

CLASS STRUGGLE



Political Paper of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain

Vol. 8 No. 9

October 1984

20p

Azania (South Africa)

People's Revolt

In August and September, one struggle after another rocked the South African racist regime.

August was the month when "Coloureds" and Asians were meant to vote for representatives in "their own" chambers of Parliament, as part of the strategy of racist Premier, Pieter Botha, of giving apartheid a face lift and at the same time, winning a section of these communities to collaboration with the white colonial regime against the black, African 73% of the population.

As it turned out, the exercise was a flop. Only 18% of the eligible "Coloured" voters and 20% of the registered Asian voters went to the polls. Boycotters held protest rallies and stoned police who tried to break them up. Some carried placards saying: "One Azania, One Nation", showing that they identified themselves with the African majority and Pan-Africanist views. The result was that the MP's elected had derisory votes, and cannot claim that they have a mandate to speak for the "Coloured" or Asian people of Azania. The South African colonial regime is paying them well for their treachery - each MP will receive a salary of £22,000 a year, plus £8,000 car allowance and other benefits, including 36 free trips a year on South African Airways.

KOORNHOF SEEN OFF

At the end of August, protests against the regime's elections merged with protests by school students against the colonial education system, and with risings against rent increases. On August 24th, a day of widespread action by school students outgoing Minister for Cooperation and Development, Pieter Koornhof, was scheduled to open a hall in Imbali, Natal, but was unable to attend because of the massive demonstration which awaited him.

On September 3rd, police killed at least 10 people when firing on demonstrators. Armoured cars were deployed in some areas to supplement a police force already equipped with guns and whips. One of the main centres of protest was Sharpeville, where, nearly 25 years ago police murdered 68 peaceful demonstrators protesting against the racist pass laws.

The main focus of this protest was rent increases, which were subsequently suspended.

Two weeks later, 40,000 black gold miners went on strike at eight mines. Seven of the mines were owned by the Anglo-American Corporation; there, the strike was legal, because the union involved, the National Union of Mineworkers, was recognised by the company. The AAC miners won a pay rise of 16% (although in real terms, it is under 10%) and returned to work, but other mines (where there was no legal union) had been affected in the meantime. Mine owners called in the police who fired tear-gas, rubber bullets and birdshot to break picket lines.

This recent wave of struggles cannot only be seen as a reaction to the policies of the racist state and to a worsening economic situation, but owes a lot to the increasing effectiveness of the organisations of the oppressed people of Azania, especially black people.

TWO TRENDS

There are two main trends in the opposition to the current set-up in Azania.

One is represented by the United Democratic Front, which is basically in agreement with the views of the banned African National Congress. The UDF groups political organisations, trade unions and other bodies opposed to the South African regime's policy of 'apartheid' ('separate development'). It wants equal rights for all people living in South Africa, and includes within its ranks people from the different nationalities living there.

The other trend is that which embraces Black Consciousness and Pan-Africanism. It is mainly represented by the Azanian Peoples Organisation and the National Forum. It was strongly influenced in its evolution by the illegal Pan Africanist Congress and Black Consciousness Movement (although some of the UDF's affiliates are also strongly influenced by this ideology). It believes that the black people of Azania, as the most savagely oppressed, must organise themselves before considering any alliance or co-operation with other groups, as they believe that in general those who have enjoyed some of the fruits of the colonial regime cannot wholeheartedly commit themselves to the full emancipation of black people and to the destruction of the colonial order. They deny the accusation that this is "black racism", and say that a free Azania will not be "multi-racial", but one where citizens will only be judged by their personal qualities, not national origins, and any can be citizens who give their first loyalty to Azania and Africa.

The National Forum has political and black trade union affiliates.

Both trends enjoy widespread and increasing support. The South African authorities have reacted to rising opposition in the past by ferocious repression, and the banning of revolutionary and progressive organisations, but the latest wave of struggle in Azania only confirms that repression breeds resistance, and that the people of Azania will go on rising up until they destroy the South African colonial system once and for all.



Children demonstrate in Soweto (1976)

Photo: Peter Magubane

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Are Labour Councils Anti-Racist ?



LONDON AGAINST RACISM

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A contingent of miners organised a float and stalls at Notting Hill Carnival, held in London at the end of August. Their presence at this major Afro-Caribbean event was not just an indication of good 'race relations' but represented a concrete aspect of the solidarity between different sections of the people. One miner spoke of similar experiences of the state: "Many people told us of the riots in Brixton and Notting Hill, frustration of high unemployment and constant daily harassment and intimidation and watching their civil liberties slowly disappearing. It sounded all too familiar."

Support Just Demands

Oppose Chauvinism

35 years ago, on October 1st, 1949, Mao Zedong, Chairman of the Communist Party of China (CPC), stood at Tiananmen Square, Beijing (Peking), and proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The Liberation of China was a major turning point in history. A quarter of the world's population was now living in a country which had not only freed itself from direct imperialist rule, but was setting out on a path that would build an independent, socialist economy.

In order to make a revolution the CPC had to struggle to apply Marxism-Leninism to the actual conditions in China. It had to develop a strategy and it had to learn tactics to push that strategy forward. At various times the CPC changed its line. Sometimes it was because the CPC was looking for a new way to resolve problems. Sometimes it was because conditions had changed. And sometimes it was because its experience showed it had made mistakes and it needed to correct them.

The CPC was not completely right at all times. It could not be. But it proved to be a party capable of learning and that was the reason why it could lead the people of China to victory over imperialism and feudalism.

The struggle to build China as an independent socialist country has not proceeded along a straight path. There have been twists and turns, and there have been setbacks and gains too. At all stages there have been vigorous debates and at times sharp confrontations within the Communist Party of China.

DEFENDING MARXISM-LENINISM

In the late 1950's and early 1960's, there was a split in the International Communist Movement. The Soviet Union had gone revisionist. It attacked the revolutionary essence of Marxism-Leninism, attacked those making revolution around the world, and internally socialism was destroyed and the rule of a bureaucratic state capitalist class established. The CPC along with some other parties, particularly a number in the Third World, stood up to the onslaught and fiercely defended Marxism-Leninism. Quite rightly genuine communists around the world stood by the CPC. Then in 1966 the Cultural Revolution was launched in China. Essentially it was the method which the CPC believed at the time would prevent the rot of revisionism in China.

CULTURAL REVOLUTION

There was much that communists outside China found inspiring about what they heard and saw of the Cultural Revolution; indeed, in the West, there were new recruits who came to communism precisely because of their admiration for China at that time. There was a strong tendency to view everything China did as marvellous, and an attitude that China was always right. In some organisations anyone who expressed doubts about a particular policy was regarded as some sort of heretical counter-revolutionary. In the West, a dogmatic adherence to China's policies went side by side with a failure to develop an independent analysis of what had to be done to make revolution here.

Then came a shock. The CPC changed its policy after 1976 and especially 1978. Now it criticised the whole basis of the Cultural Revolution and what happened. Some who had thought China could do no wrong changed their own line over-

night. They condemned the Cultural Revolution totally and said that China was NOW Completely correct. Others stood by their previous total support for the Cultural Revolution and claimed that China was now TOTALLY wrong. Others took the more painful but correct way of trying to look at their own thinking.

LIVING SOCIALISM

The reality is that China was never perfect. Neither is it now. It has successes and failures. Some of its policies may be wrong. There will be continued debate and struggle in China over the best way forward. The issues for us are "Is China a Socialist country?", and "Does China support the struggle against imperialism?" and lastly, "While still standing in solidarity with China, are we going to use our own heads to work out a way forward for our revolution?"

In China the people are involved in decision-making in a number of ways. There are discussions and elections both at the workplace and in the community. The standards of living in China have risen dramatically since 1949, both in the countryside and in the towns and cities. China has systematic policies to support the development of its national minorities. The prevention of disease and the spread of health care have both been astonishingly successful. China systematically supports the demands of the Third World against the imperialists, and against superpower domination. Despite its growing strength China does not seek to dominate other nations. The list could be considerably extended, but should be sufficient to demonstrate China's socialist character.

This is the basis for our support for China. It is not possible to put forward such a list in support of the USSR which is again a prison house of nations. We do not seek to defend every policy of China. Neither do we believe in condemning China because some may disagree with particular policies. On the contrary, we will totally oppose the professional denigrators who propound an abstract political "purity" that is irrelevant and totally unconnected with any ability to build a movement capable of uniting with actually existing struggles in the world and at home, and whose purity isolates them from reality so much that it will never be put to the test in making a real revolution.

We have learned to think for ourselves. It has raised many problems, but it is the only way forward. We can learn much from others, but only if we also learn how to apply the lessons creatively to our own situation. That is the real lesson.



Dear Editor,

As you rightly pointed out in your last issue, the Olympics did reflect progress being made by the Third World. The article could have, however, also pointed out that the American and British teams would not have done so well if it had not been for those countries' central role in developing slavery. Without large numbers of national minority men and women in the teams they would have won far fewer medals.

A Birmingham reader.

As communists, we give our full support to the present struggle of the miners against pit closures and for jobs. Such support should include material and practical support to the extent that we are able.

We give this support because the miners' struggle is a just struggle for the interests of working class people which hits hard at British imperialism. If there was any doubt about this, the extent to which the state has mobilised to repress the strike has made it clear how important it is to them.

AGAINST PIT CLOSURES

The basic demand fought for by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) with mass support from a majority of miners has been to stop the pit closures, often in the form of refusing to accept the necessity of closing what the National Coal Board (NCB) and government term 'uneconomic pits'.

The motive force of British imperialism is its drive for higher profits. In challenging the need to close down the less profitable pits, the miners are challenging the logic of British imperialism head-on. We should support the basic demand to stop the pit closures even though many of the arguments put forward for this are based on a social-democratic 'alternative' policy of what is a different strategy for British imperialism.

Although primarily an economic fight for jobs, the strike has always had broader aspects. Defence of jobs has been seen in terms of defence of whole communities, and the direct involvement of women and families in the struggle has made this clear. At any rate, in this society there can be no absolute separation of economics from politics. Although it is often denied, the struggle is also a political one.

MONETARISM

It is important for us to point to some differences in ideas surrounding this strike.

In the first place, the policies of the present government are often portrayed as those of "madness" and "intent on destroying industry". Some people have portrayed the NCB's plan to close less profitable pits as preparation for the privatisation of the coal industry. They contrast this with nationalisation which is said to be "common ownership for the common good."

Dear Editor,

The article on Berlinguer which appeared in the July-August issue was very informative but had a basic weakness. It is correct to put all the aspects of an issue and draw out the contradictory aspects of his role but as communists we have to take sides. This is particularly true in imperialist countries where various forms of social democracy have a strong influence amongst workers. The Labour Party, various Trotskyist organisations, CPGB, New Communist Party etc., have all devalued and confused people about the true nature of communism and socialism. Berlinguer may well have played a partially positive role internationally. But the main point that has to be made is that his party has misled the Italian working class and that his predominant role was in reality counter-revolutionary.

A Birmingham reader.



For British imperialism, the policies of the present government represent a particular strategy which is not "mad" but has a monetarist logic. According to this strategy, British industry has to be restructured to be more profitable. It depends on using new technology to modernise parts of industry and imports (e.g. coal and steel) where it is not so profitable for these to be produced here.

LABOUR STRATEGY

The strategy of nationalisation and state subsidies for industry is often in contradiction with present policies. But we should be clear that these alternative policies (favoured by the Labour Party) are themselves only alternatives for British imperialism. Labour's actual record is at any rate one of increasing numbers of pit closures. Relatively favourable terms, won by the miners in 1974 were the result of the miners' own hard struggle and more importantly, of the struggles of the peoples of the Third World, in this case OPEC's struggle for higher oil prices. Their struggle created the favourable conditions in which the NUM carried out its struggle at that time.

COMMUNIST STAND

This brings us to the essential point: as communists we do not simply stand with the working class in our own countries. We stand with them and with the oppressed peoples and nations of the Third World. We do not for example support struggles of the National Front or British Movement even though their membership may be predominantly working class. We do not support struggles that are waged round general slogans of import controls. The working class has itself benefited from the exploitation of the peoples of the Third World and where their struggles are in opposition to the oppressed peoples, or national minorities within this country, we stand with the people of the Third World.

DEFENCE OF JOBS

In this society it is easy to slip from 'defence of jobs' and 'defence of communities' to the 'defence of British industry' and calls for import controls. Many of the ideas surrounding the miners' strike do exactly this. We should not confuse policies that we might call for and implement under a true socialist state in this country with those that are correct now. For example, it would be essential for a socialist England to disengage from the world imperialist system. It would have to establish new and equal trading relations with other countries, on the basis of mutual benefit and self-reliance of different countries. To make generalised calls for the defence of British industry now and for import controls now is to line up with the kind of thinking that calls for jobs for white workers and the repatriation of black people.

This is quite different from supporting the call to break trading links with South Africa, from where Britain imports coal, because the liberation movements there have called for it. Uranium, an essential raw material in the nuclear industry is illegally mined in Namibia and we support the demand of SWAPO to break this trade.

General calls for import controls harm the interests of the peoples of the Third World whose new industries are hard hit by protectionist measures. For example, import controls in the textile industry hit the developing textile industries of the Third World and should not be supported.

DEEP-ROOTED CHAUVINISM

We could once again aim our criticisms at the TUC who at its recent congress renewed calls for import controls.

The TUC however, has often been exposed for what it is and many people fear that it will, for example, sabotage rather than support the miners' struggle. The problem is more deep-rooted than the misleadership of the TUC because the whole of our society has been built on centuries of exploitation of the Third World's peoples and resources. The resulting racist and chauvinist ideas run deep too, and are found in the working class alongside economic militancy. While giving support to an objectively just struggle, we have to break with the politics of imperialism, whether in the form of Tory, Labour or a hundred 'left' varieties.



On 7th July, 60 Arab people living in London took part in an Arab Delegation of Solidarity with the miners. They visited Deal and Mill Hill in the Kent coalfield and met miners and their families. The Arab delegation took with it £1,331 they had collected for them.

A miners' representative who spoke to the delegation drew a parallel between the British media's distortions about the current strike and its misrepresentation of the Palestinian struggle against Zionism and imperialism. Replying, an Arab speaker said that there were Muslims, Jews, Christians and atheists in the Arab delegation, and they were all there to express their solidarity. The delegation presented the miners with a plaque inscribed in Arabic and English with the words: "The Struggle of the Oppressed Has No National Boundaries."

Support the Miners

The miners have now been on strike for seven months in their fight for jobs. The state has mobilised vast resources to defeat them. The organisation of the police, the iron fist, has reached a new level of sophistication, with many lessons learned in the six counties of the north of Ireland and in black national minority communities being applied for the first time on such a scale in an industrial dispute. The cost of burning oil instead of coal in power stations is already estimated at £45 million a week before the winter has started.

The government and the National Coal Board (NCB) have chosen not to use the new 'Employment' laws against the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Instead they have waged a powerful propaganda campaign against the strike, aimed partly at the minority of miners still working and partly to win the 'hearts and minds' of people in general. There have, however, been numerous small cases coming before the courts, apparently brought by individual miners aimed at playing on, and increasing the existing contradictions among the miners.

REPRESSION

Already over six thousand have been arrested and the vast majority of these restricted by bail conditions, sometimes amounting to house arrest, to stop them picketing or taking part in other activities in support of the strike. Three miners have died on the picket lines. Some have been imprisoned either on remand, or for the "crime" of active strike work of one kind or another. Whole villages have been occupied, houses broken into and communities terrorised by the police. Thousands have been injured by police.

RESISTANCE

The vast majority of the strikers have not be intimidated into backing down. On the contrary, their resolve to continue and develop the fight has been strengthened by the repression. The struggle has been characterised by rank and file mass action which has broken out of the more familiar patterns of trade union action. Miners have reacted to police attacks on the picket lines with vigorous self-defence and have, in some cases, gone on the offensive. Barricades have been built and NCB property and that of scab haulage firms, destroyed. One firm that was building armoured buses for transporting men through picket lines, had all their vehicles burnt out.

Miners have driven in convoys, three abreast, down motorways, holding up traffic for miles. On one occasion hundreds of miners just 'happened' to find that the wheels of their cars needed changing just when they were all crossing the Humber bridge, a major traffic route.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The miners can rely on the support of their own communities with small businesses and pubs often giving support because their livelihood too is threatened by pit closures. After the savage police attacks on miners at Orgreave, with dogs and horses, and reacting to the heavy police presence in their village, youth at Maltby in Yorkshire stormed the local police station and attacked it with bricks and other missiles.

WOMENS SUPPORT GROUPS

Another key aspect of mass support and action has been the role of the women in the mining communities. Never before in an industrial dispute have women organised separately on such a scale. Their role is crucial as striking miners receive no money from the state and many families face considerable hardship.

Outside mining areas support is essential, both politically and in the form of food and money collections. Much has already been collected often by grassroots activity and street collections. Black people and the nationalist people of Ireland have been notably strong in their support. But support has come from many sections of the working class and progressive people, as well as internationally.

As winter approaches and as the government continues to take a hard line, real solidarity must increase. We cannot rely on the fine-sounding speeches made at the recent Congress of the TUC. Any support from that source will, of course be welcome. But the TUC has a record of fine words and little action and has long forgotten how to mobilise its members, even if it wanted to. The only firm basis for solidarity with the miners is mass support, built from the grassroots upwards. Such real solidarity will not only strengthen the miners in their long and bitter struggle, but will lay the basis to build a revolutionary working class movement for the future, a movement based not only on class solidarity but on a firm alliance with the oppressed peoples.



Coal and Oil

In 1972 the miners staged a major national strike. Two years later, in 1974, they struck again. As a result the Heath government fell. The miners went on to win a big pay rise and to gain concessions by the National Coal Board on keeping pits open.

Today the miners have already been on strike for seven months. Despite the hard struggle of the strikers and their communities, victory is still a long way off.

In supporting the battle for jobs, it is essential to grasp the reasons why the miners have a more difficult uphill struggle today. This short article cannot deal with all of the reasons, but seeks to begin to analyse some of the economic causes underlying the present situation.

THE ENERGY NEEDS OF IMPERIALISM

An industrialised nation needs energy in vast quantities, firstly to maintain manufacturing production and transport, and secondly for domestic use. Imperialism seeks to gain cheap reliable sources of energy, by whatever means.

Britain today is an imperialist country in crisis. Manufacturing industry has continuously declined since 1975. By 1979 metal goods and mechanical engineering production had fallen by 5%. By 1981 it was nearly a quarter down. The vehicle and ship-building industries have followed a similar pattern, roughly 5% down by 1979, nearly 20% by 1981. Textile production also

fell by a quarter in this period. Chemicals and products made from coal and petroleum rose by 17% between 1975 and 1979, but dropped 12% by 1981.

Inevitably this has affected total energy consumption. Whilst this was equivalent to 324.8 million tons of coal in 1975, and rose to 355.7 million tons in 1979, it fell rapidly to 317.3 million tons in 1981.

SOURCES OF ENERGY

Since the 1974 miners' strike, there have been significant changes in energy sources. The importance of coal has fallen proportionally in relation to other energy sources, particularly North Sea gas.

But it is also important to recognise the long-term relationship between production and prices of coal and oil, for long the main sources of energy in Britain. The major oil sources for Britain historically were in the Third World. From the end of the Second World War to the end of the 1960's, industrial production in the imperialist countries rose eight times, and oil production rose faster to meet the consequent demand. But the "post-war boom" depended on the imperialist countries' ability to exploit the Third World, not least the oil-producing countries. Although their revenues went up because of huge production increases, in real terms of what the income from one barrel of oil could buy, prices fell.

It was in response to a price cut by the oil companies that

Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed in 1959. OPEC scored a major success in 1973-74, when it forced a major price rise. However, despite the outcry in the west, this only reduced their exploitation - nothing more. The rise simply restored oil prices, in real terms, to their 1953 prices.

For the imperialist countries, this meant trouble: endless streams of cheap Third World oil could not be counted on; and for Britain, North Sea oil and gas were only just coming into production, as it had hardly been worth developing while Third World oil was cheap. Coal suddenly became "economic".

It was at this ideal moment that the miners struck in 1974.

THE SITUATION CHANGES

But things changed. By 1979, off-shore oil in the North Sea was bringing in over 77 million tons of coal equivalent. By 1981 the figure was 90 million tons. Natural gas rose to 72 million tons. Throughout this period the miners have come under increasing pressure to become "more economic". The Labour government, with Benn in charge of energy, forced the miners to accept a productivity deal, which meant that miners at the more "economic" pits got more money. Now there is increasing pressure.

The struggle now takes place at a time when the miners are in very difficult circumstances. Inevitably it is a long, hard struggle.

WORKERS' NOTEBOOK

The miners' strike has found widespread solidarity internationally. The independent trade unions in El Salvador recently declared their support. In Australia, miners, dockers and seamen have embargoed the movement of coal to Britain, and many unions have organised collections to support the strikers. It has been a similar story in New Zealand, where the Seamen's Union voted 5,000 dollars from national funds to back the miners in Britain.

Collections have also been made by French and Belgian miners. The Party of Labour of Belgium is organising solidarity visits to British mining areas and it has already raised considerable sums to support the strike. A miners' delegation to Ireland this summer received a warm welcome from trade unionists in the twenty six counties.

NO-GO AREAS IN YORKSHIRE IN 1893

In 1893, coal owners demanded a 25% cut in miners' pay and the Miners Federation (predecessor of the NUM) and the Yorkshire area in particular, were determined to fight this cut. One miner said: "We in Yorkshire believe in getting as much as we can and in keeping our powder dry... we are fighters." 253 pits were locked out and the struggle that followed was fierce. One historian described how: "The West Riding became an area in which an emergency situation prevailed and which the Yorkshire police force found themselves unable to control."

The greatest clashes occurred when great numbers of miners tried to prevent some miners going to work or coal being moved from the pits. Colliery offices were wrecked, and wagons overturned and burnt. Some militants even took to holding up travellers and demanding toll money before they would let them pass. These events culminated in troops being sent to Featherstone and a local JP ordered them to open fire. Two men, James Gibbs and James Duggan were killed and many others wounded.

50 YEARS SINCE GRESFORD DISASTER

You've heard of the Gresford disaster,
The terrible price that was paid;
Two hundred and sixty two colliers were lost
And three of the rescue brigade.

Down there in the dark they are lying,
They died for nine shillings a day.
They have worked out their shift and now they must lie
In darkness until Judgement Day.

The explosion in the Dennis section of Gresford Colliery, Wrexham, Wales, that killed 265 men and boys, happened 50 years ago on September 22nd. The inquiry that followed exposed appalling work conditions and total lack of safety precautions for men and boys working in dangerous conditions. Mine-owners, whether private or state, have never put money into safety, except where the miners and their union have struggled hard for it.

WOMENS SUPPORT GROUPS

At a meeting in Leeds in September, Maureen Douglas, a miner's wife from Doncaster, described the many different kinds of activities that women from mining communities have organised or taken part in, particularly through the women's support groups. She also said that some women were beginning to identify with people in Ireland and South Africa who face violent repression from the forces of the state. "What is certain," she said, "is that objectively the women are challenging the state, and that experience, whether recognised or not, will not be forgotten."

Margaretta D'Arcy, who also addressed the meeting spoke of support within Ireland for the miners' struggle. She also said: "You must ensure that the war in Ireland, which has been going on for 15 years now, is brought from the periphery into being a central issue."



The sinking of the cargo of uranium hexachloride in the English Channel, last month, stirred up all sorts of muddy waters. The amount of radioactive materials being transported all over the world, backwards and forwards; the lack of international control and safety provisions; and the close relationship between nuclear weapons and nuclear energy have all been brought up. However by far the most foul of all the muddy pools is the relationship between this world trade and profiteering in uranium and the situation in Namibia, where most of the world's high-grade uranium is mined.

The U.K. imports uranium oxide from Namibia and Canada, and British Nuclear Fuels processes these to form uranium hexachloride, a liquid gas. Namibia, at present illegally occupied by South African forces, is supposedly protected by the United Nations (UN). The UN Council for Namibia Decree No.1 prohibits the mining, exporting and distributing of any natural resources from Namibia. The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) has been recognised as "the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people" by the UN since 1973. But UN Security Council action against South Africa has been vetoed by France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Uranium is a very dirty business.

Whatever the media, the government and the NCB say, the 'back-to-work' movement in the Yorkshire pits is no mass movement. At Gascoine Wood, in the Selby coalfield, one man returned to work in August. 'Leeds Other Paper' has calculated the cost of getting this one man to work (past the pickets) at £210,000 over two days. By the end of August the police bill as at least half a million pounds. Hardly an "economic" proposition.

Police Attack

'Class Struggle' correspondent



Devastation of Nostell Priory after the police raid.

All photos from 'LEEDS OTHER PAPER'

Peace Convoy

Close on the heels of the 'Stop The City' protest (see July/August issue of 'Class Struggle'), comes yet another outstanding example of 'community policing' from West Yorkshire's finest. In an operation involving five hundred police officers, a total of one hundred and eighty four arrests were made and wanton destruction inflicted upon the homes of the travelling village known as the 'Convoy' or 'Peace People'. All of those arrested had been attending the Nostell Priory Music Festival which had taken place over the Bank Holiday weekend, 24-27 August. Although the event had been trouble-free, a scare campaign was built up by the Yorkshire Post and Evening Post whose reporters claimed to have witnessed the open sale of drugs, displays of offensive weapons, prostitution and theft. It was this which finally galvanised West Yorkshire Metropolitan police force into action. The chief inspector himself had been shown around the camp-site the day before so that he could see for himself that the media hysteria was completely unfounded. However, it seems that the opportunity was merely used to sus out the following day's policing.

IMPRISONED

All the men remaining on the site were arrested along with most of the women, many of whom were pregnant or had young children. Bundled into vans, they were taken to police stations all over West Yorkshire where they were crammed into cells up to twenty at a time. Neither food nor toilet facilities were available and both prescribed medicines and medical treatment for those injured in the operation were refused. Women were forcefully photographed and fingerprinted and care orders used on mothers as a threat to ensure co-operation and guilty pleas.

In the light of the minor charges brought against those arrested - 'suspicion of possession of drugs' and 'threatening behaviour' or 'obstruction' - the wild allegations from the press which prompted the police action seem somewhat over-sensationalised. Indeed the activities of the Convoy over the weekend contradict the scaremongering of the press. Far from the 'degeneracy' and 'criminal activities' alleged by the Yorkshire Post and Evening Post, the Convoy were responsible for security at the festival

EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW?

These grounds for the refusal of bail are significant in a number of closely connected respects. In a country where all are supposed to be equal before the law, it reveals the extreme inequalities and prejudices inscribed within the everyday practice of the law. Essentially the defendants were immediately punished - without ever being found guilty - for the lack of conformity of their lifestyle. This is quite telling upon a society which prides itself on its supposedly 'democratic' nature in which all differences are 'tolerated'. What it reveals yet again is the underlying trend towards the criminalisation of all national minorities, cultural sub-groups and sections of the working class. Moreover it reveals the truly repressive dimension of 'community policing' - in this case a travelling community - and the extremes to which the 'guardians' of a rapidly disintegrating society will go to reassert their norms of behaviour and control in the face of difference and diversity.

PRIVATE PROPERTY BEFORE PEOPLE

As a postscript, it should be noted that on 3 September, a High Court Judge granted Lord St. Oswald (life tenant of Nostell Priory which is owned by the National Trust) an immediate possession order over the camp-site against the women and children still stranded there. Lord St. Oswald claimed that the land was needed urgently, for farming purposes. An application for postponement of the order was denied by the judge who declared that he was not concerned with 'cases of individual hardship' - that suffered by the remaining members of the Convoy of course - but with Lord St. Oswald's legal right to the property. The cruel irony of the situation is that it was impossible for the homes to be removed as many of their owners were remanded in custody in Armley Prison, Leeds, until Friday September 7th, whilst others were immobile due to damage caused by the police. Ignoring the fact that an entire community, a travelling village has been scattered and many of its members left homeless and destitute on the edge of winter, the judge ruled that the owners of the property be granted the right of seizure and removal over remaining vehicles. Once more the interests of private property are placed before those of the people!

"No-one has complained about firearms, offensive weapons or prostitution."
"There was no evidence of lawlessness at the festival."
— Mr K. Hariwell, Assistant Chief Constable of West Yorkshire

One of the travelling homes wrecked during the attack.



Yorkshire Evening Post - the paper that gets people done.

POLICE ATTACK

On Wednesday 29 August, the Convoy was packing up to leave the camp-site when five hundred truncheon wielding police officers, many in full riot gear and backed up with police dogs, jogged onto the site in columns of sixty and seventy. Immediately they began beating people and proceeded to smash up remaining vehicles and equipment. The inventory of destruction included the paneling and glass of vehicles smashed and their doors torn off, plus wiring ripped out rendering vehicles undrivable, tents torn down, mattresses and bedding destroyed, household goods trampled on and broken, cookers, musical instruments and stereos completely ruined. According to one eye-witness: "What was worse was that nobody from the press was there to see what they were doing... it was the press - the Yorkshire Post - that started it off!"

on two nights, held a party in the main marquee for some four hundred people - without any trouble - and agreed with the organisers (White Bear Promotions) to clear all the rubbish left on the site. (Precisely what they were doing when the police arrived.) Indeed they had been invited back to the festival next year.

BAIL REFUSED

Despite this, and an incredible lack of any material evidence, the police went ahead with their prosecutions and bail was refused to over one hundred of those arrested on the grounds that, firstly, the identities of those involved could not be confirmed and, secondly, they were of no fixed address. This last has been fought upon many occasions by the Gypsy Council on the grounds that it constitutes undue harassment of an 'ethnic minority'.



Above: Ruined guitars flung among the debris after the raid. Instruments and stereos were popular targets for the police.

Hackney, LONDON ARE L ACTION BRINGS RESULTS

For four years, Angela Whitelock, a 18 year old black woman, has been confined to a wheelchair following a serious accident. She wants to get about and would like to study, but her accomodation makes this impossible.

For two years, she has lived in a flat which is totally unsuitable for her. It is difficult for her to move her wheelchair around the place, and the toilet has been damaged three times as a result of Angela being forced to try to manoeuvre her wheelchair in the confined space. She has repeatedly asked to be rehoused in accomodation which will allow her to lead an independent life without constant difficulties getting around.

Eventually, an action group was formed to press Hackney Council to rehouse Angela. When the Housing Services Committee met on September 10th, and considered Angela's housing position, it was picketed by 70 people.

Angela, her sister Gillian and Barbara Lisiki from the Action Group went in to put Angela's case to the councillors. In this situation, the members of the Housing Services Committee proved cooperative and the Chairman of the Committee promised that by October 8th, Angela would be rehoused, come what may.

LABOUR COUNCIL

Hackney Council has been Labour-controlled for a long time. As councils go, it is probably better than most: it withdrew cooperation from the police over the killing of Colin Roach in Stoke Newington police station in 1983; it has refused to accept rate-capping, and

it has allowed striking miners to use a Town Hall to organise miners' support work in London. But its slowness in rehousing Angela Whitelock shows its limitations. Whatever the personal wishes of the councillors, they operate within a bourgeois framework, both physical and ideological, which makes it difficult for them to respond to basic needs of people in Hackney. Their personal desire for progressive social change is bound to be frustrated time and time as they are sucked into operating a system which may be tinkered with, but not fundamentally transformed to serve the people.

Angela Whitelock is after all, only one of many tenants who have a frustrating time getting the council to meet their just requests and demands.



Support Nayan Cheta

We reprint below the full text of a leaflet produced in support of Nayan Cheta, a black teacher in a London school.

DAMAGING REFERENCE

As a qualified teacher of the deaf, Nayan has tried to find a job with deaf children, but has been prevented in this by a patronising reference by the Head.

RACIST, SEXIST, N.U.T. REP.

A male National Union of Teachers (NUT) rep has also treated her in a racist and sexist way by making insulting comments about her looks and traditional way of dress. One appalling incident witnessed by Nayan involved the NUT rep forcing two Muslim girls into a pigsty against their will when visiting a farm.

RACIST REMARKS

He has said: "You are an aggressive, belligerent young woman and I don't know whether this has something to do with your culture."

And: "It would help you to take some lessons in social etiquette so that you can learn to talk to English people."

MULTI-CULTURAL WORK

ayan's efforts at multi-cultural education have received little support and in some cases, have been thwarted by the Head. For example: As part of a Christmas display, ayan's class made a collage of Black and Chinese angels with the words 'THEY COME FROM HEAVEN IN DIFFERENT COLOURS' (actually a child's words). The Head removed the words, because he thought it would offend parents.

A campaign is being run to expose racism in this school. We want:

- * justice for Nayan
- * the Council to hold an enquiry into Nayan Cheta's case
- * the Headteacher sacked
- * the Council to implement policies to support Black teachers

These changes are essential for the benefit of the local community.

You can contact the campaign c/o 23 Verulam Avenue, London E 17

BOUR COUNCILS ANTI-RACIST?



ANTI RACIST YEAR?

LIVERPOOL

COUNCIL CRITICISED



The fact that Britain is a deeply racist society has been confirmed again in two recent reports. The first, a "survey of social attitudes", published in May, found that two people in five believe that discrimination against black people will increase in the 1980's. Over one third of those questioned openly admitted being "racially prejudiced" and over one half predicted a repeat of the 1981 uprisings in the years to come.

The second report, from the Policy Studies Institute (PSI), and published in July, concluded that little has changed in the past twenty years for black people in this country. It noted that "racial inequalities" have become entrenched.

At the same time, 1984 has been declared Anti-Racist Year by the Greater London Council (GLC)

which has been running a "London Against Racism" campaign complete with posters, badges, pamphlets and videos.

A CHALLENGE TO THE SYSTEM?

On the surface, it appears that the GLC has issued a call to "challenge the system". For example, a free GLC publication states: "... To eliminate racism there has to be a twin challenge aimed at the institution where power is located and at people's behaviour which is too often conditioned by racially-prejudiced attitudes."

However the same pamphlet goes on to recommend that the way to fight racism is through using the system - complain, write to your Council, contact the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and BBC!

What is the record of these state-established institutions? To take one example: since 1977 the CRE has started 47 investigations and made a total of 26 reports. One of these reports criticised racism in Hackney's housing allocations. The Labour Council responded by setting up monitoring procedures! Meanwhile, black people in Hackney continue, no doubt, to occupy the worst housing in the area.

RECRUITING BLACK WORKERS

Another way of fighting racism, according to the GLC in 1982, is by recruiting more black workers. "We are also getting black and ethnic minority people involved in the decision-making, contributing to policy demands, monitoring what's happening, being critical of the GLC."

It is a well-established fact that the state machinery in this country, at both local and national level, is overwhelmingly white. One internal survey of civil servants in two regions found that of 64,047 white-collar workers only 0.9% were black even though the proportion of the population was 2.5%. Similarly in Manchester's Housing Department, an investigation found that only 9 out of 900 officials came from the national minorities, who made up 10% of the local community.

It is also well-known that black workers find themselves in the bottom grades of all kinds of

work, including within the Civil Service, and therefore with the least powerful positions. The PSI report observed: "The British job market has changed little in its hostility to black workers, except that it now excludes more of them from work altogether."

Some of the particular reforms promoted by the GLC, in for example housing or employment, are progressive and should be supported. But at the same time we have to be clear that these reforms in themselves cannot change the basic racism of the British state, local or national. The present policies and reforms of the GLC are also a double-edged weapon in that although apparently aimed at fighting racism, there is another purpose which has the opposite effect. This is true whether those involved are subjectively anti-racist or not. Particularly since the uprisings of 1981, the British state has used dual tactics of 'the carrot and the stick' towards national minority people. State funds made available have the purpose of 'buying off', or as it has been called 'nationalising' sections of the movements of resistance.

The GLC approach ignores the whole history and development of racism in Britain. Today's state racism reflects not only our imperialist history but the continuing national oppression of peoples of the Third World and Ireland, and national minorities here.

PROMOTION OF THE STATE

For all its fine-sounding anti-racist rhetoric, the approach of the GLC is to promote a state whose immigration laws systematically abuse the rights of black people, dividing families and inducing repatriation, as an anti-racist machine.

It presupposes a willingness for the British state to act in favour of national minority communities, and that the state is not inherently racist but that racism is a kind of deviation from bourgeois democracy.

Experience tells us different. It is only when the basic nature of the state is changed that we can begin to lay sound foundations for eradicating racism.

The following letter has been sent to us by a reader to illustrate the racism of a so-called progressive Labour Council. It was printed in the 'Daily Post' and written by the Chairperson of the Merseyside Community Relations Council.

I should like to add some information of the walk-out protest by all the members of the Black Caucus Group on Liverpool City Council's Race Relations Liaison Committee. A number of recent decisions in the field of housing will illustrate the frustration and concern felt by all of us over the lack of constructive race relations policy and practical commitment shown by the ruling Labour group on the City Council.

The Housing Committee has recently rejected a £1 million grant by the Department of the Environment to support a sheltered housing scheme in River Avon Street, targeted particularly (though not exclusively) at elderly black and ethnic minority residents, though they are currently severely under-represented in council day-care, home help, meals on wheels. Again, the Housing

Committee has recently refused to allow a Racial Harassment Working Party to be set up, despite the widely documented problem of racial harassment on council estates.

In terms of employment, the Labour leadership has recently refused to appoint a team of four specialist ethnic minority housing liaison officers (for which central government had agreed to pay three quarters of the salaries), despite the overwhelming under-representation of black staff in the housing department. Last year, the council failed to support the "positive action" scheme that is providing training for local black people in housing management.

It is this persistent refusal of the Labour Party (highlighted particularly by the attitudes of senior housing politicians) to employment practices and service provision that has caused us to demand an account of their overall policy on eliminating racial inequalities and evidence of their commitment to take the immediate and practical steps that are necessary to secure a fair deal for black and ethnic minority citizens of Liverpool.

International Notes

OCCUPIED PALESTINE:

After 40 days of wrangling, the Israeli Labour Party and the Likud Bloc formed a coalition government in mid-September. In the new Cabinet, Labour's Shimon Peres is Prime Minister and Likud's Yitzhak Shamir, Foreign Minister. They will swap posts in 1986. Among others taking up ministerial posts is Ariel Sharon, who directed the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and was one of those directly responsible for the massacres of Palestinians and Lebanese in Sabra and Shatilla in September 1982. This shows the hypocritical character of Labour and Likud's condemnation of the extreme racist, Meir Kahane, who openly demands the expulsion of all Palestinians from their land: Kahane is "unacceptable", but the mass murderer Sharon becomes Minister of Trade and Industry!

ETHIOPIA:

Has the Dergue had its day? On September 10th, the five day founding congress of the "Workers' Party of Ethiopia" ended. With its foundation, 10 years of rule by the Provisional Military Administration Committee, (commonly called the "Dergue") officially ended. Little will in fact change. The commission to organise the party was headed by the leading member of the Dergue, Mengistu Haile Mariam and was composed of military personnel and representatives of political parties which were themselves little more than creations of the Dergue. It was hardly surprising that Mengistu became the "WPE"'s General Secretary.

For the past 10 years, the Dergue, backed by the Soviet Union, has continued the former Emperor Haile Selassie's policy of trying to incorporate Eritrea into Ethiopia, and denying their rights to the oppressed nationalities. There is no sign that Mengistu's new political outfit means a new policy on these questions.



MOROCCO:

On 4th September, 28 political prisoners suspended their two-month hunger strike. The Moroccan authorities had promised to meet their demands for visiting rights, and the rights to receive newspapers and books, to study and do their exams. All the strikers were arrested last January during food riots. The hunger strike was launched by leaders of the militant wing of the National Union of Moroccan Students (UNEM), supported by the Marxist-Leninist organisation, Ilal-Amam. A message of support was broadcast by the radio of FPOLISARIO, the liberation movement fighting the Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara. The only Moroccan political organisation to oppose that occupation is Ilal-Amam. (The pro-Soviet party supports the government's stand on Western Sahara.)

Three of the youths involved died on hunger strike. But the others declared that they would start again on 24th September if the authorities went back on their word.

Victory!

Esther Ankeli heard recently that she has finally won her right to stay in this country with her two children. Esther has been fighting a campaign to stay and was planning to make a further appeal to the Home Office when she heard that they had backed down.

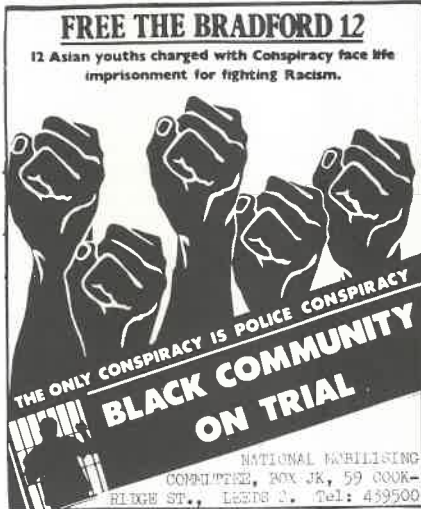
Newham 7 Self Defence

Despite pouring rain, a 60-strong picket of West Ham Magistrates Court was held on Friday, September 14, when committal proceedings against seven young Asians took place. The public gallery was also full of Newham 7 supporters. Zafar Khan, Parvaiz Khan and Jyoti Rappan face charges of affray and carrying an offensive weapon; Bahadur Khan is charged with affray and criminal damage, Habib Mahammad with affray, and Amjad Ali with affray, criminal damage and threatening to kill.

conspiracy to cause criminal damage. The latter charge had originally been made against the other six too, but was dropped, in what the Newham 7 Defence Campaign sees as its first victory.

Also in court were three white youths who were involved in the incident which led to the seven's arrest.

The basic issue in the case of the Newham 7 is the same as that for the Newham 8 and Bradford 12 - the right of national minority peoples to defend themselves. The Newham 7 Defence Campaign demands the dropping of all charges against the seven, as their only "crime" has been to defend themselves.



In 1981 the Bradford 12 were charged with conspiracy and explosives charges. But after a long trial in 1982, they were all found not-guilty. They had argued in court, and the campaign had won mass support on the basis of 'Self Defence is No Offence'.

The seventh of the young Asians, Athur Choudhury, is not only charged with carrying an offensive weapon and causing actual bodily harm, but with

CHINA

35 Years of Socialism



On 1st October 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong stated: "The Chinese people have triumphed over their enemies, changed the face of their country and founded the People's Republic of China. We the 475 million Chinese people have now stood up..."

35 YEARS OF SOCIALIST CHINA

All have enough to eat in China today. Yet 40 years ago, hundreds of thousands died of famine. Today, China's people can think about which clothes to buy, when many were in rags 35 years back. People who had the minimum necessary to survive would count themselves fortunate 35 years ago. Now they not only have the basic necessities, but more and more are buying televisions, radios and other goods for entertainment and to make life more comfortable.

In short, the Chinese people have made tremendous material progress in the 35 years since Liberation, and it can truly be said that Chinese socialism has passed the great test that many other forms of society have failed: it has brought the Chinese people from misery and poverty to the beginnings of prosperity.

From 1919 onwards, China was in turmoil as one struggle after another against feudalism and foreign domination broke out. It was in the midst of these upheavals that the Communist Party of China (CPC) was born and grew. After a serious setback in 1927, the CPC led the poorer sections of the peasants in various areas to set up their own system of political power. Huge liberated zones were created in China's interior, where the Kuomintang (KMT) government, warlords and foreign powers were weakest, and these zones were defended by the Chinese Red Army and local peasants' militia.

The Red Army was an army of a kind not experienced before by the Chinese people. When soldiers came into their towns or villages, looting and bullying was what the people could expect from them, if not worse. But the Red Army was well-disciplined, and it helped the people. When the Red Army needed extra supplies from the people, it paid for them. When land reforms took place, or other changes which benefited the people, the Red Army assisted them to organise themselves to prevent landlords and other exploiters taking away their gains.

"ENCIRCLEMENT AND SUPPRESSION"

In the early 1930's, the main Red base was in south-east China

The most appropriate comparisons to make when assessing China's progress are with its own past and with other Third World countries. But there is still some point in comparing it with the imperialist countries. It is true that, in terms of material possessions, most people in Western Europe are still better off than the Chinese. But the gap is slowly narrowing. Moreover, in certain ways, China is far in advance of the West.

There have been socialist parties and organisations around in the major capitalist countries for over 150 years, and yet none of those countries are today socialist. Their ruling classes have gone on exploiting their workers and most of the world besides.

"The Chinese People have stood up!"

Yet "backward" China produced a strong Communist Party, which led the Chinese people in overthrowing foreign domination and led the workers and peasants in carrying through a socialist revolution in the country where a quarter of the world's population lives.

FREE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Racism and national oppression exist wherever imperialism reigns. Socialist China has done away with national oppression. Except for a short period, the Chinese government and Communist Party consistently opposed chauvinism among the majority Han nationality, and adopted policies favourable to the free national development of the other 55 nationalities in China. Some peoples, such as the Oroqens of north-east China, were on the verge of extinction in 1949. But thanks to the assistance of the people's government, their numbers have increased and they have preserved their identity.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Chinese women still have to fight old feudal and male chauvinist ideas. But in obtaining work, child-care provisions and specific laws and regulations protecting women's rights, China is ahead of most western countries. Chinese women can feel a good deal more secure about travelling on their own late at night

- largely in Jiangxi province. It came under repeated attacks from Chiang Kai-Shek's KMT armies. But each enemy

The Long March

"encirclement and suppression" campaign was smashed. Finally, Chiang concentrated one million troops, and ringed the base area with a network of blockhouses, machine guns and barbed wire. Armed by European



Arrival at Shaanxi at the end of the Long March.

powers, assisted by advisers from Nazi Germany, he imposed an economic blockade and gradually began to close in on the liberated zone. In previous

or working with men without fear of harassment, than the great majority of women in the capitalist world can.

A PEOPLE'S HEALTH SERVICE

Health care in China is not yet universally free. But in the vast countryside it is for the first time in a Third World country, cheap and easily available. China has learnt from its traditional medicine alongside adopting modern techniques. It has concentrated vast resources on the prevention of disease, for example even diverting large rivers to eradicate the plague of snail fever that still racks so many Third World countries. In this area of preventative medicine and in certain areas of treatment such as Anaesthesia, burn

treatment and eye treatment, it has outstripped the 'west'.

RESPECTING OTHER NATIONS

In terms of the strength of its armed forces, China is today a great power. Yet unlike the USA, USSR, Britain or France, its soldiers do not occupy any other people's country, nor does it have military, naval or air bases beyond its borders. Chinese volunteers went to fight side by side with their Korean comrades after the US launched its war of aggression against Korea in 1950, and they had all withdrawn by 1958. Countries which have had the "benefit" of military assistance from the imperialist great powers have generally found themselves permanently occupied and / or placed under a government of the choice of one or other of these powers. China seeks to assist the development and self-reliance of other Third World countries, in contrast to the superpowers and other imperialists' domination of them.

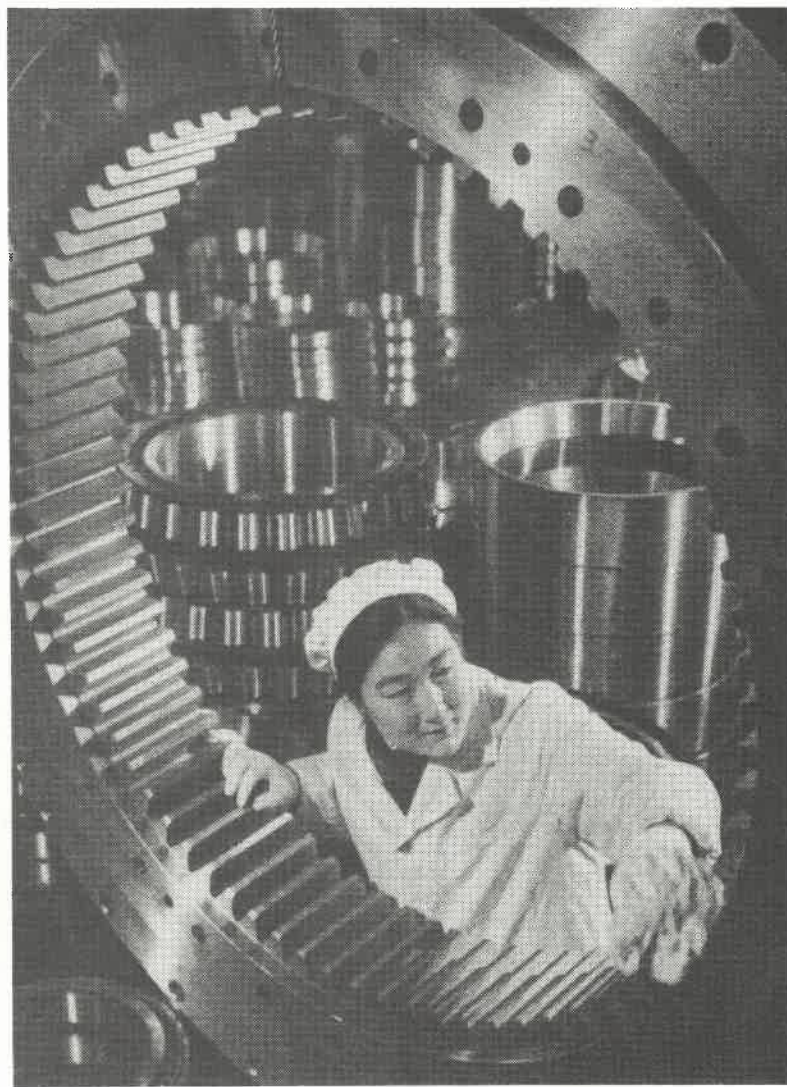
CELEBRATING FREEDOM

This month, as they celebrate their 35th National Day, the Chinese people can feel justly proud of their achievements. They still have a long road to traverse, but they have begun this second Long March. The imperialist world can still point to many areas in which it is more 'advanced' than socialist China. It has nothing

campaigns, the Red Army's use of mobile warfare had enabled it to bring into full play the advantages of its healthy morale

and strong political motivation, as well as its tactical flexibility and support among the people. These factors outweighed the enemy's advantages in numbers and armament. But in the fifth "encirclement and suppression" campaign, the Red Army was drawn into more conventional, positional warfare, where the advantage lay with Chiang's forces. It casualties mounted and soon the survival of the Red Army and much of the Communist Party was at stake.

What hope would the Chinese revolution have if they were smashed? It was decided to shift the centre of operations for the Party and Red Army to Shaanxi in the north-west, where another liberated area already existed. From there, the Red Army could fight the Japanese, who had invaded China and were intent on conquering it. The Communist Party had repeatedly called for all Chinese to fight the Japanese invaders, but Chiang Kai-Shek and his clique had insisted on concentrating their efforts on fighting against the Communists. By moving their main forces and headquarters to Shaanxi, the Red forces would not only break



Woman technician of the Loyang Ball-Bearing Plant, Honan Province.

to be proud of. Whatever China has built up today is the fruit of the labour of the Chinese people, while the development of the imperialist countries rests on the exploitation, underdevelopment, poverty and oppression of the rest of the world.

SUPERIORITY OF SOCIALISM

China's success demonstrates the superiority of socialism over capitalism. China's planned economy, where production is for the benefit of the people, has expanded at an accelerated pace in the last six years, while the whole capitalist world has been racked by crisis. The richest countries in the world have resorted to more and more fascistic policies to preserve the established order; they have increased oppression of the Third World's peoples while at home, most of the people

are becoming poorer and see little to hope for in the future. In contrast, the Chinese people's democratic rights are developing. They have more say at work and in the community than we have. And their prosperity is increasing.

China's example is clearly one to follow. While every people must take their own course to progress, and every communist organisation must formulate its own strategy and tactics to lead the fight for socialism to victory, it is clear that the socialist road is the only one that offers hope to humanity, and that the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the whole imperialist order is the only way to get to socialism.



out of a closing trap, but would be able to show the Chinese people who really stood up to Japanese aggression. Chiang would have to come to an agreement or lose all credibility.

BREAKOUT

In October 1934 the Long March began. 80,000 Red Army soldiers set out for Shaanxi. With them went thousands of revolutionary peasants. The first thing the Red Army had to do was to break through the KMT encirclement. They moved westwards and, in just over a month of furious fighting broke through four lines of fortifications. But the cost was high: they lost one third of their forces.

Moving west and north, the Red Army had to manoeuvre to avoid being trapped by the hundreds of thousands of soldiers sent in pursuit by Chiang and the other enemy forces posted at strategic points to block the Red Army's way. Chiang hoped to trap the Red Army south of the Changjiang river, so he ordered that all the ferries over should be drawn up on the north bank, and blocked all the roads leading directly to the river. The Red Army marched and fought, day after day. Finally, as the enemy forces closed in on the westward moving Red Army to annihilate it, a small unit doubled back 85 miles in under 24 hours, and, dressed

in captured enemy uniforms, quietly occupied the south side of a ferry crossing point. When darkness fell, a local official was made to call for a boat to be sent over from the north bank for some "government troops" who had just arrived. Suspecting nothing, as the Red Army was supposed to be at least 80 miles away, the garrison on the other bank sent over a boat. They soon found themselves prisoners of the "government troops". Next day, the main forces of the Red Army began to arrive, and were soon on the north bank.

ACROSS THE TATU RIVER

The Red Army still had one more great river barrier to cross - the Tatu. They were guided to one river crossing by the Lolo nationality people, who had always fought any Chinese army which entered their territory, but who had been convinced that there was a big difference between the stand of the "Red" Chinese and that of the "White" Chinese towards the minority nationalities. The Red Army took the enemy by surprise and captured a ferry boat. 17 soldiers then spear-headed a successful attack on the opposite bank, struggling against the fast-flowing current and braving enemy gunfire in the knowledge that the fate of the Red Army could depend upon them. *Cont. on p.7*

Central America on its guard

After the US Presidential elections, it is widely anticipated that a victorious Reagan will direct increasing US resources to the suppression of revolutionary and progressive trends in Latin America and the Caribbean. The USA wants to re-assert its domination over the whole area.

Ever since Reagan came to office there has been a determined US campaign to destabilise the popular government in Nicaragua. The US has funded, armed and trained the counter-revolutionary anti-Sandinista forces - the National Democratic Forces (FDN) based in Honduras, and the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE) based in Costa Rica, and is trying to make them merge so as to increase their effectiveness. So far,

Nicaraguan ports in its destabilisation campaign. Nicaragua has made great progress since the dictator Somoza was overthrown. Illiteracy has dropped from a rate of around 50% five years ago to next to nothing. Everyone has enough to eat. Equal pay for women and maternity rights legislation have been introduced, and the voting age reduced to 16 in recognition of the sacrifices young people have made and are making to build a free and independent Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan people have no intention of letting all these gains go, and that is why this small country of 2.8 million people has so far repulsed all the destabilisation efforts of one of the two strongest military powers in the world.



In El Salvador, a guerrilla guards the liberation force's Radio Venceremos. The Radio is a key source of information for the guerrilla units themselves, the people and the world's press. The junta's Deputy Minister of Defence, Colonel Adolfo Castillo was captured when his helicopter was shot down. Since his capture the Radio has broadcast several interviews with him.

these groups have murdered over 3,000 people, caused hundreds of millions of pounds worth of damage, and forced thousands of Nicaraguans living in border areas to leave their homes, but their attempts to take territory and establish themselves within Nicaragua have been totally crushed by the government forces.

The US has also funded the legal opposition parties and press within Nicaragua and mixed

Probably the biggest gains of the Nicaraguan people have been national independence and the creation of democratic institutions. This is very ironic, given the fact that the USA crusades against Nicaragua in the name of, amongst other things, countering subversion from external forces and defending democracy.

On 4 November, the Nicaraguan people will go to the polls

in what will undoubtedly be the most democratic, intimidation free elections ever held in Central America. Although free to participate, the main right-wing parties have announced their intention of boycotting the elections. They know that they would win little electoral support and hope that by a boycott, they can diminish the credibility of the electoral process. The four parties which have made up the Nicaraguan leadership up to the present time - the Sandinista National Liberation Front, Nicaraguan Socialist Party, Independent Liberal Party and the Popular Social Christian Party - are standing separately in the elections, and so is the pro-Moscow Nicaraguan Communist Party. The FSLN is expected to emerge as the major party in the new National Assembly. The elections take place just before the US Presidential elections, which Reagan is expected to win. Nicaragua believes that Reagan will take re-election as a mandate to intensify pressure on it, and possibly even to launch an invasion. It hopes that the elections will forcefully demonstrate to the world the democratic character of Nicaragua, and make it much more difficult politically for the US to step up intervention. Besides preparing for the worst within its own borders, Nicaragua has actively sought to build friendly relations with many countries around the world, but especially in Latin America. It has declared its readiness to co-operate with the regional mediation efforts of the Contadora group (Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Panama) in order to secure peace in the area. It has developed friendly links with France, Sweden, and other western countries. Ties of solidarity with socialist China and Korea have also been reinforced in recent exchanges of visits by various delegations.

Further to the north, in El Salvador, the FMLN liberation movement has responded to the threat of increased US intervention by intensifying attacks on government forces. In a spectacular operation on September 13th, FMLN fighters seized 5 radio stations in El Salvador's capital, and broadcast a message and a report of recent successes against government forces. The US is turning Honduras, which lies between Nicaragua and El Salvador, into a regional centre of counter-revolution, but although this has meant

a great expansion in the Honduran armed forces and rise in death squad activity, it has also meant a growth in popular opposition, including armed revolt.

Across the Caribbean, in Grenada which the US invaded a year ago, popular opposition is re-organising. Supporters of former Prime Minister Maurice Bishop have established the Maurice Bishop and October 19th Martyrs' Foundation, (October 19th was the date of the murder of Bishop and many others by a group that seized power in Grenada before the US invasion), and the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement to struggle for the ideals of the Grenadian revolution. In Trinidad, the Oilfields Workers Trade Union led a strike in May-June this year which forced the US transnational Texaco to pay a 5.2% pay rise to its workers. The OWTU is



now preparing for the next round. The people's struggles in and around the Caribbean show that they will not be intimidated by the US, even though Reagan threatens more repression. When imperialists lash out violently, it is a sign of weakness, not strength, a sign that they fear their power to dominate is draining away. The revolutionary people will win!



Armagh Interview

Cont. from p.6

trousers that are never, ever, actually going to be worn. They're just put in a storeroom. There've been lots of protests over the work and it would be very easy for full-time education to be made available for every prisoner, but they refuse to do it. It would be very easy to bring in. Even if they didn't bring in the full-time education, if they didn't make it available, they could bring in some sort of constructive work and work for charitable organisations, or welfare groups, things like this, but they refuse to think about it.

STRIP SEARCHING
I would point out also that there was a question in the British House of Commons about the strip-searching in Northern Ireland, and in 1983 - I'm not actually sure of the exact details - there was something like 1,700 strip searches carried out in Armagh Jail.

The highest number of these are carried out against remand prisoners. The highest number of remand prisoners we ever had was 12, and we had 12 for about a week. The average would be six, sometimes it went down to four, but in a year, that small group of women was subjected to 1,700 strip searches. **Class Struggle:** What do women inside feel about solidarity action outside? Do they hear about it? Is it good for their morale?

Linda Quigley: Oh yes. There have actually been a lot of English women over in Armagh Jail. They come over for events such as International Women's Day, and they always arrange to take some visits. These visits are thoroughly enjoyed, for more than one reason. We're very aware of the campaigns that are being mounted and of the efforts that some people will go to on our behalf. Our families and friends make us aware of what's happening. The thing with Armagh Jail is that if there happens to be an article in the newspaper about conditions in Armagh, or about a support group for Armagh women, the article will be suppressed, or the paper

will be suppressed and we wouldn't actually see it. But our families would make a point of letting us know what was in it, so, although we mightn't actually see the article or hear an interview or see a piece on television, we're made aware that it's going on. It's great for morale. It's very important that people continue to campaign, especially against the strip-searching. Conditions are bad. Harassment is at its height at the minute. As I said, we're aware that this is happening to us because we are women Republican prisoners. If we weren't, they wouldn't bother. We have our own identities, we know who we are; we know why we've been put in Armagh Jail and we don't lose sight of that.

The British government, through its prison administration is attempting to carry out a policy of criminalisation, which means that they don't want us to have our Republican identity. They don't want any Republican group inside jail. They want individuals they can control, and this is why there's such pressure on the women. Of course, we're aware of what they're trying to do, and why they're trying to do it, and we won't let it happen. Although they can dish out very severe punishments, they can make life extremely hard, they'll not succeed in removing our Republican identity.

Talking about publicity and things like that, we're aware of the many groups. We know that some of the groups actually write into the jail. But there's a problem with the letters. If something arrives and it's deemed "too political", they won't define what "too political" is, so it can be anything - a small sentence about the strip searching, or a small sentence about general conditions, or a small sentence about a march or a support event - that would be enough to stop the whole letter reaching us. But family and friends who do visit us, we do receive an awful lot of information. We have our own PRO in the jail who sends statements to newspapers.



Cont. from p.6

As the Red Army could not cross fast enough against the rapid current, most of them had to move along the river again, to where there was part of a bridge standing. They arrived to find bare chains stretching halfway across the river, where the enemy troops had taken up the planks. This time, 22 volunteers swung out across the water under machine gun fire from soldiers on the other side. The enemy set the bridge alight, but the Communist soldiers could not be stopped. They took the enemy positions. The bridge was repaired, and before long, the Red Army was across.

With its crossing of the Tatu river, the Red Army left behind most of the KMT and warlord forces, but it still had to overcome many natural obstacles - steep, snowy mountains, tangled forests and swamps that could swallow up the unwary and leave no trace. But in the course of the march, the Communist Party held literacy and political education movements, and even held a major Congress, despite the conditions.

Just over one year after setting out, 20,000 Red Army troops reached their destination. Many fell in battle in the years that followed, but many others came through it all to see China's Liberation and the

declaration of the People's Republic in 1949.

VICTORY

Though made necessary by setbacks to the Chinese Revolution, the Long March was an achievement without parallel in world history. On average, there was a skirmish or battle daily and the Red Army crossed 18 mountain ranges and 24 rivers, yet it still managed to march an average of 24 miles a day. Everywhere it went, the message of the Communist Party went, reaching 200 million people directly, and inspiring millions more throughout China. Many wounded soldiers, left to be looked after by villagers along the route, later organised in those areas. The Long March ensured the survival of the Communist Party and the revolutionary armed forces, and their relocation in Shaanxi left them well placed to confront Japan and eventually, to force the KMT to enter into another United Front with the Communist Party against Japan.

The success of the Long March was due to the heroism and political strength of the men and women of the Red Army and Communist Party; to their dedication to the cause of the workers and peasants, which enabled them to find friends and allies along the route of their march; to their respect

for the rights of China's minority nationalities, which helped them to win the co-operation of most of them in overcoming many obstacles; and, not least, to the fact that the Communist Party of China, under the leadership of Mao Zedong, and other outstanding revolutionaries, applied Marxism-Leninism in a creative way to the handling of the concrete problems of the Chinese Revolution.

CONFERENCE ON ANTI-ARAB RACISM

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Speakers include: Edward Said, Michel Warshawski, Karim Al-Rawi and others.

Sunday 14 October 10.30-5.30 at the Camden Centre, Bidborough St, London NW1 Admission Free. Followed by Social with African Dawn and Barricada.

BENEFIT FOR IRELAND AFRICAN DAWN

Middlesex Polytechnic All Saints Site White Hart Lane Friday October 26, 8 p.m. £2 waged, £1 unwaged.

Organised by Middlesex Polytechnic Irish Society

A MINIBUS FOR IRELAND

For years, the Prisoners' Dependents' Fund has provided a regular transport service for relations of Republican prisoners to go and visit them in Long Kesh and Armagh Prison. Their vehicles take a lot of wear and tear and need replacement. As a practical measure of solidarity with the Irish people, the East London Solidarity Committee has launched a campaign to raise enough money to buy another minibus.

Besides answering a practical need, ELISC considers this to be a project in line with its basic stand of solidarity with the Republican Movement.

Several thousand pounds will be needed to buy a good second-hand minibus, and raising this will take quite a bit of effort,

but ELISC is confident that it will succeed. It plans to make collections, hold benefits and have sponsored events to raise whatever is needed: one Asian friend of the Irish people has already promised to go on a sponsored diet as his contribution!

The Revolutionary Communist League supports this initiative because it believes in promoting both political and practical solidarity with the Republican Movement and the Irish people fighting for their freedom. We hope that others will add their support.

ELISC can be contacted c/o 203, Seven Sisters Road, London N.4. 'Class Struggle' readers wishing to contribute can contact ELISC direct or send contributions to the RCL to be forwarded to ELISC.

FREEDOM FOR IRELAND



"Stop the Strip Searches"

Interview With Linda Quigley Recently Released From Armagh Prison Part 2

In the first part of this interview, published in the September issue of 'Class Struggle', Linda Quigley focussed on the strip-searches being carried out on Republican women prisoners in Armagh Jail. In the second part, printed here, Linda talked more generally about conditions in Armagh.

Apart from the actual strip-searching, they're separating women Republican prisoners in an effort to try and break their morale and to destroy our identity as Republican prisoners. We're broken up into small groups of six; we're scattered throughout the jail. This is just to isolate us, to separate us from each other.

If anyone breaks any of the rules, the punishments are severe - they're savage. Girls have lost years of remission - literally years of remission. There's solitary confinement. They have a separate wing - it's a dark wing. The windows are blocked off, things like that. It's an isolation wing, and it's hardly ever empty. Now, they only put you there one at a time. But out of 30 women, there's always one in the solitary confinement wing, for completely stupid, petty things, which would be designed and orchestrated and in fact, created by the screws. The prison governor himself told me - now this wasn't for breaking any rule - he told me that I was arrogant, which meant that I didn't agree with his way of thinking. He told me that I was too arrogant, and that because I was arrogant, and as long as I continued to be arrogant, he had ordered his staff to hammer me at every available opportunity. Now that was not meant in the



About to visit Armagh prisoners. physical sense: this meant that if I annoyed a screw I would be put up on a charge and then put in solitary confinement, followed by loss of all privileges.

That was out of his own mouth. Now that, as I said, was not for breaking any rules - that was for being a Republican, and refusing to lose my identity.

MEDICAL NEGLECT

I touched briefly on the medical staff's attitude to strip-searching and the medical effects of strip searching. The medical facilities, or the medical attention, I'd say, is very poor. Over the years, there's been a long history of near accidents. One girl I spoke to recently, she's only



Picket of Armagh Jail on International Women's Day. (Photo: TOM)

just got out of jail, and she went to her doctor and was diagnosed as a chronic diabetic. That diagnosis was not made while she was in jail, and she'd been with the doctor.

An awful lot of the women sustain severe weight loss through the diet they have, vitamin deficiencies and the general stress of being there. I myself, my normal weight would be eight stone, and I came out of jail at seven stone. The only medical treatment I received for the weight loss and all the symptoms going on with weight loss, was half a pint of milk. I was on a pint of milk at the start, and when I'd lost half a stone, I was put on a half a pint of milk, and then I lost another half stone. My own doctor has sent me for tests, and all sorts of things, and I have to go for some more. Now the fact was, it would be very easy for them to give me a blood test, and they didn't even do that.

SAVED - JUST IN TIME

Another girl, she had a history of appendicitis, and one particular time, she lay in bed for a week, and the doctor refused to diagnose it as appendicitis. She knew it was. It was only because of the strong feeling of the other girls, they insisted that an outside specialist be brought in. A specialist was brought in at twenty to nine and Mary was rushed out to Craigavon hospital, and was actually in the operating theatre at ten o'clock. The specialist that operated on her stated quite clearly that there was no way that she could have been left till the morning, because apparently, the appendix was just ready to burst.

Another girl, Marie McLennon, she was in Armagh Jail twice. The first time she was in, she was diagnosed as having ulcers. When she got out, she was receiving treatment. She went back in, and the doctor, although he had already diagnosed ulcers, told her she didn't have ulcers. She served her sentence in constant agony. Every time she went over for some sort of treatment, she was fobbed off. I think he actually told her she was a hypochondriac, and she was imagining all this. The day after she got out, her ulcers burst, and she actually had to have part of her stomach removed. It's something that could have been treated - you know, it's a very common, everyday complaint - people

have ulcers, people become diabetic.

If you become diabetic, it's very easy to diagnose. You can maybe survive it just on tablets or something but in the case of Brenda Murphy - that wasn't diagnosed, and she has to inject herself daily with insulin injections, she must be careful with her diet - her whole life is actually affected by this: if it had been diagnosed in time, it would not have been.

DOCTOR COLE

She actually took a case out against Dr. Cole, and he was found guilty of some sort of neglect - I'm not quite sure, because I've only just heard this recently.

There was a case of a girl a few years ago - Monica Craig - and she had anorexia nervosa. They kept Monica in the hospital wing and they kept her full of tranquillisers. She received no help, no medical care, other than filling her full of tranquillisers which they hoped would stop her causing any trouble. Monica's condition deteriorated, and they had to give her an early release, and when she was released, the doctors outside discovered the treatment that she'd been receiving, and the very fact that she'd just been kept full of tranquillisers, there was a very big kick up and the British Medical Association actually became involved in it. But Dr. Cole still wasn't removed from the prison - he was still allowed to treat the women there.

PRISON EDUCATION

The education inside prison is very poor, very poor. Specifically, no facilities are there for remand prisoners. Sentenced prisoners could easily study something in their cells, become involved in full-time education of an academic nature, secretarial, or some sort of course. They refuse to allow this. Instead they expect women - intelligent women - to perform menial tasks. They seem to derive some sort of pleasure out of seeing Republican prisoners working at menial jobs.

You have the case of girls that could be studying for Open University, where they could be in full-time study, and they're put down to sewing rooms, and they're made to sew

Cont. on p.7

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 25th
ASSEMBLE outside STRANGWAYS
PRISON 1.00 p.m.

REMEMBER MANCHESTER MARTYRS

In November 1867, William Phillip, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien were executed and their bodies buried in Strangeways Prison. Their legal murders arose after two Fenian leaders were freed from a black maria taking them to prison. A group of Irishmen ambushed the black maria. As the lock was shot off, a police sergeant was accidentally killed by the ricochet. The three martyrs captured afterwards were found guilty of murder despite the fact that there was no evidence that any of them had fired the shot.

This year, as in past years, there will be a commemorative march. The demonstration, called by Sinn Fein, will concentrate on the situation of Irish prisoners in British jails today. The main slogans will be:

REPATRIATION, ON DEMAND, TO JAILS IN IRELAND
RELEASE OF PRISONERS FRAMED BY THE BRITISH POLICE
AN END TO SOLITARY CONFINEMENT AND SPECIAL CONTROL UNITS
RELEASE OF PATRICK HACKETT ON MEDICAL GROUNDS
ABOLITION OF THE PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT

JOIN THE MARCH THIS YEAR!
SUPPORT THE IRISH PRISONERS OF WAR!

ANTI-IMPERIALIST EVENTS ORGANIZED BY THE NEWHAM ASIAN ASSOCIATION



10th OCTOBER 7.30 p.m.
East Ham Town Hall E.6.
ANTI-IMPERIALIST RALLY

Main speakers: PLO, Sinn Fein, Pan Africanist Congress, Black Consciousness Movement, Tamil Eelam Solidarity, El Salvador Solidarity, NUM.

11th OCTOBER 7.30 p.m.
East Ham Town Hall E.6.

POETRY OF RESISTANCE

Mahmood Jamal, H.O.Nazareth, Ptika Ntuli, Molephe Pheto, Maria Tolly, Benjamin Zephaniah, Tippa Nephtali, Val MacLochlain.

12th OCTOBER 7.30 p.m.
Stratford School Hall, Upton Lane, E.7.

BLACK WRITERS FORUM

Ngugi WaThiong'o, Farukh Dhondy, Dilip Hiro, A writer from Palestine.

20th OCTOBER 2 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Stratford School Hall, Upton Lane, E.7.

EXHIBITION

Photos, Posters, Books etc.
7.30 p.m. Asian Cultural Evening