter-revolution.



Victim of Duvalierist gangs

HAITI

Duvalierists' revenge on democrats

A reign of terror forced the Haitian Electoral Council to call off the country's first free Presidential elections in 30 years. During the campaign two candidates were assassinated, Port-au-Prince's main food market was burned down and dozens of people were killed. On 29 November, polling day, at least 34 people were murdered and 76 wounded in the capital alone.

General Namphy blamed the Electoral Council for the bloody fiasco, and promptly dissolved it. His army-dominated National Governing Council (CNG) has won a grim victory, and the Duvalierists have taken revenge for the February 1986 upheaval which drove Jean-Claude Duvalier into exile.

When the Electoral Council stood by the Haitian constitution and barred former Duvalierists from running for office the counter-revolution went to war. Soldiers looked on or joined in as armed gangs terrorised opponents and their supporters' neighbourhoods. US aid doubled the size of the army from 6,000 in 1986 swelling its ranks with members of the Duvalierists' notorious death squads - the Tontons

Macoutes. This summer, either in army uniform or plain clothes, they killed some 50 people protesting at Namphy's attempts to abolish the Electoral Council, and massacred 300 peasants demanding land reform.

November's slaughter took place with the US looking on with some satisfaction. It has yet to construct a stable and apparently respectable alternative to Duvalier's discredited regime. For the moment the US is content that Namphy, the military and the Tontons Macoutes are engaged in a war to decapitate the leadership of the opposition, particularly the left, and terrorise the masses.

Namphy has called new elections for 17 January. This time it will include the Duvalierists and the Macoutes. The major opposition candidates have vowed to boycott the elections. The opposition is meanwhile organising to strike back. During November vigilante brigades were formed involving 8,000 people to protect candidates and poor neighbourhoods. These are the germinating forms of the force that will finally settle accounts with the Duvalierists and what they represent - US imperialism.

John Bryan

CENTRAL AMERICA

Repression in Honduras

until June 1988 and bring an additional 15,500 US troops into the region.

Mike Webber

When the Central American peace accord was signed on 7 August, President Azcona of 'USS Battleship Honduras' quickly enumerated the parts of the agreement that did not apply to his country. He did not set up a National Reconciliation Commission until November on the grounds that it was not needed as there was no armed opposition - at a stroke ignoring the accord's other tasks such as opposition's access to the media, repeal of 'anti terrorist' legislation, and release of peasants agitating for land reform - critical in Honduras, second only to Haiti for poverty in the Western Hemisphere. Not until mid-November did Azcona announce any intention of dismantling the contra bases in Honduras. Thus far the 'intention' remains just that: a statement.

Meanwhile, in October, 30 peasants were detained, and several tortured 'for security reasons'. They had been involved in land seizures after exhausting six years of legal procedures against government bodies. Some were accused of kidnappings, bank robberies and murder, and membership of the Lorenzo Zelaya Revolutionary Patriotic Front guerrillas. In December the Pentagon commenced 'Fuertes Caminos '88 Honduras' military exercises which will take place along the Nicaraguan border and last

FMLN refuse ceasefire

Ruben Zamora and Guillermo Ungo, leaders of the political wing of the FMLN/FDR alliance, returned to El Salvador in November 1987 for a short visit after seven years of exile. Their return was made possible by the resurgence of the mass popular struggle and the Central American Peace Pact.

Zamora and Ungo are social democratic in orientation and President Duarte was hoping they would disavow the FMLN guerrilla struggle led by communists and consistent revolutionary democrats. He was disappointed. The two leaders' public meetings were turned into mass rallies in support of the FMLN.

The FMLN have thus far refused Duarte's call for a ceasefire making it clear that negotiations can only be based upon a recognition of the FMLN as a major political force. Meanwhile the FMLN's campaign of economic sabotage has been stepped up, and in September they claimed 700 military casualties. In October they launched an important military offensive dedicated to Che Guevara '20 Years of Latin American struggle - Long live Che's guerrillas'.

John Bryan

Palestinian youth fight Zionists

For ten days and more in December 1987, Palestinian youth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip staged the most powerful uprisings against Zionism since the June 1967 occupation. Across dozens of refugee camps thousands of youth using only petrol bombs, rocks and iron bars challenged the might of the 'Israeli' army. Braving Zionist bullets, they taunted their enemy 'Go on shoot me or you will die for our Palestinian land'.

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

structured security forces who used tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition against demonstrators proudly unfurling the green, red and black Palestinian flag. On occasion, the youth snatched their dead from enemy hands to mount impromptu funerals and nationalist demonstrations. In East Jerusalem a two day commercial strike was followed by youth stor-

refugee camps off to journalists, threatening to 'smash your camera

British Director of UNRWA reported a string of beatings and abuse. Another UN official reported Zionist soldiers urinating in the water supply of Khan Younis camp. A hospital in Gaza had gas grenades dropped into its grounds and ambulances were fired on to stop the wounded being taken in.

The December uprisings were sparked off by an 'Israeli' truck in



Youth arrested by Israeli thug



Youth from the Bureij refugee camp in Gaza fight the Zionists

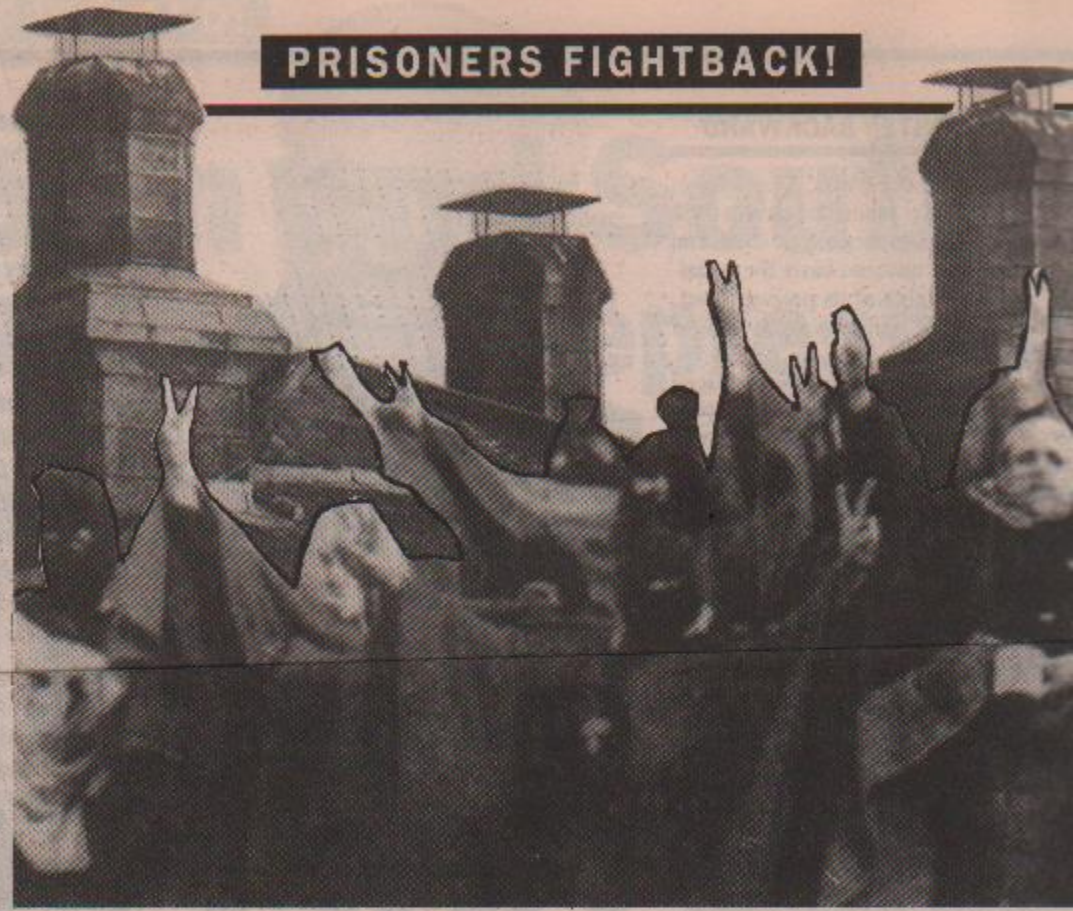
ming banks and other Zionist establishments. In Nazareth, in the biggest demonstration in 'Israel' by Palestinians, thousands marched in solidarity with the West Bank compatriots.

Zionist Prime Minister Shamir claimed that 'these criminals know that the army is trying not to wound or kill them'. Yet within 10 days 29 Palestinians had been killed - young children of 10 and 11 as well as people as old as 50. To deter the youth, 'Israeli' soldiers used a young Palestinian as a shield, tied to the bonnet of their jeep. They imposed curfews and sealed the

Gaza 'accidentally' ploughing into a Palestinian taxi rank crushing four Palestinians to death. But it was more than just a response to a single incident. *Hadashot*, an 'Israeli' newspaper, wrote that the occupied territories 'have become more like Soweto... densely populated, poor, with shameful living conditions and full of hatred.' The uprising was a revolt against these conditions imposed by 20 years of Zionist occupation.

But twenty years of racist oppression has failed to break the will of the poor and oppressed. December demonstrated its indestruc-

tability. Press reports speak of a greater degree of popular organisation and leadership in the current battles. Despite Shamir, who described the youth as 'terrorists', 'criminals', and 'hooligans', the youth will continue to challenge the might of the US financed Zionist military machine. Despite their current isolation, the treachery of Arab regimes, and the collaborationists in their own ranks, the poor and oppressed in Palestine have again proclaimed their determination to fight Zionism and imperialism until victory or death.



Barlinnie Trial

The trial of nine Barlinnie prisoners for the prison uprising last January ended in late November. Three men were found guilty of 'mobbing and rioting'. Allan McLeish was given ten years on top of the six month sentence he is currently serving. William Marshall received eight years on top of the five years he is now currently serving. Hugh Twigg got four years on top of his current one year sentence.

The state has taken revenge on these three prisoners for daring to take action against brutality in Scottish prisons. But the prison authorities did not have it all their own way. The other six men on trial were acquitted of rioting and

all nine defendants were found not guilty on the murder charges against them.

In early December, Sammy Ralston, who carried out a rooftop protest and hunger strike against brutality at Barlinnie, was found

not guilty on charges of assault. was, however, sentenced to three months for breach of the peace.

Since the trials, we have received information that all the prisoners who were on trial (including those acquitted on all charges) are being held in solitary confinement.

As we go to press, Barlinnie is again boiling up. At the beginning of December there were many violent incidents. The prison authorities cannot disguise the reality of brutality and fightback in Barlinnie prison.

Graham Johns

Hundreds in police cells

Remember four years ago Leon Brittan, then Home Secretary, promised to end the use of police cells because of overcrowding in prisons? The 'promise' lasted two days into 1984. Well, Douglas Hurd, his successor was far more ambitious when he declared that they would be emptied 'within about a fortnight'. Over two weeks later on 18 November this year there were still 800 men, women and young people locked in police cells.

Regular readers of *FRFI* will know of the appalling conditions in the cells, built to hold people overnight at the most. Windowless, damp, below ground, no exercise or proper washing facilities, a constant stench of urine etc. Access for medical reports is impossible

so mentally ill and sick prisoners have no care for weeks on end.

And the numbers have kept on rising, at least fifty a week. Recently it has come to light that at least 230 young people, many of them minors (16 or under) are being held in police cells. A boy of 15

was kept for over twelve days in a London police cell. His mother complained about the cold and a policeman suggested she bring coats for her son. Social workers are being denied access to the youngsters due to lack of space. They have no access to education or exercise and simply lie for days on end in disgusting, deadening conditions.

The majority of people in police cells are awaiting trial and are sometimes remanded hundreds of miles from their homes, families and friends. A London boy, just turned 17, was sent to Chester-Street police station, Durham, a will likely serve his four month a day sentence there.

Home Office spokesman has wittered on about 'logistic problems' and 'unsatisfactory conditions'. Hurd blames industrial action by the Prison Officers Association, despite the fact that this ceased three weeks before 18 November. Prison Officers had been refusing to admit new prisoners to five jails: Wandsworth, Pentonville, Chelmsford, Camp Hill and Ashford. Their action was over Home Office rules stopping overtime for POs. During their action overcrowding at these jails was relieved, but 1,300 prisoners ended up in police cells.

As we have said repeatedly Hurd's failure is a direct result of hard-line Tory law and order policies - locking up thousands of working class people. Hurd has now threatened the right of 100,000 prisoners to have food brought in. There are over 49,200 men and women in jail and places for 42,500. The cost of imprisoning people in police cells since April 1986 was over £1 million!

Alexa Byrne

Alexa Byrne

SRI LANKA

Tamil Tigers fight on

Behind the Indian Army imposed news blockade, the Tamil people and their vanguard the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), are fighting on against systematic large scale atrocities. Some 2000 innocent Tamil civilians have been killed since the 10 October Indian Army offensive against Jaffna. There are now 400,000 refugees in the Tamil areas. The Jaffna Peninsula is subjected to aerial bombardment, shelling and disruption of food, water and electricity supplies.

Under the pretext of searching for Tiger leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran villagers are rounded up, shops burned down and young women raped.

The Indian government is seeking to exploit the people's war weariness to force them to abandon the Tigers and is offering economic incentives to guerillas

who surrender. This policy is not working: Tiger operations now span across the North and East of the island, Indian Army movements are restricted to major roads and they are relying on heavy artillery. They admit over 270 deaths. The Indian Army is preparing more atrocities like the 2 December assault on a Tamil mosque which took 13 lives. The Tigers are however prepared for prolonged guerilla warfare.

Trevor Rayne

Catalogue of deaths in custody

Three prisoners died in Wandsworth jail between 7 September and 21 October. David Padbury, Kenneth Muklo and Alan Prince were all found hanging from the bars of their cells.

Michael Flynn, aged 32, was being held on remand in Brixton prison awaiting psychiatric reports. He was found hanged in his cell on 4 November.

Mr Joseph Palombella, 40, was found hanged in a cell at Belle Vale police station, Liverpool, in mid-November. He had been arrested on suspicion of shoplifting.

The death of Mrs Rose-Anne McGee, 35, in a cell at Romford

police station, Essex, has provoked coroner, Dr Harold Price, to complain to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Peter Imbert. Mrs McGee collapsed after taking an overdose of paracetamol in the cell. At the inquest the jury returned a verdict of death by misadventure - neglect would have been more appropriate.

Alexa Byrne

NEP: ONE STEP BACKWARD



Mikhail Gorbachev criticised 'excesses'

'... if we assess the significance of collectivisation as a whole in consolidating socialism in the countryside, it was in the final analysis a transformation of fundamental importance.'

This is the first of a three part commentary on Mikhail Gorbachev's Report on the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution, a speech given on 2 November (page references are from the translation in Soviet Weekly 7 November 1987).

Gorbachev re-examined some of the most crucial episodes in the history of the USSR from 1917-41. This was not for academic reasons, but because many of the problems encountered by the USSR then exist today: the relationship between the USSR and imperialism; socialism and democracy; and the role of the party. This first article examines the question of collectivisation.

Every successful revolution in a predominantly peasant country (eg Nicaragua) faces the same problem as the USSR did in 1917, so the Soviet experience is also directly relevant to the oppressed nations today.

'No other course could be taken...'

CLASS WAR AND COLLECTIVISATION

ВРАГИ ПЯТИЛЕТКИ



Class enemies of the first five year plan including kulak, priest, Menshevik and rich landowner. From a poster c. 1930

THE FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN

The April-May 1929 Plan envisaged the rapid expansion of the basic industries – steel, coal and electricity. The annual growth rate for industry was to be between 17.5% and 21.5%. This breakneck pace made no economic sense, but was dictated by the political reason given by Stalin: 'We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do so, or we shall go under.' (Speech of 4 February 1931, CW 12 p40).

The first plan (completed in four years) was a colossal success: electricity production rose 165%, iron 88%, and steel 47%. The number of workers employed in large-scale industry rose by 108%.

Within 3½ years the Soviet Union moved from fifth to third place in the world for volume of industrial production. While the Soviet Union surged forward with a growth in industrial production of 86% between 1928-31, the capitalist world was in the grip of the Great Depression, with production falling by 29%, massive unemployment and wage cuts.

By contrast to the birth of industry under capitalism, based on the plunder of the colonies and the super-exploitation of the working class, the USSR had neither colonies (unlike Britain), for forced loans (Germany) nor cheap immigrant labour (USA).

Despite the priority of building heavy industry, every effort was made to increase cultural and social provisions for the working class. 17% of the total expenditure was earmarked for education, municipal services and housing.

The 8 hour day (6 hours for miners) established by the November 1922 Labour Code was not only maintained, but in fact reduced to 7 hours at the end of 1929. Other social provisions, such as retirement at 60 for men (50 for miners) and 55 for women, were far in advance of any capitalist country at that date.

Gorbachev refers to these achievements as '... a labour exploit of epoch-making significance, an exploit of liberated labour, an exploit of the Bolshevik Party.' (pv column 2). Yet, her argues, the methods of struggle were impermissible: '... the gross political errors and abuses committed by [Stalin] and by those around him, for which our people paid a heavy price and which had grave consequences for the life of our society.' (pvi column 1).

Could the Soviet Union have made its giant stride forward in any other way? Did Trotsky and the Opposition offer a credible alternative? What lay behind the purges and show trials of the 1930s?

These questions will form Part 2 of this series; Part 3 will analyse the position of the Soviet Union in the current period.

PATRICK NEWMAN

FRFI invites readers' comments.

wounded. The policy of conciliating the kulak had reached its limits.

The kulak danger was acute because there were signs that imperialism was considering intervention. The Locarno Pact (October 1925) between the leading European nations confirmed the isolation of the USSR. In 1927 the anti-Soviet forces gathered momentum: in May, the Soviet trade mission in London was raided and diplomatic relations were broken off; in October the Soviet Ambassador to France was expelled.

Increasingly threatened by imperialism, the USSR was as isolated as it had been in 1917. No other revolutionary movements had been successful; with the major exception of Germany, the revolutionary movement in the advanced industrial countries was very weak; and national liberation movements were only just emerging.

COLLECTIVISATION: TWO STEPS FORWARD

'Inasmuch as messrs. the imperialists have not so far decided to attack us directly, we must utilise this moment for a decisive advance in the economic development and collectivisation of millions of peasant households.' (Speech by Molotov 15 November 1929).

The Bolsheviks resolved to attack on two fronts: to expropriate the kulaks, using force if necessary, and to collectivise agriculture; and to rapidly build up large-

scale heavy industry.

The programme of collectivisation was announced on 7 November 1929; 10 days later, a plenum of the Central Committee appealed for 25,000 politically experienced industrial workers to go to the countryside to assist the process of collectivisation. Over 70,000 workers volunteered, and by the end of 1919 some 27,000 had been selected by party commissions.

The process was forced through at a great pace. On the eve of collectivisation, collective farms covered little more than 1% of the cultivated area. Within three months 57.6% of peasant households had been collectivised. It was recognised that as the process had been too hasty – about half of the collective farms were disbanded, and the process carried out more thoroughly. It was essentially achieved by the end of 1931 when 52.7% of the peasant households and 67.8% of the crop area was collectivised. This effected the destruction of the kulaks as a class.

But the kulaks took their revenge. In the same period, they slaughtered nearly a third of the cattle, half the sheep and goats and a quarter of the horses.

While recognising that '... no other course could be taken...' (pv column 2), Gorbachev is critical of the '... excesses [which] occurred in carrying out collectivisation...' (pv column 3), which, he considers, were the consequence of '... the erroneous "theory" of an aggravation of the class struggle in the course of socialist construction.' (pvi column 1).

But surely the (unnamed) author of this theory (Stalin) was correct when he argued that: 'In order to oust the kulaks as a class, the resistance of this class must be smashed in open battle and it must be deprived of the productive sources of its existence and development...' (CW 12 p189). What else could have been done in the circumstances?

At the time, Stalin halted the process of collectivisation after three months, because some comrades had adopted a wrong approach to the middle peasant by using coercion and depriving him of political rights. He also criticised '... distortions... bureaucratic decreasing of the collective farm movement... unworthy threats against the peasants' (CW12 p208, p201).

Why did this happen? In my view it was because the Bolsheviks unleashed a poor-peasant movement against the kulaks which, owing to the qualitative and quantitative weakness of the forces at their disposal, they could not always control.

On the eve of collectivisation, there was only one peasant Communist Party member in every 125 peasant households. The 25,000 communist workers sent into the countryside were a drop in the peasant ocean – 1 worker for every 5,200 rural inhabitants. Given the hatred felt by the landless labourers and poor peasants against the kulaks, given the overwhelming necessity of rapid collectivisation, given the inadequacy of the Bolshevik forces – is it surprising that there were excesses and distortions?

Activities Roundup

• As well as holding a series of forums on Ireland FRFI has continued to organise activities in support of the framed Irish prisoners. A street meeting was held with the WRP/Workers Press in Kilburn. Over 100 copies of the new Free the Framed Irish Prisoners pamphlet and 80 FRFI were sold. In solidarity with the Birmingham 6, two public meetings were held on 1 and 2 December in Archway and Brixton. Sharon Raghup, wife of Engin (framed Broadwater farm prisoner) was guest speaker in Brixton. Speaking at an RCG public meeting in Birmingham, Maggie McKenny called for a 'massive physical presence' at the Old Bailey on the day the Birmingham 6 judgement is delivered. She is the daughter of Richard McKenny, one of the six. Geraldine Egan, Birmingham Trades Council and Terry O'Halloran also spoke.

• The Manchester Martyrs March, held annually for the past 120 years, was banned by Manchester police and the Labour City Council. The organising committee decided to go ahead with a rally despite threats from the Orange Lodge and National Front. The RCG supported this decision and on 22 November three hundred people attended including the H-Block Martyrs Bank from Glasgow. Speakers included VMDC, IRSP, Manchester Martyrs Committee and IFM. The event, despite the ban, would have been significantly bigger if, following the ban, the Troops Out Movement and Sinn Fein had not withdrawn their support from the event - the latter on the grounds that it was not broad enough.

• On Monday 7 December the RCG held a 'Hands Off Sinn Fein' picket outside Downing Street to protest against the raids, arrests and detentions of Sinn Fein councillors and others launched in Ireland. 30 people attended the protest which was addressed by FRFI, WRP/Workers Press, Irish Freedom Movement and members of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group.

With One Voice

Just as the British and Irish ruling class used Enniskillen as an excuse to attack the Republican Movement, so did the British left.

The bombing on Sunday of the Remembrance Day ceremony in Enniskillen was horrific. No socialist supports the random killing of individuals. *Socialist Worker*, 14 November 1987.

... at certain times in history, Protestant workers have fought alongside Catholic workers... If the impasse is to be broken in Ireland, then this potential of Protestant workers will have to be realised... Viewed from a Protestant outlook, Enniskillen can only be held to be a sectarian attack. (*Socialist Worker Review*, December 1987.

'The latest atrocity underlines the bankruptcy of the IRA approach. It leaves British imperialism intact and wreaks carnage against innocent civilians... British imperialism will only be forced to leave Ireland when it is confronted by a united, mass opposition to colonial occupation backed by solidarity action in Britain... That opposition cannot be restricted to the Catholic minority... Approaches must be extended to the Protestant workers.' (*Morning Star*, 10 November 1987)

'Enniskillen will make it harder to raise even simple demands like a ban on plastic bullets, or the repeal of the more outrageous parts of the emergency legislation. It will lessen the chances for the Birmingham 6 to get justice.' (*Seven Days*, paper of Communist Party)



Protest against extradition

The ground for this operation was carefully laid. On 15 November Sir Jack Hermon RUC Chief Constable, issued a widely-publicised statement that the IRA was poised to make a major attack on the army/RUC. Rumours that three shiploads of Libyan weapons had reached the IRA were given prominent coverage. However, the targeting of the 23 November raids showed clearly that the two governments' real aim is to disrupt and criminalise Sinn Fein and all nationalist political activists.

In the Twenty Six Counties Sinn Fein and An Phoblacht/Republican News offices in Dublin were raided by armed gardai 'searching for arms'. In the AP/RN offices, journalists' files and sackloads of photographs were confiscated. Two staff were arrested and charged with assault. In the Sinn Fein office large amounts of literature were seized and Special Branch officers copied out lists of branches and members. In Cork the Sinn Fein office and shop were raided twice. The gardai threatened to close the shop if Birmingham 6 posters were not taken down.

On 22 November nine Sinn Fein members attending a seminar in County Clare

North and South: new stage of repression

'... internment is now a live option and will, when/if it is introduced, be more likely on a 32-County basis.'

Gerry Adams

The relevance of Gerry Adams' warning was shown on 23 November when the British and Twenty Six County army and police conducted a huge military operation north and south of the border. In the Twenty Six Counties a force of over 7,000 conducted searches and raids affecting thousands of people and lasting several days. In the Six Counties there were raids in Derry, Belfast, Strabane, Armagh and Tyrone. Dozens of Sinn Fein activists were arrested both north and south. Under cover of the anti-Republican atmosphere generated by the Enniskillen bombing, the British and Twenty Six County governments have embarked on large scale repression and the target is the Republican Movement.

MAXINE WILLIAMS

were arrested and held for 7 hours. In Donegal large numbers of homes were raided including those of former H-Block activists and even Independent Fianna Fail TD Neil Blaney's home was raided. In other border areas, hundreds of homes and farms were searched. The office of the Irish Anti-Extradition Committee in Dublin was raided as were the homes of anti-extradition campaigners. The widespread trawl, part of whose aim was information-gathering, included journalists, trade unionists and others. In one case a raid proved fatal - 77 year old Bridget Sweeney died - the day after a raid on her home.

In the Six Counties over 40 republicans, including five Sinn Fein councillors, were arrested under the PTA in dawn raids. Dozens of homes in the Six Counties were raided and several homes in Belfast were seriously damaged. So intent were the British government on arresting prominent republicans that Sinn Fein councillor Alex Maskey (recuperating from wounds received in a loyalist assassination at-

tempt) was arrested under the PTA as he passed through Heathrow after a holiday. On 2 December Sinn Fein councillor Martin McGuinness was arrested. Sinn Fein councillor Mitchell McLaughlin was assaulted by the RUC whilst in custody.

Haughey's government no doubt hoped to use the raids to create an anti-Republican witch-hunt which would undermine opposition to the Extradition Act. In the event, the Act was passed with Fine Gael support by making two very minor amendments: the Irish Attorney General will vet extradition warrants from Britain and the Act will be reviewed in a year. Even these meaningless 'safeguards' aroused a stormy response from Thatcher. Haughey was forced to grovel and assure her that the Act would work satisfactorily, ie that Irish republicans would be handed over to the British courts without any problems.

The realities of extradition were graphically shown in the cases of Paul Kane and Dermot Finucane, two republican escapees from Long Kesh, recaptured during the police sweep in the South. Extradition warrants were issued by the RUC but in



RUC waiting for internment

Kane's case contained mistakes. The Irish court was therefore forced to release him. Although technically free he was pursued by a huge force of troops and gardai at several hours later they forced his car off the road. Bruised and mud-covered, Kane was arrested for 'assault'. This charge was enough for the court to hold him while no extradition warrants were issued. So much for Irish law.

There are no limits to the lengths to which the Twenty Six County puppet regime will now go to serve their imperialist masters. The full meaning of the Anglo-Irish Act is clear: carefully co-ordinated repression aimed at smashing the Republican Movement north and south.

LIVINGSTONE ISOLATED

Labour Party - reactionary to the core

Following the Enniskillen bombing, Neil Kinnock and the Labour Party rushed to join the condemnation of the IRA. As usual the Labourites ignored Britain's responsibility for the partition of Ireland and the discrimination against nationalists because the Labour Party itself has a long history of attacks on the Irish people. Kinnock dusted off his 'dying for my country' phrasebook to pledge once again Labour's eternal devotion to British imperialism. He accused the IRA of 'vicious cowardice' and claimed that British forces in Ireland were simply fighting for freedom which the Republican movement was trying to destroy.

On his visit to Ireland he said there was no question of the Labour Party having any links with Sinn Fein (although of course he did meet prominent Unionists) and he cautioned Prime Minister Haughey against using the extradition issue to try to get reforms of Diplock courts. *The Guardian* applauded Labour's 'impeccable reaction' to Enniskillen. Having boosted his popularity with the ruling class Kinnock was doubly furious when Ken Livingstone stood out against the Labour Party's reactionary chauvinism.

He compared the struggle there to earlier colonial wars by British imperialism: 'As with all other colonial situations we have been involved in, Britain will even-

JIM O'ROURKE

tually go'. He said that 'the decision to remain in Ireland while maintaining a sectarian state in the North, has cost lives and undermined the democracy of Britain and Ireland.' Livingstone had committed an unforgivable sin in the eyes of the Labour Party: he had told the truth about Ireland.

Kinnock reacted with new levels of hysteria saying that the Irish struggle was not a colonial situation and that the IRA was just 'a few hundred gangsters'. The Labour Party then orchestrated a vicious campaign against Livingstone. Kevin McNamara, Labour's spokesman on Ireland, weighed in by calling for support for



Ken Livingstone

the sectarian RUC. He stressed Labour's loyalty by recalling that their party conference has consistently voted against British withdrawal. Indeed even to announce a date for withdrawal would, he maintained, lead to civil war. But he said this did not amount to a bipartisan policy because Labour 'had a different attitude to civil liberties'. What a nerve coming from a party which unleashed the British army in 1969 and introduced the racist Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Indeed Mr McNamara's credentials for

becoming Labour's spokesman on Ireland include comparing the IRA and INLA 'rapists, burglars and murderers' and saying in 1983 that the PTA was not altogether necessary because 'Ordinary decent cops using ordinary decent police methods apprehended those responsible for the Birmingham outrages'. Those ordinary decent methods used against the Birmingham 6 included: beatings, perjury, intimidation, threats and torture.

Nor was this campaign against Livingstone limited to the leadership. A Labour Co-ordinating Committee meeting Sean Rogers accused Livingstone of 'having blood on his hands'. The meeting passed a motion condemning Enniskillen as calling for the ostracism of those advocating 'terrorism'. The PLP reaffirmed its support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement and unification by consent. Labour councillors in Leicester cancelled a fact-finding visit to the Six Counties. At a Labour meeting in Westminster described as 'trial' of Livingstone's views he came under attack from not only the right-wing but also such 'left' figures as Martin Flannery and Clare Short.

Kinnock's stance will lead to increased repression in Ireland. Thatcher has already been encouraged to demand a party support for the renewal of the PTA. The Labour-controlled Association of Metropolitan Authorities has declared support for this. Ken Livingstone deserves credit for defying the attacks on him as the Republican movement. But the question is how much can he achieve within the corrupt and pro-imperialist Labour Party. Those who think he represents a growing current in the Labour Party should have had their eyes opened by the latest event

Guatemala

False hope, false freedom

Guatemala: False Hope, False Freedom. James Painter, Latin America Bureau, 1987, pp160, £4.95.

Soft Drink, Hard Labour, Guatemalan workers take on Coca-Cola M. Gatehouse and M.A. Reyes, Latin America Bureau, 1987, pp44, £0.95.

In 1986 the people of Guatemala saw the end of 32 years of virtually unbroken military rule when the Christian Democrat leader, Vinicio Cerezo, swept into office with a large majority. This was trumpeted by the US State department as 'the final step in the reestablishment of democracy'.

Guatemala: False Hope, False Freedom looks at the reality behind the international propaganda war to analyse the economic and political make up of Guatemala and exposes the failure of Christian Democracy to confront the powerful vested interests which control the distribution and consumption of the nation's wealth.

Nowhere in Latin America is the gulf between rich and poor so acute, nowhere is the level of poverty so overwhelming. The 1987 UNICEF report *The State of the World's Children* put Guatemala at the bottom of a number of social indicators for Latin America; highest illiteracy rate, lowest average birth weight, lowest percentage of children in education. Yet Guatemala is not a poor country, it possesses vast expanses of fertile land, oil and mineral deposits and a relatively well developed industrial base.

The masses in Guatemala are suffering this grinding poverty not because of natural conditions but as a result of the domination of the economy by three powerful vested interests who benefit from the existing order. These are the small Guatemalan Landino (of mixed European and Indian descent) elite based historically on coffee production; the security forces originally trained by the US but now with a degree

of independence; and the mostly American multinationals and banks.

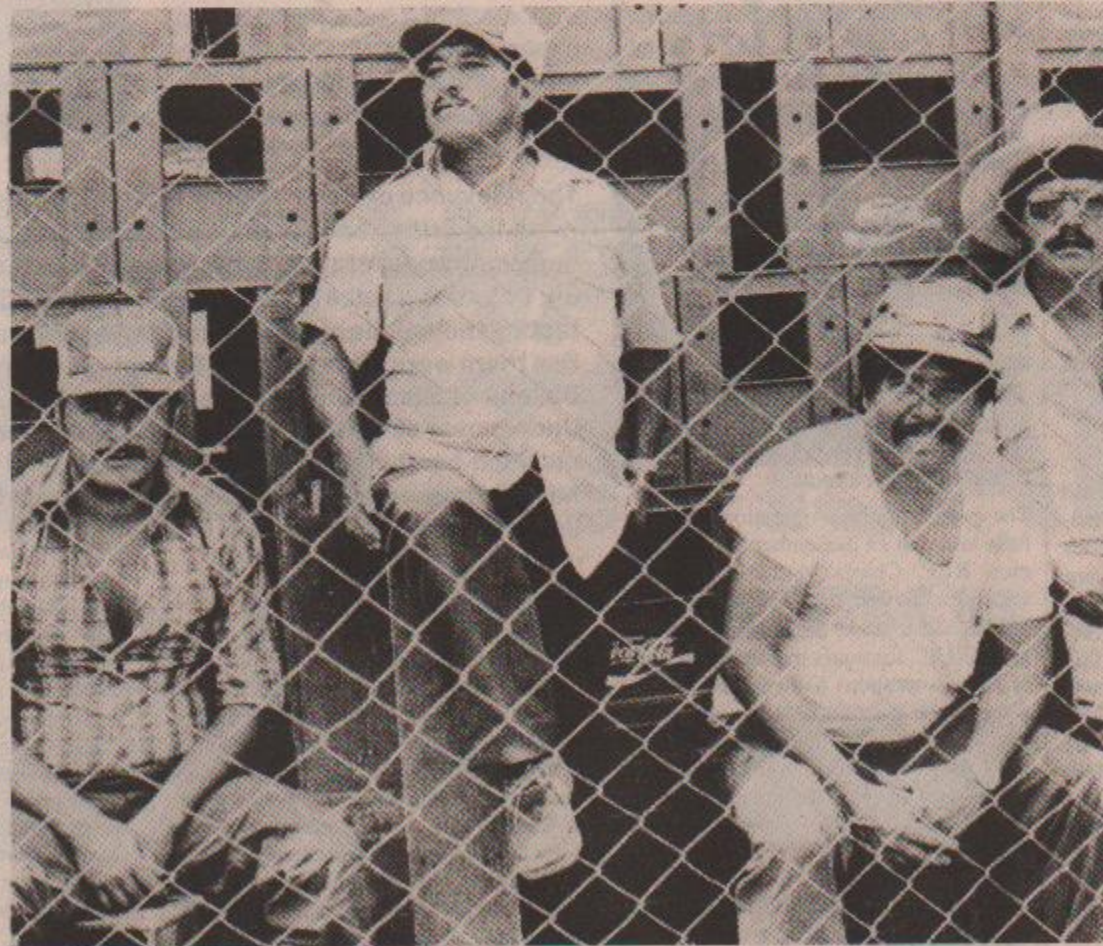
'Plots the size of graves' - Eduardo Galeano.

Land is the key to Guatemala's economic and social relations and these powerful sectors have united to ensure that land is distributed and used according to their own needs. The Guatemalan bourgeoisie monopolises the best land, credit and other resources whilst peasant farmers are forced to survive on plots of land too small to support them. Crops produced are then almost all for export via US multinationals.

Another thread of the repression of the people lies in the racial divisions which are reflected in the distribution of wealth. As in South Africa the wealthy Landinos use race to justify the degrading inhuman existence they inflict on the Indian majority (for whom life expectancy is 16 years less on average).

Christian Democracy comes to office

It was in this context that Cerezo was elected in 1986 and the book neatly details the constraints both internal and external which have prevented the CDP from instigating any fundamental reforms likely to bring relief for the poor. To get into office Cerezo had to agree not to institute agrarian reform and has left the security forces free to continue the systematic oppression of any opposition forces which resulted in 30,000 deaths and many more disappearances in the early 80s. In this



Coke workers during the occupation

Guatemala has repeated the US inspired pattern set by Honduras and El Salvador.

The bankruptcy of Christian Democracy is obvious. Real peace and democracy can only be based on a radical transformation of economic structures, most importantly far reaching agrarian reform. What the book fails to point out is that this will only be achieved by revolutionary change based on the united action of the peasantry and the urban industrial workers.

Although heavily attacked the people have organised themselves in the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG).

'Our people are posed to make new advances because they have already set out on a journey full of pain but also full of hope... No one will hold them back because they have come to realise that the solution is not in the hands of the oppressors but in their own hands'. Rigoberta Manchu, peasant leader.

'In Guatemala Coca Cola is a name for murder'

For nine years the workers at the Coca Cola bottling plant in Guatemala City carried on an historic struggle against the local management, the multinational Coca Cola Corp. and the Guatemalan security forces for the right to organise in a trade union. *Soft Drink, Hard Labour* shows how the battle was much more than a simple economic struggle demonstrating as it did the re-

lation between imperialist economic interests and the repression and exploitation in nations such as Guatemala.

'To be a trade unionist in Guatemala is to risk one's life'. For the existence of a powerful trade union movement is an anathema to the ruling elite and army. In this situation the basic democratic right of the working class to organise autonomously becomes a revolutionary activity. The employers were quite prepared to use death squads to assassinate leading trade unionists in the hope of breaking the workers' organisation.

When this failed the company began asset stripping with the eventual aim of closing down the factory in 1984 but the workers in STEGAC launched a year long sit in which with strong support from other trade unions in Guatemala and internationally was able to force Coca Cola to rethink. The pamphlet has a preface by Ron Todd, Gen Sec of TGWU, which suggests that British trade unions played a major role in the international campaign of solidarity. In fact in comparison to workers in Norway, Italy, Austria, Mexico, Denmark and Sweden who took or threatened industrial action at Coca Cola plants efforts in Britain were restricted to messages of protest and limited financial aid.

The lessons which can be drawn from the struggle are many but in particular the inability of the murderous security forces and the powerful multinationals to defeat the workers' organisation stands as an inspiration to many others in similar circumstances in Latin America.

Both these publications from the Latin America Bureau are useful and moving accounts which leave the reader in no doubt that the enemy of the downtrodden peoples of Guatemala, as elsewhere in Latin America, is the whole imperialist system of exploitation as much as the local bourgeoisie.

Andy Pacey

Exposing The Irish War

The Irish War: the Irish Freedom Movement handbook - 3rd edition. Junius Publications, 1987, pp 308, £4.95.

The Irish War claims to expose 'all the myths' and to put 'the case for supporting the cause of Irish freedom'. It fulfils neither. In fact it creates a few myths of its own. For instance Sean Mac Stiofain did not call for an IRA ceasefire in March 1983 (p231). His revolutionary contribution to the debate on the conditions for a truly All-Ireland Forum was distorted and falsified by the Irish and British press. *The Irish War* merely repeats these lies. Most centrally, *The Irish War* denies the revolutionary significance of the national democratic struggle of the Irish people when it criticises Sinn Fein.

The programme (of Sinn Fein) expresses the dreams of small farmers and small business men in the Ireland of 70 years ago. It is no answer to the needs of the working class today' (p260)

This is the standard Trotskyist position. That is, criticism of a national liberation movement for not being communist. National liberation movements such as the Republican Movement are alliances of

class forces fighting imperialist oppression. The victory of the national liberation struggle is in the interests of the working class in oppressed



IRA freedom fighters

country and therefore should be supported by communists in the oppressor nation.

The RCP/IFM (the authors of *The Irish War*) spin another myth that the 'man in the street' can only be won over by taking a tough line - 'taking sides with Irish freedom fighters' (pp201, 209). All else is 'waffle about human rights' (p209). Out the window go campaigns against frame-ups, strip-searching, plastic bullets and torture (pp182, 200). The 'man in the street' is the RCP/IFM's phrase for the Labour and trade union movement - members of which do have a backward political consciousness but are likely to remain so despite any amount of tough talk from the RCP/IFM. Their men

in the street lag behind those who, in times of resistance, have solidarised with the Irish people - striking miners' wives, relatives of Broadwater Farm prisoners, Greenham women - none of whom are men in the street! The RCP/IFM have a sectarian attitude to the question of building a solidarity movement. They reject the possibility of a broad anti-imperialist force which would embrace the working class oppressed, who remain outside the trade union movement, together with anyone opposed to individual aspects of imperialist oppression. The RCP/IFM futilely nail their colours to changing opinion within the bankrupt British labour and trade union movement.

An *Phoblacht/Republican News* carried a review in September argued that it is only through the Labour Party that a solidarity movement can be built and therefore criticism of Labour is unwelcome. This strategy is wrong and does not work. It ties the solidarity movement here to the coat-tails of the Labour Party. Bitter experience has shown that the Labour Party is incapable of being anti-imperialist. The Labour Committee on Ireland has often excluded from its platforms and initiatives the oppressed and all forces to the left, preferring to seek a 'broad consensus' which includes only those to its right. The review of *The Irish War* and *The Irish War* have this, then, in common - both narrow the scope of a broad movement. *The Irish War*, from its ridiculous ultra-left position, excludes everyone to its 'right' and the *AP/RN* review excludes everyone to the left of the Labour Party.

Gary Clapton

THEATRE

Pub Bombers a state conspiracy

The Pub Bombers, by James O'Brien at the Village Theatre, Cricklewood, London, 10-19 November 1987.

The Pub Bombers is a powerful statement of the innocence of the six Irishmen framed for the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974. The setting of the play is stark and nightmarish. The lighting alternates between glaring brightness and almost total darkness, with the use of stroboscope lights to emphasise the atmosphere of confusion during the detention of the six men.

The six men, the police, the judges and lawyers and prison warders are played by actors identically dressed and with whitened faces. They shout extracts from the witness statements of the six men which form the book by Chris Mullin, *Error of Judgement* as well as reproducing scenes from the police station, the remand prison and the court.

The play follows the events from the bombings through to the convictions, portraying the nightmare that overtook the men when they tried to board the ferry to Ireland for a funeral. To scenes of frightening

brutality and torture the question is asked 'why do innocent men confess?' The play lays the blame for the horrific treatment the men had, unequivocally, on the police, and exposes the forensic evidence offered by the state as totally fraudulent. Anyone watching the play is made aware of the conspiracy of the state to frame the men.

However, the political significance of the Birmingham frame-ups is passed over. Nowhere in this play is there a realisation that frame-ups are systematically used against the Irish community by the British state, indeed the play says the shock of the bombings and widespread disgust made the police lose their heads in a desperate search for the culprits.

Despite obvious political weaknesses the play remains a well executed and necessary reminder of the events that led to the convictions of six Irishmen for bombings they did not commit.

Ann Burrows

A WISE DECISION

Dear FRFI,

I note that in a recent issue of FRFI you announced that FRFI was not going weekly but remaining monthly.

I am writing to congratulate you on a very wise decision. FRFI is the best left paper in Britain and being a monthly contributes to this. The left press cannot begin to compete with the bourgeois media for treatment of events as they happen. If it attempts to do so, it becomes a pale shadow of the *Economist* or *Financial Times*. What it can provide is that element of analysis, rounding up events and going that little bit deeper. And because the left is guided by Marxism it can reveal the essential core of events and mention the unmentionable - the conspiracy against the working class which is the reality of modern politics.

If the left goes weekly, all that edge goes. The articles are only drawing on the media, and there isn't time for sober reflection to get that little deeper into events.

I used to read the RCP's *Next Step* with great interest thinking many of the articles really interesting, despite political disagreements. Now that it is monthly no longer the level has dropped and one learns nothing.

If you have extra resources you should put them into expanding FRFI to 24 or 36 pages or produce supplements or produce weekly news sheets - the VMDC has produced excellent two or four page hand outs. Local news sheets for Manchester or the East End of London would provide something frequent and they would have an edge in being local or specialized eg. in Sri Lankan affairs. Best wishes
Dr AN May
Manchester

Dear FRFI,

Congratulations on your decision not to embark on a fortnightly newspaper. The plethora of leftist/'leftist' papers in Britain is in many ways a wasted effort. Out here in Australia also the production of a newspaper appears to be seen almost as a triumph in and of itself. Much better to put resources into real struggles out of which support would grow for extended newspaper publishing.

A Bidgood
Australia

WELSH SEPARATISM

Dear Comrades,

Readers of FRFI may be interested to hear about yet another example of the hypocrisy of the AAM leadership.

Wales AAM held a demonstration in Cardiff on 24 October 'in support of' the national demonstration in London on the same day but organised under the slogan 'Free the children' rather than 'Sanctions Now'. Deeside AA group decided to organise a coach to the London demonstration in conjunction with the Chester group, since we took the view that we could mobilise more people for that demo than for the one in Cardiff. On 3 October two members of Deeside AA group attended a 'Che Guevara Freedom Festival' in Mold at which Hanif Bhamjee, secretary of Welsh AAM, was one of the speakers.

A number of leaflets advertising the Deeside/Chester AA coach to London were distributed. At the end of his speech Bhamjee referred to the Cardiff demo. He went on to say that leaflets had been distributed urging people to attend the London demo but these should be ignored and everyone present should go to the Cardiff demo. Thus while it was ostensibly called 'in support of' the London demo, the Cardiff demo was clearly seen by Bhamjee himself as competing with it. So there you have it: Welsh AAM's

24 October ego trip in Cardiff is OK, but City AA group's picket of the South African embassy is declared to be 'divisive' and 'counter-productive'.

Yours in Comradship

Paul Bellis

Secretary, Deeside AA group, (personal capacity)

CRY FREEDOM... CRY SECTARIANISM

Dear FRFI,

On 16 December a gala performance of Cry Freedom was on in Leeds. We went to sell and petition and the response was so good even the cinema manageress came out and signed.

When three woman members of Leeds AAM came to leaflet they did their utmost to ignore us - you'd have thought we offered them poison not 'Non-Stop Against Apartheid'.

Five minutes before the film a Rolls Royce glided up and Sir Richard Attenborough emerged. He signed the City AA petition for the release of Nelson Mandela.

It was all too much for Leeds AAM and they called it a day. Their boundless sectarianism never called it a day. The following night at their vigil for detained children in South Africa, Francis Bernstein, Labour Party Member, told FRFI supporter Gordon to 'move along' and 'stop poncing on this demonstration' he was told to stop selling FRFI and was refused an AAM petition.

Gordon/Auriel
Leeds/Bradford RCG

KEEN READER...

On 15 December I was collecting signatures on FRFI's 'Boycott Apartheid! Release Nelson Mandela Now!' petition. A man asked for a copy of FRFI 72. He could give me his name and address - how about signing the petition? - and I would send him one. No, he had signed it many times, but would give his details on a piece of paper. Fine, I said; which aspects of our work was he interested in? 'Anti-Apartheid', he replied. I pointed out that he could always get FRFI at the Non-Stop Picket.

Imagine my surprise to find out that he was Seumas Milne, AAM lap-dog and hack journalist, responsible for vicious attacks on City Group in *The Guardian*, contributing to its disaffiliation from the AAM. I wondered how many times he had signed the petition...

I asked him if he would like to buy a copy of *South Africa: Britain out of Apartheid; Apartheid out of Britain*. It had plenty of information about City Group, I explained. He did buy one, saying 'that's a good idea'.

An even better idea would be if Mr Milne learned how to write objectively, without recourse to sectarian slurs and rumour-mongering.

Hmmmm...
Virman Man
South London RCG

UNION BAN DEFEATED

Dear FRFI,

On Tuesday 17 November Manchester University FRFI Society held an open meeting in the university on Ireland with speakers from the RCG and Manchester Martyrs, despite attempts by the right wing students union to ban the meeting.

Over the last few years the Manchester University Students Union has established a reputation as one of the most radical in the country opposing successive visiting Tory ministers: Heseltine, Brittan and Waddington. This has now changed with the triumph of the right in the guise of being 'apolitical' who are

LETTERS

FRFI welcomes letters from readers. Please send them to FRFI BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

seeking to wipe out the influence of the left. This has included bans on the sale of left wing newspapers in the Union and suspension of progressive societies' budgets.

On 16 November they informed the FRFI Society that we could not have a speaker from the Manchester Martyrs Committee at our meeting in the union. They blockaded the main entrance and the doors of the meeting room with security men.

We brought our speaker through the back entrance and into the meeting room. Then Derek Draper, Labour Party, threatened not to recognise the FRFI society. We discussed the Manchester Martyrs and organising together against the Students Union. Members of the SWP and RCP supported us although they had previously advised us not to defy the ban.

Chris
Manchester

TELL CID...

I hope you are all well and in fine spirit. I am writing on behalf of four people arrested at a picket of a British National Party meeting in Glasgow. We were unjustly arrested, physically abused and held for ten hours; the only reason we were released was undoubtedly the phone calls.

From the very moment of our arrests the phone at the station was ringing, before we even got there: MPs, Councillors, church people and concerned individuals all phoned and pestered the already flustered officers.

On being released the desk sergeant declared 'you must have a lot of friends with big phone bills', another comment was 'I've been answering the phone all night for you'.

We are all agreed to fight the charges brought against us and to continue the fight against the filthy racists in society be they in or out of uniform.

Thank all you members, supporters and contacts for their excellent work, we are all very grateful.

Yours
Andy
Glasgow

FIGHTING BACK

Dear Comrades,

The Thatcher government is attacking the rights of the working class and the black communities in this country. Thatcher is supporting Botha and does not want sanctions against the Botha regime because she fears it means losing a lot of profits her government has made from apartheid. Thatcher has blessed apartheid and branded the ANC as a terrorist organisation.

The racist Labour Party is collaborating with Thatcher on attacking the working class. They are responsible for existing immigration laws and it was the Labour Party which introduced the racist Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Neither Thatcher or Kinnock condemns the police when they murder black people in their communities like Colin Roach, Winston Rose, Paul Worrell and others.

They cannot get away with it any more. We are fighting back. We are fighting to defend Viraj Mendis from deportation.

Yours in solidarity
Errol Baptiste
London

INFORMATION FROM PRISONERS, PLEASE...

Dear Comrades,

We are at present engaged in gathering information about legal proceedings which have been pursued by prisoners against prison administration in Ireland and Britain. We are particularly interested in those cases which sought to challenge

(1) Rulings made by the administration 'in the interests of security, good order and discipline', and (2) any aspect of the present system of life/indeterminate sentence reviews. We are interested not only in cases which actually went to court, but also wish to hear from anyone who has attempted to push a case which was not, for whatever reason, proceeded with.

We ask for a brief outline of the following: - The nature of the case; the names of those involved; the legal arguments for and against; the final result of the case and why you the prisoner/prisoners involved, believe it ended as it did.

Finally, we would ask for the names and addresses of any groups and organisations which can supply further details in this particular field. All responses to this letter can be sent to A Kelly, 22 Beechwood Avenue, Derry City, Ireland.

Thanks to FRFI for printing this letter for us.
Republican POWs
H Blocks Long Kesh

CITY OF LONDON ANTI-APARTHEID GROUP

FORTHCOMING

EVENTS

FREE MOSES MAYEKISO FREE THE ALEX 5 FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS 3PM SATURDAY 16 JANUARY
On the Non-Stop Picket Outside the South African Embassy

9.30-5.30pm SUNDAY 17 JANUARY

PARTICIPATE IN 88

FREE THE PRISONERS NOW!

DAYSCHOOL POLYTECHNIC OF CENTRAL LONDON
35 Marylebone Road, London NW1
Entrance £2 waged/£1 unwaged
WORKSHOPS/EXHIBITION/VIDEO/MUSIC

26 January is one year to the day since Moses Mayekiso and the Alex 5 were charged with treason, sedition and subversion THEIR TRIAL RESTARTS ON 1 FEBRUARY
Join the picket
5.30pm TUESDAY 26 JANUARY

ANTI-RACIST CALENDAR 1988

To mark the anniversary of Viraj Mendis one year in Sanctuary, the VMDC has produced a calendar which documents the anti-racist struggle in Britain and abroad.

A3 size, lots of pics, two colours
£3 (+ 50p p&p)
10 or more post free
from: 'Calendar Offer' 11 Forth Street, Edinburgh

We need £10,000 Now!

We have raised £1,904.40. Special thanks to Jules, Ken Hughes, and Susan and Helen for the help with the jumble sale. We still have £8,095.60 to raise. Last month we missed reaching our monthly target by £400. Make it your New Year's resolution to give a regular donation to our fighting fund.

★ I SUPPORT THE £10,000 FUND DRIVE ★

I enclose £ _____ donation

I pledge £ _____ monthly (Please send me a standing order form)

I want _____ copies of each issue of FRFI to sell each month.

I want to help organise fundraising events

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Make cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications and return this form to FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

RCG PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Immigration Bill & Nationality Act No to British pass laws

NORTH LONDON
Tuesday 19 January 7pm
Fire Station Community Centre
Leswin Road, N16
Invited speakers: Frances Weller, Marion Gaima Campaign, RCG
Admission 50p/25p unwaged

SOUTH LONDON
Wednesday 20 January 7.30pm
Peckham Settlement, Goldsmith Road
London SE15
Speakers: Chris Randall (Immigration lawyer), Virman Man RCG

MANCHESTER
Thursday 21 January 7.30pm
Church of Ascension (Sanctuary)
Royce Rd, Hulme
Speakers: Viraj Mendis, Barbara Ahmed, RCG

BRADFORD
Tuesday 9 February 7.30pm
Asian Women's Centre, St Pauls Rd
Manningham, Bradford 8
Speakers: Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, RCG, others invited
Admission 50p/25p
For more information write to Bradford FRFI c/o Bradford Resource Centre, 31 Manor Row, Bradford 1

For details of meetings in York, Leeds, Bangor, Birmingham, Newcastle, Glasgow, Dundee, Edinburgh write to: FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX

TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION

Friday 8 January
Assemble 7pm Hackney Police Station, Lower Clapton Road E8

Anniversary of Trevor Monerville's brain operation and before the inquest on Tunay Hassan's death. In January 1987 Trevor Monerville was held in custody by Stoke Newington police before undergoing a brain operation. In June 1987 Tunay Hassan died while in the custody of Dalston/Stoke Newington police.

Organised by the Family & Friends of Trevor Monerville Campaign and the Justice for Tunay Campaign

★ 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 _____ Tel _____

Address _____

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

SUBSCRIBE TO THE BEST ANTI-IMPERIALIST NEWSPAPER IN BRITAIN

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

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- Ireland - letter rate sealed: £6 for 6 issues, £13 for 12 issues

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DEMONSTRATION BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATION
March for Troops out Now
Saturday 30 January 12.30pm Whittington Park Holloway Rd, London N11

Viraj Mendis— one year of resistance

After one year in sanctuary, with three others having followed our example, with widespread discussion in the Churches and in the media, the concept of sanctuary in Britain is now established.

VIRAJ MENDIS

The Home Office understands the significance of this development. As long ago as 19 March 1987, the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, in a letter to the Bishop of Manchester said: 'I hear that the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign is now planning a "sanctuary campaign". It apparently has as its aim the encouragement of anyone subject to a deportation order to

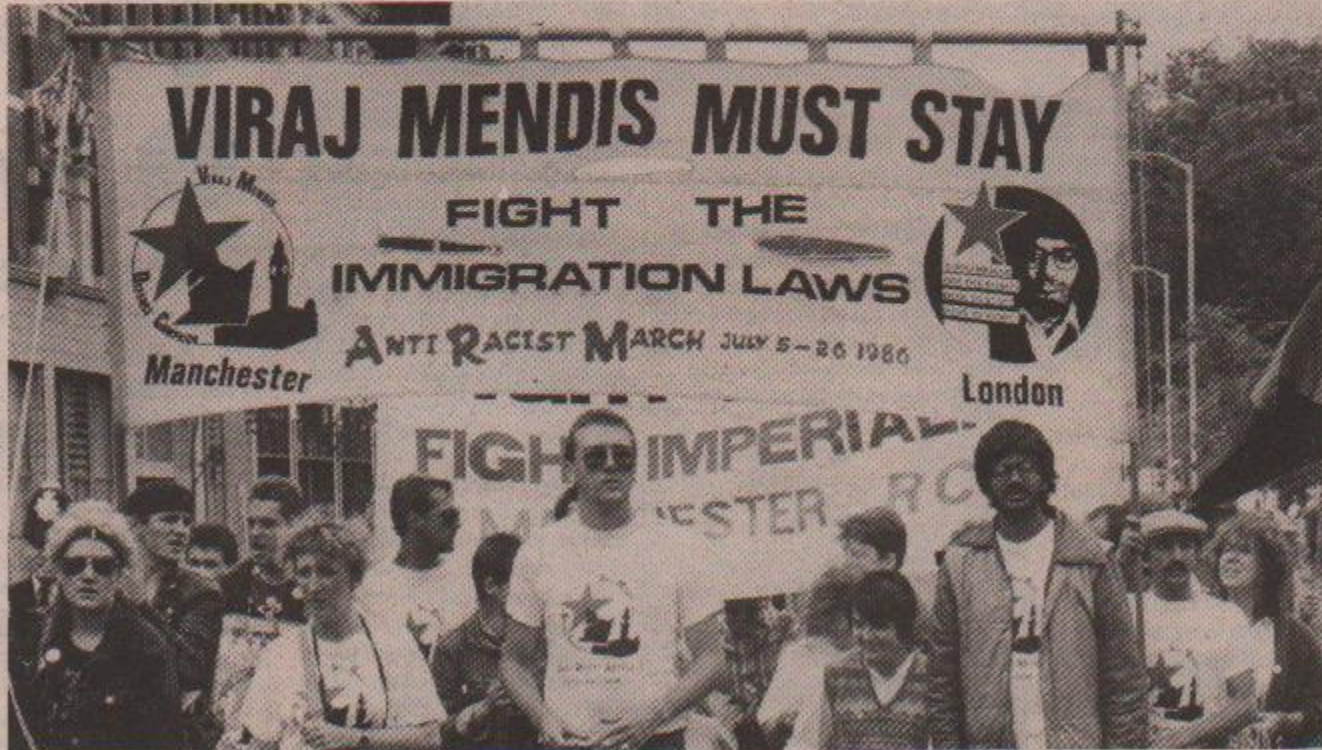
... there can be no doubt that the campaign has been a flagship. It has provided a range of techniques for other struggles, it has made sanctuary a live issue and has shown that if something is worth fighting for, it is worth maintaining that struggle.'
David Burgess (solicitor for the VMDC)

seek sanctuary in a Church. I cannot believe that this sort of tactic is welcome to anyone who believes in upholding the law: certainly David Waddington and I would find it impossible to let this sort of behaviour influence our decisions. To the extent that the affair has now escalated beyond Mr Mendis himself my view that he cannot be given special treatment is strengthened.'

The new immigration laws will destroy the right of appeal from a wide layer of black people and the only defence they will have against instant deportation will be to go into sanctuary.

The political preparations the VMDC has made will be invaluable for the future

'The VMDC is a way in which to take an active stand against racism and racist laws. Through it you can actually get down and do something against the racist immigration laws.'
Sussana



growth of sanctuaries. The fact that, apart from the RCG, the left organisations in this country have played no part in this process shows their inability to understand the centrality of the anti-racist struggle to the progressive movement. At the sanctuary conference in December the depth of analysis shown by mainly Christian speakers was a breath of fresh air. After one year in sanctuary, I could do with some!

The Home Office know the importance of my sanctuary. So they will use every weapon available to undermine and destroy it. Most of the bourgeois media sense this fact and continuously question me about the 'isolation and responsibility' I must feel. But what they fail to understand is the sharing of the responsibility by not only members of the campaign but also the congregation and the local community. They certainly don't understand the common bond I feel with all those people struggling against British imperialism at home

... supporting Viraj is the best way I can actively support anti-racism in Manchester ... I want to make links between fighting racism and sexism ... The VMDC has been the most inspiring campaign I have been involved in.'
Amanda

and abroad. They would not understand the sleepless night listening to the news on the radio when the Tamil Tigers were under siege - and the exhilaration when I realised that the Tigers had regrouped and were intact. Nor will they understand the feeling of strength and joy when I heard that first Renoukaben and then Salema had won great victories against the Home Office.

My New Year's resolution is a 'victory for Rajwinder and myself in '88 and forward with the sanctuary movement!'

Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign— one year of sanctuary

During 1987 Viraj had over 11,000 visitors. He had messages of solidarity and visits from revolutionary militants in the Philippines, Nicaragua, Palestine, Ireland, Italy, West Germany, South Africa, Norway, Burkina Faso and elsewhere.

Viraj's appeal against his judicial review decision is due in the new year. The RCG will devote all its efforts to mobilise for victory. We call on all those who stand for democracy and socialism to join the VMDC in its fight.

DECEMBER 1986

David Waddington rejects Viraj Mendis's final appeal. 500 march with the VMDC in Manchester as Viraj enters sanctuary in the Church of the Ascension in Hulme on 20 December. The Church votes overwhelmingly to support Viraj. Amnesty International issues statement opposing Viraj's deportation.

JANUARY 1987

The Labour Party NEC and the AAM AGM votes to support Viraj. Messages of solidarity are received from Irish POWs.

FEBRUARY

Inspired by the VMDC, Rajwinder Singh enters sanctuary in Bradford. 200 Hulme school students march in solidarity to the sanctuary.

MARCH

Viraj is offered a job by Manchester City Council as Immigration and Nationality Officer. Waddington, the local Tory Party and the racist press mount a virulent racist campaign which ends with fascists attacking the Church and maiming VMDC supporters.

APRIL

500 delegates attend the VMDC conference in the Church: 'Viraj Mendis Will Stay! Stop all deportations now!'

VMDC celebrates

On 18/19 December, the VMDC took to the streets of Manchester to celebrate one year of Viraj's sanctuary. Over 400 people participated in a weekend of popular events. On Friday night 250 people joined the VMDC's torchlight demonstration. It was followed by a rally in the Church of the Ascension addressed by Father John Methuen, Mr Maharasingham of the Tamil Action Committee, Simone Dewhurst of the RCG and Viraj himself who urged the audience to go out into the community and build the necessary support to secure victory in 1988. On Saturday 19 December over 150 VMDC supporters participated in a 12 hour mass rally in Piccadilly, Manchester's city centre. As well as speakers from the VMDC, the RCG, City AA, Salema Begum, the VMDC London Support Group, Les Huckfield and Glyn Ford (MEPs) and others spoke. To the accompaniment of music, songs and slogans thousands signed the VMDC petition and over £250 was collected for the campaign. RCG comrades, who had made a national mobilisation for the events, sold 400 FRFis. The events were rounded off by a brilliant social in the Church at which women from the North Staffs miners support group sang in honour of Viraj.

Capitulating to racist pressure Manchester City Council withdraws job offer. Viraj wins the right to judicial review of his case.

MAY

VMDC organises intervention in British General Election campaign.

JUNE

Tories are re-elected and Timothy Renton replaces Waddington as Minister for deportations. Brass Tacks broadcasts a documentary about Viraj. The Times in response advises the Home Office to 'quietly give way'.

JULY

4,000 march in support of Viraj in Manchester. Viraj loses judicial review in a stitched-up decision. The Home Office threaten to raid the Church.

AUGUST

The VMDC launches its regular weekly Friday marches. The campaign produces a dossier exposing Home Office claims that Sri Lanka is returning to normal and exposing the farce of the judicial review. Inspired by the VMDC Renoukaben Lakhani enters sanctuary in Leicester and then wins her fight against deportation.

SEPTEMBER

VMDC attends all major Party Conferences. The Labour Party Conference unanimously votes for an emergency resolution in support of Viraj.

OCTOBER

VMDC holds its general meeting. Inspired by the VMDC Salema Begum enters sanctuary in Chorlton.

NOVEMBER

The Friday VMDC march on 27 November is banned. The VMDC defies the ban.

DECEMBER

The VMDC marks one year in sanctuary, one year of resistance with a major series of activities in Manchester revealing the local community support the campaign has built up.

'When you stand for the oppressed, they gun for you'

170 people, the majority from different Churches throughout the country, attended the VMDC's Sanctuary Conference on Saturday 12 December. It brought significant new support for Viraj and helped consolidate the tactic of sanctuary as a weapon against the racist immigration controls. Judith Watkins, a Methodist Deaconess, opened the conference by describing how her own church Minister had from his pulpit attacked Viraj's sanctuary nearly one year ago. She walked out and became a VMDC activist. Father John Methuen reaffirmed the Church of the Ascension's continuing support for Viraj.

Clare Sobers speaking at the conference



CHARLIE BAYER

'When you stand for the oppressed, they gun for you. That is why Viraj Mendis is in sanctuary today'. With these words, Clare Sobers from the Committee for the Caribbean Community opened her address. Noting that 'if you don't go forward, you go backward' she urged those present to take action in support of Viraj. Even if the going seems hard 'a thousand drops wear a stone.'

The main speaker was Viraj Mendis. He quoted Fidel Castro, showing there was no contradiction in principle between communists and Christians struggling against oppression and injustice. The press and the ruling class, in their attempts to weaken the VMDC vainly nourish the hope of such a contradiction. Viraj attacked the hypocrisy of the British state which had 'overstayed in my country for over 100 years' and now dares describe him as an 'overstayer'.

The theme of practical unity between communists and Christians was taken up by Ken Leech, Director of the Runnymede Trust. Asserting that immigration laws were racist, he said that Christians must oppose them, if necessary by breaking the law. In this struggle, Paul Weller, who helped establish Viraj's sanctuary, emphasised the critical importance of building up defence campaigns. It was such campaigns, based in the community, which made the development of a sanctuary movement in Britain qualitatively different from other countries.

Chris Procter

JOIN THE VMDC IN THESE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES!

If you want more information about the VMDC:

Fill in the slip below and return to VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL or phone 061-234 3168

Name

Address

Phone

I also enclose a donation of £.....