

# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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## THE TIME TO FIGHT

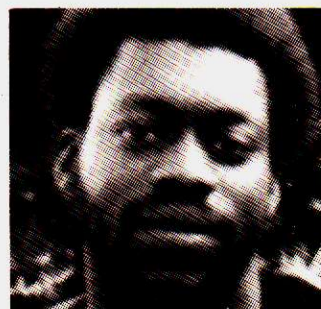


# AGAINST RACISM AGAINST FASCISM

Ten years ago, many thousands demonstrated against racist attacks in East London. Now racism is spreading across Europe, new immigration and asylum laws are being designed and in Britain the political parties are sharpening their racist rhetoric for the next election. A new European-wide anti-racist and anti-fascist movement is required to stem the tide.

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We look at the growing racism and fascism in France, Germany, Belgium and the Asylum Bill in Britain.



## WINSTON SILCOTT IS INNOCENT! TOTTENHAM 3 ARE INNOCENT!

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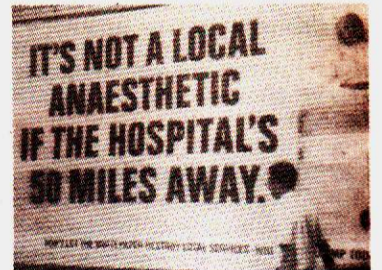
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# Private affluence - Public squalor

The capitalist system is no longer able to maintain a welfare state



In the 1960s, we were told we had reached the 'end of ideology'. Private affluence for a minority and public squalor for the majority need no longer be the visible face of capitalism - at least in the imperialist countries. The irreconcilable contradiction between capitalism and socialism was to be overcome with a suitable mix of the two - welfare state capitalism and the 'mixed economy'.

By the mid-1970s this social democratic consensus was being undermined by economic reality. As the rate of profit began to fall in the major capitalist countries, the rising consumption institutionalised in the Keynesian welfare state became a barrier to capital accumulation. In Britain, stagflation, inflation and unemployment growing together, demonstrated that British capitalism could no longer sustain a growing welfare state.

The 1980s saw capital's counter-revolution, led by Reagan and Thatcher. The state sector was to be massively cut back as wealth was transferred to the private sector, in a forlorn attempt to restore the fortunes of a stagnating capitalism. Thatcher announced the 'end of society'. There were now only competing private individuals whose acquisition of wealth was supposed to trickle down to us all. So confident were the ruling class after the collapse of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe that they announced the 'end of history'. The contest between capitalism and socialism was apparently over and capitalism had won.

However, the rejoicing was premature for the speculative credit-led boom of the 1980s ended with a widespread recession at the beginning of the 1990s. This is now having significant political consequences in Britain as the General Election draws near.

## Planning for our poverty

The ruling class can only stay in power if it can maintain the political allegiance of a significant section of the working class. Which government party secures this depends on the circumstances. After the Second World War it was the task of the Labour Party to put the welfare state into place. It was the cost capital had to pay for the political integration of the working class in the immediate post-war period. This consensus between capital and labour was continued under both Tory and Labour governments from 1951-1974, when the growing crisis made the return of another Labour government necessary. It was in this period that the consensus began to break down as increased state spending led to accelerating inflation and larger balance of payment deficits.

The Callaghan government opened the way to Thatcherism in complying with the conditions of an IMF loan. It set monetary targets, cut public spending and wages. Public spending fell from 49.25 per cent of GDP in 1975/6 to 43.25 per cent in 1977/8 before rising slightly to 44 per cent in 1978/9. It also fell in real terms from £195.3bn in 1975/6 to £181.1bn in 1977/8, increasing only to £190.1bn in 1978/9. It was the strikes of public sector workers during the 'Winter of Discontent' of 1978/9 against government-proposed wage cuts which ensured that the Labour government lost the election in May 1979. The consensus had truly broken down.

The Tories believed that public expenditure was at 'the heart of Britain's economic difficulties'. They wanted to cut it in real terms. They failed. The recession of 1980/81 saw state spending rapidly rise to 47.5 per cent of GDP in 1982/3. It was only after 1984/5 that it began to fall as a percentage of GDP, reaching a low of 39.5 per cent in 1988/9 at the

height of the speculative boom and after GDP had grown by 4.4 per cent and 4.7 per cent in two successive years, 1987 and 1988. Since that time it has been rising again. The recent Autumn Statement's projected increase of £11.1bn for 1992/3 public spending over last year's plans will see it rise to at least 42 per cent of GDP on the optimistic assumption that GDP will grow by more than 2 per cent in 1992.

From 1979/80-1989/90 public spending increased in real terms by nearly 13 per cent. The projected real increase from 1979/80 to 1992/93 will be more than 20 per cent. Yet we experience increasingly squalid and deteriorating public services. How can this be so?

To understand this we need only look at the major components of public spending. Social security spending represented more than 30 per cent of public expenditure in 1989/90 compared with 25 per cent in 1979/80. It grew by 31.8 per cent in real terms between 1979/80 and 1989/90. This figure has grown with the rise of unemployment and poverty in the Thatcher years. The number of people claiming pensions has also been steadily increasing. By 1992/3 the social security budget will be greater than £70bn. Most of the planned increase in spending for 1992/3, announced in the recent Autumn Statement, consists of spending on social security, legally necessary as a result of the second deep recession in the 13 years of Tory governments.

Long-term benefits since 1980 have only increased with prices, instead of the greater of prices or earnings as previously. This represents a significant reduction in benefits as average earnings have risen by 2.5 per cent a year more than prices over the last decade. Earnings-related supplement to unemployment benefit was also abolished. Many have had their right to claim benefit taken from them. So the growth of social security spending, the largest com-

ponent of public expenditure, is nothing more than an index of rapidly growing poverty.

What of government claims to have increased health and education spending in real terms? Over the period 1979/80-1989/90 health spending (14.1 per cent of total public spending in 1989/90) grew in real terms by 31.8 per cent and education (14.2 per cent of the total) by 13.7 per cent. These figures however are misleading. They ignore the real price changes specific to those areas of expenditure which allow us to estimate the 'volume' changes in expenditure.

For the health service these are at least 2 per cent above the general rate of inflation, taking into account pay increases and the cost of new medical technology. This would bring the real increase to 12 per cent over the period. The rest of the increase can be explained by greater use of the service due to the demographic rise in the number of old people. In fact the volume expenditure per patient over the period fell by one per cent.

The rise in education spending over the period, taking into account the real price changes including the rise of teachers' wages, is zero. Even the recently announced increase of 4.1 per cent in real terms for 1992/3 over last year's plan is totally misleading as it makes no allowance for any real increase in teachers' pay. Wage costs are on average half the total cost of public sector services.

Cuts in public capital expenditure (on the infrastructure of the country, such as buildings, new schools, roads etc) have taken place in 14 of the last 20 years. They can easily be cut as they are not immediately noticeable. Labour cut capital spending by 40 per cent in volume terms from 1974-79. The Tories cut it by a further 40 per cent from 1980-1983. Most of the increases have been by Tory governments each year immediately before a general election. The long-term effect is a serious de-

terioration in the basic infrastructure of the country.

If we add to this a fall in housing expenditure of 67 per cent, a fall in trade and industry spending of 38.2 per cent, and a fall in transport spending of 5.8 per cent from 1979/80-1989/90, the overall picture is one of a rapidly growing deterioration of public services.

Finally it is no surprise that in such circumstances, government spending on the forces of repression has been a priority and has continued to increase. Defence spending (12 per cent of the total spending in 1979/80) increased by 9.2 per cent in real terms, and law and order (5.6 per cent of the total) by a massive 53.3 per cent, mainly on the police. This is truly planning both for our poverty and the repression needed to enforce it.

## Labour's dilemma?

A minimum rise in real spending on public services is necessary to prevent social and political instability of a widespread nature which could threaten the capital-labour alliance. British capitalism is increasingly finding it difficult to sustain this basic level.

The Tories' period of office saw a serious deterioration in the standard of public services in spite of nearly £100bn North Sea Oil revenues, the more than £60bn from the sale of public assets, up to and including 1989/90, and an overall increase of average taxation from 35 per cent to 36.75 per cent of GDP (1989/90). The latest plans require public borrowing of £10.5bn in 1991/2 and a massive £19bn in 1992/3, while assuming privatisation proceeds of £8bn in each of those years.

Labour says it will increase public spending in line with economic growth. It will face an immediate problem on coming to power of taking on a £31bn public sector borrowing requirement - nearly 5 per cent of GDP - unless it continues with

privatisation sales. These include £8bn from British Telecom and other government trading companies and £4bn from central government and local authority asset sales. And after these sales there will not be a great deal left to sell. British capitalism cannot sustain a growing public sector. The Labour Party knows this and this is what is behind its very recent conversion to Europe.

## A European solution

A Keynesian welfare state is no longer sustainable on a national basis with the decline of Britain as a major imperialist power. A European-wide Keynesianism is being seen as a more viable alternative with Britain becoming part of a European-wide imperialist confederation led by German capitalism. The Labour Party, reflecting the deep chauvinism of its own constituency, still wants to wave its own imperialist flag and retain control of Britain's defence, security and foreign policy. It also insists on retaining control of Britain's racist immigration policy, no doubt in preference to a racist European-wide one. But these are early days and there is a lot at stake.

The left of the Labour Party has also joined the action, putting its own opportunist gloss on the issues at stake.

'... The economic goals of the EC should include not only price stability but also the overcoming of unemployment and regional inequalities ...

'Democratic socialists must build for a European future, placing social welfare and democracy on the agenda ...

'On its own the sovereign nation state is no longer up to the job of dealing with many pressing issues, such as the power of the multi-national corporations, ecological crises, new technology investment, the conversion of defence industries ... The socialist project goes through Europe or it probably goes nowhere.'

They will 'not be happy with a European federation that excludes other Europeans or throws up fortress walls against the rest of the world's peoples' but no doubt they would put up with it as they have done with Labour's racism over so many years.

How is all this to be achieved? 'Intense pressure' from European Labour movements will be necessary to make this European-wide capitalist federation 'concede significant social change.' (Ken Livingstone and Harry Barnes, *The Guardian* 21 November 1991)

Nothing changes for these social democrats. They have merely transferred their opportunism and their illusions to a European-wide stage. German-led European capitalism could only consider bailing out the British economy if it succeeds in expanding and intensifying its exploitation of Eastern Europe and the Third World.

For our part, we recognise that capitalism has never been able to guarantee the basic needs for the vast majority of humanity. Recent developments show it failing to do this even in the major imperialist nations. In Britain, private affluence and public squalor have returned as the visible face of capitalism. Inter-imperialist rivalries and the devastating economic deterioration in the countries of the ex-socialist bloc, make a European-wide solution to Britain's problems an unlikely one in the middle of a growing worldwide recession. The next few years could prove to be turbulent offering revolutionaries the opportunity to put communism back on the political agenda. ■

# Tweedledum and Tweedledee: Voting Labour with illusions

ROBERT CLOUGH

**The prospect that Tweedledum (Kinnock) may beat Tweedledee (Major) come next spring has caused a 'frisson of excitement' to surge through Paul Foot (Socialist Review, November 1991). This is in some contrast to his pessimism at the beginning of the year, when Labour were slipping behind Major in the opinion polls, and he wrote that 'if Labour wants to win, it has got to start fighting'.**

Not that Tweedledum has started fighting, unless you count the war against Iraq. So clearly if he does win, it will have nothing to do with his ability to champion the cause of the working class and oppressed. Nor is it because his policies are distinguishable from Major's. Both want Trident. Both want a more integrated imperialist Europe. Both want NATO. Both want immigration controls, both want anti-union laws. Both love the monarchy, and wish to maintain her rule over occupied Ireland. Both want an internal market on the NHS, and neither wish to be committed to restore the underfunding of the past decade.

Despite this, Foot is of the emphatic opinion that there is a difference between the two. He cites the recent Labour Conference which pledged to introduce a new Freedom of Information Act, abolish the House of Lords (again), wipe out NHS trusts, and end conviction on the basis of uncorroborated confessions. Nor is this all: 'Anyone watching the two conferences can tell at once that one is pro-trade union, pro-poor, pro-reform, whilst the other is reactionary to the core: anti-trade union, racist, militaristic and sanctimonious.' Of course the Union Jack waved on the last day of the Labour conference was a pro-poor Union Jack, and the retention of Trident was argued in a completely non-militaristic way. Labour's democratic credentials left the Guildford 4, Birmingham 6 and other framed prisoners in gaol for many years without a vestige of Labour Party support. And of course, reforming zeal has been at the forefront of Kinnock's anti-Militant witchhunt.

However, Foot is undeterred in his attempt to find nuggets of gold amongst the rubbish. After all, he argues, the economic strategy of the Tory Party 'is to protect profits' whilst the Labour Party 'came into being to represent trade unions in Parliament'. The difference between the two parties, he concludes, 'is in the class base of their origins and their support. Employers vote Tory, workers vote Labour.'

The consequences of this? To call for abstention during the election is to cut oneself off from any further argument or discussion with workers, because it is seen as 'an act of betrayal' by the 10 million who vote Labour. 'So, socialists, quite rightly, vote Labour. They do so out of instinctive solidarity with the party which draws its support from the dispossessed, and is founded on the organised working class.' So Foot and the SWP

vote Tweedledum out of 'instinctive solidarity. Being 'instinctive' protects them from the view that since Tweedledum had sanctioned the barbarous war against the Iraqi people, and was now busily locking up those who could not pay their Poll Tax, there seemed precious little reason to vote him in in preference to Tweedledee.

Labour is based on the 'organised working class'. This is a fiction. Labour was created by the trade union leadership to represent its interests in Parliament. This leadership was a part of a privileged upper stratum of the working class created by imperialism whose interests were quite different from the mass of the working class. In 1918, this labour aristocracy ensured Labour would serve as a bulwark against bolshevism by giving it a constitution which ruled out any reference to socialism, and

Who can see Ramsay MacDonald, the rampant imperialist of 1924 and 1929, in this sanitised picture of a Labour leader? Foot himself points out that Attlee sanctioned the secret development of the British A-bomb. But look at the wars that self-same government waged: against the Vietnamese, the Indonesian, the Malayan, the Korean, the Greek peoples. Just honest ministers misled by generals or civil servants?

What of a future Labour government? Foot believes that it 'will be more at the mercy of the real unelected rulers than any other Labour government since the war', and that it 'will make no real difference to the fearful chaos to which the Tories have reduced so much of working class Britain'. Instinctive solidarity will not deliver much, it seems.

He recalls how the political

warmth and solidarity for Tony Benn.' Indeed Foot was one of those who supported the rehabilitation of Benn, saying that his record in government, sorry and wretched though it was, was of no relevance during his deputy leadership campaign.

Foot's heart goes out to the white shop steward 'turning in wretchedness and disillusionment' to the fascists. But speak of black and Irish people breaking from Labour in a revolutionary direction and neither Foot nor the SWP want to know. After the uprisings of the 1980s, the Socialist Workers Party took the line that black people are not part of the working class at all, but are a 'lumpen proletariat', the 'vulnerable underbelly of the working class'. By 1983, they are attacking Livingstone for describing electricians and engineers as privileged, saying that this view is part of a trend that seeks to create a new popular base 'by linking up with groups which are not part of the working class. The examples most often given are those of such "minorities" as women, blacks and gays.'

Hence the 'credible socialist organisation' that in conclusion he wants to build may be separate from Labour, but will instinctively vote for it. It may appeal to white trade unionists, but not to 'minorities' such as women, blacks and gays. 'Kick out the Tories', says Foot, repeating that tired old slogan which recurs at every election whatever Labour's programme. The one thing the SWP won't kick is its servile instinct to cover up for Labour imperialism.



The Kinnocks - certain of Paul Foot's vote

which formalised the block vote to ensure the trade union barons could continue to wield control of the Party at conference.

It is this labour aristocracy that Foot describes as the 'dispossessed'. In fact the real 'dispossessed' do not vote Labour - they abstain since they cannot see the subtle distinctions which Foot magnifies to such an amazing degree. Recent general election results show that the turn-out of voters is always lowest in the inner city areas. But as the people of these ghettos tend not to be part of the 'organised working class' - they are unemployed or in low-paid and therefore generally non-unionised employment - Foot writes them out of existence. Even then only 40 per cent of trade unionists now vote Labour, instinctively or otherwise, undermining Foot's position even further.

Foot's defence is that Labour leaders are not vicious - merely misled by unelected civil servants, generals and so on. Hence the most consistent theme of all Labour governments has been their 'impotence' to act of behalf of those who elect them. He argues that Ramsay MacDonald's ministers in the 1929-31 government 'did not want to increase unemployment. But they had absolutely no control over it'. Similarly, wars which may be opposed by Labour in opposition 'are enthusiastically supported when the Labour peace-mongers make it into Whitehall'. Why? 'Not because they suddenly become vicious, but because the massed ranks of generals, civil servants, allies etc present the ministers with an option they can't refuse.'

atmosphere began to rot during the final years of the last Labour government, and how a white engineering shop steward confessed to him that he would vote for the fascists in preference to SWP candidate Foot in a 1977 by-election. Did this rottenness stop the SWP from instinctively calling for a vote for Labour in 1979? Of course not. In fact, this was the time when sections of the working class did start to break from Labour - black people, fed up with 'sus' and police racism, the immigration laws, Irish people with torture in Castlereagh, the criminalisation of political prisoners. But they were not part of the organised white working class beloved by Foot, so they didn't count. Nor apparently did low-paid state sector workers, whose growing disillusionment with Labour led to calls for NUPE to disaffiliate at their 1979 Conference.

The next few years saw the SWP trying to shore up the respectability of the Labour left wing - painting over their silence at the murder of the hunger-strikers, their impotence during the Falklands war. In November 1979, Benn was heckled at a 20,000-strong overwhelmingly black demonstration against immigration controls for his silence over Southall. Did *Socialist Worker* mention this? Of course not. When the 1980 Labour conference debated Ireland and overwhelmingly opposed political status for Irish political prisoners, Benn kept his mouth tightly shut. This did not prevent one Paul Foot from commenting at the time: 'There can hardly have been a socialist in Britain who did not feel



## Tottenham 3 are innocent!

As we go to press, the Appeal Court has overturned the conviction of Winston Silcott and is still hearing the 'new evidence' in the case of Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite. The three were arrested in aftermath of the 1985 uprising in Broadwater Farm Estate and, a racist press hysteria, framed-up for the killing of PC Blakelock.

New forensic evidence in Winston's case showed that police tampered with the alleged statement which was the only prosecution evidence. Four pages of the statement had been replaced at a late date. One page of Winston's statement is missing, having been removed from Scotland Yard by 'a police officer'. Detective Chief Superintendent Melvin who was in charge of the interrogations who was disciplined for the treatment given to juvenile witnesses suspects during the original investigation, has now been suspended.

The arrests and subsequent convictions of the Tottenham 3 were the result of the biggest murder inquiry ever held by the Metropolitan police: they arrested 460 people. It has brought further shame to already discredited system of British justice. When all three first appealed following their convictions, Lord Lane described the evidence against Winston as 'a solid foundation' - it consisted only of an uncorroborated, unsigned statement, now proved to be forged.

Initially with almost no outside support, and finally, in the wake of the Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6 releases, embarrassing even Labour Party conference into backing them, the three men's families have fought for six years to prove their innocence. Following the appeal verdict, Winston's mother, Mrs Mary Silcott, told FRFI: 'We have to fight for what we believe in to get justice. The case against Winston shows us what British justice is. They said from the start it was Winston, Winston, Winston, and they lied.' Winston and his family are now considering an appeal against the other murder conviction which he remains in gaol.

FRFI sends solidarity greetings to Winston, Engin and Mark and their families. We look forward to their long fought-for release and the criminal prosecution of those police officers responsible for framing these innocent men.

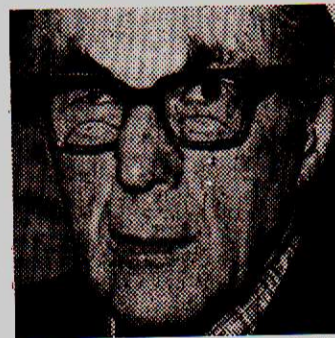
## CPGB is dead - Long live Communism

CAROL BRICKLEY

**On 22 November the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) finally abandoned its name: it had thrown out all vestiges of communist politics some time before. More interesting than this tired inevitability, was the series of death-bed confessions which had dominated Party literature, and occasionally seeped into the *Guardian* comment pages over the last few months.**

If we believe this opportunist rump who have lied and manoeuvred their way through post-war British history, Stalin wrote *The British Road to Socialism*, the CPGB's post-Stalinist, reformist programme. If he did so, it was amongst the worst of his 'crimes' - it is a thoroughly opportunist route up the Labour Party's backside. But this is both unlikely and a minor matter compared with the fact that so many CPGB members, past and present, actually agreed with it.

But this is not what keeps them awake at night. Much more serious for sufferers of Post-Communist Trauma Syndrome (PCTS) is the fact that the Party was financed by *Moscow Gold!* Reuben Falber, former assistant general secretary, revealed that the CPGB received payments of up to £100,000 a year in plain brown envelopes.



Falber 'blew the lid' on Moscow Gold

Putting aside the fact that this would buy only an hour of Mrs Thatcher's time, or pay for a fraction of a Labour or Tory political broadcast, the revelations have sent tremors through party ranks and ex-ranks. Nina Temple, now general secretary of the Democratic Rump, or whatever it is they have renamed themselves, told the press that she was 'pretty angry' and wouldn't have joined if she had known. Earlier disclosure may well have done everyone a favour.

Particularly affected by PCTS is Sarah Benton, an ex-rank and former editor of the CPGB's newsletter *Comment*. 'Shock and horror' the Soviet Communist Party may have paid her salary (should we ask who has paid it since she resigned?).

In a breathless *cri-de-coeur* to *The Guardian*, Sarah tells us that the Party was Divided. Blame lies, apparently, with the dour men in grey suits who were born

before 1940 (surely significant). Blameless were the bright young things (born after 1940) kept busy organising Communist Universities, Red Rags, cracking jokes about the Grey Men.

The Sarahs and Ninas Martins still do not have the time to understand, or the honesty to admit, that this new wave of members were middle class radicals engaged in what a previous generation would have called 'slumming'. Oh, the radicalism of *Marxism Today!* It was an accommodation to Thatcherism.

They will not lose one night's sleep over the abysmal position they endorsed, without a parent arm-twisting from the Dour Grey Men. Entirely of their own free will they failed to support the Irish or the black in Britain, or the framed prisoners, or anyone who opposed CP manoeuvres in the Labour Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, or the Anti-Apartheid Movement, or the Stop the Gulf War campaigns. They were on the working class and the working class without even blushing.

None of us will regret the demise of the CPGB. The betrayed even their predecessors in the pre-war Party were willing to fight fascism. It had been an obstacle to revolutionaries for many years. The regret is that hard-earned cash was not put to better

# First in the queue for Paradise

TREVOR RAYNE

**'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters...'** So Robert Maxwell was laid in his grave. For a modest outlay - the family say \$8,000, but they are surely too modest - a plot was secured on the Mount of Olives.

There, for it is where the Messiah will appear and deliver the Last Judgment, the wicked throughout history will be judged and cast down, the righteous will be transported into paradise. Judging by the recent performance of his more earthly speculations, Maxwell's gambling craving may serve him ill on that fateful day.

Money having the power to set thieves on thrones and give them titles, to make the noble and generally to turn the bad into good and the good into bad, Maxwell received the customary adulations: 'He scaled the heights. Kings and barons besieged his doorstep,' President Herzog of Israel bade him farewell; 'A steadfast supporter of the Labour Party and a man with genuine commitment to the advancement of the British people,' Neil Kinnock; 'A great

character,' John Major etc etc. Thus the alchemists affirmed their pact.

The Sun caught the more popular concern: 'Did he fall... Did he jump?'. Unable to restrain its enthusiasm it ran on 'or was he pushed?' Readers were invited to turn detective and send in their theories of how Maxwell could have been murdered. This edifying pursuit is no doubt compensating for not actually giving him the old heave-ho oneself.

Financial journalists, entire teams of them, beholden to banks, shareholders and insurance companies, who have billions of pounds riding on Maxwell's madness, had to attempt a more sober appraisal.

At the time of his death the Maxwell family owned or part-owned 455 companies operating in over 25 countries. They were bought and strung together with nearly £3bn of debt. In some cases the debt was greater than the asset values against which it was secured.

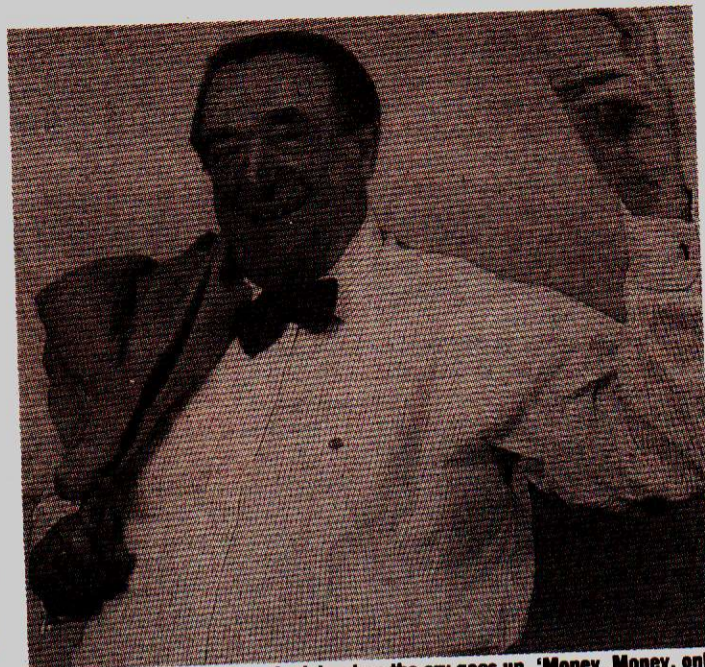
Maxwell Communication Corporation (MCC) is the biggest component of the conglomerate; the Maxwell family held 68% of its shares. In April MCC shares traded at over 220 pence a share, by 20 November they were down to 36 pence. Each £1 invested in

MCC in April was worth about 15 pence; the Serious Fraud Squad were leafing through Maxwell's company accounts and the receivers were hovering, awaiting a call from the banks.

Maxwell's stated goal had been 'a global information and communications company by the end of the decade, with annual revenues of £3-5bn'. Throughout the 1980s loan followed loan in a constant swirl of acquisitions. National Westminster Bank, Barclays, Lloyds and Midland banks are all thought to be owed over £100m each. Over 50 banks are exposed to Maxwell's public and private companies.

Much of this debt was secured against Maxwell shares on an agreement that if the share value fell below 145 per cent of the loan value, more security has to be provided or the loan repaid. Bankers call this arrangement 'pig on pork'; the cannibalistic metaphor is appropriate. For as long as share prices hold up there is little problem; if they fall, either more and more company assets are sold off to feed the banks or the banks will swallow more assets themselves and sell them off. The alternative is unsecured loans and default.

Maxwell was juggling with



Maxwell - at that moment of crisis when the cry goes up, 'Money, Money, only Money', while ordinary commodities and company assets shrink to nothing.

scores of loans, switching them from company to company to buy up shares to hold prices up. If any creditor pulled out the whole lot could come crashing down in a vortex of financial cannibalism.

Only hours before Maxwell's disappearance the US merchant bank Goldman Sachs revealed to the London Stock Exchange that it had sold 2.2m MCC shares.

Goldman Sachs held £143m worth of MCC shares in August. Credit Lyonnais and the Swiss Bank Corporation organised loans and a credit facility jointly worth \$2bn to MCC. The Swiss Bank Corporation discovered in October that shares offered as collateral for a £55m loan were not forthcoming. Maxwell had gambled with other people's money and the time of reckon-

ing had come.

So what is the real mystery of Maxwell? A repulsive man; a self-proclaimed socialist millionaire who praised Thatcher for teaching the trade unions 'some economics'. Whose catchphrase was 'You're fired!'. The 'friend' of Israel with Mossad agents advising in his editorial offices, who yet also was a 'friend' of Brezhnev, Ceausescu et al. A rags-to-riches self-made man whose business was established with a little help from a British intelligence officer who was also the brother-in-law of a director of the Bank of England. A man who made £500,000 a week in dividend payments; who had the gall to accuse Arthur Scargill of misappropriating funds. A man about 90lbs overweight who spent £1,000 a week on caviar. A man who includes in his *Who's Who* entry 'Producer, DODO: the kid from *Outer Space*' (a mystery to match *Citizen Kane's Rosebud*).

Such a man could have died for a thousand reasons, but he was killed by the very force that drove him and took him over: finance capital at that moment of crisis when the cry goes up 'Money, Money, only Money', while ordinary commodities and company assets shrink to nothing. ■

## Hands off Libya! Sanctions off Iraq!

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

As we approach the first anniversary of the Gulf War imperialism is conducting a three-pronged offensive in the Middle East: the charade of Arab-Israeli 'peace' talks (see page 12), the continuing devastation of Iraq and the recently renewed campaign against Libya. Their aim remains the destruction of anti-imperialist forces and Arab nationalism and the imposition of a new imperialist order in the Middle East.

Iraq, with its 17m population and vast oil resources, once a potential regional power, has had its economic and social foundations irreparably undermined. UN sanctions prevent Iraq selling oil or purchasing desperately needed food and medicines, or machinery to reconstruct its shattered economy. Production in the public and private sectors has dropped by 50-97%, and real incomes have dropped by 90%. Iraq's Minister of Agriculture said: '... only 15 per cent of our people can afford to buy food on the free market. The rest must accept hunger. This is the reality of the embargo.'

In September, an Oxfam-funded fact-finding mission noted the 'state of acute poverty in which a large part of the population is now plunged.' 900,000 children are malnourished with 100,000 at immediate risk of starvation. The mortality rate for children under five has increased by 380%. Disease is sweeping a country where 60% of households have no running water. Contaminated water is causing epidemics of cholera,

typhoid and gastroenteritis.

Exploiting Iraq's weakness, the UN is also hoping to undermine its national independence. It is 'permitting' Iraq to sell \$1.5bn worth of oil to purchase much needed medicines and food. But only if it accepts colonial style conditions: that the UN Sanctions Committee carries out the entire operation, including distribution inside Iraq. Given Iraq's real needs, this is no more than a cynically derisive 'humanitarian gesture' and has been rejected by the Iraqi government.



Having humbled Iraq, the US and British are seeking to do the same to Libya, a long standing imperialist target (see *FRFI* 58, April 1986). In mid-November, they announced that responsibility for the 1989 Lockerbie disaster rested, not with Assad's Syria as previously suspected (Assad is now an ally and supported the Gulf War), but with two agents of Ghadafi's Libyan government (which opposed the war). The US has demanded their extradition. Libyan proposals to have the charges examined before neutral international courts were dismissed outright. With threats of an oil embargo, total trade sanctions and even military force, imperialism is testing the waters for its next 'democratic' crusade. ■

## Kurds attacked from Turkey and Iraq

TREVOR RAYNE

US and European imperialism have responded to the advance of the Kurdish revolution by allowing Turkish and Iraqi forces to attack Kurdish positions.

On 25 October, 40 US-supplied fighter bombers of the Turkish army began bombarding villages in Iraqi-occupied south Kurdistan. Napalm, phosphorous and poisonous gas were reportedly used. The Turkish government said the raids were intended to wipe-out PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) guerrilla bases. Their real aim was to depopulate an area of strategic importance to the PKK's objective of establishing a provisional government, in the near future, which will straddle the Iraq-Turkey border.

Neither the US nor the British governments censured the raid into a region supposedly protected by their Poisoned Hammer forces. Talabani of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan PUK and Barzani of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) effectively defended the Turkish operation against what they called PKK 'terrorist attacks'. These bourgeois and feudal leaderships fear the growing influence of the PKK and sought to strengthen their positions in relation to Turkey's imperialist benefactors.

Anticipating that the Allied troops would not act against him Saddam Hussein imposed a military blockade of Kurdish areas in Iraq in early November. By mid-November the PUK and KDP had yielded to Saddam's demand to remove their peshmerga from key Kurdish towns.



Kurdish Workers Association demonstration in London

In near desperation the PUK and KDP have resorted to trying to embarrass the Allies into taking action in their defence. Barzani has raised the issue of the whereabouts of the £57m raised by Jeffrey Archer's Simple Truth concert. This money was only ever intended to burnish the image of Archer and to erase the blemish of the Kurdish exodus from the otherwise carefully-manicured media presentation of the Gulf War.

Imperialists understand well that the Kurdish struggle is a threat to their domination of the Middle East. In the context of the PKK-led Kurdish revolution challenging a key regional ally, Turkey, a few blushes over leaving Barzani and Talabani in the lurch is scarcely a consideration: 'Nato will continue to protect the existence of Turkey. The situation in Turkey in this crisis region was taken into account in the new NATO strategy... It would be against the interests of Europe to isolate Turkey. Con-

tacts with Turkey have to be strengthened... In view of the crisis belt created by the instability of the Soviet Union and its uncertain future which stretches from the Balkans to North Africa and the Middle East, we have to be prepared to confront the very different crises.' (NATO General Secretary Wornier) ■

**BENEFIT FOR KURDISTAN**  
Friday  
13 December  
7.30pm

Theatro Technis,  
26 Crowndale Road  
London NW1

Performing:  
No Frontiers, Alien Culture  
Kurdish Cultural Group  
and others.  
Tickets: £4/£3 concessions  
KSC, 44 Ainger Road,  
London NW3

## End US blockade of Cuba

DAVID REED

In a statement to the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 November 1991, Cuba's permanent representative Ricardo Alarcon announced Cuba would not insist on a vote on its resolution calling for an end to the illegal US blockade in this session, but would however raise the matter next year.

Ricardo Alarcon said he had evidence of communications from the US to the foreign ministries of many countries 'in which the most fallacious arguments go hand in hand with the most transparent threats'.

The US had denied taking action to prevent other countries from trading with Cuba. But Cuba produced incontrovertible evidence refuting this, including the fact that the Canadian and British governments and the European Community had protested to the US about the extra-territorial application of US trade policy towards Cuba.

The US, he said, was impeding the Assembly from taking a just decision on the issue by sending threatening communications to other countries stating that 'The American Congress and people will be watching this important issue very carefully.'

Alarcon appealed to governments, institutions and individuals worldwide to help create the conditions for the General Assembly to take a just decision on the issue next year. Meanwhile, Cuba will continue to raise the issue of the illegal US blockade in a number of international forums. ■

# Britain in the dock

MAXINE WILLIAMS

**Sections of the British ruling class and its loyalist supporters in the Six Counties are demanding the stepping up of repression. Internment without trial is favoured by senior Army officers. The destabilising effects of internment are likely to make British politicians think twice about it. However, they have plenty of other options. In the wake of the IRA's killing of four UDA and UVF supporters on 13 November, the British government despatched 300 extra troops to Belfast and called up 1,400 part-time UDR soldiers and 440 RUC officers to flood nationalist areas.**

Thus six years after the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement the situation of the nationalist community is worse. Underlying the various twists and turns of British policy has been one consistent aim - to politically isolate the Republican movement thus enabling its more thorough repression. The major result of the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been the consolidation of a reactionary anti-Republican bloc in the Twenty-Six Counties which this month, for the first time, banned Sinn Fein's Ard Fheis from Dublin's Mansion House. This can only encourage British repression in the Six Counties.

Loyalist organisations have consistently interpreted British-Dublin cooperation as a sign that concessions to the Nationalists may be in the offing. Loyalist murder gangs have escalated their activities. In eight days in October, four Nationalists were shot dead and three more were injured, one critically. Far from acting against them, the British have repeatedly refused to ban the UDA and there is continuing evidence of collusion between the loyalist gangs and British forces. It was only when the IRA struck back that the British government decided 'something must be done'. Unleashing another 1,400 UDR men onto the

streets, many with loyalist gang links, is a cynical British sop to outraged loyalist feeling. The Loyalists also took their own random revenge the night after the IRA attacks killing three men, one of them a Protestant.

Under cover of Anglo-Irish cooperation, the British government has also refined its machinery of repression. The past four years have seen: the Emergency Powers Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act made permanent; the removal of the right to silence; a broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein; a steady increase in raids on nationalist areas. Most alarming of all has been the re-emergence of institutionalised torture on such a scale that it has attracted international attention.

In May 1991 Amnesty International published its report on British abuse of human rights in the Six Counties, highlighting the ill-treatment of detainees. In 1988 there were 164 complaints of assault by detainees. This rose to 328 in 1990. Methods used include: hooding, suffocation, forcible squatting for long periods, death threats, sexual abuse, sleep deprivation. The aim is to coerce detainees into signing false confessions or becoming informers. The methods are remarkably similar to those used in the 1970s, when a conveyor belt led from torture cells in Castlereagh to tortureless Diplock

courts and finally the H Blocks. At present over 90 per cent of convictions in Diplock courts are based on uncorroborated 'confessions'. Amnesty became so alarmed by the prolonged and severe attacks on one detainee, Damien Austin, that they took the unprecedented step of issuing an International Urgent Action Order, in an attempt to protect him.

The United Nations Committee Against Torture has begun to hear the case, put by Amnesty and others, against Britain. British officials have had a difficult time attempting to justify the lack of safeguards for detainees, arguing, for example, that interviews could not be videotaped in case they fell into the hands of 'paramilitaries'. A Canadian lawyer at the hearings, Professor Peter Burns, said this was 'facile', and that the practice of holding suspects for up to seven days, denying independent medical examination and removing the right to silence had created conditions for abuse: 'This is the difference between a civilised and barbarous community. There are international standards that have to be observed whatever the domestic situation.'

Britain has persistently rejected these 'international standards'. Unless the utmost pressure is mobilised, they will continue to do so. ■



# Haughey in deep water

SEAN Ó MAOLDHOMNAIGH

Charles J Haughey, leader of Fianna Fail and Taoiseach of a tenuous coalition government, is in deep water as corruption and financial scandals float to the surface and the floodgates come under increasing pressure from dissent on all sides. Affectionately known as 'the Boss' by party hacks and political beneficiaries, names used by those not so closely aligned to his close-knit clique offer a more accurate description of the man and his methods. Whether he is a 'threatening, thieving bully' or not, the fact is he is an exceptionally wealthy man as are those who adhere to his political style.

The worldwide recession is having severe effects on the neo-colonial economy of Ireland. The economic miracle hailed less than 12 months ago has begun to crumble at the seams. The multinationals, despite tax concessions and grants are high-tailing it back to the mother countries. The PESP Agree-

ment, an austere deal with unions to keep wages stagnant, is set to collapse. Emigration, the safety valve that kept unemployment figures below 250,000 is no longer a viable option for a highly educated but disenfranchised youth. Agriculture, Ireland's traditional breadwinner, is bound hand and foot to EC policy, itself rattled by the death blow of continued failure at the GATT talks.

The disillusionment all round was fuelled in recent weeks by the catalogue of crooked dealings and business scandals. A greedy, aggressive business class has been busy lining its pockets while overseeing the privatisation of various semi-state bodies. At the behest of Haughey and co, and largely at public expense, the avaricious tycoons have been helping themselves and their 'friends', while selling off Telecom, the Sugar Company and other state bodies. The backscratching and palm-greasing continued unabated until money went short and the cover was blown. When thieves fall out there is no telling where the filth will stop, but all

the grubby fingers in the pie are pointing to the top. The denials and accusations come fast and furious, as politicians along with the Smurfits and Goodmans cover their dirty tracks.

Meanwhile, dissension within the ranks of the parliamentary party has meant Haughey has had to use all his guile and political bullying to survive. In the run-up to the Maastricht summit his Foreign Affairs Minister Mr Collins is finding his begging bowl no longer welcome at the EEC table where the big boys have enough on their plates with domestic problems. Unemployment, already the highest in the EC and at levels unprecedented in the history of the state, is set to top 25 per cent. Crime is soaring, the health boards and councils can no longer cover basic bills, there is no attempt at a solution to the problems in the north and a budget, expected to be vicious, is due next February.

A corrupt and decrepit leader and a bankrupt government, both economically and politically, take the country into a period that is certain to see major upheavals in the coming months.

# Extradition in trouble



Dessie Ellis and Tony Sloan after the ruling that Sloan's offences were political

SARAH RICCA

**The 1987 Extradition Act between Britain and Ireland has met with vociferous Irish opposition, north and south, for its removal of protection from extradition for political charges - protection common in most of Europe. This opposition was galvanised into a powerful campaign when the first warrant under the new Act was issued against Republican Dessie Ellis.**

In the face of such opposition, Ellis' case became an important test of Dublin's loyalty to Westminster. And Haughey's government passed with flying colours, handing a hunger-striking

Ellis to British goals on a stretcher in November 1990.

What humiliation, then, for them to see a British court acquit Ellis in October of the charges their courts had rubber-stamped a year earlier. Ellis conducted a political trial, describing his involvement in the national struggle as a quality controller who checked bomb-making equipment. The jury accepted his contention that he had already served an eight-year sentence in Ireland for this activity, and that the new charge was seeking to punish him again for the same offence. On his release, he thanked the jury and said his release was 'a victory not just for the Irish but for the British people as well'.

# More British terror

PAM ROBINSON

**Thursday 6 September South Belfast** South African-born lecturer Adrian Guelke, particular interests South Africa, Israel and the north of Ireland, was shot and injured by masked gunmen. Claiming responsibility, the UFF said they obtained 'high-level intelligence information' identifying Guelke as a target. Guelke suggested they had deliberately been fed false information, possibly by pro-South African elements.

**Friday 13 September North Belfast** Taxi driver, Kevin Flood, was murdered by loyalist gunmen outside his home.

**Monday 16 September Magherafelt South Derry** Sinn Fein councillor, Bernard O'Hagan, was murdered by UFF gunmen as he arrived at the FE college where he was a lecturer.

**Saturday 28 September St James' Road Belfast** Larry Mur-

chan was murdered by loyalist death squad members outside his shop as he was preparing to open for business.

**Sunday 29 September Cookstown Co Tyrone** 19-year-old Kevin McGovern was murdered by the RUC who opened fire without warning.

**South Armagh border region** 800 extra British troops have been drafted into the area. They have increased helicopter activity, set up road blocks and disrupted the local communities. The Free State has also sent 100 soldiers to the border area.

**Thursday 24 October Beechmount West Belfast** The RUC launched an unprovoked attack with plastic bullets on Damien Austen, already the subject of an Amnesty International Urgent Action.

**Sunday 3 November Poleglass Belfast** Gerard Maginn was murdered and another youth injured when the RUC opened fire without warning on their stationary car.



Family and friends lay flowers at the site of Kevin McGovern's murder by the RUC

Just three weeks later the courts in Dublin, their fingers burnt, refused an application to extradite to the north two Republicans, Anthony Sloan and Michael McKee. They used a loophole which means that possession of firearms, with which the two were charged, is not an extraditable offence.

However irritating for the British state, this judgement is no more than a temporary hiccup in the extradition of Irish nationalists to British goals. In the same judgement, the courts approved the extradition of a third man, Paul Magee, to complete a sentence for the assassination of an SAS member. But it does show, along with Dessie Ellis' case, the strength of opposition to extradition in Ireland and the impact of the Guildford 4, Birmingham 6 and Maguire 7 cases on British juries. ■

# Voice of the Innocent

WOMEN POWS.  
MAGHABERRY GAOL

Interrogation centres in the Six Counties have witnessed throughout the years countless cases of brutal torture and inhumane treatment.

In the 1970s Nationalists learned to associate the names of the three main centres (Armagh's Gough Barracks, Derry's Strand Road and Castlereagh in Belfast) with the harrowing reality of seven-day detentions where the prisoner is drugged, stripped, beaten, given electric shock treatment by British forces. The primary intention being to extract 'confessions' to actions the detainees may or may not have carried out, or to 'persuade' them to work for the Crown forces as an informant.

Incidents of brutality have soared in recent months particularly against the youth of nationalist areas.

The renewed policy of the RUC is to round up teenagers, torture them for seven days in the hope of receiving verbal or written statements, and then remand them in custody to await trial. Many convictions have resulted solely from forced confessions, but even suspects found not guilty in the non-jury Diplock courts may have spent up to three years awaiting trial.

A new group, 'Voice of the Innocent', founded to highlight these repressive tactics points out that the RUC acknowledges these youths are not known members of the IRA but holds them as 'hostages' every time the IRA carries out military actions.

Amnesty International will be investigating the case of Damien Austin, who was beaten in Castlereagh and released only when his solicitor announced his intention to ask the courts to have the youth freed due to obvious ill-treatment.

The blatant harassment and torture will continue so long as the people of Britain and Ireland remain silent, just as the terrible oppression of the Irish will continue so long as Britain occupies our land and denies us our right to self-determination.

On 25/26 October the Patriotic Front's first meeting took place, a few months later than you anticipated. Can you explain the background to the meeting?

The Congress of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) in December 1990 resolved that we should form a broad-based principled united front to press for our demand for an elected constituent assembly. Since then we have bilaterally met a wide spectrum of organisations in order to convene a Patriotic Front. When we met the African National Congress (ANC) executive in April 1991, we decided to set up a liaison committee which would convene the Front. After a meeting with the National Executive of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), they also joined the liaison committee.

We laid down the conditions for participation; namely acceptance of the democratic mechanism of an elected constituent assembly. We then sent out invitations to the organisations which had accepted this precondition.

As you know, originally the meeting was scheduled for August 1991; it was then postponed to September, and finally it was held on 25-27 October. Our first problem was financial. It was the PAC that took up the issue of finances with the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Ad Hoc Committee in July. I must say that they responded very positively and made \$250,000 immediately available. Then, of course, the process began to move faster.

Just prior to the actual Patriotic Front meeting, we had two other difficulties. The Secretary-General of AZAPO decided to write letters to 14 of the organisations which had been invited by a collective decision of the ANC, PAC and AZAPO, laying down additional conditions for their participation in the Patriotic Front. Our argument with AZAPO was that if they felt strongly about some invitations as a matter of principle, they should have first raised it with us in our bilateral meetings. And certainly they should have raised it in the liaison committee when the invitations were being sent out. Since they had not done so, they were in breach of the agreement. We had no alternative but to say to AZAPO that if they did not agree to withdraw the letter, or agree to sign a joint letter saying that their letter was nothing to do with the liaison committee, we would have to revert to the original liaison committee of ANC and PAC. AZAPO did not agree to this, so we reverted to the original committee. AZAPO was invited to participate in the Front like any other member.

Another problem that we faced was a letter purporting to come from the second Deputy President of the PAC, Comrade Mlambo, which was circulated to some news agencies. It was on the letterhead of our external headquarters in Dar es Salaam, but there was no signature. Comrade Mlambo is supposed to have condemned the convening of the Patriotic Front, its demand for an elected constituent assembly and also the internal leadership of the PAC. The first day of the Patriotic Front meeting, I convened a press conference in Durban to refute the allegations and make clear that this was deliberate disinformation, trying to undermine the Patriotic Front.

**What was the Patriotic Front's relation to Inkatha?**

To participate in the Patriotic Front meeting, you had to accept the demand for an elected constituent assembly. Inkatha, at their congress, adopted a resolution rejecting this, and another statement issued at that meeting also condemned the convening of the Patriotic Front, saying that this was an attempt to 'gang up' on the apartheid regime. They ruled themselves out.

**What was the outcome of the Patriotic Front conference?**

92 organisations participated. Most importantly, it was an open conference. The press and guests were present throughout the very frank and democratic discussion. Since the whole aim of the meeting was to further the demand for an elected constituent assembly, the meeting was relatively small and the discussions were extremely constructive. The two documents that

**Interview with Gora Ebrahim, PAC Secretary for Foreign Affairs**

# FORGING UNITY IN THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

*Two weeks after the first Patriotic Front meeting in Durban, Carol Brickley and David Reed interviewed Cde Gora Ebrahim, from the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, on what the Front meeting had achieved and the prospects for unity in the struggle against apartheid.*

came out of the meeting, the Declaration and the Statement, clearly laid down what is the consensus of all the participants in that meeting.

**There were organisations participating that were part of the apartheid regime's structures - bantustan leaders and other organisations. What was the Front's attitude to them?**

We have to understand very clearly what a front is all about. The Front must be a uniting force for all those who have a contradiction with the regime around a specific issue - the demand for an elected constituent assembly. In that regard we think that we have done extremely well; we have been able to win even organisations and political parties within apartheid structures to our side to support our demand.

**Can you give examples?**

For instance, from the Tricameral Parliament, the Democratic Party and the Labour Party; various bantustan political parties. Let's take the bantustan structures. The meeting resolved that the bantustans must be reincorporated into a unified Azania. None of the parties present objected. None of them today are objecting. Now it is a question of *how* to bring about the reincorporation of the bantustans. The PAC's position is that if there are those who want to leave the apartheid structures, or want to associate themselves with the Patriotic Front, we should welcome them. But we should not allow them to influence the Front; we should not put them into its leadership.

Did their participation weaken or strengthen the Front? Did it strengthen the enemy, or did it weaken it? Our view is that it strengthened the Front and weakened the enemy.

Initially the regime hoped that the Patriotic Front would not happen - and even if it did, that it would be a rancorous affair and not reach substantive decisions. That didn't happen. That is why Gerrit Viljoen, Minister for Constitutional Affairs, on the eve of the Patriotic Front meeting, made such a strong statement against the Front.

**So, would you argue that the presence of bantustan and Tricameral Parliament parties was not collaboration?**

Yes. Let me explain one thing about the question of collaboration and non-collaboration. The PAC has always maintained a principled position of non-collaboration. As our founding President [Robert Sobukwe] put it, apartheid and colonialism can only function as long as the regime or the colonial power is able to get a section of the oppressed to manage and run its institutions. For us to go into such institutions and run them, or even claim to go into them wanting to change them from within, that constitutes collaboration. But to get those who are in apartheid structures out, to join our structures,



**We say that if you don't accept our terms and demands, then we have alternative methods of implementing them**

based on our principles, does not constitute collaboration.

We did not negotiate with those people to come: we told them that they must accept a democratic mechanism to resolve the problem in our country. We didn't discuss the constitution with them; the constitution is yet to be decided. All we are doing now is saying to our people 'Let us all now collectively agree on a democratic mechanism', and if these people agree, it would be wrong for us to say 'No, they shouldn't'.

**What substantial decisions came from the conference?**

There were two basic documents that were adopted at that meeting. One is the Declaration which makes it abundantly clear that the objective of the meeting was to expedite the transfer of power from the racist minority to an elected majority. That is the focus of the whole meeting. We resolved that the regime is illegal, and totally discredited, and that the transfer of power has to be done through the elected constituent assembly. In the period leading to elections, the regime cannot be player, referee and scorekeeper. Therefore a transitional authority with international participation will be needed.

In the view of the PAC, the Patriotic Front meeting upheld the decisions of the PAC Congress: that we should not talk to the regime individually; that if we do talk to the regime it must be only to discuss the modalities of an elected constituent assembly; that such a meeting should be at a neutral venue, under a neutral chairperson. All these positions were endorsed by the Patriotic Front.

The liaison committee, made up of the ANC and PAC at the moment, will continue to represent the Front. We

have agreed that the Patriotic Front conference must be reconvened in six months' time to report on our progress.

**So when we read in the British press that All-Party talks are due to begin in two weeks, what is being said?**

What the Front decided was that we should have a meeting with the regime in a few weeks' time, to set up only three things: a date for a pre-constituent assembly meeting, which our colleagues in the ANC call an 'All-Party Conference'; the neutral venue for such a meeting; and an independent and neutral chairperson. I, personally, am not very sure that the next meeting can simply resolve this at one go, because whilst the regime, from what we have learned so far, has already accepted the principle of a neutral venue and chairperson, it is however insisting that the neutral venue be within the country, and the neutral chairperson be somebody from the country. The PAC maintains that the venue has to be outside the country, and that the neutral chairperson must be from outside the country, someone representing an organisation that has the necessary clout to force the process forward. If the regime doesn't accept this, then there will be no pre-constituent assembly meeting.

**So a lot depends on the standing of the Patriotic Front; what support it has in the country. How are you going to force the regime into a process which, in your terms, is going to lead to the transfer of power to the majority?**

The regime is on weak ground. We have now succeeded in zero-ing the whole process into the fact that a new constitution is necessary. I don't think the regime can dictate to us about that. On the contrary, the Patriotic Front has now seized the initiative. It is we who are putting forward the demand; the regime has to react. I do not see how it can reject our legitimate demands and get away with it.

We have also demonstrated that this is not just the demand of one or two organisations - it is the demand of two thirds of the majority. As you know, on 1 February 1991, a quarter of a million people marched outside parliament demanding an elected constituent assembly. These demands will escalate. Next February there will be demonstrations all over the country when parliament opens. The PAC will use all means at its disposal to further this demand.

**You put stress on the international community being a neutral observer of a fair process. Why do you think that will be the case? Our recent experience of the United Nations has been that it has become very much a tool of the United States' foreign policy. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, there's not a great deal to oppose that development. Let me first tell you why the PAC**

believes that there should be some sort of international participation. First and foremost we have our own experience starting way back in 1960, when we led a very big march to Cape Town. We were asked by the regime to ask our people to quietly return to the township and to send a delegation to negotiate. When we did that, the delegation was arrested. So nobody in our country has any trust in the integrity of the regime.

More recently we have seen the agreement on the Groote Schuur and Pretoria Minutes, between the regime and the ANC. They have not been respected by the regime. We have had the National Peace Accord signed by the regime, but not respected by them. That is why we must have some international participation to make sure that agreements are respected and implemented on all sides.

Now, to the extent of participation in the international community. We are not asking the international community to find solutions for us; we have a democratic formula. We are asking the international community to support the creation of democratic institutions in our country. That's all we are asking them to do.

Let's take the United Nations. Yes, it is true, the UN has been carrying out policies very much akin to the interests of certain powers. That we know very well. But in the case of South Africa there is a consensus declaration of the United Nations which puts conditions on the regime. A one-person, one-vote constitution in a unified South Africa is non-negotiable. We are forcing the regime to accept these principles. The international community must see to it that they are implemented.

**Let's just go a bit further. The overall impression given by the British media is that the Patriotic Front conference has almost been ignored. The emphasis has been on the ANC's proposal for an Interim Government. Do you think that the Patriotic Front will be able to hold together and go to the regime with a common programme in relation to the constituent assembly?**

Let me specifically talk about the question of the Interim Government. If you read the OAU Ad Hoc Committee resolution it is very clear that the interim administration must be linked to the constituent assembly. You cannot have one without the other. An interim government must be a transitional government. The mechanism for transition is the constituent assembly. That, even the ANC agrees with.

The difficulty we have to resolve here is this: do we want to be co-opted by the government to become co-managers of apartheid during the transitional period? If you have an interim government without linking it up with the constituent assembly, and without giving it a definite time-frame, then the interim government could become permanent. This would be power-sharing by an elite against the oppressed. We believe that by having the Patriotic Front meeting we have further clarified the need for a transitional authority tied to the elected constituent assembly.

**And you feel you have the support and the strength to carry that through?**

Yes, because one thing I'm very convinced of is that nobody can sell a constitution to our people which is not based on majority rule and one person, one vote. The regime has been calling the shots since February 1990 when the liberation movements were unbanned. It wanted the PAC to engage in talks immediately, because it wanted to engage us from a position of weakness. But the PAC viewed the priority as strengthening itself at grassroots level. We had to then clarify our own programme, which we did at our Congress. We then had to unite our people, which we have done in the Patriotic Front.

Meanwhile the regime has been engaging some organisations in talks and has been turning pre-conditions into negotiating issues, something that the PAC and its allies oppose. The regime has been dictating both the terms and the pace of the discussions. But now we are going to determine the

*continued on page 7*

pace, the content and what pressures we can put on the regime. We are not merely going to threaten them that if they don't talk, we will break off talks. We say that if you don't accept our demands, then we have alternative methods of implementing them. You see, we are giving the regime the opportunity to concede, but we are not going to accept the status quo if they do not. We will use other methods to implement our programme.

**Like the recent strike against the new VAT laws?**

Yes. There was a joint liaison committee to organise the strike, including the PAC, ANC, COSATU, and NACTU. We agreed jointly that NACTU and COSATU would call the strike, but we supported it. The Patriotic Front meeting unanimously supported the strike.

It was a tremendous strike - over 80 per cent of the workforce stayed away. It was very well-organised in the sense that there was no bloodbath or intimidation, because people supported it. VAT affects everybody.

**So the kind of other measures you're talking about include strike action by workers, what else?**

For the PAC, every aspect of the struggle: strike action, mass mobilisation, boycott, non-participation. We continue to demand sanctions and isolation of the apartheid regime, and we are still committed to the armed struggle to further our political demands.

**Since your conference, what developments have taken place in the PAC?**

Today there is a recognition that the PAC cannot be marginalised. This could not have happened if we had not strengthened at grassroots. If there are organisations talking to us, forming alliances with us, it is not because they like us, it is because we are on the ground, they have to deal with us.

The four-pronged strategy that the PAC adopted after it was unbanned is now beginning to work. We have strengthened ourselves at the grassroots level. As you know, at our Congress we had 458 branches. Now we are almost up at the 850 mark. We have just set up, two weeks ago, a branch in the heart of Johannesburg. We are now consolidating them at the regional level; that is our priority. We hope to hold another congress of the PAC in April next year. The third phase was the uniting of the different forces - we have achieved that with the Patriotic Front. The fourth phase now is the intensification of the struggle.

**A recent survey said you had 7 per cent less support than the ANC.**

At one stage they said we only had 7 per cent support in the country, now they say we have 7 per cent less than the ANC. Similarly they have been giving figures about COSATU and NACTU. But the same media that talks about the pro-ANC COSATU unions, didn't say a word that the last COSATU congress was formally opened by the PAC President, Cde Clarence Makwethu.

**Has the solidarity movement still got a role to play in your struggle?**

There are two areas which we think are very important. The Western countries, who always sympathised or connived with the apartheid regime, are utilising the cosmetic changes to give the impression that fundamental changes are taking place. We believe it is the task of the solidarity movement to expose these 'reforms', and to emphasise that until and unless the country has a new non-racial democratic constitution, no fundamental changes can take place.

The solidarity organisations should also support the positions that are collectively taken by the people. But there have been tendencies in the past for solidarity groups to decide what the liberation movement should or should not do. Right now we think the solidarity groups should support the Patriotic Front. Those solidarity groups that have been sectarian should either dissolve or should make fundamental changes to their outlook, because otherwise they will not be in solidarity with our struggle.

**UNITY IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID**

**Forward to majority rule**

*'We should be like the fingers of a hand - separate, but able to strike like a fist against the common enemy.'* (PAC delegate, Maxwell Nemedivhanane speaking at the Patriotic Front meeting)

*From 25 to 27 October, more than 90 organisations, representing the majority of the South African/Azania people, attended an historic conference in Durban, co-convened by the PAC and ANC around the demand for an elected constituent assembly. The unity at the Patriotic Front conference is now to be tested in practice. CAT WIENER reports.*

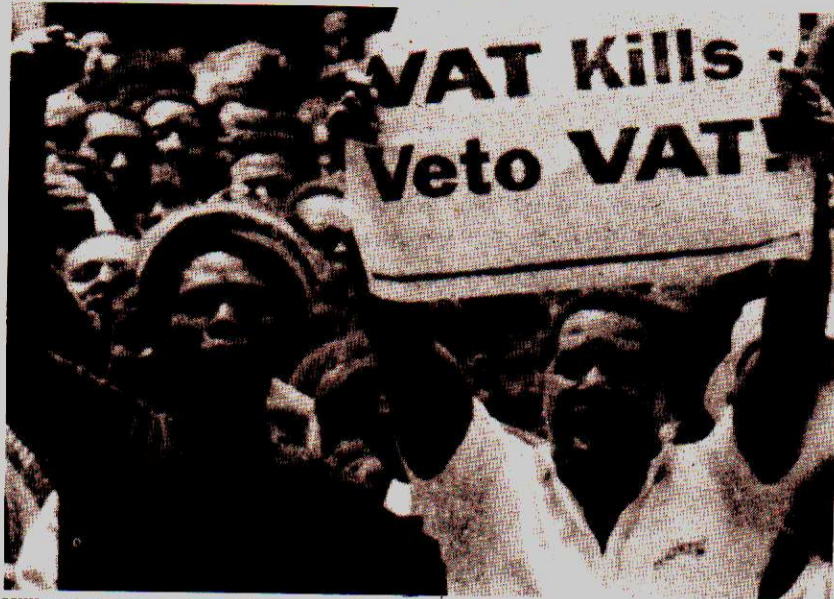
A week after the Front meeting, the potential strength of a united movement was demonstrated as millions of black workers protested against the new VAT laws, in a spectacular, mass two-day stay-away, jointly called by COSATU and NACTU, and backed by PAC, ANC, AZAPO and SACP. VAT is the regime's latest scheme for taxing the poor - it has even been applied to food and medicine.

However, in the run-up to the All-Party Congress/Pre-Constituent Assembly meeting, it is inevitable that the unity which the Patriotic Front represents, should come under great strain. The regime has stated categorically: 'we are not prepared to hand over power to the ANC or any other party or movement.' The Patriotic Front has declared the regime illegal and demands the transfer of power to the people. Between these two clear standpoints, various political tendencies are shifting their positions in the hope that they will back the winner.

Those who have a stake in the apartheid system, but are also coming under pressure from the mass movement, include the bantustan leaders. They are the beneficiaries of hefty hand-outs from the regime, so de Klerk is now moving to force those bantustan organisations who attended the Patriotic Front conference, back into line. Two weeks after the conference, some of them endorsed Constitutional Minister Viljoen as their 'negotiator'. One of these, Lebowa leader Nelson Ramodike, went on to form a 'United People's Front' committed to the aims of the Patriotic Front.

These are not the only forces who, in the words of the *Sowetan*, appear to be 'hunting with the hounds and running with the hares'. Nelson Mandela has said that the ANC is 'trying to move South Africa away from confrontation with the minority regime'.

The ANC seems to be willing to reach its own agreement with the



Millions have demonstrated their opposition to the new VAT laws

regime and Inkatha on the All-Party/Multi-Party conference. The proposed date is now 20/21 December. Mandela wants the All Party Congress to be 'the route through which the ANC will relieve the apartheid regime of exclusive responsibility for the management of the state and its resources' (our emphasis). This must be a reference to setting up an Interim government with the regime.

It is now rumoured that the ANC has reached its own agreement with the regime on a 'neutral' chair and venue for the All Party Congress. Apartheid's Chief Justice is rumoured to be the choice of chair, along with the head of the Dutch Reformed Church, and Stanley Mgoba, President of the Council of Race Relations. The 'neutral venue' is alleged to be an hotel at Jan Smuts airport. A preparatory meeting has now been called for 29 November with ANC, the regime, Inkatha, PAC and the Democratic Party among the participants.

These events are bound to place strain on the Patriotic Front alliance, since the PAC has made it clear that it

is committed to the Patriotic Front demands (see interview with Gora Ebrahim, page 6), including a neutral chair and venue for the pre-constituent assembly meeting. It has made clear that if the ANC has reached such an agreement then it is a violation of the Patriotic Front agreement.

None of the participants, however, can have any doubts that this is a key moment for the future of the liberation movement in South Africa, and that the formation of the Patriotic Front has placed all parties under pressure to decide where they stand on one central issue - whether the majority should enter a power-sharing alliance with the regime, or act in unity to finally defeat apartheid oppression. Up until now de Klerk's divide and rule strategy, including sponsoring township violence, has paid off, with Buthelezi's Inkatha steadfastly toeing the regime's line.

There will be tragic consequences for the oppressed if de Klerk is able to win others to his side. Unity of the oppressed, on the other hand, is the key to defeating apartheid.

**ANC, PAC and BCMA address London rally**

*On 7 November, more than a hundred people packed a meeting at Conway Hall to hear representatives of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania, African National Congress and Black Consciousness Movement of Azania. The rally had been called by City of London Anti-Apartheid in solidarity with the formation of the Patriotic Front, and to mobilise solidarity for the demand of all the liberation movements for an elected constituent assembly.*

Albert Dlomo, speaking for the ANC, greeted the rally in the name of the ANC and its leadership and of 'the Patriotic Front, which is now about to lead the struggle in our country.' He paid tribute to City AA's work over the years: 'Our people and their leadership within South Africa have not forgotten the long, cold winters that you spent demonstrating and demanding their release.'

He condemned the refusal of the racist minority regime to dismantle apartheid and establish a non-racial, non-sexist, unitary state in South Africa. 'The structures of apartheid are still in place... the so-called bantustans are still existing... the pillars of apartheid... known as "separate development" are still in place...' That certain changes had taken place was due to the struggle for

the people of South Africa, supported by the oppressed peoples the world over: but these victories had to be consolidated so that the people could achieve their ultimate goal of freedom. The Patriotic Front was a step towards uniting the oppressed people of South Africa.

Comrade Moichupari Segway spoke on behalf of the BCMA, the external wing of AZAPO. AZAPO was expelled from the Patriotic Front committee after writing to the organisations invited which were part of apartheid structures, such as bantustan and Tricameral Parliament leaders. It did not attend the Patriotic Front Conference. Comrade Moichupari explained the reasons why AZAPO had taken this stand: 'When we talk about unity, then we must spell out what we mean by that unity.

We mean, as far as the BCMA is concerned, unity among all those people amongst the oppressed who are committed and fighting for their own liberation. We do not believe that the oppressed, as the oppressed, are just an amorphous mass. There are sections of the oppressed who are part of the liberation struggle... there have always been and will always be a part of the oppressed who partake in their own oppression.'

He stressed, however, AZAPO/BCMA's unswerving commitment to the unity of the liberation movements, but added 'we believe that there is a distinct... difference between the unity of the liberation forces and unity in general.'

Spelling out the BCMA/AZAPO's programme, Comrade Moichupari said: 'We put at the top of our agenda the primacy of the black working class because we hold... for our liberation, socialism is not negotiable. We have yet to be convinced that there is an alternative way of addressing the national question, the question of national self-determination. That is a question of the working class being in power... both during and after the struggle.'

The rally was privileged to wel-

come the Foreign Secretary of the PAC, Cde Ebrahim, during a brief visit to Britain. He welcomed the participation of the BCMA at the rally alongside the ANC and PAC, saying 'that is exactly where they belong, in the Patriotic Front', to loud applause.

He outlined the PAC role in initiating the Patriotic Front, and reiterated the importance of uniting all those forces opposed to the regime and the principle that they would only talk to the government about the modalities of setting up an elected constituent assembly (for fuller exposition of views of the PAC, see interview, page 6). On the question of participation by bantustan and Tricameral parties, he said: 'The ship was sinking, they wanted to leave. When a ship sinks, it is true that the passengers run for lifeboats. But it is equally true that the rats also leave the ship, and you can't tell the rats to stay there... you know you are weakening the regime when even the rats desert the ship.'

Summing up, he emphasised the historic importance of the Patriotic Front: 'In just 18 months, we have put the question of an elected constituent assembly on the agenda and we intend to pursue it relentlessly.'

**Campaigning with City AA**

TERRY DOWDING

The highlight of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group's work over the most recent period was the rally called in solidarity with the Patriotic Front, on 7 November, which welcomed speakers from the PAC, ANC and BCMA (see separate report). The rally was also the launch of City AA's series of monthly briefings, discussions which will be addressed by representatives of the PAC, ANC and BCMA and other liberation organisations.

Mobilising support for the Patriotic Front and for the demand of all the liberation movements for a one-person, one-vote elected constituent assembly remains the central theme of City AA's work. On 3-4 November, City AA and RCG member Cat Wiener attended a UN Special Committee conference, presenting a report on behalf of City AA on our continued commitment to non-sectarian solidarity with all liberation forces, condemning the lifting of sanctions, and calling for active support for the Patriotic Front's demands.

Over the Christmas period, City AA is campaigning for the release of the political prisoners who remain in gaol. Together with the Sharpeville 6 Committee in Holland, we have a postcard campaign calling for their release, and a series of pickets outside the racist South African Airways in Oxford Circus, culminating in a rally outside the South African embassy on 21 December from 2pm. Phone City AA, 071 837 6050 for details.

AND... four years after hundreds of us were arrested while fighting for the right to demonstrate outside the South African embassy, police have finally settled our action against them out of court - at £500 per arrest!

● On 30 November, RCG comrades will attend the AAM AGM. We submitted a motion calling for active support for the Patriotic Front's demands - which was the only mention of the PF in all the motions. This has now been swallowed up into a composite seconded by the NEC - the RCG is among a long list of supporters - is the message getting home? ■

**'What is at stake is both the defence of black and immigrant groups and also the future of the left in Europe. If, from the collapsed ruin of what has passed for socialism and communism in Europe, a healthy new movement is to be built, it will have on its leading banner 'Against Imperialism, Against Racism, Against Fascism', or it will have no banner at all.'**

**FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM! December 1990**

**Since these words were written their truth has been demonstrated by the burgeoning of racism in Europe, both governmental racism and its jackboot offspring of fascist thugs. Fascist parties are making serious electoral gains in France, Germany, Austria and Belgium. Black people and immigrants face escalating attacks in all European countries. The European anti-racist movement is small and fragmented. It is urgent that a strong, European-wide movement against all racism and fascism be built.**

**Chris James, Nicki Jameson, Cat Wiener and Maxine Williams report.**

**GERMANY** *Racist outrages, including the killing of three and the wounding of countless more immigrants, have escalated to heights unprecedented since the days of Nazism in Germany. In late September, Hoyerswerda, a small German town, became the symbol of the march of fascist forces, German popular response and government collusion. For in Hoyerswerda, following five days of vicious assaults on asylum seekers' hostels, the immigrants were removed from the town on buses. A carnival atmosphere prevailed, as the population turned out to cheer their departure and stone their coaches. The government's response has been to take steps to curb the numbers of asylum seekers in Germany.*

In what was West Germany, there have been 210 arson attacks on immigrant hostels this year. In former East Germany, where anti-fascist laws were repealed at the time of unification, there have been about 70. Hundreds of attacks on individuals have taken place. In one attack Soviet children recovering from the Chernobyl disaster were attacked. The German police force, although large and well-equipped, has proclaimed itself mysteriously 'powerless' to deal with such attacks. It has, however, managed to attack anti-fascist demonstrations in Berlin using teargas and riot police.

Bourgeois political reaction has encouraged the fascists to greater heights of brutality. When they attack hostels, they see immigrants removed and indeed, in a chilling parallel with the 1930s, put into 'collection' camps. The German police have called for immigrants to be put in 'concentrated accommodation'.

When the fascists launch a wave of attacks they hear the main political

parties say that immigrant numbers must be dramatically cut. Christian Democrat Chancellor Kohl and the Social Democrats speak with one voice about this, although they differ about methods. Kohl has gone so far as to say that fascist outbreaks can only be stopped by reducing immigrant numbers. Rather like saying that the rise of Hitler could have been stopped by deporting all Jews from Germany.

The large amount of popular support for racist policies was shown in the recent Bremen elections. The extreme right-wing Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) got more than five per cent of the votes, winning six seats. The Christian Democrats surged by seven per cent, whilst the Social Democrats who, despite their best efforts, are seen as more liberal on immigration, lost 11 per cent. The increase in the DVU vote came mainly from working-class, male, previously Social Democrat voters.

During the euphoria with which commentators greeted German reuni-

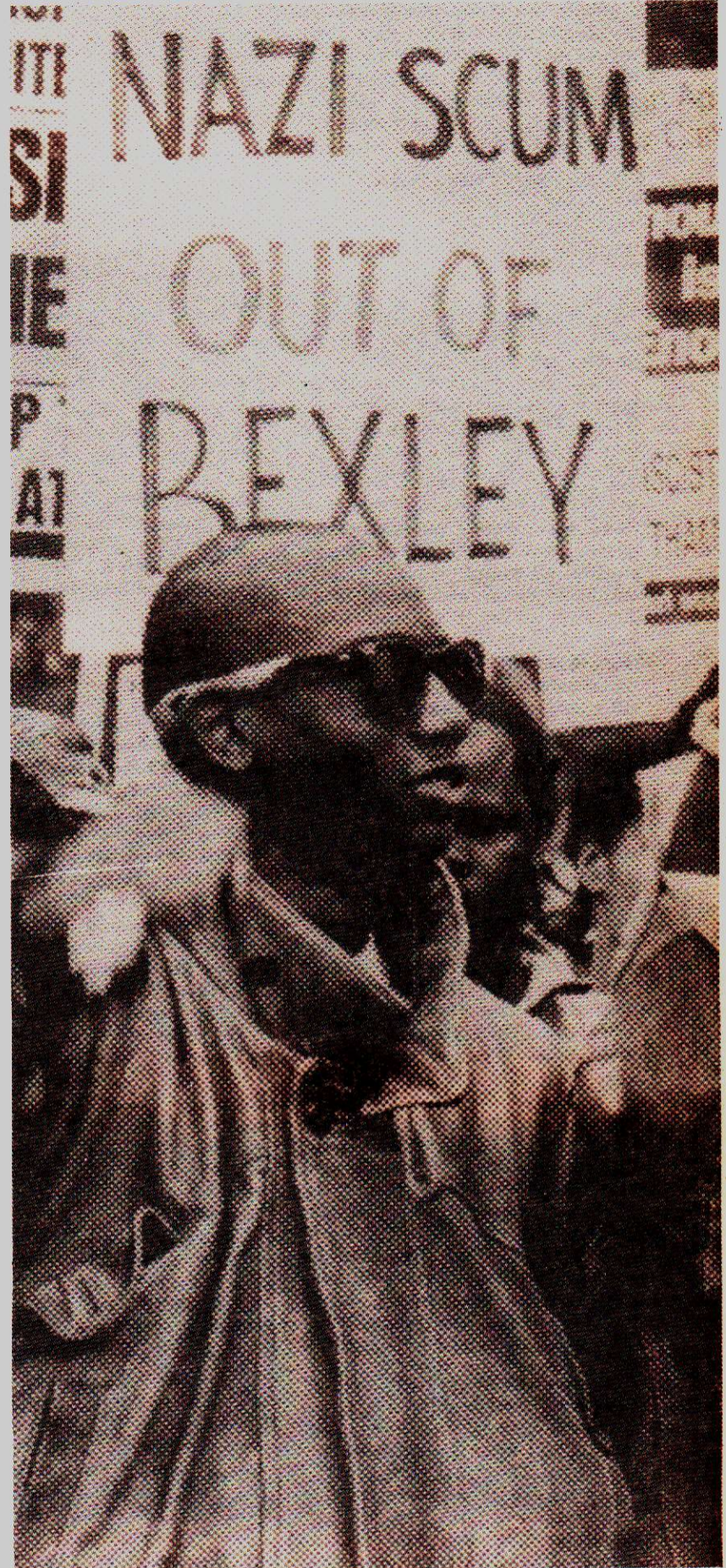
fication in 1990, they repeatedly ridiculed the notion of Germany returning to its fascist past. Democracy was too strong, they said, thus ignoring much of Germany's twentieth century history and most significantly the lack of any serious de-nazification campaign in West Germany after 1945. That 'democracy' is now facing its first serious, post-unification test.

The results look unpromising to say the least. A recent poll shows that 44 per cent of (West) Germans believe that Jews have too much influence in the country, despite the annihilation of six million Jews during the 1930s and 1940s. Germany, now a nation of 79 million and unquestionably the economically strongest in Europe, is in the grip of a nationalist and xenophobic fever. Its 'democratic' politicians have fed the fires that leave immigrant hostels in ashes and immigrants themselves in 'concentrated accommodation'.

Such fires, once begun, rarely end at Germany's borders. Particularly so today, when Germany's geographical and economic position will make it both the dominant power in Europe and the power most likely to make gains from the fractures and fissures of what was socialist Eastern Europe.

The anti-fascist movement in Germany based on immigrant groups, left, liberal and church groups faces an uphill task and needs support. They face a fascist movement with an estimated 40,000 activists and a willingness to engage in armed attacks, and a state which is colluding with the fascists. The anti-fascists who stand guard at night outside hostels may not only be trying to keep immigrants alive, but democracy itself.

# AGAINST



## Observing the first anniversary of colonisation

3 October 1991. East Germany (or 'the five new *länder*', as it is affectionately called by its Western patrons) is supposed to celebrate the first anniversary of its initiation into freedom, wealth and democracy. Strangely enough, there is no trace of celebration anywhere, no fireworks - just the odd demonstration in Berlin against xenophobia and racist violence.

So how come there is so little enthusiasm for the united Germany? West Germans, on the one hand, are annoyed that unity is costing money. They have to pay a new sort of tax called *Solidaritätsabgabe* to sponsor unity! East Germans, on the other hand, have to understand that they will remain the 'Ossies', the underdogs of the country, for a long time to come.

Rather than bringing people together, this first year of unity has shown them how different they are - and the differences are growing. Surveys show that more than 50% of the East Germans feel colonised by West Germany. So let's take a close look at

this new colony Germany North-East. Does this colonisation follow the old rules?

■ **Expropriation of the natives** There are 1.3 million applicants for the restitution of land and buildings. In East Berlin, every tenth estate is claimed by former owners (often war criminals who were expropriated after the war and moved west); in many other communities it is one in three. In extreme cases, up to ten owners-to-be are competing for the same attractive plot. Nobody cares for the residents of the past 40 years.

The restitution of the former national property of the GDR follows the same pattern. Three quarters of what was privatised by the *Treuhandanstalt* was handed over to West Germans. No single enterprise employing more than 1,000 people went to an East German.

The same picture in agriculture. East Germans don't have the money to buy the land they've been cultivating for decades.

■ **Raiding the country** Normally territory is colonised in order to strip it of its minerals and other goodies. In East Germany, there are no precious stones or other valuable raw materials. But something quite useful within the EC: production quotas allotted to factories. By buying up sugar factories in the East for example, West German competitors got the quota as well. Then Eastern factories are closed down, the production transferred to the West.

■ **'Jungle bonus' for the expeditionary force** West German civil servants who go to the East to set up new structures are entitled to a bonus of 1,500 to 2,500DM a month. A taxfree bonus that is higher than the monthly income of many East Germans.

■ **Taking over the administration** As East Germans didn't know how to run a country, scores of advisers and administrators were sent East to turn local administration, the legal and educational system upside down to then elevate it to Western levels...

■ **Protecting domestic economy from competitors** What do you do with East German factories that are capable of competing with their Western counterparts? You close them down - as happened to the NARVA light bulb manufacturer who would just have made a mess of the market Osram and Philips had so neatly divided between themselves.

■ **Exporting waste to the colony** France became notorious for exporting toxic waste to their former colonies in West Africa. For a couple of dollars, highly toxic chemicals were dumped in villagers' backyards. In the same way, East Germany is seen as a backyard for West German waste. Greenpeace found out that 150,000 tons of toxic waste from the West were illegally dumped in 1990 on one site alone. On other dumps the waste was just marked as 'household refuse'.

■ **Glass beads for the natives** It started with bananas in November 1989. After monetary union, it continued with second-hand cars, and

now it is dubious insurance and investment funds that inexperienced Easterners are talked into. So far, East Germans have lost 1 billion marks to smart 'investment advisers'.

■ **Destroying the culture** By the end of the year, there will be no more GDR television and radio. The first GDR TV station was taken over as early as a year ago, the remainder will follow suit. Many libraries, cultural centres, youth clubs were closed down - the communities can't finance them any more. Gone are the days of generous state subsidies for culture, artists and the arts... Video rentals are coming to the culture-starved natives' aid and are offering the full range of sex and crime, all these highlights of Western culture people in the East had been deprived of... Writer Christa Wolf points to the fatal consequences of the colonisation of GDR culture in order to 'demonise the real history of those who lived in the GDR and let it disappear in a dark hole of oblivion'.

*Claudia, Berlin*



# IMPERIALISM

# AGAINST RACISM AGAINST FASCISM

**BRITAIN** 'We cannot open our doors to all comers just because London, Rome and Paris may seem preferable to Bombay or Algiers... We have need of a perimeter fence around Europe' JOHN MAJOR, 1991

The new Asylum Bill introduced by Home Secretary Kenneth Baker, which had its second reading in November, is part of this escalating Europe-wide onslaught against immigrants from the oppressed nations.

Taking its place alongside what are already the most restrictive immigration controls in Europe, the Asylum Bill is a systematic attack on the tens of thousands of political refugees who arrive in Britain seeking refuge from detention, torture and possible death.

British immigration laws have always formed the keystone of British imperialism's institutionalised racism. However, in the past Britain has been forced to at least recognise political asylum as a universal human right internationally upheld by the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees - although it had no qualms about abrogating from the European Convention of Human Rights on the issue of immigration. Today, to a chorus of vicious media propaganda about 'the flood of immigrants' and 'the invasion of Europe' it is able to trample roughshod on this right, under the pretext of clamping down on 'bogus' asylum-seekers who 'abuse' the system.

The measures proposed in the Bill include 'fast-track' processing of asylum applications, effectively denying the majority of asylum seekers the right to a personal hearing; those refused asylum have to ask leave to appeal within just two days. Independent legal aid is to be abolished, compulsory finger-printing and identity cards introduced; immigration checks are to be tightened at overseas airports and fines for airlines carrying passengers with 'invalid' documents ('valid' documentation being available only from the government whose persecution the refugee is fleeing) will be doubled to £2,000. There will be reduced rights to council housing for homeless refugee families, increased restrictions on foreign students and visitors, and visa controls on passengers making transit stops in Britain.

In particular, the new measures include a restriction on refugees whose political activities in Britain, or before they arrive, might 'embarrass' their home governments: so, for example, Kurds who protest against the

fascist regime in Turkey, who have already faced torture and detention because of their political activities, put at risk their right to asylum when they attempt to mobilise support for their struggle in Britain.

The government has also been making routine use of the 1971 Immigration Act - used during the Gulf War to detain Iraqis and Palestinians - to detain 'illegal' entrants while deportation is considered. In October, Zairean asylum-seeker Omase Lumumba, grand-nephew of Patrice Lumumba, was killed while being 'restrained' by six police officers during detention at Pentonville gaol.

And yet Baker claims that one of his reasons for introducing the Bill is to counter the rise of fascist activity in Britain! Truly, this vicious piece of racist legislation makes the work of the fascists here redundant. But then, the British state has always done the fascists' work for them.

**British immigration laws have always formed the keystone of British imperialism's institutionalised racism**

In the run-up to the General Election, the Tories see playing the race card as a strategy for bolstering their flagging electoral prospects. The Labour Party, wooing the same constituency, has been careful not to attack the principle of the Asylum Bill, objecting only to the withdrawal of legal aid. Labour agrees with the Tories that there are 'too many' refugees coming to Britain. An internal document obtained by *The Independent* in June 1991 stated that the Labour Party was demanding the renegotiation of the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees and the European Convention of Human Rights because it believed that both were out of date, and proposed speeding up asylum appeals to avoid clogging the courts. Presumably, the only regret of the Labour racists is that the Tories beat them to it. ■

**BELGIUM** Antwerp, Belgium, 27 October - the Parti du Travail de Belgique (PTB) organised a European anti-racist conference. Groups from France, England, Germany, Holland and Belgium were represented. On behalf of the RCG/FRFI Chris James and Nicki Jameson attended.

Belgium is experiencing a rising wave of racism which has seen a rapid growth in the extreme right. In particular Vlaams Blok, a fascist organisation notorious for its collaboration with the Nazi occupation of Belgium during the Second World War, has increased not only its thugish street violence but also its electoral support.

Already holding one seat in the European parliament, two seats in the national parliament and ten seats in the Antwerp City parliament, Vlaams Blok looks set to gain 40% of the Antwerp vote in the coming election. This could leave one of Belgium's most important cities under the control of a party whose principal slogan is 'our own people first' and whose long-term ambition is to unite all Flemish-speaking Belgians with the Dutch to form a 'Greater Netherlands'. It sounds sickeningly familiar.

The growth of Vlaams Blok has been abetted by the bourgeois political parties. Social democracy, as always, having neither the political will nor the strength to challenge racism, is slavishly echoing the calls of the far right for greater immigration controls, for tighter border

security, for repatriation, for essentially fascist measures. In Belgium it was the 'Socialist' Interior Minister in 1987 who referred to immigrants as 'barbarians'. It was the 'Socialist' mayor of one borough along with the fascist mayor of another, who refused, in 1989, to allow Muslim courses to be taught in local schools. It was 'Socialist' ministers in the coalition government who supported the implementation by six Brussels boroughs of a ban which denied entrance to certain (ie non-European) immigrants.

Belgium has a black and immigrant population of 9%; 27% in the capital Brussels. They are mainly of Moroccan and Turkish origin, with a relatively small number of Zairean and Ghanaian political refugees. Under a coalition government led by a Christian Democrat, their daily reality is one of constant ID checks, violent arrests, strip searches and denial of the right to vote even after being born in the country. One Moroccan worker was set alight earlier this year by his Belgian workmate 'for fun'. Fascists within the national police force have been responsible for shooting dead more than 20 black people and have done so with impunity.

Dieter Mullen, worker at Centrum West Youth Club, told us: 'The fact is that it is not just the identity controls. There is a sort of humiliation which starts with identity controls but which is present in all the system. In education Arab children are automatically directed at an early age towards 'suitable' professions. In the areas where they live, like here, there are no lamps in the streets, the roads are in a terrible state. We are in the ghetto here; even the schools are ghetto schools.'

In May this year, two predominantly Moroccan areas in Brussels erupted against police harassment and abuse. Black youth engaged in pitched running battles with the Belgian police. The youth were condemned from all sides of the bourgeois political arena while the police were heralded for their firmness of action in arresting over 200 'rioters'. In Belgium today virtually the only organisation to oppose both the fascism of groups like Vlaams Blok and the racism of the state is the PTB which has recently established an anti-racist campaign in Antwerp. They were also alone in their unconditional support for the black youth fighting back in Belgium. ■

**FRANCE** The Socialist government in France is engaged in a ruthless attack on the immigrant community. In October, family allowances were withdrawn from 'unauthorised' workers, and harsher penalties imposed on their employers. These new laws have been approved by all the opposition parties, including the French Communist Party.

The Cresson government is also intensifying its voluntary repatriation programme, ensuring that deportations are carried out, speeding up asylum claims and fining airlines who carry passengers without correct documentation.

Fascist le Pen - who looks set to win 40-50 per cent of the vote in a regional presidential election in March 1992 - now describes his Front National as the party of the centre, claiming that his racist ideology has been absorbed into the mainstream political parties.

It is clear that the fightback against the rise of racism in France can only come from outside the traditional political spectrum, steeped as it is in reaction.

The **Comité contre la double peine** was set up to fight the judicial treatment of 'foreigners' including many born in France. If they are found guilty of any crime they are liable to be punished not once but twice: first by prison, then by expulsion to their 'land of origin'. This second punishment can be for life. Nicki Jameson spoke to MOHAMMED, himself expelled to Algeria where he knew no one and couldn't speak the language, and NORREDINE about their fight for justice.

**What are the problems you encounter in your work?**

Mohammed: When you take up a case people say, 'Yes, but you know he was a delinquent, he sold drugs,' and so on. But we take no account of the nature of the misdemeanour. He has committed a crime and he is punished. That is normal. But it is not a reason to separate him from his family.

**What is the relationship between the 'Comité contre la double peine' and other organisations which say they are fighting for rights for immigrants - SOS Racisme for example?**

Norredine: At the time when SOS was created there was a big move-

ment of young immigrants. The Socialist government, which invested everything in SOS Racisme, completely ignored it, in order to make people believe it was an association which fights for the rights of foreigners in France. And this lasted quite a few years until people perceived that there are other important questions like the Gulf War, the Palestinian problem, the problem of the 'banlieue' (suburbs).

**What are the problems of the 'banlieue'?**

For years, I have personally been involved with combating racist and police crime. We worked with the families involved. Organisations like SOS would get involved in some things but if it didn't fit their definition of 'racist' they didn't want to know.

The only thing which interests a politician is people who can vote for him. When you have no vote you are in no position to put this pressure on politicians. For us the only way was to organise collectively among the youth in every area and together we called ourselves 'Resistance des Banlieues' (Suburban Resistance).

When the student, Malika Soukeine, was killed in Paris by the police in 1986 SOS took on the task of making sure things didn't spill over into the backstreets and on the day of the verdict they seemed satisfied that they had organised a rally. But the rally was abandoned immediately because the people were angry and demanded to demonstrate in front of the Ministry of Justice.

The same day as the demonstration a young man was killed by a police inspector in a cafe in the suburbs. There had been a fight which the young man tried to prevent and the inspector who was off-duty and half-drunk shot him dead. The SOS-led students demonstrating for Malika refused us the right to join them in protest. But we did so anyway. There

are not two justices. There are not good victims and bad victims.

**How do you view the role of the extreme right in France?**

They say it is a democracy therefore Le Pen has the right to express himself. But he expresses himself on the subject of a community which is denied that right. But he doesn't scare us. What scares us is the behaviour of those who claim they are our friends. At the same time we are not sheep and we are not saints. We can fight as well. If they use violence against us, we will use violence against them.

In 1981 the Left made promises to give the vote to immigrants and at every election there is someone in the Socialist government who says, 'We're going to give the right to vote to immigrants'. And everyone, with Le Pen in the lead, goes 'Wa, wa, wa'. So the Socialists then say, 'You see the people are not ready'. But I say it is a principle. We don't ask for our rights, we beg from no one. They are our rights. ■

## RCG PUBLIC MEETINGS

**No to Racism!  
Smash the Immigration Laws!**

**MANCHESTER**  
Tuesday 17 December, 8pm  
Gullivers Pub, Oldham St  
Manchester City Centre

**NORTH LONDON**  
Tuesday 7 January 1992, 7.30pm  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square  
London WC1 (Holborn tube)

**SOUTH LONDON**  
Tuesday 14 January 1992, 7.30pm  
Lambeth Trade Union Resource  
Centre, 12-14 Thornton Street,  
London SW9 (Brixton tube)

For details of meetings in Liverpool, Birmingham, Nottingham and Dundee write to  
FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX  
or phone 071-837 1688

**INTERVIEW WITH ROBERTO DE ARMAS,  
FIRST SECRETARY CUBAN EMBASSY**

# Cuba: united to defend socialism



Fidel Castro

*The 4th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba was held in Santiago de Cuba from the 10-14 October 1991. Roberto de Armas, First Secretary at the Cuban Embassy in London, spoke to EDDIE ABRAHAMS and DAVID REED about some of the issues which concerned delegates at the Congress.*

**We have seen a collapse of the socialist bloc since the last time we spoke to you. What does this mean for Cuba?**

What has happened was a tragedy for Cuba and a tragedy for all progressive and anti-imperialist forces in the world. Economically, it has been hard for Cuba because 85 per cent of our foreign trade was with the socialist bloc and most of it was with the Soviet Union. A lot of supplies are now not coming through. It doesn't mean that trade between Cuba and the Soviet Union is going to disappear, not at all, because there is a relationship of mutual benefit. That relationship is based mainly on the trade of certain basic goods like sugar, citrus and nickel from our side, amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars, and we will receive the same amount in Soviet products, mainly oil.

**Are you worried that the economic collapse in the Soviet Union will make that trade impossible?**

That's our main worry. I think that the Soviet governments, even in the Republics, are convinced that trade with Cuba is fruitful. But the problem is the ability of the Soviet Union to deliver. That's why we are looking for new alternatives.

The Cuban economy is preparing itself very quickly for diversification in foreign trade. We have developed a lot of industries. Economically, we are more able to deal with the world market than before. We have developed in the last three or four years a biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry which is totally unbelievable in terms of the Third World. Such a development can only be seen in the most advanced Western societies. We are now harvesting the results of 30 years of work. And from \$35m produced three years ago, this industry produced \$1bn in value this year. So that important jump in a single industry reveals the capability of the Cuban economy to sort out the crisis at the very moment when the Soviet Union is failing to grant the supplies we need.

**Cuba is concerned to develop normal economic relations with Latin American countries, how will that reflect itself politically?**

Cuba is now an issue of very high im-

portance for political forces in Latin America. I think that most Latin American parties from the centre to the left are now totally convinced of the need to preserve the Cuban Revolution and of the need to support Cuba against the hostile policies coming from the States. Recently some important conferences of Latin American parties have issued statements of support for Cuba. Some governments in Latin America have not only expressed support but they have gone to the United States and have told the government about the need to put an end to that obsolete policy towards Cuba. That's very important, because in Latin America they have realised that Cuba is a Latin American country, that we are not a threat to the stability of the systems existing in those countries, and that having Cuba back in the Latin American scenario as an equal partner and respecting their political stance, will be very important and beneficial for Latin America.

**Can we now turn to the Fourth Party Congress. Could you just tell us about the mood of the Congress and of the preparedness of the people represented there to make the sacrifices needed for Cuba to survive the next few years?**

This was an historic congress. Not only because of the moment of the Congress but because of the way in which the Congress was carried out. Firstly, the delegates to the Congress were chosen very democratically and we got very wide representation of people from the grassroots, ordinary workers, with very clear views about what is happening in the country and how to deal with it. Secondly, the mood of the Congress was very combative: people going to the Congress, not to hear what the leadership has to say, but to discuss and to reach an understanding about what must be done to preserve what we have achieved and to continue with the Revolution, to continue developing the country. The discussions were very fruitful. They showed that most people in Cuba support the socialist model we have been building up, and are totally committed to develop, improve and defend that model.

Regarding the role of the Party, it was agreed that the Party has to con-

centrate on political work but it doesn't mean that the authority of the Party must be reviewed. We are not going to dissolve the Party, we are not going to diminish the importance of the Party in our society. The Party will remain as the driving force, but concentrate on the political work needed. The Party is not going to govern, it is not going to administer, it's not going to act on behalf of the government and to run enterprises. No, the Party has political work to do, and how to do that is the task that must be solved in the coming months and years.

**How do you prevent the Party becoming the means to privilege in a socialist society, which is what happened in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?**

That has been an important warning for Cuba for many years, and the measures taken during the recent years, and now at the Congress, to streamline the bureaucracy of the Party and to increase controls on resources, aim at this point. Most important is the democracy inside the Party. To ordinary members of the Party, the possibility to question not only policies but the leaders of the Party is a very important achievement. I think this will prevent the sort of corruption we have seen in other countries.

**Can Party leaders, if they're elected by the Party members, be removed from their posts?**

The same people who elect them can remove them. Yes, it does happen. For the shaping of the delegations for the Congress, some of the candidates who were elected at the beginning were after that removed. Because every Party organisation-elected candidate or delegate must have the approval of the masses around him. If within the Party or within an office, the Party organisation chooses a person to lead the Party there, or to go to a Congress for the Party, it is not only up to the Party organisation, it's the concern also of all the workers in that part of the organisation, or that office. Some people who were proposed by the Party organisation were not accepted by the masses.

**Does this mechanism exist between Congresses?**

It has existed for the last three years, and it is going to be more general now; I think it's going to rule the life of the Party. That is why I said the democracy of the Party is going to increase and that will be an antidote against corruption.

**Access to privilege is recognised as a problem? For example in Eastern Europe many of the new capitalists are ex-Communist Party leaders.**

It's a problem also in Cuba, because we copied to a certain extent the structures and rules of similar parties, mainly from the Soviet Union Communist Party, and we have committed to a certain extent, not to the extent they had, the same mistakes. But we were rectifying those mistakes before perestroika. And we have gone further than they ever went. In Cuba we have kept a very close relationship between the people and the Party. The Party has not isolated itself from the people.

**What is the effect of foreign capital entering Cuba?**

We are very aware of the risk of foreign investment. That is why we are looking very carefully at every proposal. We are not going to sell our sovereignty. So we think that we must go into mutually beneficial agreements with certain foreign partners, involving foreign capital that will be beneficial for our economy and also for our workers, but with certain controls. Cuba is a socialist country, we have laws protecting workers' rights, and we are not going to give up that side of our system. We are looking to improve our industry, our economy without giving away of our resources. Unfortunately, in today's world, we cannot find any more the sort of partners we found in the past. There is not a Soviet Union able to provide financial and material resources that you need for building up a sector of your economy on your own.

**What about tourism and the moral and political effect it has?**

Tourism is not a short-term industry in terms of resources. It is an industry in which one has to invest a lot during a number of years. We don't particularly like tourism as an industry to get the resources we need, that's why we are also developing other alternatives, but tourism is important. In that sense, we are creating a national consciousness about that, and explaining to workers the need for it. The response from the working class in Cuba has been very positive, because they understand that you have to create conditions for having tour-

ists in Cuba enjoying their vacations and having everything they need for that, even if they have access to things that are not available to the rest of the population. Because from that tourism will come the resources for keeping our national health system, for keeping the high standards of education, for keeping the high standards of social policies in Cuba.

**The success of your education system has meant that you have trained a large number of highly skilled, professional workers. Your economy, given the present serious difficulties, can't sustain such a large number of trained people. In the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe such educated people became a source of dissidence and anti-socialism. Could this happen in Cuba?**

In the case of Cuba it is totally the contrary. The best educated, the best trained, the best prepared professionals in Cuba are now more necessary than ever. We are trying to transform our economy very quickly and we need the best brains in Cuba working on that. The amazing results in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries are an example of that. The best professionals in Cuba have been working in that industry, have been given resources, freedom to create and to organise themselves and the results are very good.

**Professionals and educated people are having to make the sacrifices that the people are making in order to redirect your economy to the priority needs in this period. Now although some of those needs are in the highly specialised biotechnology fields, others, for example, are needed to maintain the food provision in the country. How do they feel about it?**

They are not disappointed. Professionals in Cuba are now in front of a challenge. The challenge of bringing the economy out of the crisis using knowledge, using high degree skills. How can we, for example, raise yields from crops and raise productivity without using the skills of a professional? We are looking for more training, more knowledge. So I don't see that in Cuba we have at all a layer of professionals looking for a change because they are disappointed... no, no, no.

Every problem we have has been explained to the population. It's not a problem of taking bureaucratic measures from above and creating hardship for the people which they don't understand. No, it's totally different process. It doesn't mean of course that some people don't understand and they express one way or another their grievances, but that's always present in every society. But in the case of Cuba, I would say that it is a society which is very unified behind the main lines of the Revolution. Now more than ever, because of the crisis, because of the risks we are facing, and because the people are afraid of going back to the sort of society they had before the Revolution. The Cuban people are very well informed about what is happening in the rest of the world and they can appreciate exactly the poverty in Latin America, the hunger in Africa and so on. They don't want to be converted into such a society. They appreciate very much what they have, and they want to improve it.

**How can British people give solidarity to your country?**

I think that there are many ways of expressing solidarity with Cuba at this point. There is political solidarity and material solidarity. Demanding respect for Cuban sovereignty, and demanding the end of the American embargo on Cuba are the two most important points of political support. From the economic point of view, certain needs could be identified, and certain campaigns could be organised to provide material support, say, for an institution, for a hospital, for a school, for that sort of thing in Cuba. That will be very valuable and highly appreciated by the Cuban people. ■

# Yeltsin's new autocracy

This November, for the first time since 1917, there was no official commemoration of the October Bolshevik revolution in what was once the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, despite severe anti-communist repression, several thousand communists and socialists gathered in Moscow's main square to defend the heritage of 1917. Their target was the Yeltsin government and among their slogans was 'Down with the Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie'. EDDIE ABRAHAMS looks at the ravages of Yeltsin's new order and the glimmers of working class opposition.

A month or two ago the British left, who applauded the Yeltsin counter-revolution, would have dismissed such slogans as expressions of outlandish Stalinist frustration. But today there is nothing to cover up the reactionary character of Yeltsin's counter-coup. We are witnessing the establishment not of 'democracy', nor even bourgeois democracy, but of bourgeois rule in its most anti-working class and anti-democratic form. Russian socialist Boris Kagarlitsky, who is by no means an adherent of the Bolshevik tradition, argues that: 'This is not just a restoration of capitalism, but a restoration of the old (autocratic) pre-February 1917 regime.' The Russian working class will be the main target for this revived autocracy.

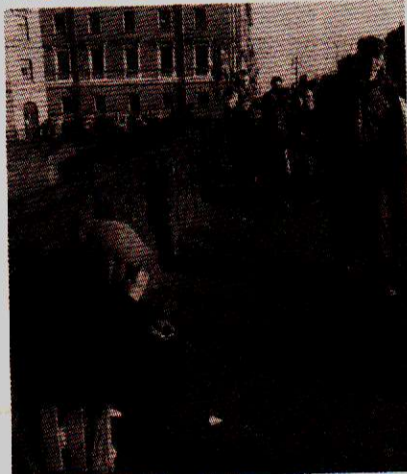
## Yeltsin's model of democracy

Russian President Yeltsin is concentrating all power in his own hands and rules more or less by decree. Decree No. 96, for example, deprived the elected Moscow Soviet of most of its constitutional powers. While in Moscow and Leningrad executives usurp the powers of elected soviets, elsewhere Yeltsin has dispatched appointed governors to take control of every region and autonomous republic. Equally ominously, the government has established a new National Guard with wages of about five times the average worker's earnings!

On 1 November, the Russian parliament overwhelmingly backed proposals to ban, for the foreseeable future, all referenda and almost all elections in Russia. Following the August counter-coup the Communist Party was 'suspended' pending an 'investigation'. Yeltsin has replaced this with a decree banning the Party and confiscating its property! Russian socialists believe that his next effort will be the dismantling of the official trade unions on the grounds that they were associated with the now illegal Communist Party. With their massive apparatus and membership, and their own printing presses and newspapers, these unions could

become formidable obstacles to capitalist restoration.

Such are the preparations being made by Russia's new 'democratic' government to cope with the inevitable working class resistance to Yeltsin's 'radical' economic reforms, which were also overwhelmingly carried by the Russian Parliament. These propose a rapid, Polish-style, privatisation of state assets and an end to all subsidies and price controls. These 'reforms' will generate massive poverty and 40 million unemployed people. They will demolish all the social, economic and political gains made by the working class since 1917.



Yeltsin's new freedom for the people

Such steps, directed against the majority, against the working class, and necessary for the restoration of capitalism, cannot be secured by democratic means! The pro-capitalist 'democrats' who support Yeltsin understand this. An *Isvetzia* supplement recently noted:

'Yes in Russia we need a harsh, and in many ways, authoritarian government. The President of Russia will soon have to confront that which is more dangerous than any elite junta - unemployment, the immiseration of millions of people. Destructive strikes are inevitable and explosions of violence are possible. In these circumstances it will be necessary to do unpleasant

things - to forbid, to maybe even disperse, to introduce order.'

Those who suggested a Swedish social democratic model for the Soviet transition to capitalism are ignorant of the relationship between politics and economics. With a foreign debt of more than \$60bn, with industrial output likely to collapse by 20% this year on top of a budget deficit of 300bn rubles, the Russian economy is too weak to sustain a stable bourgeois democratic order. Thus Yeltsin is building the foundations for a bourgeois autocracy!

## Reactionary nationalism abroad

The economic collapse and political disintegration of the ex-USSR has also set the scene for reactionary nationalist conflict. The aspirant bourgeois of the 16 ex-Soviet republics are eager to lay their hands on the largest slice of the disintegrated USSR's assets. Yeltsin's Russian government, however, has clarified its position. Anatoly Sobchak, the Mayor of Leningrad announced: 'Russia will be dictating to the Republics and not vice versa. This is what they have to realise.'

Within Russia this dictatorship takes the form of banning referenda on independence in Russia's own 16 autonomous regions. If such a diktat is defied, as in Checheno-Ingushetia, the curfew and state of emergency is invoked. For the former Soviet republics, the forum for dictatorship is the new Economic Union established by Yeltsin and Gorbachev. Most republics, too weak to resist, have signed up.

But not the Ukraine. Producing 46% of Soviet agriculture and 25% of its coal and possessing significant industry, the aspirant Ukrainian bourgeoisie want to go it alone. They plan to set up their own currency, retain control of nuclear weapons on their territory and form an army of 400,000. With Russia determined to retain real control of these resources, this struggle will become more bitter and dangerous.



## The new Russian left

The working class is the only force capable of resisting the economic disintegration, political instability and nationalist warfare which now grips Yeltsin's Russia and the ex-Soviet Union. With winter coming, millions of ordinary people are beginning to realise that Yeltsin, far from solving their economic problems, is in fact making them worse. On 23 October, the first substantial workers' demonstration of 40,000 people took place in Moscow against 'economic reforms'. Such opposition will be limited and largely ineffectual so long as the working class does not have its own political organisations. To rebuild such organisations is the task set themselves by a number of Russian socialist forces.

The *Initiating Group for the Association of Russian Left Forces of Socialist Orientation* wants to create a 'new party' on 'the basis of the progressive forces of the CPSU'. It notes that 'the CPSU as a political structure... has exhausted itself, has lost

trust, and has in fact ceased its existence'. The co-ordinators of another proposed *Russian Party of Labour* intend to create 'an authentic left movement' which 'gives political support to the trade union and the workers movement.'

These are among the many groupings trying to reconstruct a movement that defends and advances on the positive achievements of the past 70 years - free education, health care, the right to full employment, housing rights and the whole system of social guarantees. They all see the new order in Russia as fundamentally detrimental to the interests of the working class. Their immediate task is the defence of the official trade unions. Boris Kagarlitsky explains: 'If the government smashes the unions we have today, we will have no time or possibility to build new ones. There would be no unions to protect the workers.'

The political character, the traditions, ideology and outlook of these forces are not yet clear. Many are hostile to Marxism and the Bolshevik tradition as they understand them. Many oppose longstanding concepts within the communist movement - the vanguard party, the dictatorship of the proletariat etc. Some even applaud the Menshevik tradition. But nothing is yet settled. Communists elsewhere would be irresponsible sectarians if they dismissed these forces. In the current political confusion and turmoil and in totally new conditions, no revolutionary movement will emerge overnight. The decisive thing is that these forces are striving to politically organise the working class against the devastation promised by the new order. The bitter struggles which will accompany such work will sort out and clarify the ideological and political outlook of a new Russian socialist movement. ■

# Yugoslavia torn asunder



Federal troops carry away a victim in Vukovar

The fall of the Croatian town of Vukovar promises another flood of refugees and a new round of revenge massacres, this time by the victorious Serbian army. Estimates of casualties after four months of fighting range from 10,000 to 40,000 dead, tens of thousands more wounded and 500,000 homeless. Yugoslavia's economy is on the brink of disaster and a third of Croatia's industrial capacity has been destroyed.

The working class has nothing to choose between the Croat and Serbian governments orchestrating this war. Serbian President Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman, his Croatian counterpart, are fighting for the realisation of a 'Greater Serbia' or a 'Greater Croatia'. They have surrounded themselves with fascists who draw inspiration from the Second World War Ustashe and Chetniks and have whipped up national hatreds to unprecedented heights. With Yugoslavia shattering, they are reviving ancient nationalist projects, but only to secure, for their own nascent bourgeoisie, the best territorial and economic advantage.

The more developed Croatian bourgeoisie, masquerading as a defender of Croatian self-determination, aims to seize Croatia's wealth for itself and integrate with imperialist Germany. Milosevic, representing an economically more backward but militarily more powerful republic, using 600,000 Serbs living in Croatia as a weapon, aims

to block Croatian ambitions. He hopes to subjugate Croatia totally, or seize profitable portions of its territories.

EC intervention in this war was prompted by the real risk that it could spill across Eastern Europe with incalculable political, economic and demographic consequences for the whole of Europe. Yet it has been powerless. Repeated threats of sanctions, numerous EC engineered ceasefires and talk of an EC peace-keeping force failed to halt the fighting. European imperialism lacks both a single political will and the economic means for success. Indeed its intervention has revealed potentially serious differences within the EC.

The EC as a whole is seeking a settlement within the context of a continued Yugoslav federation. However, Germany, the strongest European economy has broken with the EC and called for the recognition of Croatian and Slovenian independence. It wants to integrate these two most economically developed Yugoslav republics into a new German sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.

After Serbia's Vukovar victory it is not yet clear how the war will develop. But whatever the immediate outcome, it is the working class which will be paying the price as reactionary nationalist and imperialist forces fight over the remains of what was once a socialist republic.

Eddie Abrahams

# Polish workers mobilise against Solidarity

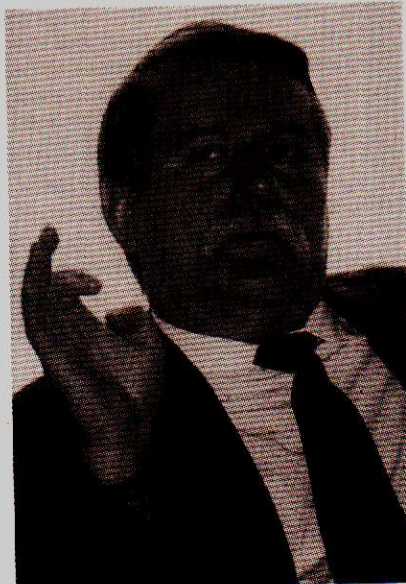
The capitalist counter-revolution that swept the socialist bloc began in Poland with Lech Walesa and Solidarity (applauded vigorously by the British left). And it is in Poland that we are seeing some of the first significant working class reactions to this experience. Subjected to capitalist shock-therapy as Solidarity governments forced through massive privatisation policies, the Polish working class saw its living standards decimated as poverty and unemployment struck them down. This has led substantial sections of the working class, especially in the northern industrial and mining towns, to abandon Solidarity for their old organisations.

In November's parliamentary elections, the SLD (Democratic Left Alliance - formerly the Polish Communist Party) received 12% of the votes. It is now the second largest parliamentary bloc, beaten by less than a third of one per cent by the right-wing Democratic Union. The official Miners Trade Union Federation, which many were hoping would disappear with the collapse of social-

ism, is steadily gaining in strength and now has nearly 300,000 members, 70% of them converts from Solidarity. The Miners Union is preparing for a national strike over pay and pensions decimated by the process of capitalist restoration.

That the SLD is dominated by a social democratic trend, and the Miners Union is tainted by mistakes of the past, are secondary to one critical factor: the working class is beginning to organise independently of the bourgeois Solidarity forces. This is the first and decisive step in the formation of any genuine working class political organisation. During the course of their new struggles, the most conscious and advanced of Poland's working class will return to socialism and communism as the only way to defend their interests.

But already, current developments have alarmed newspaper pundits who speak of a wave which 'threatens to roll back the country's painful transition to a modern (sic) economy'. ■



Lech Walesa proposed himself for Prime Minister and President after the elections

*The dominant image that accompanied the Middle East conference in Madrid, of an obdurate Israel 'being dragged screaming' to negotiate peace with the Palestinians, was a massive exercise in deceit.*

**EDDIE ABRAHAMS** argues that the conference, which opened on Wednesday 30 October, was not designed to secure a just settlement of the Palestinian question.

Having crushed Iraq, the imperialists and Zionists, with the willing aid of the Arab ruling classes, are turning to silence their greatest and most effective foe in the Middle East – the Palestinian revolution. In concert they plan to annihilate the force which became a vanguard inspiring hundreds of millions to fight against imperialism and the poverty, squalor and oppression it imposes on them. Riding the tide of international reaction, imperialism is designing a new colonial stability for the region disguised as a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

At the heart of the conflict is the right of the Palestinian people to form an independent state in Palestine. This right is rejected, even in principle, by the USA and Israel. How can one talk of a serious conference when Palestinian self-determination does not even feature on the agenda?

All that is on offer is a 'transitional period' of 'autonomy'... lasting some three to five years... following which the promise of a final settlement! An old scheme, dismissed in 1988 by the then Palestinian mayor of Ramallah as 'power to collect garbage and exterminate mosquitoes'! Nevertheless, today, with the intifada beleaguered and isolated, imperialism hopes that offering the Palestinian bourgeoisie the sop of 'autonomy' will be enough to silence the challenge of the intifada.

As the so-called peace conference began, the Israeli authorities accelerated, to unprecedented levels, their colonisation of Palestinian land. Every plea for a halt to settlement building, even as an earnest to honest intentions, was rejected. There is no commitment to halt land confiscation – amounting to the annihilation of the very foundations of the Palestinian nation – during the 'transitional' period.

How can one talk of serious negotiations when the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, was not permitted to attend the conference? How can one talk of justice or equality when even the composition of the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation was subjected to a US and Israeli veto?

The real aim of the conference was to initiate bilateral negotiations between Israel and individual Arab states. This is then to lead to Arab recognition of Israel but without an Israeli recognition of Palestinian self-determination and without Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied Territories.

Despite media impressions, Israel is not opposed to such a 'peace' treaty. It signed one with Egypt in 1975 – the infamous Camp David Agreement. Israel is opposed to a peace which leads to Palestinian self-determination. Such a peace would obstruct its long-standing ambition to incorporate all of Palestine into a 'Greater Israel'.



# PALESTINE

## Imperialism plans to bury the revolution

### *Zionism and the question of Palestine*

Zionism cannot and will never recognise Palestinian self-determination. Despite the myths, it did not even accept the 1948 UN plan which divided Palestine into a Jewish and a Palestinian state. Israel's first Prime Minister, Ben Gurion, then stated: '... after the formation of a large army in the wake of the establishment of the state, we will abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine.'

The history of Zionism is the bloody story of this colonial expansion. Today, more than ever in the past, the Israeli ruling class is being driven towards its 'Greater Israel'. The collapse of the socialist bloc and the demise of Arab nationalism has generated significant debate in imperialist circles about Israel's continuing strategic value. These considerations, together with the massive US economic crisis, open up the prospect of an end to limitless US financial aid – Zionism's nightmare.

In response the Israeli government is desperately building a relatively independent economic and military foundation for the state. But this is almost impossible within Israel's current borders. Indeed, the economic inviability of a divided Palestine was recognised by the UN in 1948 when it urged close economic unity between the proposed Israeli and Palestinian states. Zionism is therefore colonising the Occupied Territories and its critical water and agricultural resources.

### *Zionism is colonialism and racism*

Neither before nor since the conference has the US Administration done anything serious to halt Israel's racist, colonial and illegal expansion. The 1949 Geneva Convention states that: 'The occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territories it occupies.' Yet shortly before going to Madrid Yitzhak Shamir, Israel's Prime Minister who in 1988 said that Palestinians 'are like grasshoppers compared to us' reiterated: 'All the territories that we have avail-

able for construction will be populated by Jews up to the horizon's edge.'

In just over a year, between January 1990 and July 1991, Israel confiscated 7.3% more of Palestinian land. This brings 70% of the West Bank and 50% of the Gaza Strip under the Zionist jackboot. The 239,000 racist settlers, who account for only 13% of the population, also consume 80% of water in the Occupied Territories. According to the Israeli Central Bank the government's proposed 1992 budget of \$39bn includes \$2bn for settlements and related infrastructure – roads, electricity, water, security zones and army encampments.

A leaked government document outlines plans to build 100 more settlements by the year 2005. These will circle the three main Palestinian towns – Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron – with 100,000 more Zionists and reduce the Palestinian area of the West Bank to a 'cluster of cities, interspersed with villages'. This genocidal strategy merely continues that developed during Zionism's first expansionist war in 1948. Then Ben Gurion explained:

'The strategic objective was to destroy the urban communities, which were the most organised and politically conscious. This was... done by... the conquest and destruction of the rural areas surrounding most of the towns... Deprived of transportation, food and raw materials, the urban communities underwent a process of disintegration, chaos and hunger which forced them to surrender.'

As if to underline Zionism's racist, bantustan policy, the infrastructure for the settlements by-passes Palestinian villages and towns. Palestinians are not allowed to rent, buy or live in settlements. These are reserved for Jews only, who are subject to Israeli law, can vote and enjoy democratic rights. The majority Palestinians, on the other hand, live under military rule and have no rights.

Israel is a racist, settler-colonial expansionist state. It has an infamous Law of Return giving Jews of any nationality, from anywhere in the world, the right to settle in any part of Palestine, but which denies Palestinian refugees driven out since 1948

the right to return to their homes. The Zionist Law of Citizenship and the Israeli High Court have confirmed that there is no such thing as Israeli nationality. Only 'Jewish nationality' conveys full citizen's rights in Israel. None of this is, of course, negotiable at the conference. And the US is even endorsing Israel's campaign to reverse the 1975 UN Resolution 3379 condemning Zionism as 'a form of racism'.

### *The clash between Zionism and the US*

While US imperialism endorses fundamental Zionist strategy it cannot give unqualified support to its every policy or tactic. The two states' economic and political interests do not necessarily coincide. The assets of major US oil multinationals are based in the Arab world. Arab petrodollars play a significant role in sustaining the world capitalist economy. Additionally, European and Japanese ruling classes are challenging the US in the Middle East via an alliance with the Arab ruling class.

Thus whilst remaining firmly pro-Zionist, the US is bound to take account of Arab bourgeois interests. Especially so since the Gulf War and the 'return' it owes Arab states for their support in the anti-Iraq crusade. Adjusting US policy to suit today's changing US needs will necessarily entail disputes with Israel. Thus the 'arm twisting' and 'hostilities' in the run up to the conference. Thus the dispute over Israel's request for \$10bn worth of credit guarantees – a dispute over timing not substance. A massive handout to Israel just before the conference would have tarnished the US's 'impartial' posture.

But at the end of the day US and Israeli position coincided: no PLO representation, no Palestinian independence, no end to settlement building. One day before the conference US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney expressed the US's current stand:

'Rest assured that the United States will continue to support Israel's qualitative military edge over all possible enemies. And we remain committed to ensuring Israel's

security in the years ahead.'

The Arab ruling class has also taken its own independent steps against the Palestinian revolution. The Syrian government's 'uncompromising', 'anti-Zionist' stand at the conference had nothing to do with Palestinian self-determination. It was part of their own battle to win back the Golan Heights. The Syrian government's attitude to Palestine is evident in Lebanon. There it is trying to break the highly-organised Palestinian community which has been a bedrock of the Palestinian revolution.

The Syrian-imposed Lebanese government is planning to deport 120-200,000 Palestinians on the grounds that they are 'illegal immigrants'. It has forbidden the reconstruction of Palestinian refugee camps destroyed after 15 years of Israeli and Syrian-sponsored attacks. Syrian and Lebanese troops circle these camps to prevent any construction materials being moved in. Palestinians are rapidly becoming second-class citizens. They now need identity cards and work permits to get employment. They are being forced into the worst and lowest paying jobs. They pay 18% of their earnings into a social fund but cannot claim from it. The UNRWA is cutting down camp feeding centres, limiting free school supplies and reducing medical care. Confronted with such conditions a Palestinian mother cries out: 'Our future here is zero. This is not a life, this is a garbage pit with rats.'

### *The Palestinian Revolution and the Palestinian bourgeoisie*

Under enormous pressure from imperialism and from the Arab and Palestinian bourgeoisie, the PLO, after much debate, also agreed to endorse the conference. Only a left-wing minority, led by the PFLP, opposed this.

Within the PLO, the bourgeois trend is in control; its position strengthened from severe repression and exhaustion suffered by the intifada and from the collapse of the socialist bloc. With support from the Arab world at its lowest ever level, and with no hint of serious imperialist pressure on Israel, the Palestinian bourgeoisie is desperate for any solution, however limited – even autonomy. Its overriding aim is to defend from Zionist colonisation what small privileges it still enjoys and to secure its substantial economic positions in the Arab world by avoiding a clash with the Arab bourgeoisie. A prominent Nablus businessman graphically expressed their position on the conference:

'No military option is open. The Arab card is lost. The Soviet card is lost. The socialist card is lost. The only card in our hand is the conference card. We have to get on this train even if we don't yet know where it is going.'

The Palestinian masses – the workers, the peasants and the poor – have nothing to gain from this train. Their organisations in the PLO are continuing the battle for a revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle against Zionism. Central to this is reviving and strengthening the mass movement – the intifada. How the political struggles within the movement will develop, especially with the rise of Muslim fundamentalism, remains to be seen.

The outlook appears grim, the struggle awesome. While sections of the Palestinian bourgeoisie have the political and economic resources to survive or escape the Zionist onslaught, the masses have no alternative but to fight. They cannot leave. They are unwelcome in the Arab world. So inevitably, a new generation of fighters must emerge to continue the intifada. With the rich experience and lessons of popular power and organisation they can take up the banner of the revolution and self-determination. ■

# Free at last: another victim of British 'justice'

**John McGranaghan was released on 30 October after serving 11 years of a sentence of 'natural life'. He was framed in 1980-1 for a series of rapes. On his release he spoke to NICKI JAMESON about his ordeal and his plans for the future.**

**Tell us what happened in the Appeal Court.**

Before they began the judgment they told me the convictions were quashed. Obviously that was a relief; I didn't have to sit through the judgment. They attacked the prosecution and the defence but they let the police off the hook. So I can't sue them.

**Why do you think you were framed up in the first place?**

I was a burglar and I was working, doing the big houses in these areas. They were looking for a Scotsman, my height and I fitted. Any Scotsman that happened to be about would have done, but they wanted me out of the way anyway. If I'd been doing houses in Brixton or Balham they wouldn't have worried so much. But when you start doing the Home Counties it's a different matter.

**And what was it like in gaol being named as a rapist?**

For the first two years until people got to know, it was terrible, getting blanked and ostracised. After a while people got to know me because I fought back. It took about five years really and there were always still some people who had some doubt. The warders caused divisions as well. People talking to me, they would say, 'Why are you talking to the beast?' I was fighting them and they wanted other prisoners to fight me.

**But when people did realise you were innocent you got a lot of solidarity?**

Yes. Word gets around in prison. There are no secrets. You can't say you're innocent if you're guilty because it soon catches up with you. You might get away with it if you are doing a six-month sentence but not year after year.

**And we heard about other prisoners doing rooftop protests carrying banners saying, 'John McGranaghan is innocent'.**

That was Paul Ross. They just did that on their own. I didn't encourage them or anything, but Paul got out of the block and went on the roof. They also put up Alan Byrne's name because he is innocent as well. There are a lot of innocent people in prison. But it's

getting people to back them. If I hadn't had 'Justice' backing me, I don't think I would have got out. When I was released the TV were there and I named Alan Byrne but they cut it out when they showed it.

**You came up against the authorities in gaol quite a lot. Were all the protests and incidents you were involved in a result of your innocence or were some a result of prison conditions?**

I'll be frank. If I'd got eighteen months for burglary I wouldn't have had all that trouble. But if there was a protest, I put myself forward with other lads. I'd help them out and they would help me out. I lost count of how many protests I was in, but I landed up with 82 reports. I've still got two outstanding cases for assault. I will have to go to court but I'm on unconditional bail.

**So what do you plan to do now you are free? Once you've had a holiday and sorted yourself out, do you think you will campaign for people like Alan Lee Byrne?**

Just now I'm taking every day as it comes. A lot has changed in the last 11 years but once I get my head together there are a few people I would like to help. I was talking to Billy Power (Birmingham 6) and he said I could come in with him. He is a good friend of mine.

**Do you see this Royal Commission which is going to investigate 'miscarriages of justice' having any effect?**

I don't think it will have much. The whole system needs to be cleared out. The whole attitude. As long as you've got these old judges. By law a lot of people shouldn't have been convicted but they just add provisos and they get away with it. But I think they have got to change somehow because even Joe Bloggs the public who 10 or 15 years ago wouldn't have believed it, is starting to see it.

**And what about prison conditions? Do you see them changing?**

As long as you have the POA you will never get change. When the two who were supposed to be IRA got out from Brixton, they stopped all phonecalls for Cat 'A' men.

**What was the worst gaol you were in?**

Wakefield. F-Wing. It's not just the brutality, you can handle that, it's psychological. Banging gates at two and three in the morning. They even used to take a teaspoon and a cup and bang them to wake you up. The whole regime was designed to break you. In every prison that's the same. If they don't try and break you in a violent way or with psychological torture, they try to break you in other ways like acting as 'Mr Good Guy'. But whenever they see you don't want the 'Mr Good Guy', they beat you up!

**So what was your experience of the so-called rewards, the Special Units that are supposed to be the nice places?**

Well, for example, when we went to Lincoln Unit all the prison warders that were in there were block screws. We couldn't have our trainers; we couldn't have anything. We got it, but we fought for it every day. And, as you know, me and another two prisoners smashed down the unit and set fire to it over the conditions of Joe the Greek.

Hull Unit. They wanted to give me a personal officer, and I wouldn't have anything to do with it. Because next day he might be beating up a prisoner and then he'd come up to me and call me John. They are cowards anyway because when they come to your cell and attack you, there are always five, seven, ten; never one or two.

**You spent some time in Scottish prisons. What was that like?**

I went up for accumulated visits. The 'A' Categories are treated terribly; they are completely isolated. I was at Saughton. Everywhere you go you are double handcuffed. And the visits are closed. My mother is blind and she is 80 and she was crying because all she wanted to do was hold my hand because she might never see me again. The governor never once saw me, so I went on a food protest for three weeks and the Sun contacted my sister when they heard it on local radio and made out they were going to help. They put three or four lines saying I was on a food protest and there was a full page: 'The fiend', 'The beast'. Even after nine years. When I was released they called me John!

**A lot of people wrote to you over the years. Did letters sent to you get stopped?**

Yes. A lot of letters went missing that



I've only heard of since I came out. And after I had the trouble at Gartree they took my filofax and tore out all the addresses.

**Did you ever have any trouble getting FRFI or political material that was sent to you?**

At Lincoln Unit they weren't going to let us have it but we got a bit threatening and they let us. We said, 'What are you saying? We can have the Sun and rightwing papers but we can't have our papers.' So they gave it to us. They did try but they didn't get away with it.

**Have you any messages to send via the Prisoners' Fightback page?**

Well, there's John Bowden, Alan Byrne, Winston, Paul Ross, David McAllister... I can't name them all but I'd just like to thank them all.

**Since John McGranaghan's release he has not received a penny in compensation. He has been told it will be Christmas before he is entitled to even an interim payment.**

## INSIDE NEWS

### FREE KENNY CARTER!

Kenny is serving life for the murder of his cell mate in Durham prison in January 1990; as Kenny himself says, 'framed for a murder that was never committed'. Now aged 21, Kenny was originally gaoled at 18 for robbery and was approaching the end of his sentence. There were three men in the cell. One was found hanged. On the evidence of the only 'witness', Kenny was tried and found guilty of murder. The pathologists who examined the body have always maintained it was suicide. One self-inflicted death too many for the public image of Durham, perhaps?

Write to Kenny at HMP Gartree, Leicester Road, Market Harborough, Leics, LE16 7RP. His number is AD3434. 'Kenny Carter is innocent' stickers will soon be available from FRFI or 'Conviction'.

### Charlie McGhee

Charlie McGhee was framed up and convicted on 17 May 1989 of killing a police officer during an armed robbery. He was sentenced to life with a 25-year minimum recommendation. In 1990 he was refused an appeal.

As if this were not punishment enough, Charlie is being systematically victimised by the prison authorities. In a letter to FRFI he described how he was 'attacked by the screws in the block at Full Sutton where I spent a night in the strong box followed by five days punishment before being moved to Frankland where, after 16 days, I was charged with the trouble there on 23 June which I'm still on GOAD for at Albany. I left Frankland and was placed on GOAD at Long Lartin for five days, moved to Wakefield and held in a cage until August...'

Naturally, with all this going on, Charlie has not had a lot of time to work on his case - which is no doubt the intention.

As far as we know, Charlie is still at HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS. His number is MM2170.

### Why no visitors' centre?

At HMP Maidstone, like several other gaols, visitors are forced to queue in the street. After a long journey, standing outside in all weathers on a narrow pavement is unpleasant, humiliating and, particularly for small children, dangerous. We ask readers to telephone the prison on 0622 55611 and complain to the number one governor, Mr Brewer.

While you are on the phone, also ask why on the biggest of the gaol's four wings, Medway, the allocation of outgoing phonecalls is two per week - not per prisoner, but for the whole wing.

## Custody, care and justice?



Pictures 1 and 2: happy, smiling prisoners and staff sharing a joke at: HMP Stocken and HMP Birmingham (aka Winson Green - Barry Prosser was murdered there; John Bowden and others are suing for assault). Picture 3: Race Relations Manual, presumably shown because no happy, smiling black prisoners could be induced to share the joke. All these can be found in 'Custody, Care and Justice: The Way Ahead for the Prison Service in England and Wales', the government's White Paper in response to the Woolf Report. The real question is: if there is so much laughing and smiling going on, why is the first section of proposals 'Security and Control'? Why are central parts of the reform programme, the introduction of a new offence of prison murder, the extension of the term of the maximum sentence to helping a prisoner to escape, the introduction of a 'stop and search' power to prison staff, and the requirement of a 'prison officer'...

### FRAMED PRISONERS NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Send messages of solidarity to:-

- Alan Lee Byrne, framed for armed robbery in 1985. HMP Full Sutton, Moor Lane, York, Y04 1PS.
  - Dennis Kelly, framed for murder. HMP Frankland, Brasside, Durham, DH1 5YD.
  - Kevin O'Neill (B80521), framed for murder in 1987. HMP Hull, Hedon Road, Hull, HU9 5LS.
  - Abraham Lanquaye (PK2693), framed for rape in 1989. HMP Wandsworth, Heathfield Road, London SW18.
  - Terence Allen (L55957), framed for murder in 1986. HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX.
  - Michael da Silva H28888 framed for robbery in 1987. HMP Frankland.
- For a fuller list of framed prisoners write to 'Conviction', PO Box 522, Sheffield S1 1FF

### POWs' birthdays

- Hugh Doherty 338636 HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5NX 7 December
- Noel Gibson 879225 HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5RS 11 December
- Gerard McDonnell B75882, HMP Leicester, Welford Road, Leicester LE2 7AJ 19 December
- Nat Vella B71644 HMP Frankland, Finchale Ave. Brasside, Durham DH1 5YD 24 December
- William Armstrong 119085 HMP Parkhurst 26 December
- Liam McCotter B83693 HMP Leicester 2 January
- Gerry Hamrath 119085 Oberlandesgericht, Straßburg, Alsace, FR 31 January 1991
- www.conviction.com
- 25 JANUARY

# West Midlands frame-ups

**'Unsafe and Unsatisfactory'** The report of the Independent Inquiry into the working practices of the West Midlands Police Serious Crime Squad, Tim Kaye, Civil Liberties Trust in association with the University of Birmingham, 1991 93pp, £6.95.

Paul Dandy was arrested in February 1987 and subsequently held as a category A prisoner at Winclesbury Prison for ten months, during which time he attempted to commit suicide. All charges against him were dropped when his solicitor presented forensic evidence that his 'confession' had been forged.

Paul Dandy was one of many victims of the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad. By the end of 1988 'serious concern' was being expressed about the activities of the Squad after a number of cases involving uncorroborated confessions and suspect evidence had been dismissed in court.

In response to a question in Parliament by Clare Short MP, raising Dandy's case, Douglas Hogg (Home Office) expressed complacency: 'There is a thorough and fair system for dealing with allegations against police officers and it provides for an independent element in the form of the Police Complaints Authority (PCA).'

In fact the PCA had declined to supervise the internal police inquiry into Dandy's case. Instead, when the inquiry was complete, they expressed 'satisfaction' with its conclusion. The officers were reprimanded for 'losing' a page of the original police record of the interview with Dandy. No police



officer was prosecuted or disciplined for forging Dandy's confession.

The Squad was eventually 'disbanded' by Chief Constable Geoffrey Dear in August 1989, and a PCA inquiry into its activities launched following the acquittal of Ronnie Bolden on charges of armed robbery. The judge described police evidence as 'unattractive' and 'totally misleading'. In fact there was not only a fabricated confession, there was also fabricated forensic evidence and a false accusation (involving doctored prison visit records) that defence solicitors had attempted to bribe a

witness.

By this time there was good reason to distrust the official complacency which had covered up the real extent of corruption in the Squad, and considerable discrepancies between announcements of what action had been taken and what was really taking place. Officers who were supposed to have been transferred from operational duties were seen carrying out investigations. In 1989 Dear, who soon after became an 'Inspector of Constabulary', announced that 53 officers had been transferred; his successor said 36. Scepticism about the

independence and openness of any PCA investigation led to the University of Birmingham Law Faculty launching an independent inquiry. This book is the result of their efforts.

The Inquiry covered 67 cases, in all of which allegations of fabricated confessions were made. In many of them, and doubtless others, the victims of the Squad's activities are still imprisoned.

But forged confessions are only the tip of the iceberg. As the report makes clear the whole ethos of the Squad was corrupt. Between 1981-1991 23 cases brought by the Squad were thrown out of court because of tainted evidence. By 1988 the Squad was responsible for only two per cent of all arrests for robbery in the West Midlands. Unlike other specialist squads, where detectives were moved every two years, some officers had remained in Serious Crime for more than 16 years. At least two of the suspect officers were involved in interrogating the Birmingham 6.

The resulting culture led to the routine denial of legal advice to suspects, illegal interrogation procedures, threats and violence towards suspects, missing evidence and the use of supergrass.

One 'supergrass' in protective custody said he was taken out drinking by Squad officers. Another, who gave evidence against 100 people, later pleaded guilty to 72 charges, including armed robberies and wounding, asked for 32 other serious offences to be taken into account, and received a sentence of six years. He also admitted perjury and said he was paid £10 a week by police, with extra payments and perks for court appearances. This extraordinary account of corruption takes on the trappings of pantomime: he was allowed to sleep with his wife

in his cell and provided with alcohol. He 'escaped' when Squad officers took him out for a curry and was only recovered when the entire Squad was removed from other duties to look for him. No record of his escape appears in police records.

The West Midlands police as a whole, unlike any other constabulary in England and Wales, routinely destroys records of cases after two years. This means that confession documents which could now be tested for forgery are unavailable.

As a matter of discipline police notebooks are kept to a minimum of seven years. Seven Squad notebooks were known to be missing 18 months after the PCA began its inquiry, together with six files out of the 658 relating to Squad arrests between 1986 and 1989, and an unknown number of other documents which should have been inside the files which have been recovered. Following the disbanding of the Squad, senior officers, including Geoffrey Dear, failed to secure the Squad headquarters containing the records.

What all this suggests is not only the serious corruption of an elite Squad, affecting every aspect of what they did, but also, an extraordinarily slipshod handling of the mounting evidence against them by senior officers in West Midlands Police, and the PCA. The evidence provided by the Inquiry is a serious indictment of police corruption and the system of Police Complaints. Above all, those who argue that the Police and Criminal Evidence Act now ensures that miscarriages of justice like the Guildford 4, Birmingham 6 or Tottenham 3 cannot happen now should have a copy of this report rammed down their throats.

Carol Brickley

# Black people killed in custody

**Deadly Silence: Black Deaths in Custody**  
Institute of Race Relations, £4.00 pb

Young black men aged 16-24: stopped by the police roughly ten times more frequently than the average for the population. Black people awaiting trial: more likely to be refused bail than a white person. Black people granted bail: far more likely to have conditions imposed which restrict their movements than white people. Young black men sentenced: receive custodial sentences twice as often as their white counterparts. Results in: one in ten black youth having been locked up by their 21st birthday. Black people 'sectioned': far more likely to be compulsorily referred to psychiatric hospitals than white people. Results in: in 1984/5 black people forming 36% of those given hospital orders with restrictions and 32% of those given hospital orders without restrictions. Black people form 4.4% of the population, but black men make up 15.5% of the prison population, and black women 25.8%.

These facts constitute an appendix to 'Deadly Silence'. They are an indictment of so-called British Justice. Yet 'Deadly Silence' itself is far more damning. In it the deaths while in custody of 75 black people are recorded. By describing as far as possible the circumstances around each of these deaths, 'Deadly Silence' demonstrates unequivocally the racist and murderous nature of the British state.

Black people and the police: A black man is stopped by the police and questioned about the ownership of his car. Reinforcements are called in: two panda cars and a van load of dogs. The black man is continuously beaten with a truncheon, dragged face downwards to the van and thrown inside. At the police station he is dumped unconscious into a cell. An hour later he is dead. A pathologist



Demonstration against the death of Colin Roach who was killed in Stoke Newington Police Station in 1983

discovers brain damage, bruises covering his body and vomit in his lungs. The initial inquest verdict: 'unlawful killing due to neglect by the police'. Within days the Home Office intervenes. An appeal is heard and the verdict becomes 'death by misadventure'. A young black woman is taken to the police station after not providing the police with her name. She is placed in a cell and hours later found dead. Police doctors state that she suffered swelling and bruising to her head and over her eyes consistent with 'someone who had been beaten'. The inquest verdict: again 'death by misadventure'.

Black people in prison: A black man with a history of mental illness is found roaming the streets wearing just a tee-shirt and socks. He claims sickness and asks to be sent to hospital. He is arrested and charged with indecent exposure. He is remanded first in a police station and then Brixton Prison. He continues to ask for medical treatment. Instead he is locked in a strip cell for 'special observation'. Within 12 hours he is dead. The cause: viral pneumonia. The inquest finds: 'death from natural causes aggravated by lack of care'. A 58-year-old black man supposedly threatens his

cell-mate. Six officers don riot gear and shields, charge into his cell removing the door from its hinges, drag him out and 'bounce' him down the 42-step walkway. He is laid face downwards on a landing floor, handcuffed to the rails and kicked and beaten in 'a bloody fury'. He is then left in a strip cell. He is dead within hours. The post-mortem concludes: death by heart attack during 'prolonged acts of violence'. Also records injuries of a fractured bone in his spine, damage to three ribs, two teeth lodged in his throat and a third sheared off at gum level. The inquest verdict: 'death from natural causes aggravated by lack of care'.

From April 1969 to January 1991 75 black people 'died' in police or prison custody. Of these 75 deaths, only one resulted in successful prosecution and only one family of the deceased received compensation. The British state not only tortures, terrorises and murders but does so with impunity. The lives of black people are to be disposed of at will and the anguish and grief of relatives and friends is to be contemptuously dismissed.

Chris James

# Tyneside to Palestine

**'From Tyneside to Palestine'** Palestine Solidarity Campaign (North East), £2.00: c/o 36 Lime Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 2PN

This is a powerful and moving pamphlet produced by the Palestine Solidarity Committee (North East) as a contribution to the struggle of the Palestinian people. It is also a tribute to individuals such as Ian Davison, and those involved in Medical Aid for Palestine, who risk their lives for the cause.

The pamphlet is divided into three short sections. The first deals with the massacres of Palestinian refugees at the Sabra and Shatila camps in the Lebanon in 1982. The killings were conducted by the fascist Christian Phalangist militia but were planned, co-ordinated and facilitated by the Israelis. Eye-witness accounts of the atrocities are almost unbearable to read.

It was television coverage of the Sabra and Shatila massacres that inspired Ian Davison, a young unemployed man from South Shields, to hitch-hike across Europe to join the PLO. In 1985 he was sentenced to life imprisonment, alongside two other PLO guerrillas, for the killing of three Mossad agents in Larnaca Harbour, Cyprus. He is due for release from Cyprus Central Prison in 1993. His story, which forms the middle section of the book, is a testimony to the spirit of international solidarity which links the experiences of the oppressed and exploited from wherever they come.

'If anybody has ever lived in the north-east of England and been unemployed, it makes you realise something is terribly wrong and it has to be changed... I have no regrets for doing what I have done, because it was my duty as an international socialist, a person of conscience, to fight the Zionist move-



The bombing of Beirut by the Israelis in 1982

ment wherever I can.'

The final section of the pamphlet is given over to extracts from 'The Intifada', a book in which Palestinians speak out in their own words of their identity and their cause. It makes a poetic and deeply moving conclusion:

'We are a nation robbed of its country, a people stripped of their rights, a civilization that will regain its homeland and take charge of its fate no matter who resists it or how...

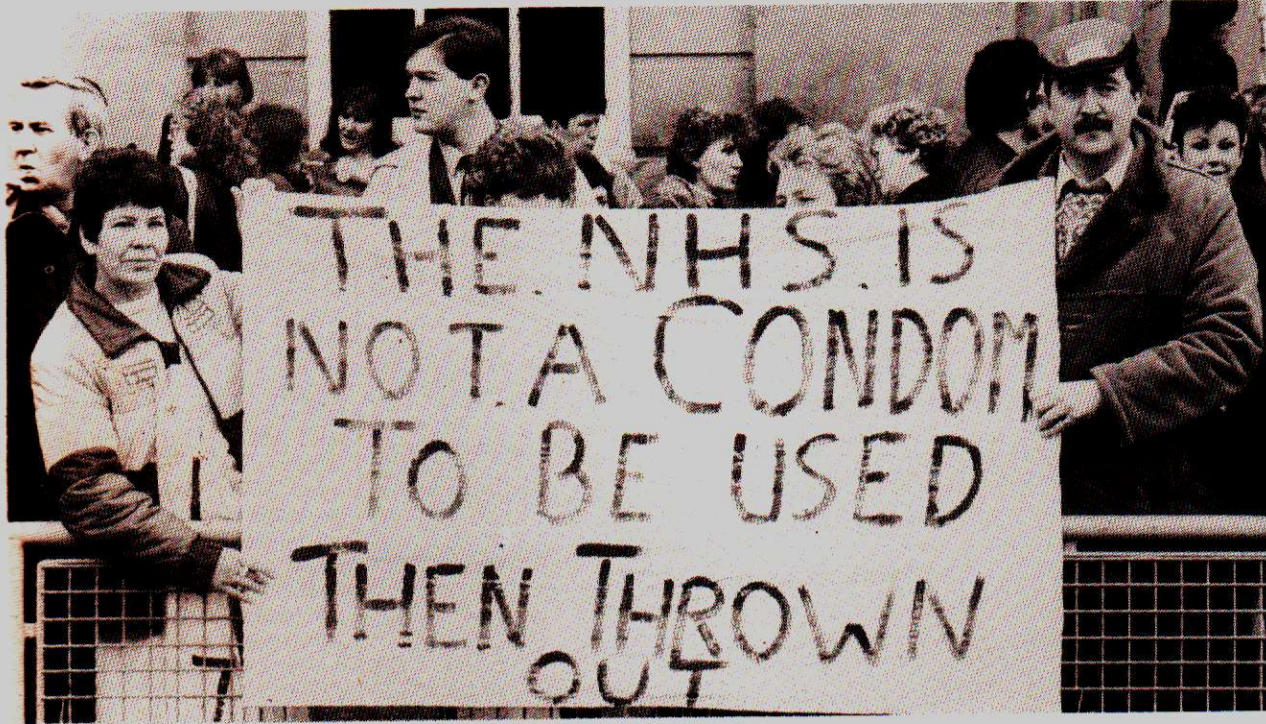
Our struggle will end when we have nothing left to struggle for. We will have nothing left to struggle for when every one of our dispossessed people has laid down his life or regained his rights... We are the Palestinian people.'

All proceeds from the sale of the pamphlet will be divided equally between Medical Aid for Palestine and the Palestine Solidarity Committee (North East). I would urge you to send off for a copy.

Jenny Sutton



# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!



## What price health care?

**Twelve years of Tory rule have brought the National Health Service to its knees. The waiting list, nationally, stands at over one million and the figure for London will reach ¼ million by the end of 1991. In 1990 291,386 operations were cancelled in England, 10 per cent of the total. ROBERT CLOUGH, LORNA REID and KATHRYN RICHARDS report on the price we are paying for the Tory 'reformed' NHS.**

The elderly, the mentally ill and other vulnerable groups of people, like those requiring long-term medical care, are suffering the most from the wholesale destruction of the NHS and are the first to be affected by the government's 'profit from health care' schemes.

The crisis of the NHS has been brought about because British capitalism cannot sustain a free health service. Whatever government is in power it will be the same – in the midst of a crisis, expenditure on the welfare state will be the first sacrifice except, perhaps, in the run-up to the election year.

Britain spends less on health care as a percentage of GDP than any other European country except Greece. Although funding for the NHS has increased – by 55 per cent since 1978/79 – it has not been enough to provide for an expansion of the service. Government funding is lower than the rate of inflation and does not allow for an aging population and advances in medical technology. Additional funding for the NHS, like the recent injection of £2.7bn, is soaked up by these factors.

To alleviate the crisis the government is creating a two-tier health service – choice and priority treatment for those who can afford it, and whatever remains for those of us who cannot afford to pay for health care.

### Putting a price on health care

The central point of the NHS internal market is that every treatment is priced. Health districts and GPs buy treatment for patients. Hospitals, ambulance services and others sell them. Health districts are run by government-appointed managers. They have contracts with local hospitals to treat local people and an extra sum to

send a few patients for treatment elsewhere. GP surgeries which are 'budget holding' make their own contracts with hospitals. This has led to hospitals offering special deals to GPs – treatment will be available for the right price.

Trust hospitals' budgets remain limited by the government but how they spend it and whom they treat is up to their managers. No hospital will treat anyone, outside of an emergency, unless they first sort out who is paying. Government cut-backs mean that Health Authorities must choose which treatments they can afford, eg between heart surgery and hip replacements; authorities must limit spending on drugs regardless of what people need; GP budget holders will be under pressure not to take on 'expensive' patients such as the old or the chronically ill.

The internal market is making hospitals and GPs compete against each other. If some hospitals attract extra money by offering preferential treatment to Health Authorities which can afford to pay, then others will have to follow or collapse. Trusts will be vying to become 'centres of excellence' in health care. But at a price. Specialised treatment and staff will be paid for by cutting back on other services such as screening facilities, diabetes and ophthalmic treatment. Staff numbers will be severely cut back.

Since April 400 jobs have been shed at the Guys and Lewisham Trust in south London and in another effort to alleviate severe financial strain on its £150 million budget, the Trust is selling three of its buildings for £2 million to be developed as a commercial site. A further £5 million is to be cut from its labour bill and costs are to be reduced by 6-8 per cent.

The biggest opted-out hospital trust, St James's in Leeds, is heading

for a £1 million deficit. Without additional funding, the trust will have to cut the number of patients it treats. Within four weeks of starting up in April 1991, the Trust announced 300 job losses. As a result of these disclosures, four leading London teaching hospitals have had their applications for opting-out delayed. Despite its approval of a further 99 applications for trusts from next April, the Tories are afraid that its NHS 'reforms' will cost them the election.

### The real-life horror

The crisis of the NHS is not the result of a media hype. Concern for the future of the NHS comes from the day to day experience of the people who rely on the NHS for health care and from those who work within it. Of a survey carried out amongst doctors who are directors in 146 English health districts (80 per cent of the total), 68 per cent of the doctors said they lack the means to assess health needs, 59 per cent have inadequate resources to formulate contracts, whilst 63 per cent cannot adequately monitor contracts and 58 per cent are unable to safeguard care quality.

The well-publicised case of the Maloney family in Middlesex brings home the message even more sharply. The prescription charges per month for Mr and Mrs Maloney and their two children is £403.75 for medication to treat the family for epilepsy, Wilson's disease and asthma. Since the introduction of a prescribing budget on their local family practice, the Maloneys have been advised to find a new GP in another practice.

A nurse in one of London's elderly mentally ill assessment units told *FRFI* about her experiences on the ward:

'A recent situation on my own ward gives a picture of the difficulties facing staff trying to place patients in need of long-term care. 70-years-old Mr Jones had chronic brain failure and was assessed as needing long-term in-patient psychiatric care with maximum assistance. He also had cancer and was terminally ill. No hospice or nursing home would take him. He was referred to a medical

ward but because he was not considered a medical emergency he was left with us – with no medical nurses, no medical equipment and no additional resources to carry out a role that was not ours: the care of a man in the terminal stages of a physical illness.

Our pharmacy refused to provide us with a pump necessary to deliver Mr Jones's morphine on the grounds that no one that ill should be nursed in our facility and it was far too expensive for a "one-off". Only it is not a "one-off". Our unit has seen five similar deaths this year.'

These stories are not made up. They are the real-life humiliations and suffering of people who are paying the price the government has put on the head of the NHS.

Contrary to the government's claims that a full and free NHS is available to everyone, there is mounting evidence of Health Authorities introducing charges for services which were previously free. Budgets which are running out are being supplemented by charging patients for treatment and medication.

Patients wanting test-tube baby treatment in the Lothian district are now being charged £1,200. Patients in Scarborough and Epsom are being charged for incontinence pads. Stroke victims in Hornchurch, Essex, are being charged £20 an hour for speech therapy. Bradford hospitals are offering screening for osteoporosis, a bone wasting disease which cripples elderly women, for £60. For those who cannot afford to pay the message is simple – tough. For those employed to administer the NHS on the government's behalf the rewards are great: unit managers are on salaries of up to £55,000 per annum; district managers up to £63,500 and regional managers up to £70,500 with rises pending.



Oh no, not my baby... the health service will be safe in neither Tory nor Labour hands

## The Origins of the NHS

Prior to the formation of the NHS, health care and medical treatment had to be paid for. The 1911 National Insurance Act covered all manual workers between the ages of 16 and 70 and all other workers earning less than £160 per annum. Their contributions allowed free access to GPs on the local panel. National Insurance did not cover dependents, and it did not cover any hospital treatment. Of a population of 45 million in the late 1930s, 16 million were covered by insurance but 15 million of their dependents and 1.5 million, excluded by various clauses, were not covered.

The hospital service was split into two: the voluntary hospitals and public hospitals. Voluntary hospitals were originally charitable foundations. By the late 1930s 25 per cent of their revenue was provided by a number of contributory schemes and another 25 per cent from patient charges which were means-tested.

Public hospitals were derived from the old Poor Law hospitals. They dealt with the bulk of the chronic cases, and most of the infectious cases. The Local Government Act of 1929 gave powers to local authorities to take over the running of Poor Law hospitals, but by 1936 the majority of public hospitals were still being run by Public Assistance Committees.

The hospital service as a whole was a

### Labour and the NHS

Expenditure on the NHS has always been tightly controlled. In its first years it cost £400 million per annum. Although it ran 3,500 hospitals, only one new one was built before the 1960s. The 1950s witnessed the slowest new building programme of the whole century. NHS spending fell from 3.75 per cent of GNP in 1949 to 3.25 per cent in 1954.

The Labour government introduced charges to NHS treatment within two years of the service being established. The 1951 budget imposed a 50 per cent charge on false teeth and spectacles and prescription charges were introduced. Harold Wilson, who resigned from the government over prescription charges, abolished them in 1966. But in 1967 after devaluation the IMF insisted they be reimposed. Labour duly did so.

### NHS – safe in whose hands?

Today, the Labour Party is revelling in the government's problems over the NHS. It believes this will be the ticket on which it can be elected to government next year. But the NHS will be no more safe in the hands of a Labour government than it is in the hands of the Tories.

Without additional funding the NHS will continue to stagger towards total collapse. To save the NHS we cannot look towards a future Labour government. In arguing that economic growth is necessary before there can be additional funding for the NHS, Labour has accepted capitalist criteria for the service. Everyone knows that in a crisis Labour will practise Tory policies and the NHS will not be spared.

The defence of the NHS does not lie in a Labour government. It lies in the hands of the millions of working class people who depend on the NHS for health care and in the hands of those who deliver that service. It is our NHS. We must fight now to save it. ■