

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

BOB GANNON



ABOVE: A YOUNG PALESTINIAN GIRL IS ARRESTED IN THE ARAB QUARTER, JERUSALEM (PHOTO: BOB GANNON)

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LEFT: ALBERTINA SISULU BANNED
BELOW: STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST THE BANNINGS IN JOHANNESBURG

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A RISEN PEOPLE P11

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JOHN STURROCK: NETWORK



ABOVE: NURSES ON THE MARCH TO DEFEND THE NHS



BOTHA'S CRACKDOWN
THE RULE OF THE JACKBOOT
REMEMBER SHARPEVILLE

CENTRE PAGES

OPPRESSED FIGHT BACK

Fighting the poll tax

Kim Coleman, Graham Johnson and Nick Lewis look at two very different campaigns against the poll tax in Scotland

The poll tax is due to be introduced in Scotland in April 1989 and the rest of Britain in April 1990. It will shift the burden of local government finance onto the low paid and unemployed. It will strengthen central control over local councils.

Six million people will be better off. Nearly thirty million will be much worse off.

A working class family in Glasgow with two school leavers will pay over £1500 every year. Student nurses, unlike other students, will have to pay the whole tax. A first year student nurse in residential accommodation in Edinburgh will have to pay at least £360 per year. Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland, will pay only £300-400 per year for his Edinburgh villa.

In Scotland local authorities will soon begin to collect information for the poll tax register. Every household will have to complete a registration form or face a £50 fine. The registrar responsible for policing the tax has said that everyone in Scotland may be uniquely identified and their movements recorded from birth to death.

The unemployed will receive an 80% rebate not of the actual tax they pay but of a national average of £224. An unemployed person living in Glasgow will have to pay over 50% of the tax: an extra £4 or £5 per week out of poverty-line money.

Labour's phoney campaign

Labour councils all over Scotland have agreed to implement the tax. They are involved with the tax at every stage. They are up to their necks in it. The leader of Labour-dominated Strathclyde Regional Council argued that it is 'totally irresponsible to lead people down the path of non-payment.'

In April every home will receive a letter from the Assessors Department addressed to the designated 'responsible person' in each household. The 'responsible person' will be legally obliged to inform the council of all residents in the

household

Strathclyde has decided to deliver these by hand so that receipt cannot be denied. The councils are already anticipating trouble. Poll tax snoopers will probably travel in pairs and, if they have any trouble, will be accompanied by police.

Glasgow District Council which,

payment. The Labour Party has once again capitulated in the face of Tory reaction.

The Stop It campaign is used by the trades unions to claim that they are fighting the poll tax. Council workers could block implementation if they could get support for any action. NALGO, however, is refusing to protect members who want to fight the tax. NALGO is also offering union membership to new employees whose sole job is to implement the poll tax.

The poll tax cannot be stopped by the tactics of the Labour Party and the Stop It campaign.



Kinnock's 'counsel of despair'

Smash the poll tax

'... the difficulty is how can we be sure about how many people are living in a house? Perhaps the only way is to go around in the middle of the night like the sanitary inspectors of old and hammer on the doors.'

Glasgow official

supposedly, opposes the poll tax has recently agreed to administer the rebates system. This is the first step on the slippery slope towards full implementation of the tax.

All Labour councils have advertised for staff to run the poll tax. Strathclyde expects to employ 500-900 people to deal with the tax. Job advertisements, which have already appeared in most of the Scottish newspapers, ask for people of 'a determined and tactful disposition'. Lothian, Fife and Grampian regional councils have already employed staff.

Whilst claiming to oppose the poll tax Labour is setting up the machinery to administer it.

At the recent local government conference in Edinburgh, Kinnock said that he refused to lead a campaign of non-payment. He described such a campaign as a 'counsel of despair'. The true counsel of despair is Kinnock's claim that a future Labour government will repeal the poll tax.

Donal Dewar, Labour Scottish Secretary, laughed on Scottish television when it was suggested that Labour might organise for non-payment. Kinnock argued that such a campaign would play into the hands of the Tories by diverting attention from the real issue: 'social injustice'.

The Labour Party's Stop It campaign consists of urging councils to take their time in imposing the tax and telling people to lobby the House of Lords. It also, of course, consists of attacking those who advocate non-

The poll tax is unjust and undemocratic. It must be opposed. The only way to stop it is a mass campaign, based on the support which already exists, for non-payment. The Fife registration officer has admitted that if there was an orchestrated campaign of non-payment 'we would not be able to cope... There are many ways in which public resistance could shatter the timetable [for implementation] which depends on public co-operation.'

Campaigns such as the Smash the Poll Tax Campaign (SPTC) reflect a growing feeling of anger among Scottish people.

SPTC was set up in Glasgow last October and has three guiding principles:

- *Break the Tory law* We must first and foremost refuse to comply with this Tory law and defend those harassed by the state for non-implementation or non-payment.

- *A working class campaign* The campaign will be based upon working class resistance rather than appeals for middle class sympathy, involving community groups, the unemployed, women, trade unionists.

- *United action by council workers* Council workers are in a position to block implementation if they have the support of the rest of the working class.

The RCG will be supporting the initiatives of SPTC over the next few months. We support all initiatives by communities trying to build resistance to the poll tax. The next few months are vital. If the poll tax is to be defeated the groundwork for a mass campaign must be done now. The poll tax will not be defeated if we wait until it comes into effect. We must build resistance now.

Kim Coleman, Graham Johnson and Nick Lewis



NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

Thorn sues strikers

On Friday 19 February 6000 people marched through Manchester city centre in defence of the National Health Service. Ancillary workers, nurses, doctors, students, clerical workers: all sections of the NHS were represented and formed the largest contingent on the march.

There were many local trade unionists on the march. Some of them are now suffering for their solidarity. Management at the local Thorn-EMI factory have threatened four workers with legal action.

The four men - convenor Dave Hodgkinson, shop stewards Keith

Davenport and Kevin Frisby, and one other - are accused of calling out Thorn-EMI workers on 19 February in solidarity with healthworkers. 560 Thorn-EMI workers struck on the day.

The four men have been summoned to a disciplinary hearing and

the management has announced it will go ahead with civil proceedings to recover £45,000: the alleged cost of losing a day's production.

At a meeting on Wednesday 2 March, the Manchester Hospital Workers Joint Shop Stewards Committee called for a mass rally in support of the four men on Tuesday 8 March.

Chris Procter
Bob Shepherd

Health workers fight to speak

On Saturday 5 March over 100,000 health workers and their supporters marched through London on a demonstration called by the TUC in defence of the NHS. The majority of those who marched were women.

The rally in Hyde Park was chaired by Norman Willis. Willis told us what we all know - the NHS is underfunded - but refused to call for any future action. Health workers shouted him down chanting - 'You sold out the miners', 'Scab' and 'All out action'. The speakers at the rally were Jack Jones who attacked the nurses calling for action to defend the NHS, 'I fought for the NHS before you were born', Claire Rayner, an 'agony aunt', and Trevor Huddleston. No one representing the health workers was on the platform.

Incensed by this, nurses, on their comrades' shoulders, used megaphones to address the crowd. Two nurses got onto the platform but Willis turned off the microphones and left. Nurses and ancillary workers rushed onto the stage and using only megaphones called on everyone to support the London health workers strike on 14 March. They called on the health workers to take control of the dispute to fight for all out action to defend the NHS.

The RCG will be supporting the strike action on 14 March and urges the health workers to go out to the people to mobilise beyond the trade union movement to involve women in the community, black people, the youth and the unemployed - all those dependent on the NHS - to build a fighting force to defend the NHS from Thatcher's attack.

Lorna Reid



Ancoats sit-in

On Monday 1 February 1988, local people from the Ancoats area of Manchester began a sit-in at Ancoats Hospital to protest against the closure of the casualty department. Their demands are very simple: they want a twenty four hour service to be open; they want doctors and nurses (which helps!); and the use of plaster and X-ray rooms. In response to this the Health Authority (HA) has formed a working party, which comprises of members of the HA, the Council, and only one of Ancoats Action Group. The working party seems to be on the side of the HA, and there has been a lack of communication between them and the Action Group.

The Action Group says that the casualty department was systematically run down for five years, and that when the beds were removed the Royal College of Surgeons withdrew the licence, because there was no backup. The RCS said that if the beds were returned they would license the casualty department.

The last time the Action Group held a sit in, it lasted for eight months and ended when the HA said the casualty department would be open by Christmas. It is now nothing but a store, containing 60 bedside lockers and 40 bedside tables in space which should be used for emergency cases.

A member of the Action Group

said 'This government in its cold-heartedness refuses to take on board its responsibilities to the people. There are people who are still coming to casualty for treatment only to find they have to go across Manchester to receive it. One night a taxi pulled up, and a mother ran in carrying a baby who was having convulsions, at that time a nurse who was looking for files cleared the child's throat of vomit. The nurse said that if the child had gone to the nearest casualty it would have died.'

Professor More of the HA said 'in two years time this hospital will be closed.' He now retracts this statement, he has rephrased it 'in two years time this hospital will be empty.' Where is the difference, the An-

coats Action Group ask?

The HA are now negotiating with the Action Group about a system where a community health centre will operate from 9am to 9pm; they are due to meet on 9 March. From what the HA say, it seems that when a doctor is available facilities can be used - just like a glorified surgery. The Action Group will not accept this.

The HA have also threatened the Action Group with eviction. The group received a letter informing them that they must vacate the hospital premises by 12 noon on 19 February. The Action Group held a mass rally in Manchester, and following this two hundred people came to the sit-in on 19 February. It was clear to the two members of the HA, who arrived at 2pm, that evicting them will not be an easy process. The sit-in is organised on a 24 hour rota system, and the action group are encouraging more people to participate.

It is clear that ordinary working class people are beginning to fight back. They are not prepared to accept hospital closures and privatisation of the NHS. The Ancoats Action Group are making a stand to defend the basic right of the local people to health care. We can expect to see similar fightbacks being organised nationwide, as the government seeks to implement new cuts and closures.

Declan

News notes

Top cop Imbert's much publicised campaign against racist attacks could turn its attention to Tottenham police. At the end of February it was reported that two 13 year old black boys, Michael Slack and Roger Husbands, were picked up by Tottenham police. Michael Slack was grabbed by the throat and had his hair and ears pulled. He is deaf and dumb. Roger Husbands is deaf. The two boys were looking for a ball in a garden when arrested.

In April the Social Security Act 1986 and various other changes in benefit rules come into effect. An estimated four million claimants will be worse off. One million will lose all Housing Benefit. Changes in the rules for Family Credit (replacing Family Income Supplement) will mean that many families will lose up to 98p in the pound of any tax cuts made in the budget.

Much cheering and lighting of bonfires in the Falls Road no doubt greeted the news that on 29 February an 'independent' commission for complaints against the RUC was set up. It will have 'extensive supervisory powers'.

Quote of the month: 'Nuclear waste ... is perfectly harmless to people as long as it does not come into close contact with them,' writes Dr C F Clement of the UK Atomic Energy Authority in *The Guardian* (1 March 1988). There now. That's made us all feel better.

RUC Chief Constable Sir John Hermon has, it seems, a disturbingly unreliable memory. The decision to investigate charges against John Stalker was first taken at a meeting in the Royal Hotel Scarborough 19 May 1986. Hermon stoutly denies that he was present at the meeting. He denies being in the hotel or even in Scarborough that day. Strange then that a Police Federation chap called Carr remembers our Hermon addressing a Police Federation meeting on 19 May 1986 held in the Royal Hotel Scarborough.

A letter in *BETA News* (February/March 1988) from City Group supporter Jon Kempster reveals that the BBC's £2 billion pension fund is heavily invested in 20 large multinationals, 18 of which have 'massive investments in racist South Africa'. It is compulsory for all BBC employees over the age of 21 to contribute to this fund for apartheid.

The Union of Communication Workers last month called on the Labour Party to give renationalisation of British Telecom a low priority and to drop any opposition to individual share-ownership. The UCW estimate that there are 12,000 shareholders in each constituency and some four million trade unionists with shares.

Whilst in capitalist Britain the National Health Service is slowly dying for want of proper funding, figures for 1987 show that socialist Cuba has achieved the lowest infant mortality rate in Cuban history: 13.3 per 1,000 live births. This is the lowest figure in Latin America and puts Cuba in the top 23 nations. The infant mortality rate in Honduras is 128 per 1,000 live births.

Warning signals for Britain's booming economy

Britain appears to be booming. The October stock market crash has had little immediate impact. Profits are still rising, real earnings continue to increase, the government exchequer is awash with funds and the British economy grew by nearly 5 per cent in 1987, the fastest rate of expansion since 1973. However, the fundamental structural problems remain the same and already warning signals have begun to appear.

The international current account imbalances which triggered the stock market crash have not significantly changed. The US trade deficit is still at record levels, and there has been no sustained reduction in the German and Japanese trade surpluses. Renewed turbulence in the financial markets is inevitable and increasing calls for protectionism in the US threaten the stability of international trade markets during the rest of the year.

	Bank profits (£m)		Third World debt provisions (£m)	% of total exposure
	1986	1987		
Barclays	895	339	713	29
Lloyds	700	-248	1,066	34
Midland	434	-505	1,016	29
NatWest	1,011	704	759	33



North Sea oil running out.

The British government exchequer may be awash with funds resulting from the increased privatisation proceeds, increased tax revenues over the last two years and higher oil prices over the last year, but no fundamental structural change has taken place in the British economy. While investment in British industry is far from booming, investment abroad in 1987 rose to record levels as UK companies took advantage of the weak dollar to make some 250 acquisitions in the US worth \$27.2bn (gross).

At the end of February it was announced that the British current account deficit for January 1988 was at

the record level of £905m. This represented a deficit of £1.5bn on visible trade partially offset by an estimated surplus of £600m on invisible earnings from overseas assets, insurance, tourism etc. Many reasons have been put forward to explain away these record figures but no one can deny the overall trend and the current account deficit will rapidly grow over 1988.

The deterioration in trade results from the relative run down of British manufacturing industry together

with the decline in the production of North Sea oil. In 1987 the deficit of trade in manufactures was £7½bn compared to £5½bn in 1986. With oil prices falling to a 16 month low at the beginning of March (a fall of \$2 per barrel in the previous two weeks) the overall position will get worse. In the not too distant future the British economy's credit-financed consumer boom will be brought to a halt.

International developments, in particular Third World debt, have had a dramatic impact on the profits of British banks. On 18 February 1988 Midland Bank was the first clearing bank ever to register a loss - £505bn in 1987. This was the result of having to set aside £1,016m to protect Midland against the inevitable losses it will make on its £4.1bn loans to Third World countries which face serious economic problems.

Lloyds Bank made a full year loss of £248m compared with a profit of £700m a year ago. This is the first loss in its 200 year history. Bad debt provisions for Third World loans of some £3.93bn were slightly higher than Midlands at £1,066m. Barclays' profits fell by more than 50 per cent to £339m from £895m after provision of £713m for problem loans. Finally NatWest's profits fell by 30 per cent to £704m after a provision of £759m for doubtful loans.

While all the banks significantly increased their profits made from the booming UK economy, the £3.55bn set aside for bad debt provisions led to the worst results in the clearing banks' history.

David Reed

£500m LOST PRODUCTION

Ford strike settled

On Monday 22 February Ford UK's 32,000 manual workers ended their nine day strike. The workers had voted by 16,060 to 6,759 to accept Ford's revised pay offer.

The deal gives the workers a pay rise of 14% or more over two years. The other issue in the dispute was Ford's attempt to impose new working practices - speeding up the production line and allowing management to move workers from one job to another. Ford have now agreed that local agreement must be got before working practices can be changed.

On the day that the ballot result was announced, Thursday 18 February, Ford reported annual figures showing that profits had risen by 40% to £2.6 billion. They could afford to buy industrial peace at their UK companies. The strike and unofficial action before the strike cost

Ford £500 million in lost production.

The Ford strike, and industrial action at other car plants, naturally brought the British left out in a rash. *Socialist Worker*, always liable to overhear on these occasions, declared: 'Ford strike shows we have the power' (20 February 1988). Well, not really comrades.

What the Ford strike showed was that traditional trade unionism can still force concessions, particularly on pay, from profitable companies. This is good news, especially for the Ford workers themselves, but tells us next to nothing about 'our power'.

Terry O'Halloran



BAKER'S BILL

The fight for education

In front of his loyal supporters at the Conservative Party Conference, Kenneth Baker confided the true purpose of his Education Reform Bill when he condemned those in education who 'refused to believe that the pursuit of egalitarianism is over'.

Behind the slick catchphrases of 'raising standards' and 'expanding parental choice' the Education Bill has directly political aims: to impose central government control over all information available to children in schools; to create a two-tier system for state schools; to halt attempts to improve opportunities for black and working class children; to destroy the ability of teachers' unions to resist; to eliminate any other potential forum of resistance, eg the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA).

Middle class parents will be encouraged to opt out of Local Education Authority (LEA) control leaving sink schools starved of resources for the poor. The Bill now aims directly at the abolition of ILEA.

The parents who organise for their

schools to 'opt out' will be middle class parents opposed to anti-racist education and teaching for all abilities. Was the government interested in 'parent power' when the majority of parents at Drummond Middle School in Bradford demanded the sacking of racist headmaster Honeyford?

The government has demanded that ILEA cut £93 million from its budget for this year. ILEA has now conceded and plans 6,000 redundancies including the loss of 1,200 teachers and 830 college lecturers. The government originally demanded even greater cuts but ILEA found £38 million from its reserves. Baker's purpose is obvious: to force such a decline in the standards of ILEA schools that parents will support its break up.

ILEA, under its Kinnockite leader Neil Fletcher, is actively aiding Baker by attacking those teachers who resist. Teachers who struck in defence of jobs and conditions have been threatened with the sack. The NUT leadership too has attempted to victimise ILEA activists. They have been calling for a return to the selective industrial action which failed to restore teachers' negotiating rights last year.

The Labour Party is displaying its now-established method of 'opposition'. Labour education spokesperson, Jack Straw, has called for differential salaries with higher payments for maths and science teachers rather than higher pay for all teachers. Its 'opposition' consists of appeals to Tory 'wets' and the House of Lords. The Labour Party will not mount any serious fight for fear of scaring off 'semi-detached Britain'.

Jim O'Rourke

Parkinson privatises electricity industry

In February and March the government published two White Papers outlining their plans to privatise the electricity industry.

At the end of last year Cecil Parkinson, Secretary of State for Energy, ordered the electricity boards to concern themselves only with 'a higher rate of return on investment during the run-up to privatisation'.

The Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) spent £162m on research and development. This has been seen as a prime area for cuts.

At the beginning of last month the CEGB announced that:

- It is pulling out from a multi-million pound research programme into how nuclear reactors can be safely decommissioned.
- From April it will no longer pay £2.5m every year towards the

cost of decommissioning the Advanced Gas Cooled Reactor at Windscale.

Electricity consumers face a 15% price rise over the next two years. The cut-off rate will increase, as it did after the privatisation of British Gas (from 40,000 per year in 1986 to over 53,000 last year).

The South of Scotland Electricity Board (SSEB) has an overall debt of £1.8bn. In an attempt to increase its profits prior to privatisation the SSEB is reducing its expenditure. At the end of February it announced that it would end its nine-year long contract with British Coal and would in-

vite tenders from abroad for its coal supply.

British Coal sought an injunction preventing the SSEB from breaking its deal, claiming that all four remaining deep mines in Scotland would be closed with a loss of 3,500 jobs. On 4 March the court ruled that it could not use 'foreign coal' in two power stations. The SSEB announced that it would buy one million tonnes of coal from Australia, China and America to use in its other stations.

A report made by the directors of the Scottish Coal Project noted that the SSEB would have to 'cut costs to the bone' together with 'closing its barely profitable high street appliance shops with the consequent redundancies and stepping up of disconnections'.

Far from being in the 'interests' of the consumer, the privatisation of the electricity industry must be seen for what it is: yet another attack on the living standards of the working class.

Nick Lewis



NON STOP PICKET IN COURT

■ Out of a total of 567 charges against non-stop picketers up to 31 December 1988, 91% of the cases have resulted in acquittals.

NOISE IS 'GOOD NOISE'

In February Richard Roques was cleared on Appeal of breaching Westminster bye-laws. Richard's case was one of a long list of summonses issued by Cannon Row Police in an attempt to silence the Non-Stop Picket - at the behest of the South African Embassy.

1st BIRTHDAY ACQUITTALS

Cat Wiener, Oliver Rodker, Steven Kitson, Andy Higginbottom and Tunde Forrest were the first of the defendants to appear in court for charges (including assault) arising from the 1st birthday of the non-stop picket on 19 April last year.

On that occasion TSG officers under the instruction of Chief Inspector Gilbertson attacked the picket (more than 250 people) in pursuit of two small benches which were said to be obstructing the highway. As a result a 75-year-old woman was knocked to the ground and Steven Kitson was knocked unconscious.

All the defendants were acquitted except for Andy who was acquitted of the assault charge but convicted for holding a police helmet for too long!

PICKET 172 - POLICE 0

Cl Gilbertson, now Superintendent (and LSE graduate) was obviously promoted to get him off the streets. In the same week that the 19 April defendants were acquitted, Carol Brickley and Norma Kitson - convenor and deputy convenor of City AA - won their appeals with costs against conviction under Section 14 of the Public Order Act - taking part in a prohibited demonstration.

On 6 May 1987 - the day of the white only election in South Africa a quantity of red paint was thrown at the Embassy. The police used this as an excuse to move the non-stop picket. 18 people were arrested that evening and subsequently 172 arrests were made for crossing the road to demonstrate. A test case of four people was heard last summer and despite the fact that they were all doing the same thing, in the same place at the same time, 2 defendants were acquitted but Norma and Carol were found guilty.

Gilbertson came to court to give evidence at the appeal sporting a bright red tie and handkerchief - surely a breach of the trades description act - but it was his face that was red as he had to explain to the judge why he had given two sets of completely different evidence in the magistrate's court (neither matched the truth, but that goes without saying). His erstwhile deputy Insp. McCrieff had even more difficulty explaining why his evidence matched (to the letter) Gilbertson's first, totally fictional account.

After the appeal the remaining cases under the POA were dropped. The police score of convictions arising from last summer's campaign organised by Cannon Row to rid the streets of the non-stop picket is exactly 0. Taxpayers may care to write to the Commissioner asking how much money, time and resources went into this pantomime - at the behest of the South African Embassy. Perhaps they can be sent the bill?

STOP PRESS

PICKET 173 - POLICE 0

James Aptaker has been found not guilty of damaging a police video camera on 2 July last year. James' arrest marked the closure of the police campaign - a last fling?

● The three defendants charged with throwing paint at the embassy will be retried at Southwark Crown Court on 21 March.



Afghanistan settlement?

Pakistan may be forced to sign a four part agreement with Afghanistan, leading to the withdrawal of 115,000 Soviet troops.

The agreement proposes non-interference by both countries in each other's affairs; no outside interference in Afghanistan (an end to US financing of the counter-revolutionary Mojaheddin); the USSR and USA to act as guarantors; and the safe return of over three million refugees in Pakistan.

By proposing to bring all Soviet troops out within nine months, half within the first three months, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union have met a major demand made by Pakistan and the US.

The governing People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) has also proposed a national reconciliation programme. This is aimed at drawing sections of the counter-revolution into a multi-party government. In concession to such elements it has proclaimed Islam as the state religion and promised: a mixed economy; amnesty for returnees; and a non-aligned foreign policy.

Pakistan, presumably at US behest, is dragging its feet and demanding an interim administration in Afghanistan to supervise the Soviet withdrawal, gaining diplomatically what has not been won in battle: chosen instruments of US imperialism appointed to the Afghan cabinet.

All the excitement over imminent

power has provoked dissent in the ranks of the counter-revolutionary forces. Islamic fundamentalists, situated mainly in Pakistan and the main beneficiaries of \$1 billion a year US aid, reject reconciliation with the PDPA. They vow to fight on. Distinct from these, and, possibly, the target of PDPA policy concessions, are the bands within and without Afghanistan that derive their following from feudal land-owning ties.

General Secretary Gorbachev clearly wants Soviet withdrawal to be a precedent for the peaceful solution of the 'bleeding wounds' in Central America, southern Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf, and Kampuchea. He hopes it will contribute to mending relations with China as well as removing a key propaganda point in Reagan's justification for more bellicose US policies.

The Pakistani ruling class, on the other hand, has gained considerably from the war. In the past five years Pakistan received \$3.2 billion in US aid. A further £4 billion is scheduled. This represents a 500% increase in aid during the decade following Soviet entry into Afghanistan as compared to the previous decade. Pakistan can be expected to seek ways to sabotage any agreement.

Trevor Rayne

PTA

Permanent terror

On 16 February the Tories renewed the anti-Irish Prevention of Terrorism Act. This year they went a stage further and announced plans to make the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Temporary Provisions) permanent.

The PTA's main powers are detention for up to seven days and exclusion from Britain to the Six Counties. From its inception it has been used against the Irish community in Britain in order to intimidate and harass potential activists into silence. From 1974, when the PTA was introduced, to September 1987, 6,610 people have been detained and questioned in police custody for periods over one hour. Less than 3% have subsequently been charged. The Act is used for large scale intelligence gathering purposes. In 1986 alone, 59,481 travellers between Britain and Ireland were stopped and checked. 106 people have been permanently excluded from Britain, a unique form of internal deportation.

Labour introduced the PTA in 1974. Now pledged to oppose it, their 'opposition', in the latest Parliamentary debate, centred not on fundamental democratic rights but on whether the PTA was the best way to defeat 'terrorism'. Roy Hattersley for Labour, insisted that the PTA was a hindrance and a handicap in the

fight against terrorism and accused the Tories of 'playing into the hands of the IRA propaganda machine'.

The history of the PTA now follows a well-worn path from temporary to permanent legislation. In 1983, after the Jellicoe Review, FRFI predicted what would take place:

'The government says that it will be renewed for five years and then will have to be re-enacted. This is supposed to blind people to the truth, but those who remember the Six Counties Special Powers Act will know what is really happening. The SPA was introduced as a "temporary" measure in 1922, renewed annually until 1928 when it was renewed for five years, then in 1933 it was made permanent.'

So coy is the government about its actions that even now, the new permanent Act will be entitled... the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act.

Gary Clapton

Soviet nationalism policy tested

The massive demonstrations in Armenia in February, pushed to the fore numerous unresolved issues arising from the Soviet Union's policy on nationalities. The Gorbachev leadership is now presented with another important and major challenge.

Between 23 and 29 February, hundreds of thousands of Armenians left their factories, offices, schools and colleges to participate in almost non-stop demonstrations in the capital Yerevan. Their main demand was for the transfer to Armenia of the autonomous region of Karabakh, currently under the jurisdiction of neighbouring Azerbaijan. Karabakh, a part of historical Armenia whose 170,000 population is 75% Armenian, does not share any borders with Soviet Armenia and was incorporated into Azerbaijan in 1923.

The Armenian demonstrations, apparently endorsed by sections of the highly corrupt Armenian Communist Party, followed the Karabakh Soviet's overwhelming vote for a transfer to Armenia. The demonstrations have led to serious riots, with numerous deaths and injuries, between Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in Armenia, Karabakh and the Azerbaijani city of Samgait. TASS has reported 31 deaths. Soviet troops have been moved into the region to restore order. The demonstrations ended after Mikhail Gorbachev announced that the next Central Committee, already scheduled to discuss the nationalities question, will discuss Karabakh.

The events in Armenia and Azerbaijan, following smaller nationalist demonstrations in Latvia, Estonia, Kazakhstan and among Crimean Tartars have led to trite speculation in the imperialist press about the resurgence of nationalist movements leading to the 'collapse of the Soviet ethnic empire'. The left press,

generally plagiarising opinions from *The Guardian* and *The Independent* has been even cruder. For example, *the next step*, paper of the trotskyst RCP speaks almost gleefully of 'ethnic tensions that have smouldered for decades now threatening to explode... (and)... engulf the whole region in ethnic violence.' It sees the events as an 'indictment of the Stalinist system' and proclaims that 'only a new proletarian revolution' can overcome 'the ethnic divisions which now plague the Soviet Union.'

Despite serious dangers of nationalist rivalries and national chauvinism, the reality is quite the opposite. By any Marxist standard the Soviet Union's nationalities policy has brought enormous benefits to the state's 100 odd different nationalities. Not only have they developed economically, but some like Armenia and Georgia have the highest standard of living in the USSR. Their language, literature, culture and identity have been preserved and developed.

However, the frequently bureaucratic methods used in settling national disputes and demands; frequent instances of national discrimination, prejudice and insensitivity have undoubtedly fostered national chauvinist tendencies among certain strata in the USSR. These have led and continue to lead to tension and conflict among different national groups. The Communist Party of the USSR and national communist parties, riddled with privilege and corruption have also been indifferent to the national grievances of the working class thus allowing chauvinism to

gain a foothold. Gorbachev has acknowledged the existence of such problems which will be addressed by the forthcoming Central Committee meeting.

These are reasons why the Armenian demonstrations were not marked by anti-sovietism. On the contrary their demands were expressed in the context of Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Furthermore, the demonstrations focussing on Karabakh, were not purely nationalist, overlapping with other issues such as pollution which is a major popular grievance in Armenia, a centre of the Soviet chemical industry.

The Soviet leadership has so far responded with great sensitivity to the Armenian events. Demonstrations have not been suppressed, and open discussion on the issues has been allowed. Undoubtedly, Gorbachev will face a difficult task in resolving the issue of Karabakh. The Soviet leadership has stated its opposition to revising existing boundaries in the USSR. The Armenian Communist Party leadership, corrupt to the hilt has been resisting Gorbachev's drive against corruption. It appears quite willing to tolerate reactionary petit-bourgeois elements who are stoking up nationalist chauvinism as a card against the central government.

The discussion and resolutions of the Central Committee's deliberation on the nationalities question and that of Karabakh will be an acid test. It can determine whether the working class's national grievances will be settled in a principled communist manner or whether chauvinist trends will succeed in spreading their poison among the masses leading to national conflict, violence and death.

Vahram Razmikian

City Anti-Apartheid Group visits United Nations

A sure sign of the growing international recognition of the Non-Stop Picket came with the invitation from the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid to City AA to attend its meeting on 26 February.

I was honoured to be City AA's delegate. City AA was welcomed alongside other solidarity groups from the US, West Germany and Holland, representatives of SWAPO and the PLO, and many government representatives from the Non-Aligned Movement and the socialist countries. We had come together on the occasion of the special 10th Anniversary Commemoration of the death of Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe, the founding President of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania.

The immense contribution of Robert Sobukwe was emphasised by several invited guests who testified to his courage and faith in the African people. He was amongst the first to be imprisoned on Robben Island, where he was held in isolation from other prisoners. The racist regime even went to the length of passing a special law to keep Sobukwe on the Island for years after his release date. Sobukwe was then banned and, finally, murdered through deliberate neglect of his cancer condition. Yet ten years later nations gathered to honour him - Sobukwe lives!

One of the delegations at the UN were Joyce Mokhesi and Mrs. Julia Ramashamola, relatives of the Sharpeville 6. There is considerable determination amongst the UN representatives and US support groups

to maintain pressure on PW Botha to save the lives of our five brothers and sister on death row.

The PAC gets particular support from black churches and black revolutionary organisations in the US. Racism is rampant. Within a 100 yards of the UN buildings I saw scores of black and Hispanic homeless braving the sub-zero temperatures of the New York winter. I met groups campaigning for black prisoners. I went on an angry demonstration demanding justice for Tawana Brawley, a black teenager who was raped and sodomised by a gang of white men. All the black comrades I spoke to, emphasised that theirs is a common struggle with the liberation of Africa. They were particularly concerned to hear of the situation of Viraj Mendis, and send their solidarity greetings to our comrade.

In my report on the Non-Stop Picket I spoke of the vicious racism and sexism of the Metropolitan Police as an index of British collaboration with apartheid.

I would like to thank comrades Norma Kitson, Lesaona Makanda (PAC UN representative) and Gora Ebrahim (Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the PAC) and many other comrades. The PAC acted as considerate and warm hosts throughout my short trip, and on behalf of all the Non-Stop Picketers I would like to thank them for their encouragement as well as their hospitality.

Andy Higginbottom
Secretary, City of London
Anti-Apartheid Group

PTA

No Irish here

The use of the PTA as a means of harassment was graphically shown on 5 March when seven people, including three relatives of Martina Shanahan, an Irish prisoner on remand, were detained under the Act.

Their arrest followed the committal proceedings against Martina and two others, Finbar Cullen and John McCann, who have been held on charges of conspiracy to murder persons unknown and plotting to kill Tom King. The first charge was dis-

missed at the committal. As usual the police put on a special display at the court with armed police ringing the area. These arrests are no doubt part of the effort to portray the three as guilty even before their trial.

Maxine Williams

70 years after the October revolution, what is the relationship between the USSR and the capitalist world? For Mikhail Gorbachev the counterpart to *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the USSR is 'a new concept of foreign policy' (pxii), which he describes as '... a Leninist policy of peace, mutually beneficial international co-operation and friendship among nations.' (pxii)

The new policy is, Gorbachev suggests, a development of Lenin's '... policy of learning and mastering the art of long term "existence side by side" with them.' [the capitalist states] (pxii). Politically it means a 'commitment to dialogue' (pxii) with the capitalist states to agree on disarmament. Economically, he proposes '... a joint quest for a new economic order taking into account the interests of all on an equal basis.' (pxiv).

The significance of Gorbachev's speech can only be appreciated by analysing the objective situation of the USSR and its allies in relation to imperialism. It would be pointless to 'criticise' Gorbachev's speech 'ideologically' as Trotskyist groups do: any leadership of the USSR would face certain objective problems which cannot in themselves be resolved by changing the foreign policy of the USSR.

In my view, the objective situation is that in a period of renewed offensive by imperialism, the socialist countries are in a very weak position. Under these circumstances, the USSR and its allies may be forced to make significant concessions to imperialism.

IMPERIALIST OFFENSIVE

Since 1979 imperialism has gone over to a concerted offensive, in an attempt to regain the positions lost to revolutionary movements in the period 1974-79. No revolutionary movement has come to power since 1979; 2 of the new revolutionary regimes have been successfully overthrown (Grenada 1983, Burkina Faso 1987); the new revolutionary regimes (Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua) have come under sustained attack; and there have been attempts to undermine weak socialist countries (especially Poland, from 1981).

To defend the revolution in Afghanistan, the USSR has had to commit 115,000 troops for the last 8 years, against a reactionary movement which has lavish backing from US imperialism. The continuing divisions within the socialist camp have meant that the USSR has to subsidise Vietnam \$3m per day, chiefly in order to sustain its 100,000 strong army in Kampuchea against China.

During this period imperialism has been able to forestall revolutionary democratic movements by supporting the bourgeois forces opposed to the existing regimes - Haiti (1986), Philippines (1986) and South Korea (1987).

PRESSURES ON THE SOVIET UNION

In this context, consider the weakness of the USSR and its allies economically, militarily and politically: in fact, in several respects the USSR is in a weaker position than in 1960.

Economically: although the USSR is the second largest industrial producer in the world, its overall production is still only about one third of that of the US (1984 figures). In terms of production per person it is on a par with Puerto Rico and Eire; and 40% of the FRG.

In relation to its alliances, the USSR is, if anything, weaker in economic terms than it was in 1960. The share of world GNP on the part of the socialist countries (excluding China, because of its current pro-imperialist connections, though it is socialist) and non-Soviet countries actively allied with the Soviet Union (including Egypt and India for 1960; only India for 1988) has fallen from 8% to just over 6%.

The victorious revolutionary movements of 1974-1979 have not altered this position. Of the world's 14 poorest countries (by GNP per head) six (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Kampuchea, Laos, Vietnam) are in the socialist camp; only one of the world's 36 richest countries (the GDR) is socialist.

In several cases, socialist countries have

borders with economically much stronger countries - GDR and the FRG; the Korean Peoples Republic and the Republic of Korea; Yemen People's Democratic Republic and the Yemeni Arab Republic.

For the most part, the COMECON countries are a drain on the resources of the Soviet Union, relying until recently on oil on favourable terms compared to the world market (in Eastern Europe); suspension of interest payments on debt (Poland); or subsidised payments for commodities (Cuba). Economically speaking, the victorious revolutions of 1974-79 increased the Soviet Union's burden.

Militarily: between 1971 and 1980 the USSR increased its percentage of spending compared to the US from 78 to 96%. Despite putting a tremendous strain on the economy of the USSR, it only brought the USSR itself within striking distance of the US' nuclear capability. In terms of conventional military power for intervention rather than defence (ie aircraft carriers, naval bases, marine commando forces), the USSR cannot begin to compete.

In 1984, arms spending by the US and its allies (including China) was 203% of that of the socialist countries'. The tragic significance of the Sino-Soviet split can be appreciated if the military balance is recalculated with China as part of the Soviet camp - arms spending by the US and its allies would then be reduced to 127%. Gorbachev rightly makes the 'top-priority goal' of the Soviet Union's foreign policy the '... strengthening of friendship and the utmost development of co-operation with socialist countries...' (pxi).

In an area of vital strategic significance to the USSR, the Middle East, the Soviet Union is weaker today than it was in 1960. No anti-imperialist movement has come to power since 1969 (Libya); and the defection of Egypt to the imperialist side in 1973 left the USSR with no reliable allies in the region.

The case of Egypt shows how difficult it is for the Soviet Union to build defensive alliances. After its defeat in 1967 the Soviet Union cancelled half of Egypt's debts to the USSR, and re-equipped its army free of charge. Yet when Sadat unilaterally abrogated the Soviet-Egypt Treaty, and refused (March 1976) to continue repaying Egypt's very considerable debt (\$7bn) the Soviet Union could do nothing about it.

Politically: all the revolutions between 1974 and 1979 - Angola, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Laos, Mozambique, Vietnam - took place in underdeveloped countries. The only movement which involved a significant working class/urban population (Iran) was defeated. As a result, while these are tremendous victories, they do not weigh very heavily in the political balance of forces.



Soviet troops in Afghanistan

The Soviet Union versus imperialism

PATRICK NEWMAN

In his third and concluding article on the report given by Mikhail Gorbachev on the 70th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, Patrick Newman gives his analysis on the role of the Soviet Union today. In future issues of FRFI we will be printing replies to Patrick Newman. We urge readers to contribute to this debate.

None of the European Communist Parties is a significant political factor: it is arguable that in 1960 the Italian Communist Party was, although nowhere near any kind of power, parliamentary or otherwise.

INTER-IMPERIALIST RIVALRIES

Nor can the Soviet Union hope to exploit inter-imperialist rivalries. In the Civil War period (1917-21) when the USSR was invaded by the armies of 14 different countries, it was able to hold out '... only because there was no unity among these powers.' (Lenin, Speech to 8th All-Russia Congress of Soviets December 1920 CW 31 p466). Japan was at loggerheads with the US over the exploitation of China; and Germany was planning revenge against France for the Treaty of Versailles.

At present, as such rivalries are only latent, the USSR has been able to exploit differences only over fairly minor questions (the gas pipeline 1982).

Therefore, one of the cornerstones of Soviet foreign policy as formulated by Lenin (the utilisation of disagreements between foreign powers CW 31 p476) cannot bear much weight in the current period. What of the second - '... to show peoples that are conscious of the bourgeois yoke that there is no salvation for them without the Soviet Republic.' (CW 31 p476).

An analysis of what this policy meant in Lenin's day shows that in principle there is a continuity, particularly as revealed by the case of Turkey. The Soviet government reached an agreement with Turkey on 16 March 1921, despite the fact that less than 2 months previously the government of Mustafa Kemal had murdered the 17 leaders of the Turkish communist party, which continued to be illegal after the agreement.

The Soviet government reached this agreement because in April 1920 the Turkish government had appealed to the Soviet Union for recognition, assistance and mutual operations '... to expel the imperialist powers', primarily Britain. It also had friendly relations with the amir (king) of Afghanistan who had launched a campaign against British India.

As early as the 7th party congress (March 1918) there was a clear separation

between the Soviet state and the Russian Communist Party. Even when the Soviet state was compelled to accept treaty clauses renouncing anti-imperialist propaganda (especially in relation to British India), such an agreement was not binding on the Russian Communist Party, or on the communist parties of other states.

Gorbachev argues that 'The time of the Communist International, the information



Above: The Angolan revolution - victorious with Soviet support. Below: Revolutionary democratic forces in the Philippines.



bureau, even the time of binding international conferences, is over.' (pxv). But it is only when there is such a movement and such an organisation that the policy of the Soviet state and the Communist Party can be clearly separated.

LOW EBB

This is the problem - that the world revolutionary movement is at such a low ebb. Gorbachev acknowledges this: '... the impulse for [national] liberation... present at the stage of the struggle for political independence - is certainly waning... the impulse essential to the new, current stage of the Third World's development... is only nascent.' (pxiv). For this

reason, he does not mention national liberation movements, but only refers to '... the processes of inter-state consolidation among the developing countries.' (principally, the Non-Aligned Movement) (pxiv).

'REALISTIC' FOREIGN POLICY

Does this mean that the USSR intends to abandon the revolutionary movement solely for alliances with 'non-aligned states'? While peoples are not 'conscious of the bourgeois yoke' it will not have the choice of supporting their movements; when they are, they will be supported by the USSR.

Once a revolutionary movement has seized power, whatever the USSR's attitude towards that movement during a period of its struggle for power, the USSR never refuses to give its military support (when physically possible and when it would not lead to the possibility of all-out (ie nuclear war) confrontation with the US) to defend the revolution. This support is decisive: Korea (1951), Cuba (1961), Aden (1967), Ethiopia (1977), Afghanistan (1979), Nicaragua (1983). Where possible, it gives decisive economic and technical support in the construction of socialism (China 1949-60).

When a revolutionary movement is strong enough to be on the verge of seizing power, the USSR gives decisive military and political support, which carries the day: for example, in Angola (1975) and Vietnam (1974-75).

Where the revolutionary movement already has state power, as a base for further national liberation struggle, it gives substantial military and political support: Vietnam (1954 onwards, 1975).

Where a bourgeois government can be considered to be conducting a significant struggle against imperialism (Egypt 1955,



Above: The Angolan revolution - victorious with Soviet support. Below: Revolutionary democratic forces in the Philippines.



bureau, even the time of binding international conferences, is over.' (pxv). But it is only when there is such a movement and such an organisation that the policy of the Soviet state and the Communist Party can be clearly separated.

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1967; Iraq 1960) the USSR gives substantial economic and military aid.

The overall record shows, therefore, that strong and successful revolutionary movements will, within certain limits, receive the economic, military and political support of the USSR. The limits are set by the continuing overall superiority of imperialism.

Given the virtual non-existence of a revolutionary movement among the working classes of the imperialist nations, and the current weakness of the national liberation movement, the USSR will face some very difficult decisions in the forthcoming period. The leadership of the CPSU is attempting to work out a realistic foreign policy to confront these problems.

AMNESTY REPORTS ON BROADWATER FARM

A damning indictment of British 'justice'



Police lay siege to Broadwater Farm

The entire British political, judicial and police establishment must be seething with rage against Amnesty International, a respectable and bourgeois organisation. In February, Amnesty, which specialises in monitoring and reporting on violations of elementary human and political rights internationally, produced its first major report of an event in Britain: the notorious police frame-ups following the October 1985 Broadwater Farm rising in which PC Blakelock was killed. Home Office officials wrote to Amnesty saying that Home Secretary Hurd was 'astounded' that Amnesty had undertaken the investigation.

EDDIE ABRAHAMS
SUSAN DAVIDSON

The reason is not surprising. The Amnesty report 'questioned the fairness of (these) British trials' and 'called on the British Government to review the murder trial and other trials conducted in the wake of the riot on Broadwater Farm...'. Even more damaging to the Home Office and the British ruling class is Amnesty's recognition of the Broadwater Farm prisoners as political prisoners. This the Home Office claims is 'not remotely justified'.

Coming from a body which commands enormous respect internationally, Amnesty's investigation delivers a devastating blow to the carefully constructed policy of criminalisation, lies, illegality, torture and racist slander which secured the convictions of scores of youth following the Broadwater Farm rising and life sentences for Winston Silcott, Engin Raghup and Mark Braithwaite.

The report concentrates on the cases of 362 people arrested following the risings and examines the conditions of detention and trials of six people charged with murder and five other named people: it is a catalogue of violations of elementary human and legal rights.

'With disturbing frequency the police denied suspects, including juveniles, access to lawyers or family. This created the universally known preconditions for coercion of admissions from suspects.'

Amnesty goes further stating that:

'Amnesty International believes that detainees were threatened with the charge of murder if they did not confess to lesser offences, or with prolonged detention.'

Whilst Amnesty reported only on 11 cases, they state in one of their conclusions that:

'Amnesty International... believes, on the basis of many other cases which it has investigated, but which are not reported in this paper, that the police have regularly used threats and intimidation against those suspected of serious offences in connection with the disturbances.'

Readers of FRFI will already be familiar with the conditions detainees were held in - incommunicado for at least two days, hungry, cold, semi-naked and constantly subjected to physical and psychological brutality. Amnesty points out that present law does not require that arrested suspects be told formally of their rights. This is merely embodied in a Code of Practice. Amnesty in its report calls for it to be made law.

With its meticulous investigation and conclusions, it is hardly surprising that a deadening silence has surrounded the Amnesty report. It is an indictment not only of the British state, but its lackey racist media which played such a major and obnoxious role during the trials, especially the trial of the three convicted for murder (see FRFI 67).

Those in the Parliamentary Labour Party who claim to be socialist, have no excuses left for not raising this matter in the House of Commons. It is against their nature to rely on the truth when supplied by those who have actually been subjected to police illegality and brutality, but here they have the same truth supplied by a bourgeois organisation. Yet they have done nothing so far to take up Amnesty's call for a review of the miscarriages of justice that were the Broadwater Farm trials.

The Amnesty International Report *United Kingdom: Alleged Forced Admissions During Incommunicado Detention* can be obtained from Amnesty International, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ.

Sharon Raghup talks to FRFI

Following the publication of the Amnesty International report, Susan Davidson spoke to Sharon Raghup, wife of Engin who was sentenced to life imprisonment along with Winston Silcott and Mark Braithwaite for the killing of PC Blakelock.

For Sharon there was little new in the report: 'I already knew about the forced confessions and conditions of detention for Engin and many others... But I didn't realise how illegal the police's behaviour was.' When he was arrested, Engin had asked for a solicitor, but the police would not allow anyone in to see him. 'He was interrogated on ten occasions in five days. On the third day of his detention he was charged with affray and taken before a magistrate's court. This was the first time he spoke to a solicitor... The magistrate ordered that a solicitor be present during future police questioning. The police ignored the magistrate's ruling.' Every time Engin asked for a solicitor 'The police said he was not going to get one and they would "kick the hell" out of him.' So despite being only 19 Engin was denied all access not only to a solicitor but to friends and family as well. It was through such methods that 'The police forced him to sign false admissions and written statements containing things he had never said.'

Commenting on the Police Federation's statement that Amnesty International had

lost all credibility, Sharon observed 'I suppose all countries say that when it is about them. The police also said that they must have got their information from those convicted of murder - but that's not the case. They would not be allowed in to see Winston and I know for sure they haven't seen Engin.'

Sharon is determined to use the report 'to force the government and media to take notice of it. I intend to campaign around it.' In the light of the Amnesty International report 'we are now working on how best to sit up a Relatives Action Campaign demanding a fair and just appeal for the three men convicted of murder.'

Police harassment in Hackney

The racist Hackney police are conducting a vendetta against 20 year old black youth, Trevor Monerville. On 2 March they arrested him at his girlfriend's house claiming he was in breach of bail conditions confining him to his home. It took two hours in a police cell, and the intervention of Trevor's solicitor to 'remind' the police that he was in fact officially living at his girlfriend's house. They in fact already knew this. In the fortnight before his arrest Trevor had been stopped five times while driving for 'routine checks'.

The reason for this campaign is that Trevor is taking a civil action against the police for serious assault and brain damage. In January 1987 he disappeared for a week. He had been arrested by the police who at first denied he was being held in Stoke Newington police station. His father finally discovered him in Brixton prison suffering from a brain haemorrhage. He had to undergo brain surgery which has affected his sight and memory and left him suffering epileptic fits.

The latest attack on Trevor came the day after Metropolitan Police Commissioner Peter Imbert announced a £100,000 campaign to combat racist attacks. Given the experience of thousands of black youth have at the hands of the police, this is a cheap, cynical publicity stunt. The money should go to finance Trevor's action against the racist police.

Roy Spring

CAMPAIGN NEWS

TONY BENN VISITS VIRAJ

Tony Benn visited the sanctuary on Saturday 13 February with Jeremy Corbyn to show solidarity with Viraj. In the visitors book, he wrote 'Your courage and the sanctuary offered has given hope to millions.'

VMDC SPEAKING TOUR

Last month the VMDC held five public meetings in Manchester, London, Newcastle, Birmingham and Nottingham. In Manchester, over 90 people, mostly from the local community in Hulme and Moss Side packed the Church of the Ascension on 4 February to hear Father John Methuen, Viraj Mendis and other speakers respond to the recent attacks on the sanctuary. On 18 February, Father John spoke to 80 people in London, sharing a platform with Paul Weller, author of *Sanctuary: the beginning of a new movement?* and Simone Dewhurst representing the RCG. In Nottingham, Keith Vaz MP shared the platform with Father John and in Birmingham, Som Raj, himself threatened with deportation, and Mohammed Idris spoke.



VMDC JOINS MANCHESTER MARCH AGAINST CLAUSE 28

On Saturday 20 February, a 70-strong VMDC contingent joined the 25,000 demonstration in Manchester against Clause 28. Speaking on behalf of the VMDC, Tony, a gay man, urged everyone to join the VMDC's fight.

LONDON STREET RALLY

At a street rally in Wood Green on Saturday 6 February, over 900 people signed the VMDC petition and donated £93 to the campaign. FRFI supporters sold 387 FRFIs.

DAVID STEEL REAFFIRMS SUPPORT

David Steel MP reaffirmed his support for Viraj writing 'I do accept Amnesty International's report that Viraj Mendis's life would be in danger if he were to return to Sri Lanka.'

Sarah Ricca

Join the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign

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

There are VMDC Support Groups in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leeds, Tyne and Wear, Brighton, Bristol, Dundee, Cambridge, Nottingham, Birmingham and London.

Join one of these groups. Help set one up if there isn't one in your town.

SRI LANKA

What chance for Viraj Mendis?

On 16 February Vijaya Kumaranatunge, Sri Lanka's most popular film star, was assassinated by Sinhalese chauvinists. He was not only a film star, but was to have been presidential candidate of the United Socialist Alliance, a coalition of the People's Party, the Communist Party and the nominally Marxist LLSP and NSSP. He was a bourgeois politician who supported the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement.

TREVOR RAYNE

The week before his assassination Kumaranatunge gave the oration at the funeral of a leading Communist Party organiser, also gunned down by Sinhalese chauvinists. The Sri Lankan Communist Party opposes national self-determination for the Tamils and has viciously attacked the Tamil Tigers.

What chance then for Viraj Mendis, a revolutionary communist who supports both the Tamil Tigers and their demand for national independence? Death is most certainly the fate awaiting Viraj Mendis, should the British Home Office have its way and deport him.

As the political crisis in the south deepens, President Jayewardene's response is one of mounting repression. Thousands of Tamil and Sinhalese people are held in detention without charge in Sri Lankan jails. In one day on 24 January 890 Tamils and 1,154 Sinhalese were arrested without charge under the Sri Lankan PTA. Six hundred Green Tiger militia, formerly Home Guards that terrorised the Tamil population, are now allocated to each southern constituency and 150 to each ruling UNP MP. Green Tigers patrol the south in unlicensed cars without registration plates and operate in tandem with the murderous Special Task Force.

Swiss journalist Erich Schmid who

Police attack VMDC march



As if to prove they are training to smash into the Church of the Ascension, the Manchester police on 12 February arrested and assaulted eight VMDC members on the regular Friday march from Piccadilly to the Sanctuary in Hulme.

ADRIAN LEVY

At 6.45pm as the march moved into Bonsall Street in Hulme, a black youth was being violently arrested by five police; not an unusual occurrence in Hulme and Moss Side. Four VMDC march stewards went to witness and photograph this assault on the youth. The local police squad E Division radioed in for Tactical Aid Group back up who attacked the VMDC witnesses, headbutted, kicked and punch-

ed them. They were handcuffed and thrown into police vans which set off to Platt Lane police station.

The VMDC immediately mounted a picket of the station demanding the release of those arrested. The TAG then attacked this peaceful picket arresting four more VMDC members. But the Manchester police had significantly misjudged the VMDC's support in Hulme and Moss Side. As they attacked the march people came out of their flats lining the walkways

and shouting at the police. At the same time, a passing bus was forced to stop by youth who had witnessed the attack. As the news of the arrests spread, literally hundreds of people rang into the police station demanding the release of the eight. The sanctuary also received solidarity calls and visits. The police were kept busy until they released those arrested.

The eight have been charged with police assault, Public Order Act offences and highway and police obstruction. Their trial will take place in June where they are all pleading not guilty. A Bonsall Street 8 Campaign has been set up to fight this latest police attack on the VMDC.

reported extensively from Sri Lanka during and since the Indian army offensive against Jaffna in October 1987 told FRFI: 'Even in the south the situation is becoming worse and worse. Those people who want to send Viraj Mendis back to Sri Lanka should, just one time, feel for themselves the fear that you have when you oppose the Sri Lankan government.'

Schmid's articles which appeared in the Swiss paper *Die Wochenzeitung* helped force the Swiss government to delay plans to deport 1,500 Tamil refugees back to Sri Lanka. When he heard Schmid's account of the situation in Jaffna, the Swiss ambassador to Colombo, Henri Ceunet, remarked 'Taking into account the actual state of affairs and the general feeling of uncertainty that has also started growing in the south... I can't see how procedures of repatriation... would be feasible in any way.'

Rajwinder Singh leaves sanctuary

On Sunday 14 February, Rajwinder Singh walked free after 373 days in sanctuary in the Guru Nanak Sikh temple, Bradford. 53 weeks of determined struggle for Rajwinder's right to stay with his family in Britain have forced the Home Office to grant him a temporary reprieve. Further medical examinations will now be done to confirm that Rajwinder is unable to care for himself, has a mental age of 13 and if deported to India would have no one to look after him.

The Home Office has known this all along but relentlessly pursuing their racist laws have conveniently ignored the facts. Publicity generated by the Rajwinder Singh Defence Campaign (RSDC); action by Pat Wall, Labour MP for Bradford North and Max Madden, Labour MP, together with support from the community for the sanctuary has forced the Home Office to retreat.

In a press statement Rajwinder's parents thanked everybody and made special reference to Viraj Mendis and Salema Begum. 'At this moment of relief we cannot forget Viraj Mendis... and 13 year old Salema Begum who has also won a reprieve. We pray for their health, safety and success... and hope that compassion and human values shall prevail against unjust and harsh rules in all such cases...'

At the rally welcoming Rajwinder out, all organisations present were given speaking rights. There was a message of solidarity from Father John Methuen and speakers from the RCG, VMDC, LPYS, AYM, the IWA, Pat Wall MP, the ex Mayor of Bradford, Bradford Sikh Federation and local Labour councillors. The RCG pledged continued support to secure Rajwinder's victory and stressed the importance of involving all groups and organisations who want to join the campaign.

The only cloud over the afternoon was caused by Gopal of Bradford Anti-Racist-Anti-Fascist Action (Arafa) who with other members walked off during the rally. Gopal had earlier been publicly arguing with Mr Singh against a reference to Viraj

Mendis in the RSDC press statement. At the moment of victory these Arafa members turned their backs on the magnificent stand by Rajwinder, his family and supporters for black people's rights in the face of vicious laws.

In RSDC, RCG and VMDC comrades have had long arguments with Gopal and some Arafa members over how to build the campaign. We have consistently argued for a broad open and non-sectarian campaign in the democratic tradition established by VMDC. These Arafa members rejected this approach and have pulled out of the campaign. On leaving their last meeting, Gopal assaulted our comrade Gordon, punching him twice in the face. This uncomradely and thuggish behaviour is completely unacceptable and in no way serves the interests of the RSDC.

We will continue to work and build support for Rajwinder's right to stay and to make this victory, in the words of Mr and Mrs Singh 'not short lived but a permanent one'.

Auriel French, Nomsa Langa, Gordon Teal

The Rajwinder Singh Defence Campaign meets every fortnight on Saturday 2pm at the Asian Women's Centre, St Paul's Road, Manningham, Bradford 8. Next meeting Saturday 12 March - all welcome
For more information contact RSDC, PO Box 26, Bradford BD3 0SJ

Viraj Mendis Speaks

Last month the Home Office applied to have my appeal hearing expedited. It is pushing for the appeal to come up as soon as possible. The vicious press campaign which the Home Office and its allies have initiated against us (see FRFI 75) is calling for my forced removal from the sanctuary and deportation to Sri Lanka. The Home Office plan is simple. If the appeal court finds against me, they expect to have the political initiative and enough racist force calling for my removal, to smash into the sanctuary with minimal losses to them. Like the Judicial Review before it, the appeal court judges will be under immense political pressure to find against me. The danger I face in Sri Lanka, quite apart from the 14 years I have lived in Britain, will be pushed into the background.

On Wednesday 10 February, the British government took the first step towards deporting 2000 Tamil asylum applicants to Sri Lanka. Three Tamil refugees were forced onto a plane handcuffed, and flown into the waiting hands of the Sri Lankan police. Despite Home Office assurances, their ID cards were confiscated and they were put under virtual house arrest. Douglas Hurd had snubbed an Amnesty International delegation saying that although there was some 'confusion' in Sri Lanka this did not mean that refugees should not be deported there.

In fact as Hurd knows full well, there is now a clear drive towards fascism in Sri Lanka. The civil war has now spread to the south where the fascist forces within and without the government are pushing forward. Indeed the government's move has been condemned by Amnesty International, the World Council of Churches and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The Australian cricket team has also withdrawn from a tour in Sri Lanka because of the situation there.

Sanctuary - the way forward

I am overjoyed by the victories of Salema Begum and Rajwinder Singh. There can be no question that it was sanctuary that forced the Home Office to accept the justness of both these cases. If not for sanctuary, both of them would have been deported. It was because of the existence of the VMDC sanctuary that Renukaben Lakhani, Rajwinder Singh and Salema Begum went into sanctuary in the first place.

It might look puzzling that the longest lasting sanctuary, ours, has not yet been successful. But it is precisely because we have given a lead in the fight against immigration controls and laid the political basis for sanctuary that the Home Office is determined to destroy us. The Home Office may think that by clearing away the other sanctuaries it will be able to isolate and defeat ours. In fact, whatever its plans, the sanctuary movement is gaining momentum. The Committee for Community Relations of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has endorsed the sanctuary movement which allows those threatened with deportation to take refuge in churches and private homes.

SUPPORT OUR NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
The VMDC has held the Home Office and the police at bay for 14 months. The attack on us is now intensifying. This is why we are organising a national march on Saturday 28 May. I ask all of you to show your support. **DEFEND THE SANCTUARY! BUILD THE 28 MAY DEMONSTRATION!**

Salema Begum wins right to stay

On 15 February, the Unite Salema with her Parents Campaign (USPC) won a fantastic victory when Salema's MP, James Lammond informed the campaign that the Home Office had granted her indefinite leave to stay.

13 year old Salema went into sanctuary in Chorlton Central Church on 18 October 1987 after the Home Office tried to deport her to Bangladesh. So swiftly did her campaign gather strength, that within 12 days, the Home Office was forced to let her remain in the country pending a DNA blood test. When the test proved that she was indeed her parents' daughter, a fact denied by the Home Office, the Home Office had no option but to let her stay. After 11 days in sanctuary and five months of battle the Home Office has been forced to back down.

The USPC victory bulletin paid tribute



Viraj Mendis with Salema Begum

to the VMDC and Viraj Mendis who 'have given a great deal of practical help, support and advice, particularly at the start of the campaign.' In recognition of the VMDC's role, Salema, her father and some of her brothers joined the regular Friday VMDC march on 19 February and then visited Viraj in his sanctuary. Mr Mir, Salema's father was straightforward, 'Viraj has lived here for 15 years. He should be allowed to stay. No problem.' Diana, an activist in USPC said, 'Being involved in this campaign has made me realise the power of campaigning. I'm now going to get involved with Viraj.'

Sarah Ricca

Rule of the Jackboot

On 24 February the apartheid regime banned 17 black political organisations and banned political activity by the largest trade union congress - COSATU. The exact terms of the decree were that the political organisations were 'banned from carrying on or performing any activities or acts whatsoever'. COSATU is now limited to 'legitimate' trade unionism. After more than 18 months of the second State of Emergency, with the townships surrounded by security police and troops, thousands detained and political protest effectively stifled by draconian press censorship, the regime has taken a further step to crush all resistance by black people.



EUGENE TERRE BLANCHE ON THE MARCH WITH FASCIST GANGS

Alongside the bannings of organisations a number of individual political figures, including Archie Gumede and Albertina Sisulu of the UDF have been served with banning orders. The regime has refused to publish the full list. Alongside the bannings the regime has promised to stop all foreign funding of black political organisations and trade unions.

Following the bannings the press spec-

CAROL BRICKLEY

ulated that they had been introduced in a last minute attempt to win support in the hardline Afrikaaner Transvaal state where two byelections were due on 2 March. In the May 1987 whites-only elections, the Conservative Party (CP) - to the right of the ruling Nationalist Party - captured 22 seats in the Transvaal.

Dr Andries Treurnicht, CP leader, was not impressed describing the move as 'just an electoral stunt which will impress nobody'. He was proved correct when the elections resulted in the Conservatives more than trebling their vote; reflecting the fact that the extreme right is gaining ground rapidly, not just among Afrikaaner farmers but also among white industrial workers. Treurnicht made plain the CP's election-winning stand: 'sharing power with blacks means whites losing power'.

Three days after the bannings were announced, on Saturday 27 February, thousands of neo-fascist AWB supporters, many of them armed, marched on the Union Building in Pretoria, waving swastika-style flags and chanting 'We will share our power with no-one'. Police and security forces stood by while these Nazis called for a separate Volkstaat (state) for white people and burned the ANC flag. AWB leader, Terre Blanche, surrounded by his new security guard wearing brown shirts - intended to echo the brownshirt fascist gangs of Hitler's Germany - declared: 'The AWB has to prepare for the night when the Afrikaaner, in violence, will claim what is rightfully his'. No arrests were made.

In stark contrast, on the following Monday, a peaceful march to the Parliament building in Cape Town, led by Dr Allan Boesak, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Roman Catholic Archbishop Steven Naidoo, was stopped, dozens were arrested including the leading churchmen, and then police fired water cannon at the remaining demonstrators.

The march was called by church leaders as a protest against the bannings of black

- The 17 Banned Organisations**
- Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO)
 - Azanian Youth Organisation
 - Cape Youth Congress
 - Craddock Residents' Association
 - Detainees Parents Support Committee
 - Detainees Support Committee
 - National Education Crisis Committee
 - National Education Union of South Africa
 - Port Elizabeth Black Civic Association
 - Release Mandela Committee
 - Soweto Civic Association
 - Soweto Youth Congress
 - South African National Student Organisation
 - South African Youth Congress
 - United Democratic Front (UDF)
 - Vaal Civic Association
 - West Cape Association

organisations. Archbishop Tutu and Allan Boesak have pledged to take over the role of the banned organisations. Archbishop Tutu has launched a personal crusade to challenge Mrs Thatcher and other Western leaders to expel South African diplomats and withdraw their envoys from Pretoria.

The Church cannot, however, politically represent millions of black people now denied any political expression, nor can it for long maintain the myth that political protest is possible without confronting state repression. South Africa is moving towards open fascism which will be stopped only by the resistance of the majority black population. Neither the regime nor the Church can be surprised if that resistance becomes a war.

Whatever purpose the bannings were intended to serve in relation to the byelections, there is no doubt that the municipal elections scheduled for October are at the forefront of the regime's plans. The last municipal elections - which elected township councils in 1983 - were boycotted by the vast majority of black people. The stooge councils elected have proved themselves to be the puppets of the regime - administering apartheid on their behalf. Town councillors were major targets for attack during the 1984/85 resistance. Banning the 17 black organisations is an attempt to forestall a certain boycott of this year's elections.

The regime's plans are now in tatters. They had hoped to restore at least the pretence of normality and stability, strengthen the economy with the help of imperialism, and introduce petty reforms of apartheid to convince the world that in South Africa it is business as usual. They are now in the situation where any reforms will be ruled out by the Conservatives and AWB, and total repression is necessary to quell black resistance.

No matter how much repression the regime metes out to black people it can rely on the support of the British government. In response to the debate in the House of Commons after the bannings, Thatcher said that they were 'a great setback to the possibility of peaceful negotiations' but rejected the call for sanctions on the grounds that 'you don't make a very difficult situation any easier by adding to it'. Such arguments were not used when Britain sent its Task Force to the Falklands/Malvinas and aided US planes to bomb Libya. For Thatcher, Botha's latest round of repression was at most a slight embarrassment.

There is now no possibility of 'peaceful negotiations' when all representatives of black people are subject to bannings, detention, imprisonment censorship and the townships are blockaded by troops and security forces. Revolution is the order of the day.

Remember

'As I attempted to escape, I tripped and fell, somebody fell on top of me. I could feel whimpers of agony above me. The body above me was ominously silent. Was death on me? How much can a human being go through with that thought?

I endeavoured to move away and managed to slip gently from the person on top of me. Then realising I was alive and in danger, started to run away from the noise...

I observed that ambulances, private lorries, and cars, were engaged in collecting bodies... the injured to hospitals and the dead unceremoniously thrown into the police garage.

At this stage I was one of the spectators who saw the insane brutality of the White police. I saw them pick up a tiny boy and throw him up in the air, allowing the body to fall on its own motion to the ground. I later saw the face of that child and it cannot have been more than ten-years-old and he was dead.'

In December 1959, it held its first annual conference and adopted its campaign to abolish the racist pass laws for the campaign was

President Sobukwe and the PAC ship toured Azania (South Africa) promoting the strategy behind the campaign urging members and supporters to pile food and prepare for an annular to leave their passes at home and themselves for arrest at the nearest station.

The African National Congress had also committed itself to an anti-pass law campaign. The ANC's annual conference in December 1959 had welcomed the international boycott campaign against South African products. It announced plans for an Anti-Pass Day on 15 April which would see meetings to organise anti-pass demonstrations.

The PAC National Secretary welcomed the ANC inviting them to join the 'action' campaign.

On 18 March 1960, President S. D. Maliba declared that the PAC would launch a campaign on 21 March. He stated that the organisation aimed for the abolition of pass laws as a first step towards 'freedom and independence' in Azania. The campaign was planned as a non-violent



SHARPEVILLE 1960: POLICE STAND BY, NEXT TO THE DEAD AND INJURED

REMEMBER

SHARPEVILLE RALLY MONDAY 21 MARCH 7PM

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.
Admission: £1 waged, 50p unwaged

Chair: Carol Brickley, Convenor City AA

Speakers: Gora Ebrahim, Secretary for Foreign Affairs PAC • Imbu Uirab, Vice-President SWANU • Azanian Peoples Organisation • David Kitson, former South African political prisoner • Anton Raja, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (UK branch) • David Reed, editor Fight Racism • Sharon Atkin, Women for Socialism • Humanist Party • Ronnie Tomlinson, City of London Anti-Apartheid Group

CITY GROUP SINGERS PATJI (SWANU Cultural Group) BATUCADA MAN
FOLLOWED BY DEMONSTRATION TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY

Sharpeville

Orlando, Johannesburg, the PAC conference. It was here that the PAC of 'decisive and positive action' to law system. The slogan chosen **No Bail - No Defence - No Fine.**

ADAM BOWLES

with the slogan *No Bail - No Defence - No Fine* strictly adhered to. If the police refused to arrest the demonstrators then they would return home and re-present themselves the following day. The crowds would disperse if the police ordered them to do so.

On 20 March, the ANC General Secretary replied to the PAC informing them of why the ANC would not be supporting the action on 21 March. Duma Nokwe wrote 'It is treacherous to the liberation movement to embark on a campaign which has not been prepared and which has no reasonable prospect of success.'

MASSACRE

On the morning of 21 March, Robert Sobukwe and his companions were arrested at Orlando Police Station, Johannesburg. Thousands of black people had responded to the PAC call. The anger in the black townships against the humili-

ation of constant harassment, repeated arrests and jailings, resulted in wide support for the actions in many parts of the country.

At various police stations around South Africa the demonstrations went off according to plan. At Sharpeville and Langa however, the demonstrators were met by the apartheid police baton charges, tear gas and a hail of bullets.

At Sharpeville, the police had frustrated all attempts to hold gatherings to discuss the day of action. Riot police toured the area threatening to arrest anyone who attended an assembly. By dawn armed police were in evidence, intimidating the black residents intending to force them to work. The crowds stood firm and followed the PAC leaders as they marched from their homes to the police station. On arriving at the police station the Vice Chairman and Secretary of the PAC announced to the police sergeant that they were surrendering themselves for arrest.

The demonstrators, now numbering some 20,000 people, were singing *Iswe Lethu - I Africa, Our Land - Africa*; they too announced that they were presenting themselves for arrest.

The police immediately called for reinforcements. At 10am the police commander arrived and on being informed of the situation he shouted 'Today we will thrash you kaffirs'. A half an hour passed and five riot squad lorries arrived with police armed with automatic weapons.

As the unarmed crowd sang the national anthem, they opened fire. Men, women and children were shot down as they fled from the hail of gun fire. 69 people were killed and nearly 200 were injured. The overwhelming majority were shot in the back. In all, at Sharpeville and Langa 83 were killed and 365 injured.

MASS DETENTIONS

The news of the massacres shook the apartheid economy, shook the Nationalist government and the echoes of the protest reverberated around the world. £70 million was wiped off the value of shares on the South African Stock Exchange in one day. The economy was so severely impaired that it took an emergency payment of £100 million from US banks to rescue it from the brink of collapse.

What had shaken the apartheid system so much? Demonstrations - some much larger - had taken place in South Africa before this without such dramatic consequences. But this was the black proletariat and oppressed on the march, seriously intent on bringing the apartheid system to a halt. The townships were in revolt.

Demonstrations took place all over South Africa, demanding the release of the people's leaders and continuing the anti-pass laws campaign. On 25 March thousands upon thousands of Africans marched to the Caledon Police Station in Cape Town with their passes. The pressure was so great

'In Sharpeville we overcame the fear of the consequences of disobeying colonial laws... it became respectable to go to jail and emerge as what Kwame Nkrumah called "prison graduates". We stripped the white man of that weapon against us.'

Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe
Founder President of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania

that the senior police officer declared that the pass laws would not be enforced until further notice. The following day a general decree affecting the whole country, announced that the pass laws would not be enforced until the situation returned to normal. It lasted for 17 days.

Chief Albert Lutuli of the ANC announced that there would be a national day of mourning for the dead of Sharpeville and Langa on 28 March. The PAC supported the action, and the stay at home protest was massively successful. This action continued in some areas for a week.

In the Western Cape there were widespread uprisings, municipal buildings were set on fire, cars were overturned and police were attacked.

BANNINGS

On 28 March legislation was introduced to ban the ANC and the PAC. The entire military reserves were placed on full alert and all units were mobilised. At dawn on 30 March a nationwide State of Emergency was imposed. Over 1,500 people were detained and some 20,000 people were arrested following raids on the townships.

On 8 April, the Governor General signed the decree banning the PAC and ANC. The 'Minister of Justice' Francois Erasmus told Parliament

'Their [PAC] aim is to bring to its knees any White Government in South Africa

which stands for White supremacy and White leadership. They do not want peace and order; what they want is not a £1 a day for all bantu in South Africa. What they want is our country.'

On 4 May President Sobukwe and 17 other leaders of the PAC were sentenced to 3 years in prison for inciting others to support the campaign for the abolition of the pass laws. The prisoners refused to recognise the court and Robert Sobukwe stated at the end of the judgement:

'Your worship, it will be remembered that when this case began we refused to plead, because we felt no moral obligation whatsoever to obey laws which are made exclusively by a white minority... We believe in one race only the human race to which we all belong. The history of that race is a long struggle against all restrictions, physical, mental and spiritual... As individuals we do not count; we are but tools of history, which will always find new tools. We are not afraid of the consequences of our action and it is not our intention to plead for mercy.'

The massacres at Sharpeville and Langa and the outlawing of the mass democratic movement closed the chapter of civil disobedience in the struggle for liberation. Both the PAC and the ANC adopted new methods of resistance. Armed struggle with the enemy, in the form of POQO and Umkhonto we Sizwe, began.

THE SHARPEVILLE SIX MUST NOT HANG

Five men and a young woman now wait in Pretoria Prison's death cells, wrongly convicted of murder. The six were arrested months after the protests against rent increases in Sharpeville on 3 September 1984. Demonstrators marched on the home of a stooge councillor, Khuzwayo Dlamini, bearing placards 'We have no money'. Dlamini shot at the crowd, killing a demonstrator. Then Dlamini was killed. In recent weeks the Palestinian people have dealt with their own traitors similarly.

The Sharpeville Six were tortured in detention and then convicted of murder on 12 December 1985. Their appeal was rejected on 1 December 1987.

The decision whether to proceed with the death sentence now lies with PW Botha. Last year Botha's regime hanged 146 black people - it will take a massive international campaign to force the regime to exercise clemency in this case. Scores of governments have intervened. The British Foreign Office has made only a formal protest. Mrs Thatcher, she who claims the 'moral high ground', has made no statement at all. Even sections of the Conservative Party are embarrassed and have signed a House of Commons motion calling on Thatcher to make a statement.

The conscience of this country lies in its people, not its government. FRFI has been working non-stop with City AA and other groups to mobilise support for the Sharpeville Six. We have held marches, rallies, street meetings, sent petitions and letters. We support every initiative to save their lives. We have lobbied MPs. Labour MPs Terry Fields and Keith Vaz joined a City AA protest which marched from the Embassy to present letters to Downing Street.

FRFI urges you to act now to save the lives of the Sharpeville Six. You can:

- Write for more information and petitions to City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, BM City AA, London WC1N 3XX. Tel (01) 837 6050.

- Mobilise for the mass rally on 21 March. Publicity available from City AA.
- Join the SATIS rally 6pm every Wednesday, the City AA rally 6pm every Friday or the Non-Stop picket at any time: all outside the South African Embassy.

- Send letters urging clemency to: PW Botha, State President's Office, Private Bag X213, Pretoria 0001, South Africa. Act Now! **Andy Higginbottom**

Relatives call for urgent action

Julia Ramashamola, mother of Theresa Ramashamola, and Joyce Mokhesi, sister of Francis Mokhesi, spoke to FRFI during a recent visit to London.

Julia Ramashamola talked about the reasons behind the protest in September 1984:

'The councillors just wrote their pamphlets saying that the rent would be increased. They didn't come to the people, to hear their grievances or do anything. The people protested. They were going to the Sharpeville office, but unfortunately the police were there.'

'If anyone looks at the case, if even the government would go through the case, he or she would never find any proof that they [the Sharpeville Six] were there.'

She told us about the feeling of the people in Sharpeville: 'If you go through the township you will see noticeboards *Kill the Sharpeville Six and we are no more paying rent.*'

Julia Ramashamola could not give any details about her daughter's prison conditions: 'Entering Pretoria prison firstly they will give you a written paper with the rules and laws. We are not supposed to ask anything, even "How do you feel?". Maybe, sometimes, she's not feeling well. As a mother I can see that. But as we have been told not to ask the prisoner anything, you just say "OK, I will see you after two weeks." We cannot ask "How do you feel?". "What do they do?"'

Mrs Ramashamola said why she had come to Britain: 'My hope when I got the invitation was that the people of Britain will do something for us. Not for myself because my daughter's there, but for the families of all the six because they are sit-

ting on the same chair, the same desk facing Death Row.

'Although I know that coming back to South Africa they may be waiting for me. Maybe it's the last time you will hear my voice or see me because they will have arrested me. But it is what I came for.'

Joyce Mokhesi described the suffering of her family: 'It has been very strenuous for the family, especially his brother, his wife Alinah and his nine-year-old daughter Mamolise and for all of us.'

'Mamolise can't see her father until she is 16, so when we go up there [Pretoria] she will drive with us and wait outside. We didn't tell her about the outcome of the appeal but she senses there is something very wrong. She knows where her father is.'

'Kill the Sharpeville Six and we are no more paying rent'

'It's about four hours drive to and from the prison. It's an effort to get transport for us all to travel together. One or two from each family go every day.'

'Since Francis has been sentenced, life has no meaning for us. Our neighbours, the community at large is affected. I think the people are angry, very angry, both black and white.'

'All of the wives are not working but there is some support from the South African Council of Churches and from relatives. The six are getting great support



JOYCE MOKHESI

from NACTU (National Council of Trade Unions) who have set up their own support committee and petition which is circulating in south Africa. Many people have signed it.

'I think for Thatcher to do anything the pressure must come from this country. As is the case with us in South Africa trying to pressurise Botha.'

THE SHARPEVILLE SIX

MOJAFELA REGINALD SEFATSA:

33 years old, married with one daughter, born 2 weeks after his arrest. A fruit seller.

OUPA MOSES DINISO: 31 years old. Married with a son of 9 and daughter of 4. Before his arrest he was an inspector at a steel firm.

REID MALEBO MOKOENA: 25 years old. Engaged with a son of 5. Member of the Steel, Engineering and Allied Workers Union.

THERESA RAMASHAMOLA: 27 years old. She is the oldest and the breadwinner in a family of 3 daughters. A Catholic, she lived at home and worked as a waitress. She is an active trade unionist.

DUMA JOSHUA KHUMALO: 27 years old. Married with a son of 8. He was studying to be a teacher.

FRANCIS DON MOKHESI: 31 years old. Daughter aged 9. A professional football player with the Vaal Professional Soccer Club.

AAM imposes its own bannings

The response of the Anti-Apartheid Movement to the Botha regime's attack on the people's organisations was to impose their own bans and restrictions on the solidarity movement here. On the day the banning orders were imposed, Wednesday 24 February, the AAM and City AA mobilised for an immediate response. 100 people demonstrated outside the South African Embassy that evening.

City Group stewards liaised with AAM stewards to agree to share speaking rights for all organisations present. However, when the RCG speaker tried to deliver a message of solidarity, the AAM drowned us out and refused to allow our speaker to be heard. We pointed out that we were there to protest against the banning of anti-apartheid organisations in South Africa and the AAM were operating their own censorship against our organisation which supports all forces fighting apartheid. Worst of all, throughout the demonstration the AAM displayed their sectarianism towards the liberation struggle in South Africa by avoiding any mention of the banned organisations who are not part of the Congress Movement, in particular AZAPO.

On the following Wednesday SATIS held another picket which was supported by NUS. City AA and the RCG comrades mobilised for a large contingent on the non-stop picket and invited Cde Rodwell Mzotane from the PAC to speak. The NUS did not mobilise mass support, but the students who did turn up stood with City AA's lively militant and non-sectarian picket. Clive Nelson, full time AAM official was heard to ask the ANC comrades if they wanted him to drown out Cde Mzotane's speech. The ANC refused.

Once again Nelson refused to allow City AA and the RCG to address the picket - this has happened on every picket that SATIS has called for the Sharpeville Six. But long after the AAM and SATIS had packed up and gone home, City AA's picket continued and both City AA and the RCG spoke to the 100 people who stayed with us in solidarity with the fighting masses of South Africa. **Lorna Reid**



The Kurdish people struggle against four oppressive powers

THE KURDISH NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE

Kurdistan is partitioned, occupied and maintained in colonial status by four countries, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, its borders having been determined by the imperialist policy of 1923 (Treaty of Lausanne). Kurdish minorities are also to be found in the Soviet Union, Lebanon and Afghanistan.

There are some 20 million Kurds: ten million live in Turkey (out of a population of 50 million); 6 million in Iran; 3 million in Iraq; 750,000 in Syria; 264,000 in the Soviet Union; and 100,000 in Lebanon.

The situation of Kurdistan in the Middle East is of great strategic importance: a point of contact between the Soviet Union, the plateau of Mesopotamia and the Persian-Arab Gulf.

Kurdistan is rich in minerals such as oil, copper, iron ore, phosphate, lead, gold and silver. There are coal deposits almost everywhere.

KURDISTAN

A ten year fight for freedom

The Kurdish national liberation struggle, under the leadership of the Workers Party of Kurdistan (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan - PKK), has entered its tenth year. The success of this liberation struggle is not only decisive for the future of Kurdistan but also for the revolutionary movements in the Middle East as a whole.

SYLVIA AND EMINE

Since the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal, Atatürk, a racist policy of total assimilation of all things Kurdish has been pursued by the Turkish ruling classes. Bans introduced by Atatürk still apply today: as the Turks are to be the only people living in Turkey, the Kurds are to be referred to as 'mountain Turks'; the terms 'Kurdistan' and 'Kurd' are no longer to be used; the Kurdish language is strictly forbidden with harsh penalties for its usage.

A policy of total assimilation automatically becomes a policy of annihilation. Each uprising against Turkish domination has been crushed by the Turkish military with unbelievable brutality. The Dersim uprising of 1938, which resulted in the murder of over 50,000 Kurds and the mass deportation of over 100,000, is one such massacre engraved in the national consciousness of the Kurdish people.

Atatürk's annihilation policy, known as 'Kemalism', forms the basis of Turkish political strategy towards the Kurdish nation. A victory to the Kurdish independence struggle would mean a death blow to the Turkish power structure and inspire yet further revolutionary movements in Turkey itself. 'Kemalism' is best compared to Hitler's annihilation policy towards the Jews and others. Today, some of Turkey's cabinet ministers talk of a 'final solution' to the Kurdish 'problem'.

Mass deportations and forced resettlements, boarding schools in which Kurdish children, removed from their familiar surroundings, are educated to become 'Turks': these are just some of the methods employed by Atatürk's successors.

THE 1980 PUTSCH

In 1948 Turkey was included in the Marshall Plan and forced to structure its economy according to US principles. Its entrance into NATO in 1954 meant commitment to the imperialist military alliance. Imperialist exploitation maintained Turkey in a permanent state of economic crisis. Mass unrest emerged in the form of protests and strikes; broad based revolutionary movements such as DEV-GENC (United Revolutionary Youth) developed rapidly in the 1960s and '70s, including both Turks and Kurds; the threat of Kurdish subversion loomed constantly on the horizon, with the attainment of some democratic rights for Kurds. The Turkish ruling

class sought a 'return to the source of Kemalism' to strengthen its rule.

A number of significant international features characterised the 1980 putsch. After the 1973 oil crisis, capitalist countries needed a reliable partner in the Middle East. With the loss to the US and NATO of Iran in 1979 and, shortly after, Afghanistan, it took less than a year for a fascist military putsch, organised by NATO, EEC countries and Turkey, to give the imperialist countries their reliable partner.

The 1980 putsch transformed Turkey and Kurdistan into one enormous prison and torture chamber. Over 240,000 persons were arrested including many Turkish and Kurdish political activists. Massacres took place where people were machine-gunned to death on the streets, hundreds 'disappeared', mass executions took place, thousands of prisoners were tortured, many tortured to death; thousands fled to Europe as refugees.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE AND ARMED RESISTANCE

The Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK) was formed in 1978, its aim an independent Kurdistan by means of armed liberation struggle. For the PKK, the colonial domination by Turkey forms the cause of their oppression, exploitation and misery; the only way for a society to be established in Kurdistan that is based on equality and justice is to smash the colonial structure. The national democratic revolution, driving out colonialism and imperialism, is a necessary stage in establishing a socialist revolution in which class structures will be abolished.

Many Turks also became active in the PKK from the very start; for example, Kemal Pir, a member of the PKK central committee who was murdered while on hunger strike in 1982 in the notorious military torture prison at Diyarbakir together with two Kurdish comrades; also PKK central committee members, Mazlum Dogan and M. Hayri Durmus.

After the 1980 putsch, most of the PKK leadership managed to escape to neighbouring countries (Syria and Lebanon). The PKK temporarily altered its strategy, as it was felt that to take up the armed struggle at this time would be pointless.

Instead, emphasis was placed for the next two years on theoretical and military training. Close links were formed with the

PLO, in particular the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); the Kurdish 'Peschmerga' (Kurdish word for fighter) being trained for battle in the Palestinian camps. During the Lebanon war of 1982, PKK Peschmerga fought alongside the Palestinians and Lebanese revolutionaries. Twelve PKK lost their lives in battles against the Zionists. Close contacts were also formed with the El Salvadorian FMLN and the Chilean MIR.

In 1982, the decision was made to return to Kurdistan in order to prepare for armed struggle. The struggle of Kurdish prisoners in the Turkish military jails was also reaching a peak at this time, with mass protests and hunger strikes against prison conditions and widespread torture - many comrades having been murdered and tortured to death.

On 15 August 1984, 'Liberation Units of Kurdistan' (HRK) which, two years later, were united to form the 'Peoples Liberation Army of Kurdistan' (ARPK), launched their first blow by attacking military installations, government authorities and taking control of official institutions of towns and villages.

'In 72 hours we shall have destroyed them. Our country is strong and powerful' announced Kenan Evren, putsch General and president of the Turkish military junta, shortly after the first attacks of Kurdish liberation units. Yet, three and a half years later, the Kurdish liberation struggle is anything but defeated. The support among the Kurdish masses is strong and ever growing.

The Turkish government, through its official channels and through state-controlled press and media, is constantly playing down the significance of the armed struggle in Kurdistan, maintaining that the PKK has only a handful of members and is totally isolated from the Kurdish population. Why is it, then, that Turkey, which possesses the largest of NATO's European Armies with over 800,000 men, has stationed two thirds of this army in Kurdistan? This fact alone gives clear indication of the threat to Turkish rule posed by the Kurdish revolution.

On 'Newroz Day' (New Year's Day as celebrated in countries like Kurdistan, Iran etc. and which now is celebrated by patriotic Kurds as 'Resistance Day') 21 March 1985, the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK) was formed by the PKK with the aim of organising all levels and classes of people. ERNK aims to bring under one front all groups, organisations and parties in Kurdistan and Turkey who recognise and support the Kurdish people's right to self-determination.

Long live the Kurdish National Liberation Front!
Long live international solidarity!



IMPERIALIST MILITARY INTERESTS IN TURKEY/KURDISTAN

Turkey is the south-eastern flank of NATO serving as a buffer zone between the countries of the Warsaw Pact to its north and north east (in particular the Soviet Union) and the Middle East to its south and south east. Turkey/Kurdistan are therefore of great strategic importance.

● The Bosphorus and Dardanelles can be blocked off, preventing access of the Soviet Navy to the Mediterranean from the Black Sea.

● 'The Thousand Mile Window' Turkey has been developed into a centre of US espionage. After the putsch in 1980, 5,000 US military personnel were stationed in 26 bases in Turkey/Kurdistan. The loss of Iran to NATO was a great blow. Now, approximately one quarter of direct US spying on the Soviet Union missile programme is being carried out through NATO bases in Turkey.

● From Turkey ground launched missiles can reach across the Black Sea into the Soviet Union.

● 15 Turkish military airports have been expanded since 1980 and a new airport has been built; runways and landing strips have been enlarged to accommodate the

huge C-5A Galaxy transporter aircraft and the smaller C141 Starfighter aircraft (all part of the Strategic Airlift Command). They transport not only personnel, but also heavy weaponry. They are linked with US Central Command - a force of 350,000 troops able to operate from the Gulf to the Cape.

● Depots have been set up for storage of heavy material (weaponry and ammunition) in Turkey. There is also a possibility for rapid accommodation of large numbers of troops at short notice.

● The Gulf war Should Iraq lose the Gulf war, Turkey is expected to advance into the area with its own troops, followed by the RDF troops whenever necessary.

'Should Iran win and the Shiites set up power in Iraq... NATO will intervene in the region, using the support of Turkey's experience' (Lord Carrington, NATO General Secretary)

Plans already exist for Turkey to invade and annexe the area to protect vital oil reserves and pipelines. Turkey has laid claim to Kurdish territory in Iraq.

Sylvia and Emine

Kinnock reassures Zionists

Despite his phrases about Gaza being a 'vast slum' and his 'criticism' of Israeli repression, Kinnock's February visit to Palestine was made to reassure the Zionists of the Labour Party's full support.

Opposing an independent Palestinian state, Kinnock suggested meeting Palestinian aspirations 'possibly within a Palestinian-Jordanian federation'. Not once did he mention the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. He urged a change in Zionism's repressive tactics only because:

'Apart from the anguish . . . those who suffer . . . are not made more compliant . . . the contrary is the case.'

Opposing Palestinian self-determination, Kinnock endorsed Zionism's expansionism. In the Golan Heights, Syrian territory occupied in 1967, he declared:

'The idea that these Heights would be given back to anyone but the Israelis is . . . out of the question.'

On returning to Britain he stated:

'What I have done is completely consistent with the policy of my party needing and demanding the complete security and permanence of the state of Israel.'



14 year old boy shot dead by Israeli soldiers

From the leader of the Labour Party this is not surprising. But what can one make of the so-called Marxists of the Socialist Workers Party? Instead of calling on the British working class to support the PLO, John Molyneux writes in *Socialist Worker* (27 February 1988):

'From the terrorist tactics of the PLO to the Parliamentary tactics of the Labour Party . . . seems a big leap . . . But both are . . . opposite sides of the same coin [which is] "substitutionism" . . . the attempt by a small minority to act on behalf of the masses.'

'What both reformists and terrorists say to workers and the oppressed is, "Leave it to us, we will win a better life for you."'

Molyneux thus joins Reagan, Thatcher and Kinnock in labelling the PLO terrorist. Is this not shameful for someone calling himself a Marxist? Only middle class socialists totally removed from real forces of revolution could equate the pro-imperialist Labour Party with the PLO. The former is an opportunist organisation representing a privileged minority in the British working class, the latter a national liberation movement, representing the overwhelming majority of oppressed Palestinians. At the root of Molyneux's reactionary positions is the SWP's opposition to national liberation movements because they don't fit into its own dogmatic, sterile and utopian conception of a 'workers' organisation - namely something in the image of our own British 'labour movement' which has done virtually nothing to support the Palestinian people.



ZIONIST REPRESSION

Palestine in revolt

Despite the intensified savagery of Zionist repression, the Palestinian uprising entered its fourth month unbowed and defiant. From a spontaneous movement, it has become highly organised with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) at its centre.

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

Within weeks of the uprising, a United National Leadership of the Uprising was formed incorporating all the main PLO trends. Despite the capture of printing presses, the United Leadership still issues tens of thousands of leaflets directing the battle and warning against imperialist plots presented as 'peace plans'.

Committees have been formed for food distribution where curfews are being imposed, to defend those arrested and to organise demonstrations, protests and funerals. Leaflets on the art of street fighting are supplemented by radio broadcasts on how to make petrol bombs, set up trip wires and use rocks. Industrial and commercial strikes are organised, with instructions to open shops a few hours a day for Palestinians to get necessities.

In dozens of towns and villages notorious collaborators have disappeared. On 24 February an armed collaborator in Qabatiya who opened fire on a demonstration at his home killing a four year old boy was hanged by the people beneath a PLO flag.

The backbone of the rising is the 'shababs' - the poor and unemployed youth. It is they who lead the street battles, build the barricades, enforce the strikes and deal with collaborators.

ZIONISM ESCALATES REPRESSION

In February alone at least 41 people were killed bringing the death toll to at least 116 since the rising began on 9 December 1987. Thousands have been wounded and maimed by live ammunition, tear gas, rubber bullets and brutal beatings.

On 5 February, four youths in the village of Salim, near Nablus, were buried

alive by an Israeli patrol. On 26 February a gang of Israeli soldiers brutally beat two Palestinian youths with rocks breaking their bones.

The British Foreign Office expressed 'shock and horror' claiming that: 'The action . . . is incompatible with the professional standards of the Israeli defence forces'. This is a lie. A secret Israeli army report states:

'We must emphasise that the exception is now the norm. . . . Officers or commanders in the field are giving orders to break property, and to break hands and feet, and to beat people not only during demonstrations as ordered but at all times and not only to subdue.'

An American medical team, Physicians for Human Rights, citing 3,000 casualties, described:

'an uncontrolled epidemic of violence . . . in the West Bank and Gaza on a scale and degree of severity that may not be clear to the public.'

Dr Jack Geiger of the same body said:

'The numbers, rate and scope of the beatings and the trauma we have seen cannot be considered deviations or aberrations.'

And Dr Leon Shapiro testified that:

'If this were a war, many of the actions whose results we have seen would be declared atrocities.'

Virtually every city, town, village and refugee camp has been subjected to punitive curfews with hundreds arrested. To prevent the youth organising, all educational establishments have been closed indefinitely. To try and break solid commercial and industrial strikes, the Israeli gov-

ernment is blocking money being sent in from the Palestinian diaspora.

IMPERIALISM INTERVENES WITH ITS 'PEACE PLAN'

Alongside Zionist repression and violence, US imperialism has also been searching for some new formula to halt this new movement. George Shultz, US Secretary of State, visited the Middle East at the end of February with his 'peace plan'. He was met with a week of mass protests against his 'conspiratorial plans against our people'. His plan proposed a form of 'autonomy' for the West Bank and Gaza Strip to be agreed by autumn and a final 'settlement' to be concluded within 12 months. It cuts out the PLO completely. But the popular uprising has ensured that no collaborators or Arab regimes accepted

Israel: US Proxy in Central America

'Israel coveted the job of top Washington proxy in Central America.'

'Ya'acor Meridor, Israeli Economic Coordination Minister 1981.

'The Israelis taught the Guatemalans how to build an air base. They set up their intelligence network, tried and tested on the West Bank and Gaza.'

Bob Simon, CBS News 16 February 1983

If 3 February's Congressional vote against military aid to the Contras leaves the mercenaries short, Israel will, on past record, make up the supplies.

● In Somoza's final year as Nicaraguan president 98% of his military equipment came from Israel.

● Israel met 80% of El Salvador's military supplies between 1970 and 1980.

● Between 1977 and 1981 Israel was the sole supplier of arms to Guatemala.

● A US/Israeli military memorandum on military co-operation in Latin America dated 30 November 1981 contains a clause providing for direct participation of Israeli forces in any US

the plan.

Former Palestinian Mayor of Ramat Karim Khalaf, dismissed it as 'power collect garbage and exterminate most toes.' The PLO rejected it stating:

'There is no word about self-determination or about the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. There is no word about the [proposed] talks - whether it is going to be an independent Palestinian state or not.'

The US was offering too little even for reactionary Arab allies.

Israel also rejected the plan so Shultz running around empty-handed as the rising continues. He did however convey his main message. On arriving in Israel just as two more Palestinian youth were being shot dead, he said:

'The friendship and ties between Israel and the United States have never been stronger. On behalf of President Reagan assure you of America's unwavering commitment to Israel's security and prosperity.'

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

The Palestinian masses have opened up a critical battlefield against imperialism. The objective difficulties they face are enormous. Zionism's overwhelming military might and the sophistication of its repressive apparatus are daunting. Imperialism, as in South Africa, will back the Zionist regime which is decisive to maintain its regional interests.

In addition, the Palestinian masses are fighting virtually alone. The reactionary Arab regimes have done nothing to aid the uprising. On the contrary, they have pressed all manifestations of solidarity. In the imperialist countries, the opportunistic labour movements have watched indifferently as the Zionists unleashed their terrible repression.

The lessons of the past three months will be learned by the revolutionary PLO leadership as it prepares to embark on a prolonged people's war based in Palestine itself. Such a war will naturally be fought by forging links with the revolutionary Arab masses of the region. But the communist and democratic movement in the imperialist countries also has an important role to play.

Zionism depends entirely on support from imperialism. Imperialist countries also provide a lucrative market for Israeli goods, many of which are produced by cheap Palestinian labour. A serious solidarity movement in Britain can begin by campaigning to boycott all Israeli products marketed in Britain.

Invasion of Cuba or Nicaragua.

● Israeli Army officers built and managed Guatemala's Regional Telecommunications Centre. Death squads have access to computerised hit lists.

● Israeli advisers operate in El Salvador. Israeli pilots are reported to have flown Israeli supplied fighters in combat missions against the FMLN guerrillas and their civilian supporters.

● During his 1983 visit to Honduras former Israeli Defence Minister Sharon offered the Contras weapons captured from the PLO in Lebanon, free of charge.

● When the CIA were prevented by Congress from openly financing the Contras in 1984 Israel stepped in with \$20-30m, plus arms and training.

● It was Israeli officials who first suggested to the White House that funds from arms sales to Iran be diverted to the Contras.

Since 1979 Israel, in its role as a US surrogate in Central America, has been directly responsible for over 160,000 people killed in the US war on the people.

Trevor Rayn
Mike Webb

(Sources: Jan Nederveen Pieterse in *Race and Class*, and the North American Congress on Latin America.)

The struggle for prisoners rights

This month John Bowden responds to Shujaa Moshesh's article in last month's FRFI. Shujaa Moshesh and John Bowden have both made very important contributions to the debate. We urge all prisoner readers and others involved in the campaign for prisoners' rights to join this vital discussion.

Shujaa Moshesh's contribution to the debate highlighted, in particular, one extremely important and relevant point: a real qualitative advance in prisoners' rights can only really be achieved by the prisoners themselves. The history of prisoners' support groups outside prison illustrates the fact that unless the momentum of the struggle for prisoners' rights originates and is created within the prison itself, those organised into various support groups outside will become increasingly isolated and demoralised and really quite ineffectual in terms of defending the rights of prisoners.

The central thrust of the prison struggle must relate outwards from the direct point of conflict and confrontation inside the prison. Shujaa Moshesh was therefore right to raise the question of prisoner representatives committees or councils.

The right of prisoners to organise and form genuinely representative committees represents one of the most potentially important rights attainable by prisoners and, consequently, one that prison administrations throughout the 'free' world have determinedly, and often brutally, denied.

Representative committees achieve two things indispensable to the prisoners' struggle: the self-organisation and, subsequently, empowerment of prisoners. Both are vital prerequisites of a struggle to redress a massively disproportionate imbalance of power between prisoners and prison administrations from which all the very worst excesses of the prison system inevitably flow.

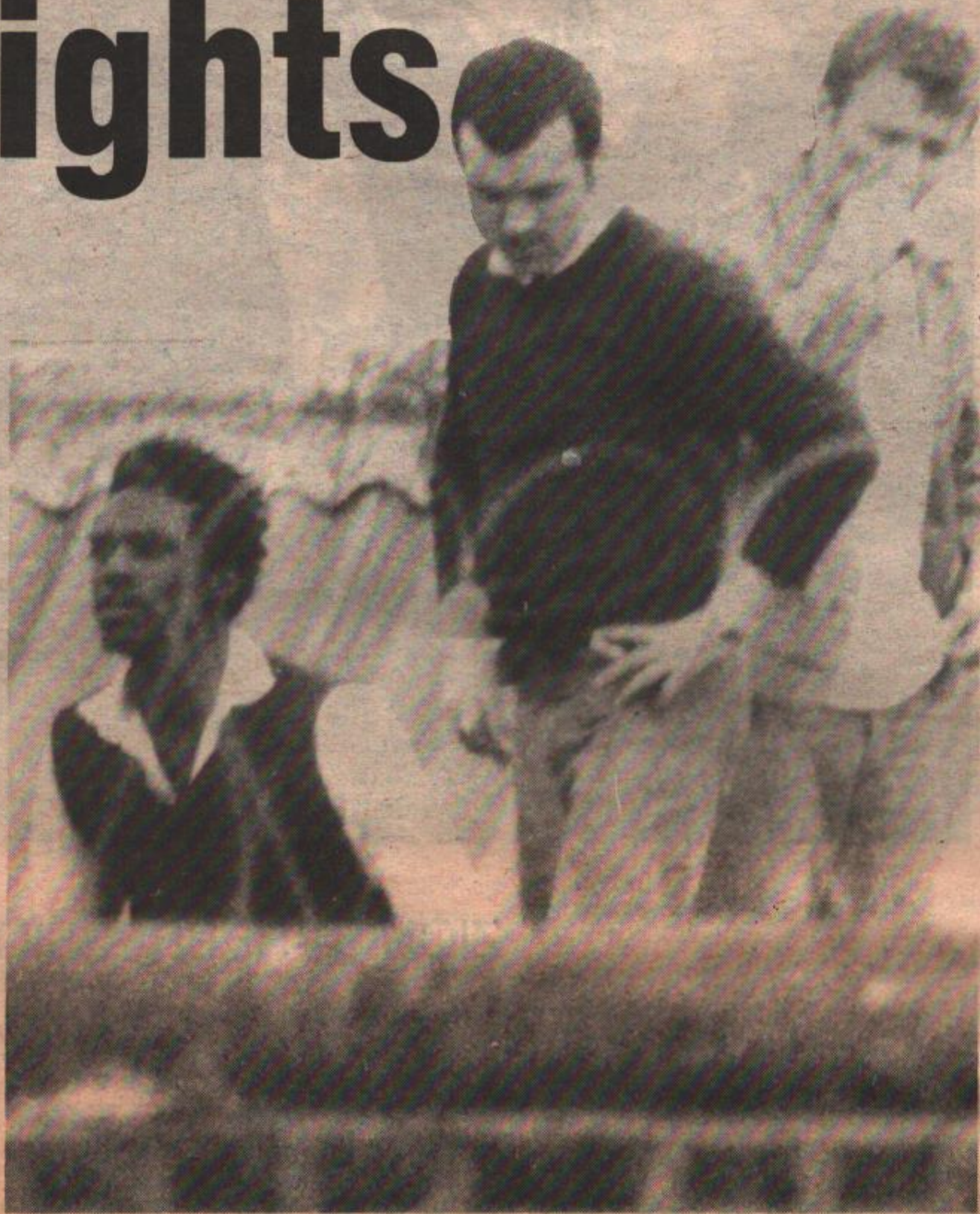
But the right to form representative committees and effect a partial democratisation of an institution as inevitably oppressive and inhuman as prisons requires a struggle of revolutionary proportions by prisoners and obviously one fought for by a sizeable section of the prison population. The main task at the moment, therefore, must be the cultivation and encouragement of as wide an area of political awareness amongst prisoners as possible.

The contribution of revolutionary organisations to the process of politicising prisoners is potentially enormous, both in terms of politically supporting prisoners' protests and grievances, and directly communicating to prisoners a revolutionary analysis of their oppression and struggle.

Unfortunately, many so-called 'revolutionary' organisations still tend to peripheralise and trivialise the struggle of prisoners, relegating it to a position of complete unimportance on the sliding scale of 'political legitimacy': of little importance at all to the 'main' class struggle. This is usually interpreted to mean that being fought out at the direct point of economic production, and, inevitably by 'straight' blue-collar workers.

Such a narrow analysis of class struggle represents a denial of the political legitimacy and credibility of the prison struggle and invariably the start of a progressive slide into reformist and counter-revolutionary perspectives on the extent and validity of that struggle.

It is absolutely important that groups and organisations seriously interested in



and committed to the prisoners' struggle recognise, firstly, the importance and relevance of it to the wider, overall struggle against capitalist state repression and, secondly, the central role of prisoners themselves in their daily struggle for greater collective empowerment and freedom.

John Bowden
HMP Long Lartin

* On Thursday 25 February John Bowden and another prisoner were put in solitary in the 'interests of good order and discipline'. John writes that he was not told why accept that there were 'a couple of vague rumours about a conspiracy to form a prisoners' union'. Prisoners on John's wing were angry and resentful at the prison authority's action. John was released from solitary on Sunday 28 February.

Downhill all the way

On Friday 20 February 1987 there were 48,574 prisoners in England and Wales, including 393 in police and court cells. On Friday 19 February this year there were 49,979, including 1,260 held in police and court cells. This rise of 1,405 comes despite the release of 3,000 short-term prisoners in August 1987.

TERRY O'HALLORAN

1988 threatens to break last year's record of over 51,000 prisoners. The prison population is rising by 387 every week - a prison the size of Wormwood Scrubs would have to be built every three weeks to keep up with this.

The prison building programme originally involved 20 new prisons and 17,500 extra places by the mid-1990s. At the present rate the 'extra' 17,500 places would be accounted for by the beginning of 1989.

The average certified normal accommodation (CNA) for 1986/7 was 41,650 whilst the average population was 47,200 - a shortfall of 5,550. The CNA has risen to 42,546 and the population to 49,979 - a shortfall of 7,433. Despite the increase in the number of prison places, the rate of overcrowding has increased from 113% (1986/7) to 117%.

In 1983 the then Home Secretary, Leon Brittan, promised to end the use of police cells for prisoners. Four years later, at the beginning of November 1987, Brittan's successor, Douglas Hurd, promised to empty the police cells within 'about a fortnight'. Since then the numbers have risen

by more than 50% to 1,260.

In 1986/7 £6.7 million was spent on using police cells. It was revealed last November that the average cost of keeping a prisoner in a police cell was £163 per night. More detailed figures reveal that in the Metropolitan Police area it costs £201 per night.

Two factors help to explain the rise in the prison population. The proportion of unsentenced prisoners has risen from 17% (1982) to 22% (1986/7). At the same time the proportion of long term prisoners has risen from 12% to 16%.

It is no surprise that conditions continue to deteriorate. More prisoners died in 1986/7: 65 (63 male; 2 female) of which 25 were recorded as suicides. The number of suicides has since risen sharply. In the calendar year 1987 there were 39 suicides - the highest ever for a single year.

On the positive side there were 45 'acts of concerted indiscipline' in 1986/7 compared to 38 the previous year.

The new look glossy Report of the Work of the Prison Service 1986/7 (the word 'Department' has been dropped in favour of the much nicer word 'Service') omits the figures for distribution of drugs acting

on the central nervous system. We cannot, therefore, publish our annual table of the top twelve prisons for use of these drugs. This is despite the government's promise to Parliament that these figures would be published in the annual report. The Home Office Medical Directorate's explanation is 'staffing' problems. They could not say why this 'explanation' does not appear in the Report.

The Report, in fact, is no longer a fairly dry collection of reasonably precise facts and figures. It is now a blatantly propagandist document complete with full colour pictures of prisoners playing Scrabble, tending the gardens and generally having a great time. The harsh reality of desperate prisoners killing themselves or 'subver-

sive' prisoners fighting back is not allowed to intrude. No wonder the drugs figures have vanished.



Reality not allowed in Annual Report

One billion spending spree

The prison building programme continues to expand. Its estimated cost has now risen to nearly one billion pounds. Of the 26 new prisons planned, four are occupied, four have been announced but no site yet found and the remaining 18 include nine which are up to one year behind schedule.

The design for Stocken in Leicestershire, an open prison, was so bad that £300,000 has been spent on repairs. £750,000 worth of staff housing is unoccupied because completion was so late that staff made their own arrangements. In any case the National Audit Office could find no reason for building Stocken at all.

New designs, based on the so-called US 'new generation' prisons, include double cells in breach of European Prison Rule

14.1. This feature is nonetheless being built into Woolwich, Bullingdon, Lindholme and Swaleside. Double-celling is therefore to be institutionalised for the next 150 years or so - assuming these prisons last that long.

The fact that new prison costs are approaching nearly one billion pounds whilst the NHS is underfunded by at least that amount speaks volumes for the government's priorities.

Prisoners win right of appeal

On 4 February five Law Lords unanimously allowed appeals by two prisoners, Gaston Prevôt and Mark Leech, against disciplinary decisions by governors at Parkhurst and Long Lartin. This overrules a 1985 decision by the Court of Appeal that the court had no jurisdiction to review governor's adjudications.

Mark Leech challenged the governor of Parkhurst over a punishment of 28 days loss of remission as a breach of natural justice. He was not allowed to put his defence or cross examine the reporting officer.

Gaston was punished at Long Lartin with 28 days loss of remission and six days exclusion from associated work. He challenged the governor's decision on the grounds that the disciplinary proceedings were improperly conducted.

He had not been permitted to call any of the 19 witnesses present at the time of the alleged offence.

Both men tried unsuccessfully to petition the Home Secretary about these cases. The five Lords quashed the ruling against Mark Leech and sent Gaston's case back to the High Court.

As Gaston writes, 'This is an important victory because it means now that governors' adjudications can be reviewed in a court of law.'

Alexa Byrne

HUNGER STRIKE

The hunger strike of Scottish prisoners Sammy Ralston and John Gallagher continues. John Gallagher began his strike on 8 January. Both men are now in a critical condition after two months of hunger strike.

Sammy Ralston is being held in the barbaric Inverness cages. John Gallagher has been moved to the segregation unit at Peterhead prison.

FRFI calls on all readers to send letters of protest to Malcolm Rifkind, Scottish Office, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Messages of support to the two comrades should be sent to:

Sammy Ralston, Segregation Unit, Inverness Prison, Inverness, Scotland;
John Gallagher, Segregation Unit, Peterhead Prison, Peterhead, Scotland.

Graham Johnson

PRISONERS FUND

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

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

I enclose a donation of £_____ to help pay for a prisoners subscription to FRFI. (Cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications)

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

What is Sinn Fein's response to the decisions not to prosecute the RUC for its shoot-to-kill policy and to reject the Birmingham 6 Appeal?

Sinn Fein is not surprised by either decision. It is what we have come to expect... We're here now in Derry on the sixteenth anniversary of Bloody Sunday and it was only some months after those events that the Widgery tribunal sat and completely whitewashed the whole situation. We would look back to the Widgery Tribunal and say at that stage the British government was given a clear licence by the judiciary to kill Irish people. The fact is the RUC and the British Army do have a licence to murder Irish people and do so with impunity and have no fear whatsoever of any repercussions in terms of being brought before the courts.

How would you summarise Sinn Fein's strategy in the North?

Our strategy is geared towards popularising the Republican Movement and its demands among the ordinary people of the Six Counties. Our involvement in advice centres, elections, political education is geared towards increasing popular support for a political philosophy, a socialist philosophy and trying to build up a greater understanding of why there is a Republican struggle and why there will never be peace until Ireland is free.

How do the recent talks between Sinn Fein and the SDLP fit in to this strategy?

They are part of the strategy simply because the Republican Movement has always had a position that we are prepared to talk to anyone in order to give people a better understanding of what we are about... Yet we have had a situation over the past twenty years where even though there is an accepted stance from these parties not to meet Sinn Fein, with the exception of the main line unionist parties almost all the other parties to the conflict have at some time dealt with Sinn Fein including the British government itself. There have been other meetings in the past between SDLP members and Sinn Fein members... The talks should be seen only in that context. Attempts by the media and other groups to read further points of significance into the talks are absolutely ludicrous... There are absolutely no ulterior motives for the talks.

The Guardian newspaper quoted Gerry Adams commenting on the talks, saying 'How it develops depends on a number of factors, the Unionist talks about talks, and how near to the political horizon is a devolved government.' If this was an accurate quote what did it mean?

With reference to the devolved government, if the impression taken by *The Guardian* newspaper is that Sinn Fein has an interest in being part of a devolved government in the Six Counties then nothing could be further from the truth and I certainly don't believe that is what Gerry Adams was saying... Our position is that we are completely opposed to any attempt to resurrect Stormont and that we will not take part in any devolved government... In the last Assembly elections we fought on the basis of boycotting the Assembly and I would presume, this is not to preempt any discussion that will go on in Sinn Fein, that there would be almost unanimous opposition within Sinn Fein and the Republican Movement to Republicans becoming involved in any devolved government or any assembly which is set up.

Given increasing repression how do you see the way forward in the South?

It has to be a political way forward and Sinn Fein has got a massive uphill task in attempting to establish firmly our party in the Twenty Six Counties. I think that over the years, Republicans have totally neglected the people of the Twenty Six Counties... we have not been involved in the day to day problems of ordinary people, problems of capitalism, unemployment, bad housing, poverty... So it's a massive job and we are at the moment trying to bring about a more politically aware movement there, to involve more people in the day to day lives of ordinary people... We are gearing our movement to do that work.



MARTIN MCGUINNESS

SINN FEIN

INTERVIEWED

On the eve of the Bloody Sunday Commemoration march, Bob Shepherd interviewed Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein Ard Comhairle member. We are proud to publish extracts from the interview.

Certainly on the basis of the national question... but just as importantly, maybe more importantly to the people of the Twenty Six Counties, on the bread and butter issues...

Would the ruling class not block a constitutional method of Republicans making progress in the South?

I think it has already been blocked by the ruling class in so far as we do have extensive use of Section 31 against Republicans

'The fact is the RUC and the British Army do have a licence to murder Irish people and do so with impunity...'

... We have been involved in a very successful campaign on Section 31 and there is quite considerable sympathy in the Twenty Six Counties for the fact that we are banned from Radio Telefis Eireann... The whole way along the line it can be clearly seen that the establishment will attempt to prevent Sinn Fein growing as a political party. It's our job to educate people to understand why this is happening and why there is a need for an alternative system of politics in the Twenty Six Counties. The left wing leadership [of political parties in the South] has been a dismal failure and has failed to educate the people, particularly the working class people about the fact that the strength of capitalism is directly related to the poverty in which they live... I don't believe there is any possibility of any left wing political

party making ground in the Twenty Six Counties unless it becomes actively involved in working with ordinary people about day to day problems.

If Sinn Fein continues to make progress in the South can you envisage the government banning Sinn Fein and what would be your response?

Anything is possible in relation to what the establishment parties would do to thwart the progress of Sinn Fein... In the event of us succeeding with our strategy we could well see a situation where Sinn Fein could be banned and repression intensified. But there is a major danger in the establishment parties agreeing to such a policy because they run the risk of making martyrs out of Sinn Fein and actually could... gain us more support through increased repressive measures. The golden rule for us has to be... involving an increasing number of working class people in our party and it has always been proven that if we are successful in doing this it makes it much more difficult for the establishment parties to act against us because they end up, not just acting against Sinn Fein as a political party, but acting against a considerable section of the population which could have all sorts of dangers for the establishment. I would certainly hope that in the next few years we can increase the strength of our party and if so... I think we would have the ability to overcome whatever difficulties they would place in our way.

The book Questions of History, produced by Sinn Fein and written by POWs, is asking fundamental questions. Do you see these as of particular relevance at this time?

Over the past five or six years our movement has undergone significant change, in so far as there has been a change of leader-

ship. There is a very definite realisation that we must not be just a Brits out party, that we must be a socialist movement, an educated movement, involved in the day to day problems of ordinary people... On all sorts of occasions people might see a particular move as being a move away from traditional Republicanism... A decision was taken a year past to become involved in Leinster House in the Twenty Six Counties. This brought about a very traumatic period and left people like myself and Gerry Adams being open to criticism from people who we would basically term the right wing of the movement in so far as they were accusing what is now the Republican Movement of being involved in a sell out of Republican principles. I would totally and absolutely dispute that. The leadership of this movement is charged with the responsibility of making the movement, Republican politics, socialism in Ireland relevant. If we have to do that and in doing so, shed some people who were faithful to us for a long number of years but who fail to grasp and understand the realities of life in Ireland in 1988, as opposed to the realities of life in the 20's, 30's and 40's, then it's sad that there has to be a departure but it is absolutely essential that the Republican Movement does shed those people... We are going to make sure that this present phase of struggle is not another glorious defeat... And if we have to challenge the Holy Grail on occasions to do this, then we are going to challenge it.

Ken Livingstone's stand on Ireland seems more isolated than ever in the Labour Party. Sinn Fein seems to place great stress in Britain on developments in the Labour Party. Can you explain this?

Our policy is that we are only interested in bringing about an increased awareness in Britain of the Republican struggle... It has been said to me by some people that some of these parties are only interested in... Ireland and interested in Sinn Fein for their own interests... it would be very dangerous if our movement were to become involved in that type of situation simply because we have been told there are all sorts of differences within the left about which is the best way forward... What we're trying to do is bring about an increased awareness of all the groups including the Labour Party and if possible the Conservative Party and the Liberal



Party and all other parties as to the evil British rule and we aren't interested with the support comes from a demand British disengagement from Ireland long as that support is there... In our opinion the best way to bring that about is not being involved in supporting group against the other but through us having a good relationship with all groups... to convince them all that it is absolutely essential for our struggle that there is a united approach to a troops out movement. I can't emphasise enough how important it is for people in Ireland to have people like Ken Livingstone and Tony Benn and others speak out... on Ireland... I'm well aware that there are other people who probably have worked harder than leading personalities at grassroots level in different political groups on the left in England who have been very faithful in standing up for the Republican Movement and for our right to self determination... We are going to accept support from all quarters, wherever it comes from and we are not going to become involved in faction fighting within the le-

What do you see as the main issues to campaign on in Britain?

The main issue from our standpoint is we believe that Britain should pull out that is a demand that has been made many years... British involvement in Ireland does throw up all sorts of opportunities for people to expose what is happening. All those issues, whether it's shoot to kill, lack of justice for the Birmingham 6, the Guildford 4 or the Judith Ward case. Judith Ward is English... I regard the Judith Ward case as an important one which should be exploited totally and absolutely in England. Diplo-mats, courts, shoot to kill, strip searching, interrogations in Castlereagh. Just last year we had two young men from Belfast beaten in Castlereagh. All issues like that can be used and exploited to expose the true nature of British rule in this part of Ireland. And through that raise the issue of British withdrawal and self-determination for the Irish people.

The politics of fear

'New Realism' - the politics of fear. Arthur Scargill. Merthyr Tydfil Trades Council. 1987. 50p.

The hatred Arthur Scargill inspires among the ruling class and the opportunist labour leaders is testimony to his uncompromising dedication to the working class and to socialism. Scargill represents the potentially revolutionary trend in the organised British working class which is trapped and fatally isolated by the opportunist Labour Party and trade union movement.

This pamphlet 'New Realism' - the politics of fear reveals Scargill's determination to uncompromisingly fight the ruling class and oppose all those cowards and compromisers in the labour movement. It also, alas, shows that Scargill has not yet come to terms with the essentially reactionary character of the same Labour Party that successfully helped Thatcher to defeat the 1984/85 miners strike.

'New Realism' is the dominant political outlook in the Labour Party and trade union movement today. Scargill sets out to 'analyse and attack' this 'dangerous', 'destructive' and 'degenerate' 'class collaboration philosophy'. 'Conceived by those in the CPGB' it has had disastrous results for the working class - unemployment, destruction of the welfare state, legislation against trade unions and increased oppression. The proponents of 'New Realism' have 'not resisted, but succumbed' to Thatcher's attacks. It is 'a concept that calls for an end to "confrontation" (ie class struggle), seeking a strategy of coalition, collaboration and compromise' with 'class enemies who at present find themselves appalled at the excesses of the Thatcher government'. He likens it to 'wooling the executioner to win either a slight delay or a less painful death.'

Whilst vigorously exposing 'New

ment, the 'New Realists' who control the Labour Party and trade union movement represent another trend. They represent that section of the working class which does not want to disturb the peace of bourgeois society because it is this peace on which their status and privilege, their security and stability rest. They fear the class struggle because it would bring those sections of the working class into action who have no status or privilege in capitalist Britain and who have no interest in compromising or collaborating with the ruling class.

Arthur Scargill sees in the 'New Realists' only bureaucrats. He does not see the base on which this bureaucratic caste rests - the labour aristocracy. Scargill says 'This has become a grim and desperate soc-

most oppressed. He says: 'political victory lies in the mobilisation of all those most oppressed within our society' and indicates the millions who struggle against injustice, low wages and the threat of unemployment, the unemployed, women, pensioners, black workers and young people. This is undoubtedly correct. But Scargill draws from this correct statement an entirely utopian conclusion. He considers the most oppressed 'Labour's natural constituency' and calls for the Labour Party to organise them: 'This is the ground on which the Labour Party must build a campaign not merely to win a general election, but to win power to change our system, bringing an end to capitalism and the beginnings of a socialist society.'

But it is precisely the most op-



Miners burn barricades to stop police charges

Realism' which is 'neither new nor realistic' Arthur Scargill does not examine or explain its class basis, its material foundation. It is, he says, 'in essence a doctrine of fear...'. But fear of what? Certainly not fear of attacking Scargill, or ruthlessly crushing any serious opposition inside the Labour Party and trade union movement, or attacking black people, gays and women. Indeed they are frightened of the class struggle against Thatcher and the ruling class. But why? Scargill does not explain.

Just as Arthur Scargill represents one trend in the working class move-

ment, the fact is that for a substantial section of the working class - the labour aristocracy - this society is far from grim and desperate. The Labour Party and trade union movement represent, in substance, those for whom capitalism is not 'grim and desperate'.

Scargill's failure to recognise the split between the two trends in the British working class movement leads him to a utopian political conclusion.

His great merit is to understand that the forces for socialism will not come from the 'New Realists', and those they represent, but from the

pressed who have been brutally abandoned and attacked by the Labour Party - today as well as in the past. The history of the Labour Party during Thatcher's period in government shows conclusively that a serious struggle for socialism, one that does indeed attempt to organise the most oppressed into a political force can only be done in a fight against the Labour Party. The working class movement in Britain needs a new communist party. Only such a party will actually organise the oppressed. One day, hopefully, Arthur Scargill will also draw this conclusion.

Eddie Abrahams

ORGANISE WITH FRFI

The second in our series of dayschools, *Women's Oppression Under Capitalism. Women against Imperialism.*, was held in London on 14 February, Scotland on 28 February and will be held in Manchester on 26 March.

Currently, the Thatcher government is unleashing a vicious attack on the rights of the working class, in particular women, through the attack on the NHS, the proposed Clause 28 which will effectively outlaw homosexuality and support for David Alton's Bill which seeks to restrict the time limit for abortions to be carried out to 18 weeks. RCG members and supporters have supported all major demonstrations and protests against these attacks. We have joined nurses and health workers on picket lines outside hospitals, marched with them in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. We have marched in London, Manchester against the Alton Bill and joined our comrades in City Group and the VMDC on the London and Manchester demonstrations against Clause 28.

These issues are particularly relevant to women. The NHS is staffed mainly by women and working class women depend on it for the health care of their families. David Alton's Bill is a major attack on the right of women to abortion.



WOMENS OPPRESSION UNDER CAPITALISM

In the wake of these attacks, our dayschools are of particular relevance for all our members and supporters. In London and Glasgow Lorna Reid introduced *Women's Oppression Under Capitalism*, using material from our theoretical journal *Revolutionary Communist 5*. *Revolutionary Communist 5* was written in 1976 and for many of those attending the dayschools this was the first opportunity to fully discuss our Marxist analysis of women's oppression.

Lorna stressed that the root cause of women's oppression was the capitalist mode of production: the exploitation of the labourer's labour power by the capitalist to accumulate surplus value, the source of capitalist profit; the separation of domestic labour and social production; the absolute limits set by capitalism on the socialisation of domestic labour; and how the inferior role of women as wage workers, and as domestic workers carrying out privatised individual toil in the home enables

capitalism to use women to augment the industrial reserve army of labour - a necessary pre-condition for the 'cure' to the capitalist crisis.

She went on to explain that the demand for 'Wages for Housework' by some sections of the feminist movement was both utopian and reactionary as it obscured the specific oppression of women by capitalism and attempted to side-step the necessity of political organisation of the whole working class to bring domestic labour into social production by conducting the campaign on a purely economic programme. Rejecting the argument that women's oppression stems from the family and the biological division of labour within it, Lorna explained that it is the form of the family under capitalism and the existence of domestic slavery that is at the root of the oppression of women and not family life as such.



WOMEN AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Simone Dewhurst introduced the session on *Women Against Imperialism*. She covered the rise and activities of the Relatives Action Committees in Ireland which were formed in 1976 by working class women to demand political status for republican POWs and highlighted their successful political struggle against the 'Peace People'.

In South Africa the women organised mass resistance to the Pass Laws in the 1950's. Their protests were met by vicious police brutality. The women were beaten and shot but their spirit was never crushed. By taking part in the national liberation struggle against apartheid women have established their claim to equality.

The emergence of working class women as an organised political force in the miner's strike in Britain was one of the strike's most important developments. The refusal of the NUM to allow the women to become members of the union was a return to the reactionary tradition

Whose friend?

My Friend, the Enemy. Uri Avnery. Zed Press. 1986. No price given.

The book is billed by its publishers as a 'sensational story of the secret contacts between a daring group of Israeli patriots and the PLO...'. Its most 'sensational' aspect is a display of the author's undiluted egoism and his thoroughly reactionary political standpoint wrapped up in shoddy liberal sentiments. Avnery's first task is to whitewash Zionism by putting it on a par with Palestinian nationalism:

'Two great historical movements... each one with the most praiseworthy aims and ideals - national and human salvation, freedom, cultural and social renaissance...'

Is this not an insult to those Palestinians today being shot dead, gassed, beaten, buried alive and having their bones smashed by the Zionist regime? Avnery compares Ben-Gurion, founding father of the bar-

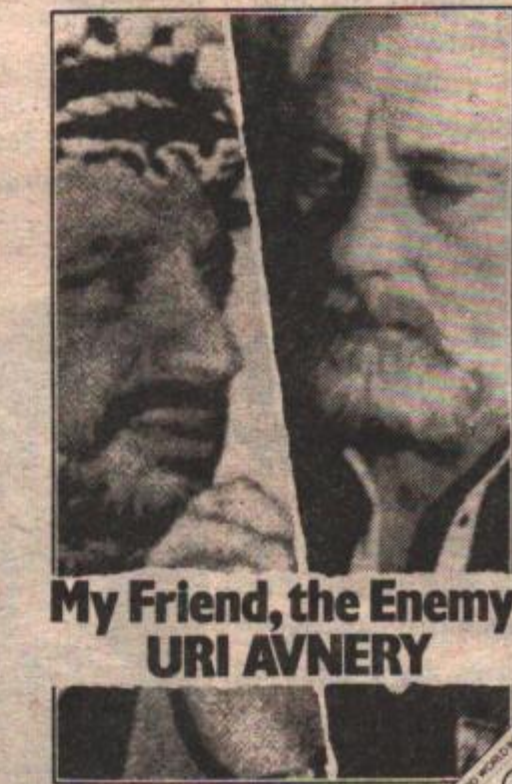
barism that is Zionism to Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO. Worse follows.

By page 32, Avnery is congratulating Prime Minister Levi Eshkol for the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip:

'A dramatic opportunity was staring us in the face. This historical homeland of the Palestinian people was in our hands. All barriers between us and the Palestinians had come down. We could address them directly, talk to them face to face, offer them the thing most precious to every people on earth: a national state of their own.'

Invasion, destruction, mass expulsions and the imposition of a new apartheid - novel methods indeed of removing barriers between nations.

Avnery, by putting on airs and declaiming pro-Palestinian sym-



My Friend, the Enemy URI AVNER

pathies engages in the business of cultivating relations with the right wing of the PLO. In return for their recognition of Israel as a legitimate political entity, Avnery promises to 'create the beginning of a pro-

Palestinian lobby within the Israeli cabinet'. A typical 'liberal', Avnery holds faith in 'reasoned' discussion and expended much useless energy having such discussions with butchers like Begin, Rabin and other criminals heading the Zionist regime. Of Begin, this man can say 'I have always enjoyed good relations with Begin...'. There was no personal tension between us, and he generally treated me with much cordiality.' Hardly surprising given Avnery's Zionist views. It is a cordiality that did not extend to the Lebanese and Palestinian people butchered by Begin in 1982.

Avnery adds to the sin of stupidity an inveterate hatred for communists and communism. He desperately tried to persuade his PLO contacts to break relations with the Israeli Communist Party and with Israeli anti-Zionists, dismissing them as irrelevant.

Avnery's main concern is for the survival of the Zionist state. His function in politics is to try and persuade sections of the Palestinian movement that Zionism has a reformist trend willing to co-exist with an independent Palestinian state. That none of his schemes have been taken up by any influential Zionist organisation does not deter him, for his real mission is to split and weaken the PLO as a first step to destroying the revolutionary Palestinian resistance. This book is a classic demonstration of the perfidious role of so-called liberals within the Zionist establishment.

Eddie Abrahams

of trade unionism in Britain.

Simone concluded that the lessons of these struggles is that the struggle for women's rights cannot be separated from the struggle against imperialism and the struggle against imperialism cannot be separated from the struggle for women's rights.



JOHN STURROCK NETWORK

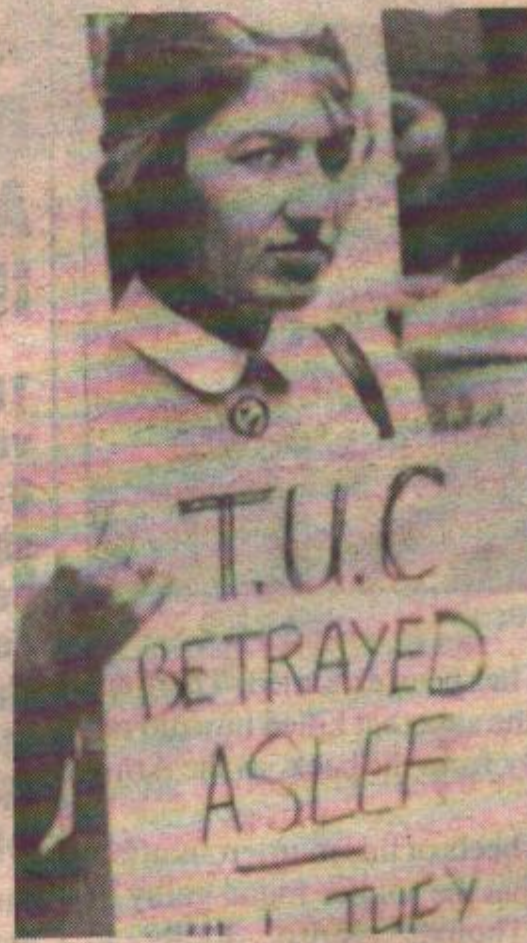
BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

In discussion the role of women in the Soviet Union was raised. Whilst they have still not achieved complete equality it was pointed out that under the socialist mode of production there at least exists the basis to remove discrimination. We clarified that women's oppression is material and not the result of historical or biological factors.

We went on to discuss our attitude as communists to a women's movement. Where a genuine working class women's movement emerges the task of communists is to work alongside and within the movement to defend it from the narrow and reactionary influence of both the Labour Party and petit bourgeois feminism. On this we discussed our previous involvement in the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) in 1975/6 and why we eventually withdrew from it. NAC fell completely under the influence of petit bourgeois feminism. Our political influence then was not strong enough to prevent NAC from ignoring the interests of working class women in the fight for abortion rights.

Today in our campaigning work we argue that it is the democratic involvement of the broadest forces that guarantees the equality of women in the struggle against racism and imperialism and therefore in City Group and the VMDC we have argued against proposals for 'women only' events.

Lorna Reid



DEFEND THE NHS

Following the discussions at the dayschools London branches have organised public meetings on the NHS dispute and invited nurses to speak. We are attending a Patients Action Group in North London - a support group for the NHS dispute formed by a City Group comrade - and argued for the involvement of the community in defence of the NHS. In Scotland our comrades will be playing a more active role in the **Smash the Poll Tax Campaign** where the involvement of working class women in organising community resistance will be a necessary and crucial development. Our next dayschool to be held in April is on *Productive and Unproductive Labour in the Public Sector. The History and Development of the Welfare State.*

REMEMBER SHARPEVILLE

This month RCG members and supporters are mobilising for City Group's rally on 21 March **Remember Sharpeville. Remember Langa. No more hangings. No more massacres.** In preparation we held the first of our Communist Forums on South Africa in London on 28 February. Adam Bowles introduced the historical and political developments leading to the Sharpeville demonstrations in 1960 which resulted in the massacre of 69 people and hundreds injured. Through regular dayschools, forums, supporters groups and public meetings we are beginning the process of fusing our theoretical development with our anti-imperialist campaigning work. We invite all our supporters and readers to contribute to these discussions and to join us in our work.

MONUMENT OF DISGRACE

Dear FRFI, It would appear there is no limit to the racist arrogance of the British establishment towards Ireland and its citizens. After the Stalker affair which gives the green light to the kill-crazy thugs of the sectarian RUC and the British army to kill Irish people with impunity, and the bigoted judgement in the case of the Birmingham Six, we now hear them talking in terms of making permanent the outrageous and discredited Prevention of Terrorism Act.

This Act will stand as a monument of disgrace to the Labour Party, alongside the Diplock courts and the supergrass trials that such a system spawned.

There is also a growing pressure in the British Parliament for the return of capital punishment which can only be seen as a method by which they would hope to escape any future international embarrassment as has appeared recently in the case of the Birmingham Six.

It would all be so simple in its way. Grab a few Irish people in the event of any incident, torture some kind of confession out of them, let the media do their dirty work, bring them before the courts, let a jury rubber-stamp the pre-conceived verdict and hang them. If only they would look at the lessons of history, they would not be so smug. Thousands of martyrs have risen to haunt imperialism and bring forward their day of defeat.

I am a regular reader of FRFI and as a person who has been involved in politics and trade unionism all my life, I consider your paper and the RCG to be the only genuinely anti-racist/anti-imperialist organisation known to me in the country.

FRFI is a most enlightening organ and I congratulate you on your wise decision to continue as a monthly for the time being at least. In order to show my appreciation I am enclosing a cheque for £12, out of which I would like you to send me a copy of David Reed's *Ireland: the key to the British revolution.* The rest will help you with your work on behalf of the poor and oppressed.

Yours fraternally
M Murtagh
Surrey

LETTERS

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

BRITISH JUSTICE - THE GREATEST OF FRAUDS



A Chara, In a letter published in the *Irish Press* on 21 December 1984, I predicted that Private Thain who had just been sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of an Irish person, would not serve the long years of harsh imprisonment endured by Republican prisoners, and that he would be released before he spent five years in prison;

'After four years in prison his sentence will be reviewed and he will be given a release date and quietly released before he has spent five years in prison.'

My prediction was correct. My comment that Private Thain's trial, conviction, and sentence was 'a propaganda exercise for that greatest of all frauds; British justice,' is fully vindicated.

Private Thain is back with the British Army. The Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four and many other men and women whose only crime was to be Irish, remain in prison. So also do several Republicans serving life sentences in Portlaoise.

Will Mr Haughey instruct his Minister for Justice to give release

dates to these prisoners? After all, his political mistress cannot object as her Home Secretary has just released a convicted murderer after less than four years from conviction.

Is mé
Sean Mac Stiofain
(Sean Mac Stiofain was Chief of Staff of the Irish Republican Army 1969-1972.)

SUPPORTING THE NURSES / SUPPORTING THE NHS

Dear FRFI Defend the NHS... That's not the issue, it's pay and conditions that we are fighting for according to Dr Michael Fitzpatrick and the RCP. At an 'All London Health Workers' meeting on 15 February he told the audience that the reason nurses and other health workers were taking strike action was only for better pay.

He attacked in his 30 minute speech not only the RCN and TUC (both worthy of attack) but all the health unions and their members for fighting for the National Health Service.

But he didn't get away with this rubbish. A speaker from Charing Cross hospital joint shop stewards committee spoke out angrily against Dr Fitzpatrick and the RCP pointing out that during the miner's strike the RCP called for a national ballot. Speakers from NALGO, NUPE and COHSE showed the divisiveness of Fitzpatrick's words.

No one denies that health workers want better pay and conditions, they are being given pocket money at present and even that is being cut. But the reason nurses (not voted for their militancy) are finally voting with their feet is because the NHS is collapsing all around them and they are no longer

able to look after the patients. Concentrating on pay and conditions is dangerous. The government could well improve pay for nurses by bringing in privatisation, although ancillary staff this has up to now meant lower pay. Nurses work in the private sector to get better pay; they emigrate to USA and Australia to get better pay but into private health systems. What health workers want is a strong National Health Service available to all, not better pay in a private system available only for the rich few. The talk of the RCP is reactionary and should be avoided by all.

Liz
Registered General Nurse
London

ATTACK ON VMD DEMO



Dear FRFI Congratulations on an excellent page. That's exactly what British justice is for the Irish people - no justice.

I'm writing to tell you about a brutal attack which was both political and racist. The VMDC Friday march on 12 February was quite simply 'about' by police officers in a manner that was callous, calculated and terrifying. Black people received the worst treatment (no cliché, simply truth).

I expect we could all highlight police thuggery. I simply wish to call on readers to fight back against these monsters whenever they attack us. All the best. Our day will come.
Andy
Scotland

LONDON

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY RCG street meeting

12 March, 11am
Nags Head, Holloway Road, London N7. Followed by march to Holloway Women's Prison

LONDON SUPPORTERS

RCG London Supporters Group meet every fortnight on Sunday 6-9pm

Marchmont Centre, Marchmont Street. Nearest tube Russell Sq. Next meeting Sunday 13 March - PALESTINE LIVES. VICTORY TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

DEFEND THE NHS! VICTORY TO THE HEALTH WORKERS!

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Speakers: RCG, Health Workers and others
Tuesday 15 March, 7.30pm
Southwark Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5

Wednesday 16 March, 7.30pm

Camden Black Parents and Teachers Centre, 146 Kentish Town Road, London NW5

MANCHESTER PUBLIC MEETINGS

Who can beat Thatcher in the fight to defend the NHS?

Tuesday 15 March, 7.30

Church of the Ascension, Royce Rd, Hulme, Manchester

NON-STOP ACTION AGAINST APARTHEID

7 April, 7.30pm

Church of the Ascension
Manchester RCG address: PO Box 80, Manchester M60 1R4.

BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND! REPATRIATE PRISONERS OF WAR!

MARCH

to Wakefield Prison
Saturday 30 April
Organised by Ad Hoc Committee for British Withdrawal for Ireland.
Transport details from FRFI.

DUNDEE

PALESTINE AND IRELAND

Thursday 24 March, 8pm

DASS Offices, High Street, Dundee

DEFEND THE NHS: FIGHT THE POLL TAX

Thursday 31 March, 7.30

Conference Room, Central Wellgate Library, Dundee

SPECIAL FUND

We have raised £3,500 towards our £10,000 target. This still leaves £6,500 to raise. A great effort is needed by all of our supporters to ensure that we can reach our target. Special thanks this month to T Howdle, Ken Hughes, Adam in Birmingham, and to Gordon in Leeds who has raised £235. Monies from the sponsored events, second hand stalls in colleges and regular donations must be rushed down as soon as possible.

We need your help to build our organisation and need your financial help to do this. Fill out the form below and send your donation to the Fund Drive.

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Cold Blooded Murderers

The government's decision not to prosecute any RUC officers involved in the 1982 murders of six Irish men has predictably been seen by British forces in Ireland as a renewal of their licence to kill. On Sunday 21 February 24 year old Aidan McAnespie passed through a military post at Aghnacloy on his way to a football match. Minutes later a British soldier shot him dead. Guardsman David Holden has been charged with unlawfully killing Aidan.

MAXINE WILLIAMS

Just as in 1982, the cover up began with lies. The army said that Aidan was shot by an accidental discharge from a machine gun. The RUC said that three bullets had struck the roadside and that one of these had ricocheted into Aidan. They claimed to have found pock marks on the road on Tuesday, two days after the shooting. Local residents report hearing shots in the

area on Monday night, which may account for the miraculous finding of marks on the road.

The local community and Aidan's family tell a very different story. His sister Eilish McCabe, who saw her brother's body lying on the road with a single bullet hold in his chest, said:

'It was cold-blooded murder. It's a bit much to believe that a bullet hit a target almost 300 yards away and with that ac-

curacy and for the British army to say it was an accidental shooting. That was shoot on sight. There's no doubt in our minds about that. The harassment he was getting was unbelievable.'

This harassment, since Aidan was 17, had involved him being stopped and questioned countless times. He had to go through the Aghnacloy checkpoint twice a day to get to work and was questioned, sometimes for an hour on each occasion. Often his mother had to meet him to ensure that he got through safely. His parish priest catalogued the harassment he suffered which was extreme enough for his case to figure in a Sunday newspaper last year. Yet we are asked to believe that his death was an accident. Aidan's family has insisted on a second post-mortem examination



Aidan McAnespie

and his body has been exhumed. There are reports that the shot that killed him did not enter his body from the back, as the Army had claimed.

Hot on the heels of this murderous affair came news that the soldier found guilty of murdering Thomas 'Kidso' Reilly in 1983, had been released having served less than three years of a life sentence. Private Ian Thain, the only soldier convicted of murdering a civilian in Ireland since 1969, has not only been released but also welcomed back into his regiment. On past form his career prospects will have been improved by notching an Irish life on his rifle. The same Home Secretary that allowed Thain to go free after an almost uniquely short life sentence, keeps at least eleven innocent people imprisoned: the Birmingham 6, the Guildford 4 and Judith Ward. The scales of justice evidently weigh very light when an Irish life is at issue.

Barely a day has gone by recently without some incident exposing the true nature of British rule in Ireland. Indeed the British government seems determined to rub the Dublin government's nose in the dirt, even to the point of refusing to comply with the legal niceties of extradition. Small wonder that the Twenty Six Counties government should have felt obliged to announce their own police inquiry into Aidan McAnespie's death. Haughey said that in the circumstances the Army's story of an accident 'must give rise to disbelief'. Nor that they should have flatly contradicted Tom King's announcement that a security meeting between the RUC and the Garda would be taking place. They are suffering from a serious attack of diplomatic anger in which they must be seen to be expressing just enough anger to assuage domestic opinion but not enough to seriously jeopardise the Anglo-Irish Agreement, security cooperation and relations with Britain.

STOP PRESS

BRITISH ASSASSINATE IRISH VOLUNTEERS

The execution of three IRA volunteers in Gibraltar on Sunday 6 March by the SAS shows that a shoot-to-kill policy, despite all government statements to the contrary, is in operation. The three volunteers were: Donal McCann, Sean Savage and Mairead Farrell. All were unarmed when they were shot dead.

First reports fed to the media claimed that the three were armed and had just planted a 500lb bomb. The newspapers obliged by printing lurid stories of a bomb so powerful it could have demolished a local school. However, perhaps because the RUC were not around to plant 'evidence', by the next day the story had to be totally changed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe admitted to the House of Commons that the three were unarmed and that no bomb had been discovered. He claimed that the three, who had been under surveillance for a lengthy period, 'made movements that led the security services to think their lives were under threat'.

He did not indicate what these 'movements' might have been. But then he hardly expected to get a rough ride on this issue from the Labour opposition. And he was right, Labour spokesperson George Robertson condemned unreservedly 'those who seek to bomb their way to power'. He said such people 'must be dealt with'.

So for all the controversy which has raged about Stalker's inquiry into previous shoot-to-kill operations, nothing has changed. The British government, Army and police remain supremely confident that they can get away with murder.

Of the three murdered volunteers Mairead Farrell was the best known. She had spent ten years as a POW in Armagh prison, taking a leading part in the prison protest which culminated in the 1981 hunger strike. On her release in 1986 she spoke out against the strip-searching which she and other women prisoners were subjected to continuously. FRFI sends condolences and solidarity to the families of the volunteers and to the Republican Movement.



The publication of *Stalker* has presented the government with serious problems. Since then Tom King has been engaged in efforts to limit the damage and obscure the murderous reality of British rule in Ireland.

King's February statement admitting 'serious mistakes' by the RUC and saying the RUC and Director of Public Prosecutions were having talks to ensure 'that in the future facts and information to the DPP are in all respects full and accurate', is the nearest the government will ever come to admitting the 1982 shoot-to-kill cover up.

Having ruled out prosecutions, yet another enquiry has been launched, this time by Charles Kelly, Chief Constable of Staffordshire, into the case for disciplinary action against middle and low ranking RUC officers. Stalker has rightly described them as the 'sprats'. The big fish - Sir Jack Hermon and his assistants - continue to escape responsibility. Indeed it was when Stalker went after the big fish in 1986 that he was removed from the enquiry.

Stalker has no doubt that even bigger fish were responsible for removing him: 'I believe that in April 1986 a government decision was made to end my involvement in the enquiry' (p264). He has an ambivalent attitude, part sympathy, part regret, for the reasoning of his 'executioners'. Had he proceeded against senior RUC officers 'The impact on plans for policing the July marches, on police and Army anti-terrorist efforts and on the Anglo-Irish talks would have been shattering... Alongside that, was my investigation or

The inconvenient Mr Stalker...

The facts behind the cover-up of the RUC shoot-to-kill campaign in 1982 won't go away. The publication of Stalker's own account of his ill-fated investigation in his book *Stalker* has embarrassed the British government further. Maxine Williams reports.

indeed my reputation so very important?' (p266). This is the attitude to be expected from a solidly pro-establishment senior policeman. But it is precisely because they come from this standpoint that his revelations are so powerful.

Stalker was chosen for the enquiry because he was seen as reliable, not a boat rocker. However, one flaw made him totally unsuitable. From the outset he told his team that 'we were to regard ourselves as if we were conducting a criminal investigation in Birmingham or Liverpool' (p37). This was his great mistake, for as the Irish people know only too well, different rules apply in the Six Counties. Murder, terror and torture are policies of state and the police and Army rely on their deeds being routinely covered up. No wonder they decided to get rid of the inconvenient Mr Stalker.

Stalker's team, despite unrelenting obstruction from the RUC, especially the

Special Branch, soon discovered the truth of the 1982 shootings. They found that in the Toman, Burns, McKerr shootings, the RUC version was a pack of lies. The RUC said they had tried to stop the car, had been driven at and had an officer injured, given chase, been fired on and then returned fire. Stalker found that the three had been under surveillance for hours, the RUC hadn't tried to stop the car but had chased for 500 yards firing all the way, 108 shots in total. All RUC officers then left the scene and went to a Special Branch de-briefing. Detectives were denied access to them, their weapons and the car for several days.

His findings were similar in the case of the Grew, Carroll killings. But it was the case of Michael Tighe that particularly incensed Stalker:

'... I also passionately believe that if a police force, could in cold blood kill a seventeen year old youth with no terrorist or criminal convictions and then plot



Stalker signs copies of his book

to hide the evidence... then the shame belonged to us all. This is the act of a Central American assassination squad.' (p67).