

CLASS STRUGGLE

Political Paper of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain

VOL.14 NO.1 FEBRUARY 1990 30p



**COMING IN FROM
THE COLD?**

999

EMERGENCY

**FAIR PAY FOR
AMBULANCE
STAFF**

INSIDE

*east moves
west – what
lies ahead for
the peoples'
movements in
eastern europe
& the soviet
union*

*in memory
betty paterson*

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TIGRAY»»»Your help still needed»»» PAGE 12

CLASS STRUGGLE

EDITORIAL...EDITORIAL...EDITORIAL

As we go to press, the news of reforms announced by President de Klerk of South Africa, is being welcomed around the world. In his speech on Friday, 2nd February, de Klerk announced the lifting of the bans on the African National Congress, Pan-Africanist Congress and other organisations. He promised the early release of Nelson Mandela and the partial lifting of the State of Emergency.

Although we should welcome these steps, they in no way represent the end of apartheid, let alone of the racist power structure in South Africa. These reforms have been won primarily by the hard struggles of the people of Azania, and secondarily by international support.

The South African state needs to make reforms to survive. Big capitalists have long been arguing for a compromise settlement that would do away with the most blatant racist laws while maintaining the basic system of exploitation.

The situation in South Africa illustrates only too well the implications of liberal democracy for the vast majority of the people of the world. The wealth and power of the few are in sharp contrast with the poverty and exploitation of the many black Africans whose country it is.

A recent United Nations Children's Fund report for 1990 stated that each day, 40,000 children in the Third World die from hunger. If present trends continue, 100 million children will die during the 1990's from illness and malnutrition. The report estimates the total cost of basic health programmes which would save millions of these lives to be £1.5 billion a year. This is about the same amount spent on vodka in one year in the Soviet Union and on advertising cigarettes in the US. It is, of course, a drop in the ocean when compared to military spending.

The priorities reflected in these figures are a result of the values of liberal democracy, the face of Western imperialism. For many years before the full development of imperialism, the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America were being exploited by the European powers and until this situation is reversed, by the overthrow of imperialism in all its forms and the building of an alternative system, the need for revolutionary change will remain.

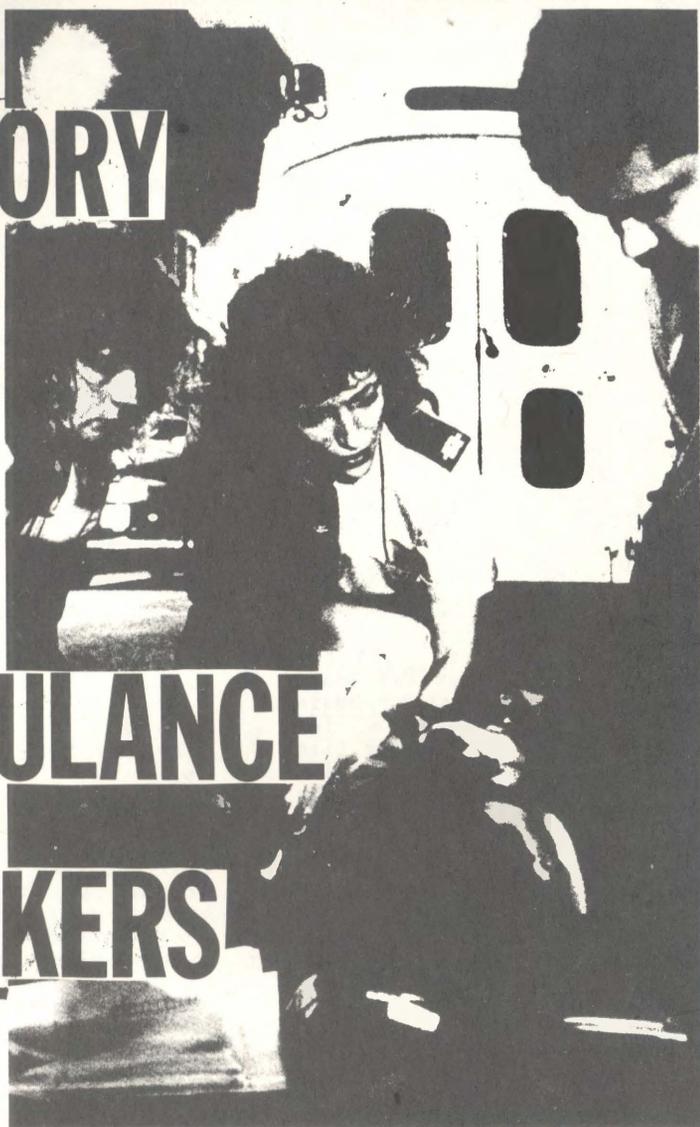
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PUBLISHED BY
THE REVOLUTIONARY
COMMUNIST LEAGUE

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VICTORY TO THE AMBULANCE WORKERS



Joe Steel

Five months into the dispute, the ambulance men and women remain united in their resolve to win and the large national demonstration in London was one expression of the widespread support they enjoy.

On December 20th, Clarke's attempt to divide the staff failed when the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel rejected his so-called improved pay offer. Despite obvious hardship, particularly for those with children, the dispute was maintained over the Christmas holiday.

There are a growing number of press reports of disquiet in the Tory party about Clarke's handling of the dispute. The increased involvement of the police and army is costing a lot of money; an estimated £5 million in London alone. Doctors are coming out in public and stating that the service provided by the army and police is inadequate and causing unnecessary deaths.

Support from the public for street collections remains

strong. The solidarity day on 30th January showed that hundreds of thousands of people were prepared to give their support.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Clarke's latest offer (made on 19th January) called for locally negotiated productivity deals as the way forward. He also floated plans for a two-tier service: an elite highly skilled minority with the rest as glorified taxi-drivers.

A two-tier system has been tried in Northumbria. It created second class crews working a split shift between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. and earning £100 a week for 30 hours work. 80% of Northumbria's crews actively support the dispute.

In 1986, national negotiations ended productivity bonuses for ambulance crews. It was argued that productivity deals were not appropriate for ambulance work. Clarke has not put forward any new money. Any pay increase for the elite staff has to come from efficiency savings from within the service.

It is clearly wrong to split the ambulance workers into more and less deserving groups. 60% of crew members are qualified to give emergency resuscitation, assist emergency childbirth, deal with haemorrhages, etc. 10% are fully qualified paramedics and can provide advanced life-saving techniques. The remaining 30% have training in first aid and are new entrants to the service. Indeed, it was only as a result of pressure from the unions that paramedic training was introduced.

The majority of police and firefighter work is not emergency work. Yet Clarke does not argue that only those involved in emergency work should receive high pay.

Hospitals already have hospital cars or use taxis for those patients who just need help with transport. Ambulances are used because the patients need the help and back-up of people with special training to deal with their medical problems. In Northumberland, five ambulance stations, 73 vehicles and 74 staff were cut as part of the attempt to change the service. 43% of journeys are now carried out by private taxis and minibus companies. It saves £2.6 million a year. But it takes away the experienced qualified back-up for patients on the journeys.

Whatever other effects Clarke's proposals have, they do not do anything about the low pay of ambulance crews, who get no enhanced rates for weekend, unsociable hours or overtime worked.

THE UNIONS' OPTION

Short of all-out strike, the unions cannot increase their action and the TUC is unlikely to call for secondary industrial action. Obviously, the crews want an end to the dispute and many are frustrated by the refusal to run a national strike ballot and have come out on unofficial action without losing public support.

A proper strike ballot takes time and in the case of a 'Yes' vote, then the unions have 28 days to put it into action. Perhaps the time has arrived to test their members views in a ballot. Any dispute action has to be gradually escalated, if it is to be successful. Any tactic - such as maintaining emergency cover - no matter how good, is only effective for so long.

The unions should rely on their members who are their strength.

Betty Paterson (1913-90)

Many of our readers will know Betty Paterson who worked in New Era Books and was the public face of the Revolutionary Communist League, and the Communist Federation of Britain before it, for twelve years. It was with enormous sadness that we learned of her death in January, following a period of illness. Betty was an inspiring comrade and a warm friend who will be sorely missed.

Betty was a lifelong communist. She came originally from a middle class family in Worcester. After she left school in 1931, she persuaded her father to send her to secretarial college in Hampstead in London. There, she met communists and other progressive people and joined the Communist Party. The Hampstead branch was underground at that time and Betty worked inside the Labour Party. She married her first husband, Peter Mauger, who remained a lifelong friend and also became a staunch friend of China.

After the Soviet Union declared war on Hitler's Germany, Betty worked actively in the anti-fascist war movement. She decided to set up a factory and creche in her home and was thereby the initiator of the Home Factory movement in Britain. She also worked for Ivor Montagu bringing in and ensuring a wide distribution of Soviet news films.

By the time the war ended, Betty had met and married Alan Paterson and they went to work a farm, first of all in Kent and then in the West Country. Betty loved the countryside and was busily occupied farming and raising four children. She was a member of the Bristol branch of the Communist Party.

Friend of China

Betty and Alan returned to London in 1964. By this time, the split between the Soviet and Chinese parties had occurred. Betty was sympathetic to the anti-revisionist views of the Chinese Communist Party from an early stage and supported them when the split occurred. In London, the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (SACU) had been formed and Betty worked as an assistant to its first Secretary, Derek Bryan. The Society organised exchanges and visits and spread information about China. It performed an invaluable service particularly during the period of China's isolation and the Cultural Revolution.

After a year, Betty succeeded Derek Bryan as Secretary and remained in that position for ten years. Characteristically, Betty became a friend as well as a supporter of China - she went on a number of delegations and was tireless in her work at SACU. As well as working like a Trojan, Betty also stood out against some of the dogmatism of the Cultural Revolution. She did this both out of good sense and also because she could be suspicious of new thinking herself. She was never frightened to put her ideas directly to people she disagreed with. Sometimes, things could be quite stormy at SACU!

Helping Out

Betty left SACU in 1975 and went to work at New Era Books (NEB) on a voluntary basis "to help out for a few months". NEB was at that time the bookshop of the Communist Federation of Britain. The shop imported and wholesaled books from the Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, particularly the Marxist-Leninist classics, as well as selling other communist and progressive literature. Betty became an Associate Member of the CFB. She did not become a full member at first on the grounds that she was too old to be a properly active communist. She was eventually persuaded to become a full member and outstayed most of the London members who introduced her to membership.

Those of us who worked with her in the bookshop soon came to have a healthy respect for her formidable working routine. She would arrive early, work until one o'clock, take off exactly half an hour for a pork pie, an apple, a cup of coffee and a brief read, and then get back to work until six. If a fellow worker was not pulling their weight, or, in Betty's opinion, was behaving in a sectarian way, the fact would be made clear by the determined set of her shoulders. She would wait until work was over to "have it out". One did not always look forward to "having it out" with Betty!

Betty did her job, day in day out, for the next twelve years. She never failed to listen attentively to and engage with all the people who came into the shop. The Communist Federation, which then became the Revolutionary Communist League, was extremely lucky to have her as a comrade. We were all extremely lucky to have her as

a friend. With a whiskey in hand, swapping stories, listening to George Melly or surrounded by the family she adored, she was a wonderful companion. The hospitality extended by her and Alan will be long remembered.

Love of Youth and Freedom

But above all, Betty had a great love of youth and freedom. She took the anti-revisionist road because she knew that revolution is made by the masses and this belief was the guiding star in her communism. Once she accepted the Chinese line, she became a friend of the Chinese people, a fact that was acknowledged when Betty and Alan were personally invited to China in recognition of their support and friendship.

Betty was enraged by the massacre in Tiananmen Square. In a letter to 'Class Struggle', she quoted Mao Zedong's 1957 speech to the youth:

"The world is yours, as well as ours. But in the last analysis it is yours. You young people, full of vigour and vitality, are in the bloom of life, like the sun at eight or nine in the morning. Our hope is placed on you ... the world belongs to you. China's future belongs to you."

Betty went on to say:

"For the past few weeks, these famous words of Mao have been ringing in my ears. And particularly since the June 4th massacre of students and workers in Tiananmen Square by the so-called government of China. No echoes of those famous words were remembered by those murderers of Chinese youth and I weep."

This break must have been very hard for Betty to make, but she did not flinch from it. She characteristically went on to say:

"Of course, eventually the forces for sanity and progress will re-emerge and then China will once again "stand up"."

Betty left NEB two years ago to retire with Alan to the countryside that she loved. She had long looked forward to being in the country and spending more time with her family. It was cruel that she had such a short time.

Betty Paterson had vision which she passed on to those of us fortunate enough to know her, and to her own children. To them, to her partner, Alan Paterson, and to all those who knew and loved Betty, we send all the strength and resolve we can and wish them the joy of happy memories of our comrade, Betty Paterson.

Mandy's Diary

Jan. 4th: The 6 o'clock news today showed women in Romania queuing up to have abortions, which are apparently now available, having been banned under Ceausescu except for women over 45 or those with more than 5 children.

The most amazing thing about it was the wholehearted support of the British media for abortion on demand and a woman's right to choose. That's because it's happening in Romania. Such support has never been available to women in this country.

Jan. 14th: Nor will it be, if David Alton gets his way. The defeat of his anti-abortion bill two years ago has unfortunately not deterred him. Together with an expert Parliamentary lobbyist, Charles Graffias, (whose salary is partly paid by the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC)), he is planning another fierce campaign to have the 28-week abortion time limit cut to 24, 22, 20 or even 18 weeks. Just as in 1988, the Royal Albert Hall has been booked for a rally on Feb 17th. Other large meetings will be held up and down the country, and anti-abortionists will be encouraged to deluge MPs with letters.

Into the abortion debate comes a new drug, RU486, an abortion pill that results in the body rejecting a fertilised embryo at a relatively early stage of pregnancy. But the company that produced it, Roussel-Uclaf of France, is hesitant about its subsidiaries applying for licences that would allow doctors to use it. It has been medically tested and found to be safe. Roussel-Uclaf withdrew the drug one month after putting it on sale in France. The reasons given at the time were the threat of boycott from anti-abortionists, the fear of litigation and pressure from the parent company, the West German pharmaceuticals company Hoechst.

The French Minister of Health, Claude Evin, told Roussel-Uclaf to resume production of the drug, saying it was now 'the moral property of women'. If they do not do so, the Ministry of Health could award the patent to another company. The effect of this upon women in Britain is that if Roussel-Uclaf does not apply for a licence in Britain within three years of being able to



Free abortion on demand!

A woman's right to choose!

do so, either the government can intervene or another company can apply to take on the patent. Such a company would have to show that there is a demand for the drug which is not being met.

And there certainly is! Worldwide, 200,000 women die each year from illegal or unsafe abortions. For the first time in medical history there is a safe, effective and acceptable medical method of terminating pregnancy.

Jan 15th: Following all the publicity about Tracey Scott, who received a six-month prison sentence for her first offence together with her three-month-old baby, and was then released on probation by the Appeal Court, a report was published today by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO). The report shows that fewer than one in seven women sent to prison have committed crimes of violence. Of the 2,813 women imprisoned last year, almost half had committed offences of theft, handling stolen goods, fraud and forgery. A further 936 were jailed for not paying fines.

Ms. Vivien Stern, Director of NACRO, said: "Tracey Scott's case has highlighted this country's overreadiness to send women to prison. Too many women with few or no previous convictions are unnecessarily imprisoned for non-violent offences, with destructive effects on their families. These disturbing statistics reinforce the case for an urgent official inquiry into the treatment of women."

There is a disproportionate number of black women in prison, 23% and rising. The report comments: "When previous record is taken into account, it appears that women are more likely to be imprisoned than men, and black women in particular seem to be in danger of receiving custodial sentences much earlier than their peers."

('Women and Criminal Justice' free from NACRO, 169 Clapham Rd, London SW9)

Jan. 19th: According to the National Childbirth Trust, childcare is provided by the state in France and Belgium for 25% of children under two. In Denmark, 44% are catered for. In Britain the figure is just 2%.

This is not all. A recent survey by the Equal Opportunities Commission reinforces the desperate need for pre-school childcare compared with only 25 years ago. Then, 80% of women felt that women with pre-school children should stay at home. In 1987 the figure was 45%.

The survey also shows the variety of informal arrangements that working parents are having to make for the care of their children. Of all employed women with pre-school and school-age children, 44% rely on the children's grandmothers. 23% employ a childminder. Only 14% have places in a creche, day nursery or nursery class.

('Women and men in Britain 1989', HMSO, quoted in 'Everywoman', Feb 1990)

Jan 20th: Watching telly tonight I happened to see 'Europe Express' on Channel 4 at 7.15. p.m. There was a report from a 'porn factory' in Hannover, West Germany. We saw sex films being made (yes, at 7.15, when quite young children might have been watching). We saw male and female 'actors' interviewed, clearly stating that there were no feelings whatsoever involved in what they were doing.

The woman director said that there was nothing wrong with a 'porn factory' because there is such a great demand for the products and they make a lot of money. None of the points she made was countered in any way by the interviewer. The programme stated that 'Playboy', the first porn magazine to be produced in Europe, was not introduced in Hungary until last year.

Is this the freedom that we are hearing so much about, which the Western countries have and the Eastern Europeans envy?

WHERE IS THE SOVIET ECONOMY GOING?

Contributed

There is much talk of detente, the Common European home, the dismantling of borders, the end of the Cold War and disarmament, or at least reduction in military expenditure. It is natural for people to welcome this. But it is important for us to look behind the politicians' words and see what is going on underneath, in particular, to look at some of the economic forces at work and how these are reflected in political change.

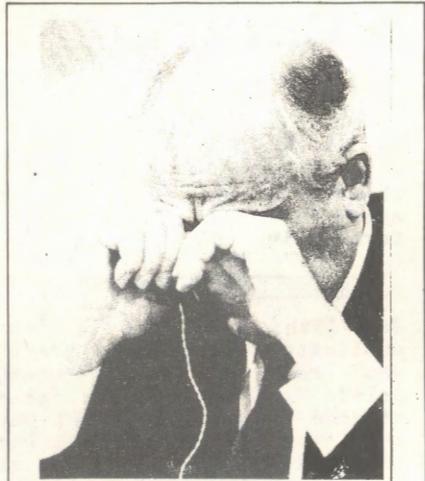
The basic position of Marxist-Leninists around the world has been that since at least the late 1950's, socialism has been abandoned in the Soviet Union and its satellites. The essence of the system that prevailed in these countries was capitalist, in the sense that once again it was ruled by capitalist laws of production and depended on the exploitation of the working class and oppressed peoples. However, it was a different kind of capitalism, which we called bureaucrat capitalism to differentiate it from the system of Western imperialism.

The recent upheavals in Eastern Europe have raised many questions about the concrete form and development of these systems, and the problems faced in building socialism. But at the same time, they have shown the truth of the basic Marxist-Leninist position.

In trying to understand developments in the Soviet Union, and in particular the "Gorby" phenomenon with its policies of perestroika and glasnost, we need to make a full analysis of the Soviet economy and where it is going. This is an important task for the future. This article will try and point to some aspects of the economy which indicate that far from moving back to socialist principles, or even strengthen the possibilities for world peace, Gorbachev is pursuing a policy of strengthening and reinvigorating the economy, with Western help, with the purpose of strengthening the world superpower.

It is clear that in the course of this process, political changes have been necessary that have set going, or accelerated, people's movements that were not part of the Soviet plan. To understand this, it is useful to make a comparison with neo-colonialism and Western imperialism. At a certain stage, Western imperialism was

able to find new ways of exploiting countries which had formally been direct colonies while conceding demands for political independence. We cannot of course make an exact comparison with the Soviet Union as the concrete situation is different. But this comparison does show how, for example, the Soviet policy of no armed intervention in the changes in Eastern Europe are not necessarily in contradiction with maintaining control at some level, in response to a different economic strategy. Similarly some commentators have argued that it would not harm the Soviet Union if some of the nationalist demands for independence were conceded. It is at any rate clear that the Soviet Union encouraged change in some of the Eastern European countries. In East Germany, for example, direct pressure was put on the ruling party to make reforms and it also seems that the Soviet Union was influential in events in Romania.



Gorbachev wishes he knew

Some people would argue that political independence for Eastern Europe was the price that Gorbachev was prepared to pay in order to convince the West, particularly the USA, to invest in the development of the Soviet economy, and not to block its application for membership of the IMF and World Bank. But although the ruling parties have changed, for example in East Germany and Hungary, it is clear that the economic system has not been overthrown or that power has changed hands in class terms. Rather we can see a merging of Western capital with powerful forces in the East, reflected politically in the merging of social democracy with the old revisionist parties.

Economic Crisis

It has been clear for many years, that the Soviet Union was facing a major economic crisis. This resulted in a massive budget deficit, funded by printing more money. While basic prices have been held down, there has been a desperate shortage of consumer goods at official prices and a thriving 'black market' at high prices. Basic industries have stagnated and are using outdated machinery which cannot compete with the West. The Soviet Union has been left behind in the development of the new technology.

Some recent indications of the depth of the economic crisis in the Soviet Union were reports in mid-January that oil wells in Siberia were shut down due to lack of maintenance and of aviation fuel. Other reports said that the shortage of electricity in Southern Georgia had forced 140 state enterprises to close.

Perestroika aims at freeing the economy from state control. It needs Western money to modernise industry. Prices will rise as subsidies are removed and at the same time, many workers will lose their jobs as industry is made more "efficient". It can be seen as quite similar to the restructuring of the British economy, in the sense that it is encouraging the development of private enterprise. But in the case of the Soviet Union, greater political freedoms, in the form of glasnost, have been the price that the Gorbachev faction has been prepared to pay for these reforms, and in order to overcome the opposition of the bureaucrats who have a vested interest in the old system.

In order to raise the capital necessary to modernise its industry, the Soviet Union has turned to the West. It had previously denounced the Western financial system as imperialist and depended on a closed system consisting of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and other COMECON countries such as Cuba and Vietnam, and exploitation of the Third World. There has in recent years been a marked shift away from this. The Soviet Union has been raising money from Western banks, governments and through increased trade in order to speed up its modernisation. Most recently it has even applied to join the IMF and World Bank, major sources of finance and politically, a stepping stone to raising finance from the USA.

WORKERS'

Workers in the Soviet Union are threatening new strikes in important industries such as steel, chemicals, cement and timber in response to price increases in diesel, electricity and transport, brought in on January 1st.

STRUGGLE

The official trade union body has warned the Council of Ministers who decreed the price rises of "social tension" unless they are reversed.

The price rises are aimed at increasing the efficiency of state enterprises. They increase wholesale prices paid by industry and costs cannot be passed on. The unions fear that this will lead to widespread bankruptcies and resulting redundancies. Alternatively workers' wages may be cut. They gave the example of a metal factory in the Ukraine where workers' wages have been cut by a quarter in response to the new measures. It is said that 42 out of 73 cement factories face closure.



If workers do strike, they will come up against laws passed last summer, banning strikes in the transport, fuel, energy and defence industries.

The official unions are not known for their militancy. But they are clearly responding to the massive miners' strikes last summer. 150,000 miners in Siberia and others in Ukraine set up their own strike committees and independent unions. They won big concessions in the form of better wages; more days off, better holidays and pensions and thousands of tons of urgent food supplies, soap and detergent before going back to work.



Muscovites outside the world's largest and most recently opened Big Mac

Another aspect of changing policy is the need for Western technology. The Soviet economy has stagnated and has fallen well behind the West in the development of micro-electronic technology. It has developed a policy of obtaining this through short-cut methods of deals with the West rather than relying on self-reliant development.

Joint Ventures with the West

Recently, the Soviet Union has accelerated the development of joint ventures with Western firms. For example, 68 British companies have now signed joint venture agreements with companies in the Soviet Union. Other European countries have been even more ready than Britain to co-operate in this way. At the end of November last year, a joint venture agreement was signed with Fiat of Italy, with investment from Fiat of £874 million in a new plant designed to produce 300,000 cars a year.

Another development is the setting up of free-trade zones of which there are two important ones:

one near Leningrad designed to attract capital from the West and another around the port of Nakhodka, in the East, to attract capital from South Korea and Japan.

The Soviet Union has been trying to attract Western capital for the development of a modern industry producing both primary and consumer goods. In the short term, it is also importing consumer goods such as Nissan cars, and foodstuffs to make up for the domestic shortage.

It is estimated that in 1988, the Soviet Union borrowed \$3 billion to finance a 9% increase in the volume of imports from the West. In the first half of 1989, the

increase grew to 11% to cover particularly the import of foodstuffs and industrial consumer goods.

It is crucial that we make a full analysis of economic developments in the Soviet Union. But, the above examples indicate that essentially the Soviet Union is attempting to change its system from a cumbersome bureaucratic, state-controlled economy to a more modern, up-to-date, capitalism.

To some extent, western imperialism blocks the way of further exploitation of the Third World and more aggressive Soviet policies have been shown to end in failure. The costs of change will be heavy on the working class and oppressed nationalities within the Soviet Union. It is already clear that both the economic and political crisis is growing in depth to such an extent that Gorbachev may not be able to hold onto power.

The leadership of the party in the Soviet Union faces opposition from the people who it wants to pay the costs of change and, at the same time, from those entrenched in the old system, who also have much to lose. It is not clear who will win out in this complicated struggle.

But it should be clear that if Gorbachev's policies are carried out, the Soviet Union will make up a modernised, more powerful superpower with greater ability to compete with the other superpower, the USA and the rising powers of the EEC and Japan to exploit the world, particularly the Third World. This is not a recipe for peace and stability. Nor is the alternative, an increasingly unstable Soviet Union deep in economic and political crisis.

THE PRISONHOUSE OF NAT

In the last three months of 1989, events moved fast in Eastern Europe, as the ruling regimes crumbled in one country after another in the face of popular revolt, culminating in the overthrow of Ceausescu in Romania at Christmas. The focus of attention was on the countries of Eastern Europe. But it was clear that popular movements were also building up within the Soviet Union itself, both workers' protests, such as those of the coalminers and national movements in different parts of the Soviet state.

In the middle of December, President Mikhail Gorbachev visited Lithuania and tried to persuade the Lithuanians of the advantages of staying within the USSR as one state and maintaining the unity of the Communist Party. Many commentators felt that his speeches were intended more for his opponents within central Russia than for the Lithuanians, who together with the other Baltic states, Estonia and

Latvia, have shown the strength of the movements for independence and secession. Gorbachev promised a future law on secession while he was in Lithuania.

More recently, attention has been focused on Azerbaijan. On the night of Saturday, 20th January, the army was sent in to Baku, capital of Azerbaijan and a state of emergency declared. This intervention followed reports of attacks on Armenian people by Azeris and Gorbachev claimed to have made every attempt over the last two years "to find a peaceful solution to the conflict". But even Gorbachev admitted that: "There were growing calls for seizure of power by force" and subsequent events have shown that the main purpose of the army has been to suppress the growing nationalist movement in Azerbaijan.

Azeri nationalists called for a three-day general strike and for three days of mourning for those

killed by the Soviet army. In the following days, mass rallies attended by thousands, took place, some of them in the form of funerals of those killed, in spite of a ban on all assemblies and meetings. The degree of unity of the people was shown by the fact that those organising the funerals included not only the Popular Front but also the officially-appointed Moslem board of the Trans-Caucasus and the Communist Party-led Baku city executive committee.

On the Wednesday after the army was sent in, the Soviet navy opened fire on ships blockading the port of Baku. It was reported that all enterprises in the city were at a standstill and the main nationalist organisation had gone underground. A clandestine radio station was still broadcasting and activists had published a programme calling for an "independent and democratic Azerbaijan".

Links had also been made with

Estonia: Pop. 1.5m
Minorities: 27.9% Russian, 2.5% Ukrainian
Capital: Tallinn; size: 33,000sq miles. Budget: R1.8bn. Main industry: Forestry

Lithuania: 3.6m
8.6% Russian, 7.7% Poles
Vilnius, 25,000sq m. R4.0bn. Engineering

Latvia: 2.6m
32.8% Russian
Riga, 24,500sq m. R2.7bn. Light Industry

Byelorussia: 6m
11.9% Russian, 1.4% Jews, 4.2% Poles, 2.4% Ukr.
Minsk, 80,000sq m. R8.9bn. Agriculture

Moldavia: 4.1m
12% Russian, 2% Jews, 14% Ukr, 3.5% Gagauzis
Kishinev, 13,000sq m. R3bn. Agriculture

Ukraine: 51m
21% Russian, 1.3% Jews
Kiev, 231,000sq m. R33bn. Heavy Ind/Agri.

Armenia: 3.4m
2.3% Russian, 5.3% Azerbaijanian
Erevan, 11,500sq m. R2.2bn. Agri/Mining

Georgia: 5.2m
7.4% Russian, 5.1% Azeris, 9% Armenian
Tbilisi, 27,000sq m. R3.4bn. Agriculture

Azerbaijan: 6.8m
7.9% Russian, 7.9% Armenian
Baku, 33,500sq m. R3.4bn. Oil

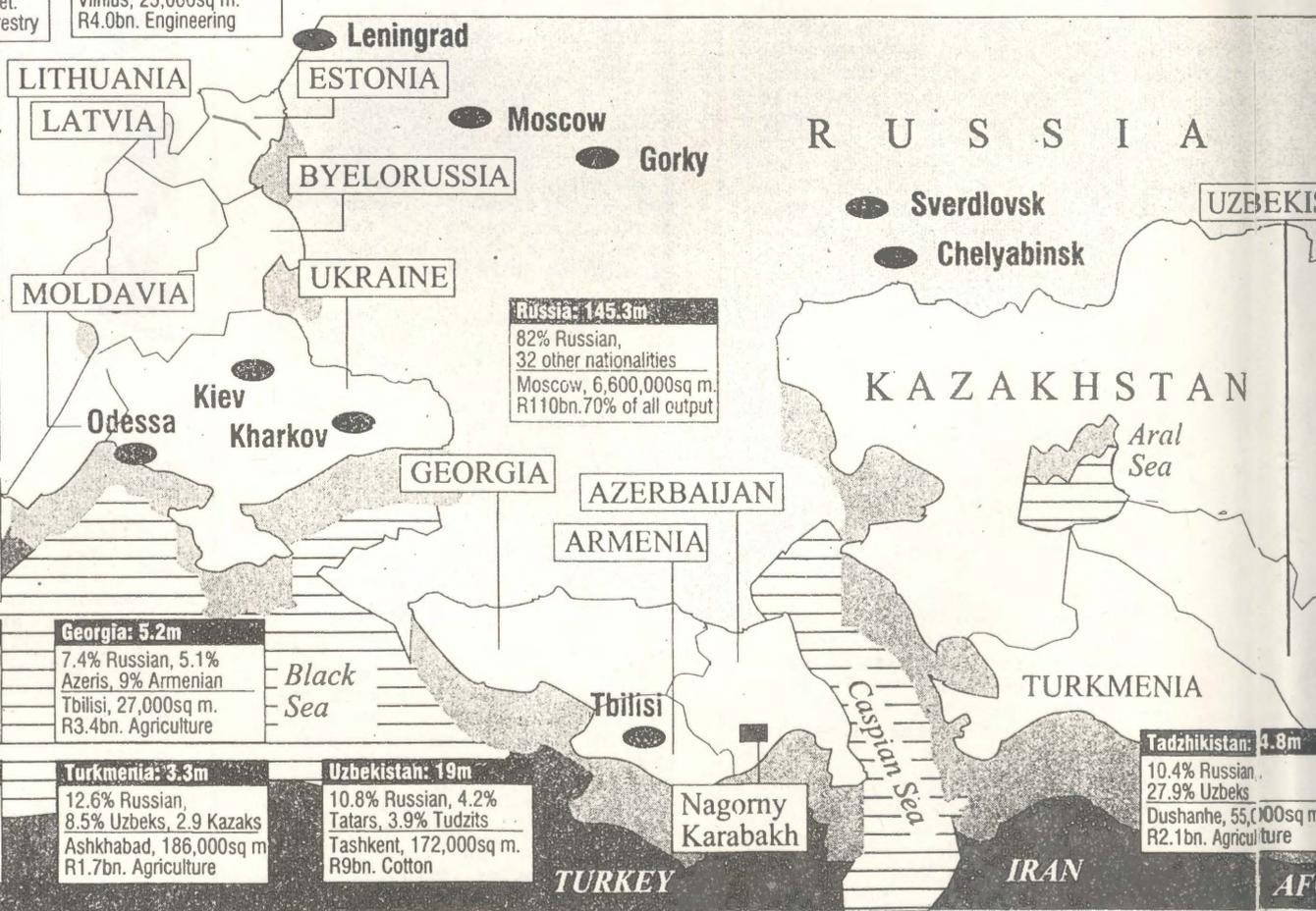
Turkmenia: 3.3m
12.6% Russian, 8.5% Uzbeks, 2.9 Kazaks
Ashkhabad, 186,000sq m. R1.7bn. Agriculture

Uzbekistan: 19m
10.8% Russian, 4.2% Tatars, 3.9% Tudzits
Tashkent, 172,000sq m. R9bn. Cotton

Russia: 145.3m
82% Russian, 32 other nationalities
Moscow, 6,600,000sq m. R110bn. 70% of all output

Tadzhikistan: 4.8m
10.4% Russian, 27.9% Uzbeks
Dushanhe, 55,000sq m. R2.1bn. Agriculture

The Republics of the USSR



NATIONALISMS

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other nationalist movements. Leaders of the nationalist movements of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia had offered to act as mediators in negotiations with Moscow. The nationalist movement in Armenia, in whose name the army had been sent in, condemned the army's actions and denounced the "violation of the sovereign rights of the people of Azerbaijan". Saturday's attack, they said was "not to guarantee the safety of Armenians, but because Soviet power was threatened."

At the time of going to press, negotiations are taking place between Moscow and nationalist leaders and it is possible that a settlement can be reached. It is unlikely, however, that this will be more than a temporary lull. The strength and popularity of nationalist movements is bound to grow and what happens in Azerbaijan has implications for the different nationalities within the Soviet state, particularly for other Muslim peoples.

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It is clear that attacks on Armenian people have taken place and that there are complicated historical questions to be sorted out. However, there are many reports that these have been manipulated by the corrupt ruling powers in Azerbaijan, to divert anger away from themselves, particular in time for elections due to be held in March. Statements by Armenian nationalists such as that quoted above tend to reinforce this view and that the main question was one of Soviet control over the area.

In an interview with the government daily newspaper, 'Izvestia', General Dmitri Yakov, Soviet Defence Secretary, said openly that the purpose of the Soviet attack had been to smash the power of the Popular Front. He is reported to have said that "24 hours before Moscow had acted to quell the Azerbaijani troubles, the Popular Front had declared a state of emergency and had been planning to hold a meeting on the day the tanks rolled.

"At this meeting, he said, the Front would have announced it had taken power in the republic....He declared that the Front had established itself at all enterprises and offices, adding that 'our task is not to arrest everyone but to destroy this structure of power."

Many people think that, if it comes to it, the Soviet Union can tolerate and even taken advantage of independent Baltic states that would act as a link with the West. Azerbaijan, however, is a different matter. It is the second largest oil-producing area of the Soviet Union and also makes oil machinery. The area is rich in minerals and agricultural resources. It is also strategic in military terms, holding bases for both nuclear and chemical weapons, it is widely believed.

In common with other nationalities, the living

standards of the people do not reflect the wealth of the region. The area suffers from chronic rural unemployment; the child death rate is high. The countryside is polluted by pesticides and the cities with industrial pollution.

A Popular Front spokesman said: "We produce 14 million tons of oil a year, but not a kopeck stays here..... 93 percent of our industry is controlled from Moscow."

The other important factor is that of Islam. Gorbachev himself and many Western commentators and politicians have attributed the "trouble" commentators and politicians have attributed the "trouble" to Islamic fundamentalism. Such statements only reflect a common European racism towards Muslim peoples and justification for oppression.

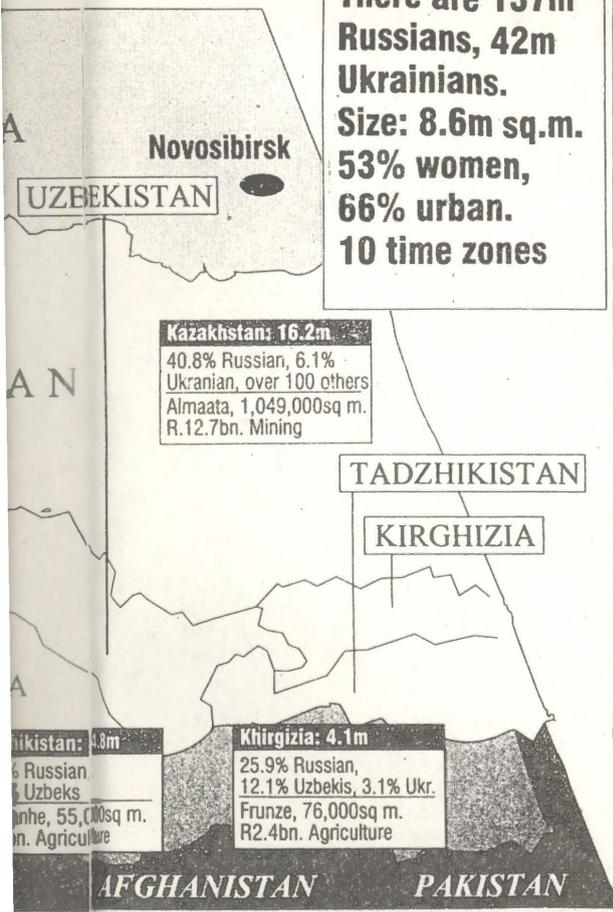
The nationalist movement is one of Muslim peoples and one aspect is that of unity with other Azeri people in Iran and Turkey, shown in their tearing down of borders and re-unification of families. But there is little indication of a movement for an Islamic republic or interference from Iran, which has recently established important links with the Soviet Union on the economic and political level and itself fears an Azeri national movement within its own borders.

There are clearly different strands within the nationalist movement. The attack by the Russian army will be seen as the brutal assertion of Soviet control and can only lead to further demands for independence and freedom. This conflict is likely to have a great impact on Gorbachev's future and the future of the Soviet Union, particularly the other Muslim areas.

USSR

SOVIET UNION
POP. 281.7m

There are 137m
Russians, 42m
Ukrainians.
Size: 8.6m sq.m.
53% women,
66% urban.
10 time zones



The 'German Question': A Matter of War &

We print below a statement by the MLPD, the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany.

Please note: FRG - Federal Republic of Germany - West Germany. GDR - German Democratic Republic - East Germany.

Statement of the Central Committee of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany on the question of 'German Unity'

**Fight the Imperialist Greater Germany Plan!
For a United Socialist Germany!**

The 'German Question' has become the most important political subject of the time. Whenever this situation has arisen in history, it has been a question of war and peace. What is the position of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany? What does it propose?

1. We support the struggle of the democratic people's movement in the GDR for political rights. Numerous corrupt politicians in leading positions in the state and in the Socialist Unity Party (SUP) must beware: the GDR will be shaken out of its deep political crisis.

But it is not yet the revolution much promised by the media. Up until now, neither has the ruling class of the bureaucratic capitalists collapsed, nor has the system of bureaucratic capitalist exploitation fundamentally changed. Rather, a speedy permeation into the Western capitalist system is in process.

2. The rulers in both East and West are approaching the German question as the central point of their struggle to redivide the world:

*** The USA and the EEC, with the FRG at the head, are making full use of their economic strength in order to snatch away the GDR from the Soviet sphere of influence.

*** The SU wants to maintain its endangered position of power and drive a wedge into NATO in order to weaken the USA.

*** The EEC is aiming to build a new power bloc in Europe.

These manoeuvres are a danger to world peace.

3. The Bonn regime refuses to recognise post-war borders,

Past	Present	Future
DAIMLER-BENZ 1890/1883		
Aero-engine factory dismantled by Soviets. MBB old Junkers works in Dessau. AEG locomotive, cable, electrical plants.	Sells 300 trucks a year to GDR. AEG manufactures with GDR locomotives	Trucks, locomotives, power supply, computers, washing machines.
SIEMENS 1847		
Former HQ in Berlin; at least 10 big plants in GDR.	Two-way trade about DM100m a year, exports factory automation and medical equipment, buys half-finished manufactures.	Will develop existing co-operation with Robotron.
VOLKSWAGEN 1938		
Owens Audi, formerly in Zwickau. (today's producer of Trabant cars). Chairman Carl Hahn born in Karl-Marx-Stadt.	VW engines built in Karl-Marx-Stadt for Wartburg models. VW to buy 430,000 engines by end 1993. VW buys DM50m in GDR parts.	Joint venture to study building small Polo-type car to replace Trabant.
VEBA 1929		
Former HQ in Berlin. Coal, electricity.	Annual purchases DM1bn, sales DM500m. Electricity deliveries began Jan 1.	Electricity sales, chemicals, building materials, environment.
BAYER 1863 HOECHST 1863 BASF 1865		
Extensive plants	DM1bn two-way turnover	All of previous

dictates conditions and perseveres with its claim to be the sole representative of all Germans. All preconceptions of a so-called re-unification amount to an incorporation of the GDR. That is imperialist power politics! Whoever wants to realise German unity under the rule of imperialism is making himself whether he likes it or not the handyman of German monopoly capital.

4. The splitting of the German nation, - a historically developed community of people who were bound together by language, territory, economic life and culture - is not in the interests of the working people. The blame goes back to the Western occupying powers under the leadership of the USA. Forty years ago they put monopoly capital back in the saddle in the FRG and broke the 1945 Potsdam Agreement.

The reinstatement of German unity in the interests of working people presupposes the collapse of the rule of monopoly capital.

5. The Communist Party of Germany and the then-socialist Soviet Union stood for the unity and independence of Germany and fought against the policy of splitting Germany. As late as 1952, Stalin proposed re-unification by means of a peace treaty. Yet the reactionary Adenauer regime rejected this. With the rise of FRG imperialism,

its membership of the NATO alliance and the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and the GDR after 1956, a new situation arose; the urgent task in both German states was to fight for freedom from exploitation and oppression.

All efforts towards re-unification which would lead to a strengthening of FRG imperialism must be combatted.

6. Because of developments since the Second World War, there are now different tasks for the two countries:

*** In the FRG: developing class struggle against the ruling monopoly capitalists.

*** In the GDR: class struggle against the bureaucratic capitalist powers, in alliance with anti-imperialist struggle against all dependence on the Soviet Union and all new dependence on the FRG.

Only when the working class in both German states have seized political power after a socialist revolution, will unity serve progress. - The German people alone will then have to decide this question.

7. Today, the central task of the struggle is to foil FRG imperialism's plans for Europe and Greater Germany.

The defence of the state sovereignty of the GDR lies in the common interests of all anti-imperialists and democratic forces in East and West. Against bourgeois nationalism, we set

Peace...

international solidarity, in the struggle for political and social rights. In order to show our common opposition to imperialism, we propose a demonstration in West Berlin, on 17th June, 1990. As many as possible anti-imperialists from East and West should take part.

Rote Fahne

Wochenzeitung der MLPD

Red Flag: the weekly paper of the MLPD.

*** For a broad alliance in struggle against the imperialist plans for Europe and Greater Germany!

*** For an expansion of democratic rights and freedoms - ban all fascist organisations and their propaganda!

*** No "special offer" for working people in the FRG for the policy of incorporation of the GDR!

*** Oppose the policy of selling out the GDR!

*** Recognise the existing post-war borders in Central Europe and the state sovereignty of the GDR by the FRG!

*** Dissolve the EEC, NATO and the Warsaw Pact! All occupying troops to withdraw! No nuclear rearmament of FRG!

*** Long Live the international struggle of the working class for peace, freedom and socialism!

Essen, 4.1.90.

LETTER TO ROMANIA

Dear Friends,

You have rid yourselves of a dictator and torn to shreds the web of fear which held the Romanian people down so long. The world watched as you rose up; it was anxious as the diehard Ceausescu supporters counter-attacked, and it celebrated with you your victory.

Some of us here in Britain who did not support what passed itself off as socialism in your country, joined these celebrations, but not without some foreboding about what the future holds.

If we sympathise with you, it is because of what we have in common as human beings intolerant of oppression and injustice and aspiring to a fairer, more prosperous and open society. You rejected Ceausescu and his brand of 'socialism' but we hope that you will think carefully before embracing our system as your own. It is undoubtedly more attractive from where you stand than from where we do.

True, there's a lot more freedom of speech here than you had until recently, but that has definite limits. So much depends on whether you have money or not. When workers fight for better wages, or to defend their jobs, they usually get a bad deal from the press, with workers' views being given little weight compared to those of managers and politicians.

Most people here have much more in the way of consumer goods, living space and food than you have. But, as hard as you may find it to believe, there are hundreds of thousands, who are worse off. I have sometimes spoken to people coming from Third World countries on their first visits here, who have expressed shock at the sight of homeless people sleeping in doorways, begging on the streets of the big cities. They had not expected to see such things in what they had always believed to be a rich country.

There are some who do much better for themselves, of course. Less than 10 percent of the people own 90 percent of the wealth, and wealth is

getting concentrated in fewer hands as the years go by.

Our government lies to us about how things are getting better, but they're mainly getting better for their friends. As the health service becomes less and less able to deliver, public transport deteriorates and most people have to struggle to make their money last to the end of the week, the lies just get more blatant.

The basis of Britain's relative wealth was its empire - the plundering and exploitation of Third World countries which it forced into dependence. Now these countries are fighting back. But the imperialist system, through international monopolies, still controls the economies of most countries in the world.

You have a chance to strike out for independence. I hope you will be able to take it.

Our politicians have nothing to feel smug about. The capitalist system has proved more durable than most Marxists expected, but that's not the same as being successful. Most of the world has lost wealth, blood and life by it. So, it hasn't been too successful for people like women forced into prostitution in the Philippines, indigenous Americans driven to the verge of extinction in much of their continent, or miners done out of their jobs here, not to mention the victims of two world wars and several hundred more localised ones besides, generated or fuelled by this "successful" system.

And socialism? Some of us have long argued that what existed in Eastern Europe until recently was definitely not socialism.

Socialism is incompatible with the denial to working people of control over their own lives, or the appropriation of the produce of their labour by a small minority. Socialism still has to be given a fair try in Europe, east and west. It remains well worth working for. Not only that, our world needs it!

David Evans

AFGHANISTAN

It was ten years in December since the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan and it is nearly one year since that same army withdrew in defeat.

Although there had been changes in leadership and policies in the Soviet Union, these were not the main cause of the withdrawal from Afghanistan. Like the Americans before them in Vietnam, the Soviet Union found that their superior firepower and weapons could not win a profoundly unpopular war when faced with a popular resistance. We should not underestimate the importance of this victory, won by the people of Afghanistan at the cost of great suffering and loss to them. It was a victory that had a profound impact internally within the Soviet Union and one that has much to do with the changes in policies there.

The people of Afghanistan bore the brunt of the aggression of the world superpower and its defeat at their hands has in turn led to a different policy within the Soviet Union and towards Eastern Europe. The refusal of the Soviet Union to intervene with armed force in the popular movements in Eastern Europe can be seen as an indirect result of the struggle waged in Afghanistan, Eritrea and Tigray, and Kampuchea, where popular struggles halted the tanks.

But although they won a historic victory, the people of Afghanistan have not yet

TEN YEARS ON



won their right to self-determination and peace.

Six million refugees still live in the camps of Pakistan and Iran. Basic UN rations have been cut.

Within Afghanistan, the fighting goes on, if anything intensified. The Soviet Union has stepped up its military aid to the Kabul government while pursuing a strategy of winning over other forces, particularly from the resistance, to form a coalition with the PDPA, to give it credibility.

At the same time, the USA is providing huge sums of money, through Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, to some sections of

the opposition. The USA is reported to be giving over £400 million in 1990 with more money coming from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The US has been pursuing a strategy of military victory over the Kabul government but its plans have come to grief because the factions backed by the US are unable to build unity among the resistance. At the same time, defeats such as that at Jalalabad, earlier last year, cost 12,000 lives.

In the second half of 1989, it also became clear that Iran was drawing closer to the Soviet Union, mainly in order to gain help for economic reconstruction. Iran has put pressure on Afghan groups based in Tehran to cooperate with the Kabul government, in line with Moscow's strategy. It is also reported that they have cut off military aid to these groups.

While aid from the two superpowers is stepped up, the Afghan factions based outside the country are becoming increasingly split and subject to foreign pressure. Only the resistance based inside Afghanistan, reliant on the people's own strength, will be able to bring the country to true victory. Even though the foreign troops have left, the people of Afghanistan still need our support in their struggle for self-determination. We should demand an end to all interference by outside powers, particularly the two superpowers.

TIGRAY

WE CANNOT SAY 'WE DID NOT KNOW'

As the world enters a new decade, the people of Tigray are facing mass starvation. Despite repeated appeals to governments, UN bodies, international organisations and through the world media, the food stocks of the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) in Port Sudan and elsewhere in Sudan and in Tigray itself are now exhausted.

A shipment of food will arrive at the end of January, and a further shipment, carrying only a tenth of what was required, has been pledged for March. Beyond that nothing is expected. Only one tenth of the trucks and trailers requested have been pledged.

On the assumption that assistance would be forthcoming, REST has been urging people to remain in their homes. The mass migration of 1984-5 meant enormous disruption to economic and social structures in Tigray and resulted in tens of thousands of deaths from

epidemics as well as starvation. Many people have now lost hope and moving themselves.

"Fear in everyone's face"

A recent visitor to Tigray reported:

"Fear is in everyone's face. The children in particular are suffering a lot. In Edaga Hamus, I saw children who have lost 50% bodyweight. There are no medicines in many clinics and hospitals. TB is spreading and medicines for treatment are running out. The situation is desperate."

In December 1989, the Ethiopian government once again rejected the proposal to allow a free passage policy for relief supplies. This has been its stance ever since 1984. It is attempting to starve the Tigrayan people into surrender. In addition it subjects them to air raids in which fragmentation bombs, phosphorous and napalm are used.

International bodies like the UN must realise that they are colluding with the Ethiopian government unless they demand a free passage agreement, internationally guaranteed at every stage, from arrival of relief supplies in the ports to distribution in the villages.

Practical Solutions Ignored

However, the danger now is that while they are concentrating their efforts on securing such an agreement, practical solutions are being ignored. A catastrophe of major proportions can only be avoided by an immediate and substantial commitment of funds for internal purchase of food.

The generosity of ordinary members of the public in recent weeks must now be matched by governments and international institutions. It cannot be said "We did not know".

CENTRAL AMERICA

On 25th February, national elections are to be held throughout Nicaragua. For the last ten years, the Sandinista government has faced continuous opposition from the USA, in the form of military, political and economic war waged against the Nicaraguan people.

This onslaught by American imperialism has created many difficulties for the Sandinistas but is unlikely to have eroded its popular support. The last time that elections were held, in 1984, they were contested by seven parties and overseen by many international organisations. The Sandinistas won 67% of the vote.

YANKEE GO HOME!

In preparing for this year's elections, Nicaragua has fully complied with the Esquipulas Peace Accords, pursued a national dialogue with different forces within the country and invited the UN and the Organisation of American States to observe the elections.

The elections are taking place against a background of heightened conflict with the US in the whole of the region, particularly in Central America.

In Nicaragua itself, the Contra war continues. It is estimated that the war has cost over 30,000 lives as well as untold devastation to the economy. The trade embargo by the US continues and internal opposition parties within Nicaragua are receiving massive backing from the US.

If all these measures fail, and if as expected, the Sandinistas win the election, the threat of direct military intervention by the US army has been reinforced by the invasion of Panama at the end of December, ironically called 'Operation Just Cause'.

"OPERATION JUST CAUSE"

The more unsavoury activities of General Noriega should not obscure the fact that 'Operation Just Cause' was a direct violation of the sovereignty of another state. It has been condemned by Central and Latin American states, even those generally close to the US. It is, of course, the most recent event in a long tradition of interference in what the US has arrogantly considered to be its "backyard". Even the 'Financial Times', not the most radical journal, commented:



campaign against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Despite the many allegations against him, Noriega had been rehired by the CIA in 1981; according to various sources, Noriega's men helped resupply the Contras and at least once collaborated with US-supported covert actions in Nicaragua."

These latter operations included planting bombs in Managua, capital of Nicaragua.

Such a history does not of course justify the invasion. It only shows its hypocrisy. The invasion apparently won popular support within the US but in Central and Latin America, it can only intensify the opposition to US imperialism throughout the region.

EL SALVADOR

February will also see important developments in El Salvador. The Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) has set a deadline for President Cristiani to meet for serious negotiations, with the UN acting as mediator. The FMLN defeated the government's strategy of confining the liberation forces to rural areas by its spectacular offensive in November of last year. They have shown that they have the military capability and popular support to threaten the government and are not afraid to use this strength if negotiations are not forthcoming.

Throughout the region, popular forces are growing in strength. US intervention cannot in the long-term hold back these forces. Whether the US tries, in the short-term, to impose its will by direct military intervention will be limited by internal opposition within the US and international protest.

NO AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA!

"The just cause of protecting US interests and allies has been used as a justification with surprising frequency in the past 35 years to explain overt and covert intervention in the region - the overthrow of the reformist Arbenz Government in Guatemala in 1954; the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion against Fidel Castro; the despatch of troops in 1965 to the Dominican Republic; intervention in Central America from 1980 to help the Contra rebels; and the 1983 invasion of Grenada."

The strategic importance of Panama to the US still lies mainly with control of the Panama Canal. In 1977, a treaty was signed between Jimmy Carter and the Panamanian ruler, Omar Torrijos, that the canal would be returned to the full control of Panama by the end of 1999. There has long been popular opposition within Panama to continued US control of the canal.

LINKS WITH THE CIA

The invasion of Panama by the US was thinly justified by legal niceties. The opposition leader, Mr Guillermo Endarra, was sworn in as President one hour before the military operation began. But the main emphasis in US propaganda has been over Noriega's involvement in the drug trade. Ironically, Noriega's power rested on his long history as a CIA agent, with personal links with Bush, in his role as head of the CIA, going back to 1976, when Noriega was Panama's intelligence chief.

According to 'Newsweek': "(The 1983) meeting took place against the backdrop of the Reagan administration's covert

FREEDOM FOR IRELAND

DIRTY TRICKS WAR

While the British government continues to hail the newly-won freedom and democracy of the people of Eastern Europe, its ideologists promote the idea of the victory of western liberalism over other forms of organising society, in particular over socialism.

In the last issue of 'Class Struggle', we quoted Gerry Adams, exposing the hypocrisy of the British establishment on this, by recalling its numerous violations of human rights in the North of Ireland.

Recent events only confirm this analysis. Imperialism is happy to use the facade of liberal democracy as long as its power is not challenged. When a strong, anti-imperialist opposition becomes a real threat to its power, it uses any method at hand, however violent or undemocratic, to cling onto power.

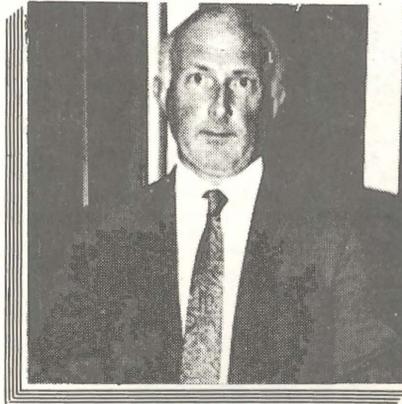
SHOOT-TO-KILL

The presence of the army and other allied security forces is still the reality of the situation in the North of Ireland. In 1987, there was a total security force of over 32,500, of whom over 13,000 were army. The presence of the SAS, undercover and plain-clothes squads has long been known and was highlighted by the murder in Gibraltar of the three unarmed Volunteers. It is clear that the January shootings of three men in Belfast were carried out by a similar squad, even if the full reasons are not clear.

The shoot-to-kill policy, this time by the RUC, was at the centre of the scandal surrounding the sacking of John Stalker from the investigation he was carrying out into the RUC. This question surfaced again recently when Stalker's friend, Kevin Taylor, had all charges brought against him dismissed by a judge. It is widely believed that the charges against Taylor had been cooked up, in order to incriminate Stalker.

THE DIRTY TRICKS WAR

The publicity surrounding the inquiry into the Colin Wallace affair has focused on his allegations concerning the activities of MI5 and the army aimed at undermining Westminster politicians. But



it is important to understand the key role that Wallace played in the psychological war going on to discredit the IRA and to pin the blame for undercover army or loyalist bombs and attacks onto the Republican Movement. One journalist explained:

"Northern Ireland, moreover, was having something of the effect on the British army that the Algerian war 20 years earlier had on the French. It made the more thoughtful officers rethink the techniques to be used against urban guerrillas. Officers such as Brigadier Frank Kitson... and Major-General Clutterbuck had been pressing the case for abandoning conventional intelligence and adopting a technique Kitson called 'low-intensity warfare'."

Wallace himself has alleged that "During the first six months of 1975, 35 Roman Catholics were assassinated in Ulster. The majority of these were killed by members of the security forces or loyalist paramilitary groups... working as agents of the security services and supplied with weapons by the security services."

It is no accident that such undercover activities and the power of the intelligence units extended beyond the confines of the North of Ireland and had their effects on British mainland politics. There has always been a close connection, at many levels, between the struggle in Ireland and in Britain. Whether the politicians in power at the time, whether Labour or Tory, knew what was going on, either way they are exposed. Either they knew and have lied. Or they did not know and have to admit where the real power lies. No wonder that secrecy is the order of the day!

COLIN WALLACE

The government announced last month that an enquiry was to be set up to investigate the circumstances of the dismissal of ex-Army Information Officer, Colin Wallace. The inquiry, limited to the circumstances of his sacking, will be investigated by Mr David Calcutt QC, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Wallace has long alleged to have evidence of the 'dirty tricks' activities organised by the army and security services aimed at discrediting the Republican Movement in the early 1970's. He has also said that there was a covert project, code named 'Clockwork Orange', part of MI5 moves to destabilise the then Labour government.

One of Mrs Thatcher's closest political advisers before his assassination, Airey Neave, is said to have asked Wallace in 1976, to up-date a forged document 'Ulster - A State of Subversion', which smeared Labour.

Wallace became disillusioned with such activity after discovering evidence that the security service were involved in a cover-up of homosexual abuse at the Kincora boys' home in East Belfast. He complained and was then encouraged to resign after being accused of leaking documents to journalists. As an army (dis)information officer in Northern Ireland, such unattributable activities were part of his job.

Now, in an attempt to bury the issue, the government concedes that two documents have been uncovered dating from 1975 relating to a proposed project named 'Clockwork Orange'. However, in an attempt to cover-up the extent of the dirty tricks campaign, a Commons written statement, issued on January 30th, limits the activity to a smear campaign against "the organisation and activity of the Provisional IRA". It insists that no evidence had been found to substantiate Wallace's testimony that it extended beyond the IRA.

Wallace's testimony is supported by Peter Wright, ex-MI5 author of 'Spycatcher' and spelt out in more detail in Paul Foot's book, 'Who Framed Colin Wallace?' Published last year. This book investigates the framing of Colin Wallace for murder in 1981. He was released in 1986 after serving six years to claims to being 'fixed' by the security services. The government claims that there is no evidence of a miscarriage of justice, and the inquiry will not be considering the wider context of Wallace leaving the British army, let alone the job that he did while in the army

British Death Squad

Three unarmed raiders of a bookmaker's shop on the corner of Falls Road and Whiterock Road in Belfast, were shot dead by plainclothes soldiers on Saturday, January 13th.

The official story of undercover soldiers happening upon an armed robbery is a tissue of lies. Accounts from eyewitnesses and from the gang member who escaped show that this was a well-planned and ruthlessly executed "wipe-out" operation.

The soldiers stated that they intervened when they saw hooded and armed men. In fact, the raiders were wearing balaclavas which were not pulled down over their faces, and they were carrying imitation weapons which were concealed by their sides.



"minimum use of force"

ASSASSINATIONS

The first man to be shot was John McNeill, who was totally unarmed. He was the driver of a stolen car parked outside the bookie's as a getaway vehicle. An armed man pulled open the door and shot McNeill as he sat in the car.

Two of the three raiders, Eddie Hale and Peter Thompson, rushed out of the bookie's when they heard the shots, and were both shot repeatedly by the two men with machine guns and pistols.

The third raider threw away his balaclava and imitation weapon and lay down on the floor of the bookie's along

with the other customers. He was able to escape in the subsequent confusion.

Associates of the victims have talked to Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein MP, about the background to the incident:

It goes back to December 9th, when two youths stole a car which they later burned out. While driving around in this car, they stole two sports bags from the back seat of another car. One of the bags contained a machine gun and a pistol of the type used by the army. They destroyed the other contents of the bags, which included a map of Belfast with military co-ordinates, tinned food, clothes, a sleeping bag, a green cannister and a paper with a coded message on it. They sold the weapons for £200. Those who bought them put them in a garage in Lurgan which was full of stolen goods. The garage was raided, the owner and contact arrested. The contact's associates specialise in replica weapons. The three killed on 13th January were members of this gang. They picked up the replica weapons in the cemetery before going into the bookie's.

The gang suspected that they were under surveillance after the garage was raided. It seems that the full story is not yet known. However, what is clear is that the killings were deliberately planned.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The most important question which remains unanswered is: Why did the British army choose to kill these three men at this particular time?

According to the British, the army operates on the basis of "minimum use of force" and according to the following rules: (a) A challenge must be given before opening fire (b) You may only open fire on a person if he is committing or about to commit an act likely to endanger life, and there is no other way to prevent the danger.

Clearly, these rules were not followed in this case. That they are disregarded as a matter of policy is beyond dispute. In total, crown forces have killed over 200 people in such disputed circumstances.

(Information from 'An Phoblacht/Republican News')

BLOODY SUNDAY

18th COMMEMORATION MARCH & RALLY

On January 27th, three thousand marched in London in commemoration of 'Bloody Sunday' when British paratroopers opened fire on Irish civil rights marchers, killing thirteen, in 1972.

Many of those on the march were young Irish people, driven to England in search of jobs. Protesters stamped their feet to the accompaniment of two Republican bands from Scotland and waved tricolour flags amidst the constant drizzle. The demand of 'What Do We Want?' was met by the refrain 'Troops Out' all along the route from Hyde Park to Kilburn.

BRITISH LEFT AND THE WITHDRAWAL MOVEMENT

Bringing up the rear of the march were left groups. Two things were noticeable about these forces. They lacked the vibrancy of the leading Irish section and for the first time for many years, there were Socialist Workers Party (SWP) banners on this annual commemoration.

As 'Class Struggle' has discussed before, the withdrawal movement is in a sorry state wracked by division and sectarianism. That was illustrated by the absence of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) led Irish Freedom Movement (IFM) from the march. The IFM virtually boycotted the mobilisation for 'Bloody Sunday' preferring to organise its own evening rally in London at the end of January. Such shameful sectarianism does not help the cause of Irish freedom.

The commemoration passed almost without incident. Three thousand marchers were "confronted" by the surreal vision of a dozen fascists from the Flag faction of the National Front. They were already dressed in bandages, perhaps in preparation for what would have happened to them without the heavy presence of the Metropolitan police.

The lack of spectacular arrests or fights meant that the papers did not bother to report or comment on this important annual protest against the continued British occupation of Ireland.

WHERE WE STAND

As Marxist-Leninists in Britain, our view is that our main enemy is British imperialism. We see our main task as being to work for the overthrow of British imperialism, in order to bring about a socialist revolution.

On a world scale, we recognise that British imperialism is no longer a major world power, as it was in the nineteenth century. The two main enemies of the peoples of the world are the two superpowers, the USA and the Soviet Union.

The USA has long been an imperialist power. But it gained its position of world strength in the course of the Second World War, and since that time, has been the leading power of Western imperialism. Its economic and political power has depended on the exploitation of the Third World - Asia, Africa and Latin America - as well as on that of the working class and oppressed peoples within the US. It has used every means within its power to maintain this position around the world: economic and political pressure, both direct and indirect; open military aggression and more covert counter-insurgency war. The world-wide operations of the CIA are notorious. No other single western imperialist power has been able to compete with the US.

Out of the First World War was born the world's first socialist state, in the form of the Soviet Union. Following the Second World War, the Chinese people - a quarter of the world's people - won their liberation and set up the People's Republic of China.

At the same time, people in the Third World and even in Europe, were challenging the imperialist system. US policy after the Second World War was to enlist the support of the other western powers, to hold back the spread of socialism and put down popular movements around the world.

This led to the boycott of the People's Republic of China; the war against Korea and

its eventual division into North and South with American occupation of the South, and many other examples of American aggression and interference. The US was finally checked by the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people, who at great cost to themselves, proved that a popular liberation struggle could defeat the world superpower.

In the Soviet Union, socialism suffered a great defeat and instead of being a force for liberation, the Soviet Union turned into its opposite, and became a new kind of imperialist power, with the strength to challenge US power all over the world. The most blatant examples of Soviet aggression were its invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and of Afghanistan in 1979. But like the US, it used many forms of interference and intervention, both direct and indirect to aid its exploitation of the Third World and of Eastern Europe.

The two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union, both competed for world domination and collaborated to suppress revolution and independent movements. Their determination to hold onto power has caused hundreds of wars in the Third World and brought the threat of world war to all people.

In the 1980's, there have been many changes: Europe and Japan have risen as great economic powers challenging the world domination of the superpowers; 1989 saw rapid change in Eastern Europe and there have been changes in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev.

Both the superpowers face an economic crisis within their own countries and are looking for ways out. The Soviet Union is looking to the West to help it modernise its economy. However, none of these changes have altered the fundamental situation of the two superpowers. Although there may be a period of reduced competition between the two, this will only lead to greater competition, as they compete to redivide the world, particularly the Third World, in the 1990's.

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