

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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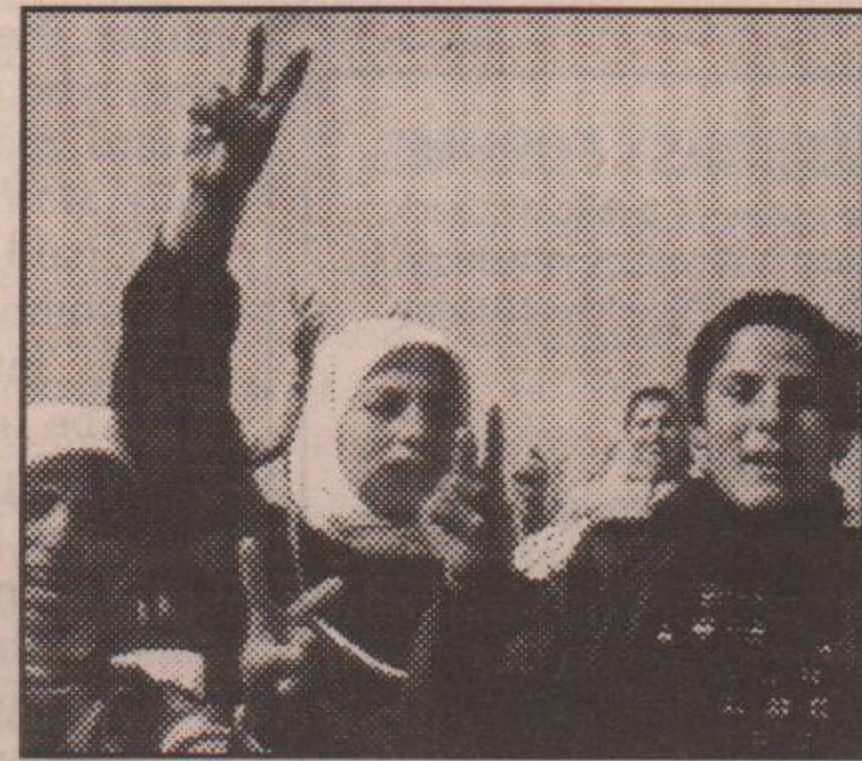
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Cuba must survive!

The Cuban revolution is under siege. Cuba is a tiny island of 11 million people. It poses no threat to other small nations in the Caribbean, let alone to the USA, the world's mightiest military power. Yet for over 35 years Cuba has been subjected to a deadly economic and political embargo by the United States. The United States, in alliance with Britain and other imperialist countries, is intent on destroying the revolution.

Why?

Because the Cuban social and economic system represents hope for the billions of poor in the world. Cuban socialism proves that the poor of the world can create a social system capable of providing adequate food, shelter, health care and education for all its people. Cuban socialism proves that it is possible to build a society without the extremes of poverty, without the hunger, starvation and disease, without shanty-towns, without the murder of young children - scars of capitalist societies dominated by imperialist multinationals whose economic system is driven only by the profit motive.

Compare socialist Cuba with capitalist Brazil.

Cuba, despite the blockade has no one starving. In Brazil 40 million people live on the edge of starvation. In Cuba all children have access to free primary and secondary education. In Brazil only 30 per cent of children complete 8 years at primary school. Illiteracy has been eliminated in Cuba. In some Brazilian states illiteracy is greater than 40 per cent. In Cuba infant mortality is 9.4 per thousand live births (1993). In Brazil the figure is 54. Brazil is the most unequal society in the world, Cuba amongst the most equal.

The United States is satisfied with the government of Brazil, because Brazil is a source of enormous profits for its multinationals. It wants to overthrow the Cuban government because this government puts the people before imperialism's profits. The fear that the people of the Third World will follow the Cuban path makes the US and its allies more determined than ever to destroy the revolution.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc, which accounted for 85 per cent of Cuban trade, and the tightening of the US blockade is now, three years later, fundamentally undermining the Cuban social system. It is creating enormous material difficulties for the people and has led to nearly 30,000 people leaving the country this year. The government is being forced to introduce market forces in the hope of averting total economic collapse - a risky enterprise given that these are the very forces whose dynamic is to generate the inequality and poverty endemic to capitalism.

The Cuban revolution is on a knife edge. It must be defended. If Cuban socialism is defeated imperialism will have struck yet another blow at the aspirations of the poor and oppressed peoples throughout the world. It will mean

that imperialism will feel free to intervene anywhere in the region to prevent the growth of popular movements fighting to better the lives of their peoples.

It will mean more Haitis, more blockades, more Gulf Wars, more death squads and torture to terrorise the people. There will be little immediate hope of overcoming capitalist barbarism.

Socialists are internationalists. British socialists have a duty to do whatever we can to defend the Cuban revolution. We do so not just to support the Cuban people but also in the interests of the poor and exploited of Britain. For our interests also are opposed to those of the multinationals which are driving millions of British working class people into unemployment and poverty, which are destroying our educational system, our health service and the very environment we live in.

Cuban socialism is a material, moral and intellectual force which can aid our own struggle against capitalism. It must survive.

Pay no attention to those pseudo-socialists in Britain who relentlessly attack Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution. Pay no attention to the Socialist Workers Party which calls Cuba a capitalist dictatorship. Pay no attention to Workers Power which calls for 'a workers revolution to overthrow Castro'. These people who have never faced real hardship, who have never gone hungry and who live in one of the richest countries of the world are incapable of reaching beyond their narrow horizons to see the world from the standpoint of the vast majority of humanity.

For our part, as socialists and communists in an imperialist country, we urge readers and supporters to act immediately in aid of Cuba. Join the **Week of Action for Cuba** organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign from **8 to 15 October**, ending in a picket of the US Embassy on **Saturday 15 October**. Get your workplace organisations, student unions and community organisations to join the action. Attend FRFI public meetings to discuss the issues (see page 15) and join with us on the streets to raise money and material aid to be sent to Cuba. In addition we can help you form your own solidarity groups to educate and mobilise people in defence of Cuban socialism. ■

COMMUNIST FORUMS

A new series of public discussions of communist politics introduced by Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!

LONDON

Sunday 16 October:
Capitalist Law and Order
Taking Liberties
Speaker: Carol Brickley
2pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn).
Entrance £1 waged, 50p unwaged.

MANCHESTER

Wednesday 19 October:
Capitalist Law and Order
Taking Liberties
7.30pm Friends Meeting House,
Mount Street, Manchester.
All welcome.

News

Racist benefit rules

MAXINE WILLIAMS

Thousands of British citizens face being denied Income Support, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit by a new and grotesquely racist rule introduced by the government.

Many EC nationals currently entitled to claim benefits here will also be denied these. The new rule concerns 'habitual residence' and decrees that unless a claimant meets six criteria for satisfying 'habitual residence' in Britain, they can be denied benefits even if they were born in Britain. These rules became effective at the beginning of August and already its victims are having their scant means of subsistence cut off.

The rule allows Benefits Officers to apply a 'habitual residence' test to a claimant who has lived abroad for several years. The six criteria include: what is the person's centre of interests; do they have steady,

permanent employment; have they lived and worked abroad for several years; do they have family abroad; what are the

claimants' intentions in coming to Britain. Thus, for example, a claimant born in Britain of Nigerian parents who then lived

abroad for some of their life could very easily be denied benefits. That they are British citizens matters not at all - there are now two classes of citizen - those who can claim and those who cannot.

The ruling will disproportionately affect black claimants. It will also discriminate against those not fortunate enough to have escaped the cheap labour/temporary contracts work that is the lot of growing numbers of people in Britain.

The rule is a legislative version of Norman Tebbit's cricket test. It contrasts sharply with the government's attitude to wealthy and white immigrants to Britain. Providing a person has £1m they can freely enter and live here in Britain. Moreover, British expatriates have recently been granted the vote in British elections even if they have not lived here for 20 years. But then, they are rich and vote Tory. It is only the poor and the black who fail to make the grade as 'habitual residents'. ■



Black people have been targeted for discrimination at every level of the welfare state

Free the M25 Three

NICKI JAMESON

It would be an appalling travesty of justice, even by this country's standards, if prosecution witnesses against men who claim their innocence were found to have been paid for their services.

And it would be an outrage if some of those same prosecution witnesses turned out to be the real perpetrators of the crimes. If they not only connived with the police to frame innocent men and save themselves, but were paid for their services into the bargain.

Such a scenario, or any part of it, may or may not be true in the case of Raphael Rowe, Michael Davis and Randolph Johnson, the framed prisoners known as the M25 Three. We are forbidden to know. It is not in the 'public interest' that either the public, or the M25 Three themselves, who are now in their fifth year in gaol for crimes they did not commit, learn who received the £25,000 reward money (put up by the *Daily Mail* and one of the victims) paid out following their imprisonment. It is not in the 'public interest' that Raphael Rowe be told the outcome of a police inquiry instigated by a complaint he himself made.

On the night of 15-16 December 1988 three masked men conducted a series of violent attacks and robberies around the M25 in Surrey, leaving one man dead, another severely wounded, two houses robbed and four cars stolen. Victims told the police two of the men were white and one black; one was described as having long blonde hair and blue eyes.

Three days later armed police

raided a large house divided into flats in south London and arrested 12 people, including Raphael Rowe and Michael Davis, both of whom are black. They were all initially charged with aggravated burglary.

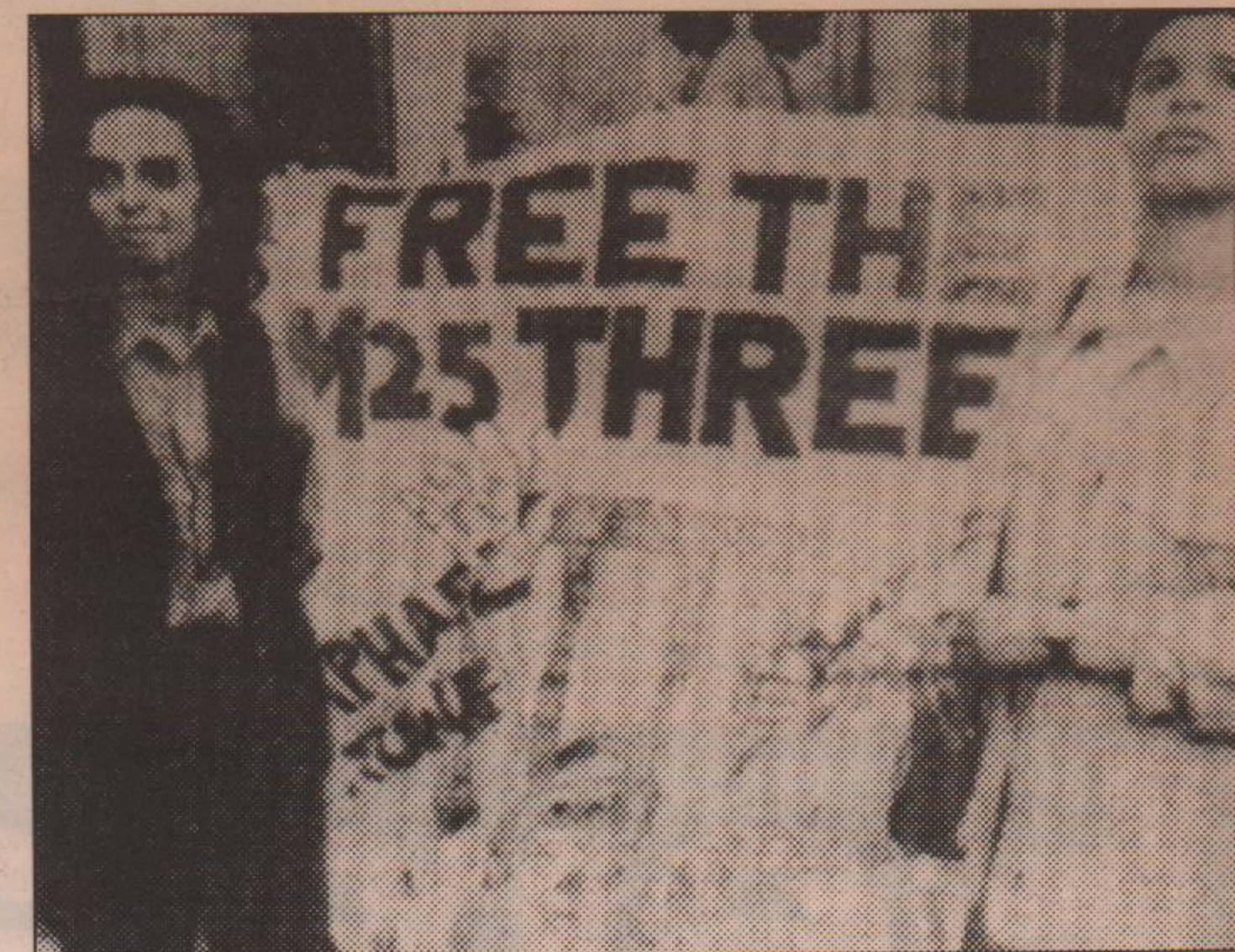
Also arrested were two white men, Shane Griffin and Mark Jobbins. Together with Norman Duncan, who was arrested a few days later, they became key prosecution witnesses. These three were found in possession of many of the goods stolen during the robberies, as well as an array of weapons, including an air pistol probably used in the attacks. Unrecorded interviews were conducted with at least one of them, and the whole direction



Raphael Rowe

of questioning was towards getting them to incriminate Rowe, Davis and Johnson. At the trial Norman Duncan, Jobbins and Griffin admitted stealing a car which was used by the 'gang', disposing of two further cars stolen during the course of the robberies and supplying the masks worn. None of them has ever been charged with any offence arising from these matters.

The trial was peppered with manipulated pieces of evidence, including the testimony



M25 Three supporters are still fighting to prove their innocence

of a girlfriend of Raphael's who was motivated by jealousy to lie and also appears to have been rewarded financially. Despite Raphael Rowe and Michael Davis calling seven alibi witnesses, the M25 Three were convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for murder and robbery.

Their application for leave to appeal was heard in October 1992; at the hearing the Crown handed a document to the judges so they could rule on whether it must be disclosed to the defence. They ruled it should not, and confirmed their decision at a subsequent hearing in January 1993, thereby narrowing a previous legal precedent on disclosure set in the case of Judith Ward.

It appears the Public Interest Immunity ruling prevented the disclosure of two documents: the report of the Surrey police investigation into Raphael's complaint about the circumstances of the unrecorded interview with Norman Duncan, and a list of the names of those who received the reward money.

Raphael also made two other complaints which the police have refused to proceed with: into the circumstances of an unrecorded interview with Mark Jobbins, which the police

deny took place, and into the conduct of the property officer, a now ex-Detective Sergeant Donaldson. If DS Donaldson of Surrey police sounds familiar, it is because he recently stood trial for the framing of the Guildford Four.

Like the Guildford Four, the M25 Three lost their first appeal but have not given up the fight for justice. Their lawyers are asking the Home Secretary to refer the case to the Court of Appeal on the basis of the 'perversity and illogicality' of the appeal judges' verdict that there was not 'even a lurking doubt' as to the men's guilt. Lord Chief Justice Watkins, who presided over the appeal and retired soon after, was a notorious reactionary who has almost never ruled in favour of the defendant, other than when he quashed the prison sentence of a police officer charged with raping a black woman, on the basis of the officer's previous 'good conduct'.

The M25 Three are Raphael Rowe (MP3660), HMP Maidstone, County Road, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1UZ; Michael Davis (MP3661), HMP Swaleside, Brabazon Road, Eastchurch, Kent ME12 4DZ and Randolph Johnson (MP3903), HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs WR11 5TZ. ■

Fightback against racist attacks

SUSAN DAVIDSON & CAT WIENER

On 8 September 1994 the Tower Hamlets 9 Defence Campaign held a Remembrance Day in the local community to mark the anniversary of a vicious attack on Quddus Ali, a young Bangladeshi boy. Not one of the racists who beat him unconscious, nearly killing him, has ever been brought to justice.

However six of the nine Asian youth arrested when police broke up a peaceful vigil for Quddus Ali a month later, still face serious charges of riot.

At the rally, a spokesperson stated: 'Not only will we never forget the attack on Quddus Ali and the shameful way the police attacked our demonstration, but we will continue to demand action against the increasing number of racist attacks in our communities. The attack on Quddus Ali was followed attacks on Mukhtar Ahmed and Shah Alam. For us, remembrance is more than marking one day... it is a day-to-day reality. How many more attacks will take place and then be quietly forgotten about?'

The campaign is calling a picket of the pre-trial hearing in October to demand the dropping of all charges against the Tower Hamlets 9, the arrest of the racists who attacked Quddus Ali and an end to police violence and harassment of their community.

What is certain is that without local youth organisation to

highlight racist attacks by fascists and police, both the attack on Quddus Ali and the subsequent frame-up of the Tower Hamlets 9 would indeed have been 'quietly forgotten about' by a racist and cynical media.

This contrasts with the furore over the stabbing of a white schoolboy in Kings Cross on 13 August. The police, in contrast to their reluctance to classify

harassment - ranging from verbal insults and spitting to attacks on children, stabbings, beatings and arson attacks on flats and restaurants - are nothing new. These attacks are routinely met with police and media indifference.

The fatal stabbing of 15-year-old Richard Everitt, on the contrary, made national news for days - providing an opportu-



Tower Hamlets 9 Defence Campaign

any attack perpetrated on black youth as 'racist' initially told newspapers that the murder was probably racially motivated, prompting banner headlines - 'Knifed for being white!' 'Asian gangs target whites'. Small wonder, then, that Camden Racial Equality Council reported that there were twice as many attacks on Asians in the two days following the murder as in the whole of the previous month. For Asian youth in the Drummond Street area, racist

ity for renewed whipping up of fears of 'Asian gangs' out of control. 11 Asian youth were arrested next day. Princess Di visited the site of Everitt's death, wreaths came flooding in. Page after page of the national newspapers paid tribute to a 'gentle giant' who 'loved bikes' and was just going about his business. Small wonder, then, that local Bangladeshi youth are cynical. Some of them tell a different story of the incident, and report seeing six-foot



Quddus Ali

Richard on the day he was killed chasing three little Asian kids around the streets with seven white mates before being surrounded and attacked by a Bangladeshi defence group. They say the fatal stabbing was an accident.

Whatever the precise facts surrounding the regrettable death of Richard Everitt, one fact emerges starkly: in racist Britain, your life is only valued and your



Mukhtar Ahmed

death only mourned if you are white. Black victims of attacks are expected suffer in silence and not fight back.

Support the Tower Hamlets 9! Picket Bow Road Magistrates court Tuesday 4 October 9.30am. Tel Adil Rahman on 081 548 0099 for further details.

School students organise defence

HANNAH CALLER

Samad Hussain, Abdul Kobir, Shazed Miah and Rony Rahman, students at Langdon Park School, Tower Hamlets, are due to appear in court in early December. They have been framed up on charges of grievous bodily harm on evidence supplied by the head-teacher Mr Dunne.

At the beginning of term, 60 school students marched to the Town Hall. As the march set off from the school, some racist school children, supported by their parents and local residents, jeered at and insulted the marchers, who pressed on and handed in to the mayor a petition calling for Dunne's removal.

Since their election as council majority, Labour has taken no action against racism at the school, but they have set up an internal investigation. In the meantime, they have brushed up its anti-racist credentials by co-organising a music festival with the Anti-Racist Alliance.

What really matters is stopping the racist attacks at school and on the streets, and supporting the youth against false charges by police and in court.

Results of the council's investigation into racism in the school should be available in the next few weeks, and will be given to the Board of Governors. There will be a picket of this meeting when the date is known.

Support the Langdon Park 4!

Pensioners Notes

Oppose benefits cuts

RENE WALLER

Pensioners' groups everywhere have now resumed meeting after the August break, and are hard at work collecting signatures for our petition to be presented to the Queen on 29 September, asking for an adequate basic pension.

Groups from all over the country have hired coaches and will be coming to London with their completed petitions. This year groups coming from a long distance have been given priority in the allocation of tickets for our rally in Westminster Central Hall, so many London pensioners will be going straight to Trafalgar Square to join those from the rally going to the palace for the presentation. We hope there will be a truly impressive demonstration.

My own branch, Lewisham Pensioners Petition Group, has planned a local rally in Lewisham Theatre (which we hope to fill), on 27 September, to mobilise the maximum possible local support for the petition.

Besides collecting signatures in a local shopping centre each Friday, we have endeavoured to act as a watchdog for the whole community, and have supported protests against hospital clo-



Pensioners protest against VAT on fuel

sures, the threatened privatisation of the post office and any suggestion that unprofitable but vital local bus services should be withdrawn. We put pensioners first, but do not forget the need to be part of a thriving, caring community. We view with dismay the seemingly endless proposals to close all those services which make life in a big city like London tolerable, let

alone rewarding.

Very recently our action group has found that a local shop had actually been named by its owner *Shoot the Aged*. We're not clear, although we're endeavouring to find out, whether the aim was cheap publicity or whether it reflected the view of the proprietor - but it's clearly offensive to pensioners and we cannot but be aware

that it's a way of thinking fostered by the philosophy of the market economy, that queries the right to exist of anything or anybody that does not help to produce a profit.

Perhaps you think that's overstating things, but, in fact, the society we live in already denies the necessities of life to millions in the so-called third world who cannot find a job which will make a profit for someone.

Let's beware - the welfare state here is being systematically destroyed and its values denied. Old people, disabled people, unemployed people, are being labelled surplus to requirements. Is this the way forward for humanity? I don't think so. I believe the human race became the dominant species because it began to learn the value of co-operation in overcoming difficulties. We must not turn back, working together has allowed us to produce sufficient to support all; now we must learn how to distribute the goods equally.

I believe our pensioners action groups can fulfil a useful role, for we are already one of the most organised sections as well as one of the most deprived. Let's stop the rot and find a way forward, not for a privileged section, but for everyone.

Young black man burned

On 22 September, a black man's genitals were doused with petrol and set alight in horrific attack reminiscent of the lynchings of the US Deep South. The attack left him with 10 per cent burns, a broken jaw and a fractured leg.

Mark Glasgow, 20, was abducted by his white girlfriend's father and another man, threatened with a gun and then beaten and set alight before being dumped on a golf course 20 miles from his home. His girlfriend was in the vehicle in which he was driven, but was apparently powerless to help.

He told newspapers, 'They told me I deserved to be burned for messing with white girls. I begged them to stop.' Police say he has since denied the racist character of the attack.

It is no accident that the abduction happened near the BNP. The fascists have been able to organise with impunity the area. The refusal of police to prosecute the murderers of Stephen Lawrence, a young black man killed by racist thugs in south east London two years ago, was a green light to the most vicious, degenerate elements to pursue whatever grotesque act of individual vigilantism they please. It is vital that anti-racists organise now to close down the fascist headquarters and drive these scum off the streets.

Cat Wiener

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... the latent object appears to have been that of placing at the disposal of the Home Secretary a body of well-trained disciplined and armed men, competent to intimidate the public and to keep down the rising spirit of the population.'

Captain W White, on the formation of the new police force, 1838.

At the time of its inception in the early 19th century, central to the role of the British police force was keeping the peace – Public Order. It was a priority which for long periods of relative prosperity and social calm could safely be pushed into the background, replaced by the myth of 'policing by consent'. But the real nature of the British police force was bound to resurface: as it did in the face of recession and Thatcher's class divisive government in the 1980s. The process of building a paramilitary force within the police had to begin in earnest following the 1981 inner city riots; in Brixton, in particular, the police were hard pushed to deal with concerted opposition. Lessons had been learned in the north of Ireland and in other British colonies which now had to be put into practice on mainland Britain. Led by ex-RUC Chief Constable, Metropolitan Commissioner Sir Kenneth Newman, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), in close collaboration with the RUC and the Hong Kong Police (notorious for their vicious riot squad), began equipping the police to deal seriously with social discontent.

The watershed came with the 1984/85 miners' strike, closely followed by the 1985 uprisings in Toxteth and Broadwater Farm. Out of their experience of policing these events, new legislation in the form of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Public Order Act 1986 increased police powers. By 1987 at Wapping the police had polished their riot procedures and had established a communication system and armoury to match. Their proficiency was tested again during the 1990 Poll Tax demonstration in London, and again on a minor scale at Welling in 1993. All the paraphernalia is now in place – the cavalry charges, the short and long-shield snatch squads, helicopters, cameras and communications – and with the media ready to pursue the hue and cry afterwards. Since then minor improvements, like extra-long truncheons, have perfected their readiness to meet social disorder with bloody, physical repression.

Miscarriages of justice

While paramilitary proficiency has been perfected, other aspects of policing have run less smoothly. First there came a series of highly-publicised miscarriages of justice in the late 1980s. Worst of all for a system which prided itself on never being faulty was the fact that the most notorious cases – the Guildford 4, Birmingham 6, Maguires, Judith Ward and the Tottenham 3 – discredited the repressive laws and policing methods of which they were all so proud and self-righteous. The unravelling of what really happened shook the system. Leading politicians, High Court judges, barristers, police and civil servants saw their reputations on the line.

A massive damage-limitation exercise had to begin consisting of the setting up of the May Inquiry, headed by a safe toady, the announcement of a Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, peopled by more toadies, and the half-hearted prosecution of a number of relatively junior police officers involved in the miscarriages. These elements were necessarily enmeshed. Outraged judges like Lord Denning, heavily implicated in the Birmingham 6 and Guildford 4 cases, publicly stated that the men were really guilty. Sympathetic magistrates tried to derail the prosecutions

POLICING THE CRISIS

Britain's police, prisons and criminal justice system as a whole are in crisis – we are told. After fifteen years of Tory rule, a mass of legislation, a great more rhetoric about 'crime', 'criminals', 'terrorists', 'yobs', 'single parents' etc, a record prison population and with a repressive Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill on the verge of becoming law – we still need ever more draconian regimes to deal with the 'criminal classes', according to the Government. Grotesque crimes are spotlighted in the media to fuel the endless public appetite for real-life horror. The message is that we are all at risk from violent crime. What is really going on? Yes, the Tories are running scared that they will lose their 'Get Tough on Law and Order' reputation to the revamped Labour Party... but there is more at issue than that. CAROL BRICKLEY examines the real purpose of Britain's police force.



COLIN CHALMERS

of police at an early stage, claiming abuse of process because of delay. This further delayed the trials, and the May Inquiry was deliberately stalled awaiting their outcome. The Royal Commission plodded on. It is only during the last year, five years after the release of the Guildford 4, and once the original public revulsion at the police corruption has died down, that the chickens could come home to roost.

- All the prosecutions of police officers for perjury and corruption have been dismissed. In both the trials concerning the Guildford 4 and the Tottenham 3 police, the defence rested on the implication that the original defendants were really guilty – specifically Patrick Armstrong and Winston Silcott – in circumstances where they were unable to defend themselves.
- Sir John May produced an Inquiry report which stated that the police and courts had not acted wrongly in their treatment of the Guildford 4 and Maguire family.
- The Royal Commission came up with a bland set of recommendations that the Government could safely ignore.

Look, no chickens!

Crackdown on crime?

In the wake of this whitewash operation, Home Secretary Howard was able to draft a new package of laws – the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill – which, far from reforming an inherently faulty system, makes it more likely that miscarriages of justice

will ensue. Whilst many of the Bill's provisions harden up the 1986 Public Order Act by targeting hunt saboteurs, ravers, new age travellers, road campaigners and political demonstrators, to the undoubted satisfaction of Britain's property-owning middle and upper classes, its most crucial provision is the end of the right to silence.

The new caution:

'You do not have to say anything. But if you do not mention now something which you may later use in your defence, the court may decide that your failure to mention it now strengthens the case against you. A record will be made of anything you say and it may be given in evidence if you are brought to trial.' It will make a change from 'you're nicked'!

Central to the English legal system has been the assumption of innocence – you are innocent until proven guilty. You did not have to prove your innocence either to the police or in court. In 1987, in the wake of the Winchester Three fiasco, then Home Secretary Douglas Hurd restricted the right to silence in the north of Ireland, using terrorism as the excuse. The new Bill now extends these provisions to England and Wales. If you fail to mention anything under police questioning after you are cautioned (see box) which you later rely on in any defence at your trial, the judge and jury may imply guilt from your silence.

Despite all the rhetoric about this measure being aimed at professional

criminals and wily terrorists who use silence to get away with major crimes, in reality this provision will be used to put pressure on people who are at their most vulnerable under arrest. Threat of the consequences of silence will ensure that the confession under police questioning will take on a new lease of evidential life. Accompanying the public justification for these measures, chief constables have attacked defence lawyers for their behaviour in court ('theatrical games'), and in particular for insisting on seeing all undisclosed material – it was undisclosed material which could have proved innocence in several of the miscarriages of justice cases. Watch this space for the next move to restrict the right to see all evidence.

The remains of the Royal Commission recommendations could be safely laid to rest. One recommendation for a criminal appeal review body, to replace the Home Secretary's monopoly on sanctioning criminal appeals, has survived – but only just. It is proposed that its constitution should follow the same lines as the Police Complaints Authority. So discredited is the PCA, that most defendants prefer to sue in the courts than waste time with a complaint. If this proposal is enacted, the chances of appeal will decrease.

While Howard has been ensuring that the defendants are more likely to be convicted, the police have been tying up the loose ends for their paramilitary police. Along with longer batons (purely defensive, you understand), they also want more guns. The rhetoric is similar – more of

Britain's robbers go armed, we need to gun them down. In fact a recent Home Office study shows that most armed robbers are pretending, using replica guns or cucumbers wrapped in plastic bags! Even when armed with the real thing, many never fire them, or use blanks. Frightening though gun-toting robbers are, it is doubtful that the police need more armed officers to deal with them. They already have special, mobile armed squads. The gradual process of convincing the British public that they need an armed police force has begun and it is doubtful that their targets will be limited to armed robbers.

It is no accident that this process of tooling-up, both literally and in relation to police powers, is happening now. After 15-years of Tory rule, British society is more divided between the rich and poor than ever before, and the process will go on. Jeffrey Archer has not even been arrested for the crime of insider-dealing involving thousands of pounds, but young mothers go to gaol for the lack of a few pounds to pay a fine. Inequality of treatment is now the norm at every level of our existence. The real causes of increased crime – the breakdown of society – are dismissed in favour of glib definitions of Evil and Yobbery. So the City fraudsters, tax dodgers, arms dealers, errant Dukes and the like, will go free, while the poor, the working class, are imprisoned for longer in harsher conditions. The government is now considering identity cards. And if you choose to complain by organising to change this corruption, the riot squad will be ready to keep the Queen's Peace at the end of a long truncheon or the barrel of a gun.

Centralisation and cost-cutting

There is one further problem the Tories face. A highly-centralised, well-equipped, well-paid and privileged police force, hired to be loyal to the State but ostensibly a public service, is very expensive. With a wealth of experience of privatising nationalised industries, destroying public services and dismantling education and health services under the auspices of efficiency, the Tories are extending these principles to the police and criminal justice system.

The Prime Minister's Yobbery campaign includes proposals for recruiting 30,000 special constables and empowering neighbourhood watch schemes to become vigilante groups. Local councils, including Labour councils, are proposing to set up private patrols on housing estates. Routine policing will soon be carried out by untrained amateurs and security firms – with the advantage that they will be cheap. More invidious still, tenants will have to pay extra for their patrols – if you can't afford it, you don't get it. In fact it is the poor who are already more likely to be the victims of crime than any section of the middle class who are so vocal on the subject. Just like the health service where if you are poor you are more likely to be ill, but you have to join a long queue for scarce resources, the poorest will be outside society, victimised both as criminals and the victims of crime.

There is no point pursuing any illusions that the Labour Party will institute different policies. They did not even summon up the guts to vote against the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill on its second reading in Parliament. The first privatised 'community patrol' was instituted in Tony Blair's own constituency; Tory Wandsworth is merely following suit. For socialists the real solution to the problem lies in society itself. Without a commitment to one another as a society, opposed to the selfish individualism of the 'free market, policing and the criminal justice system are only another means of intimidating the working class: 'keeping down our rising spirit'.

Cuba Imperialism tightens the screws

The inhumanity of US policy towards Cuba was starkly revealed in August, as up to 30,000 Cubans risked their lives on ramshackle rafts in the Florida Straits. Thousands are thought to have died. Driven by economic desperation and the hope of a better life in Miami, this human catastrophe is a direct result of US imperialism's attempt to starve Cuban socialism into submission. CAT WIENER reports.

Throughout the summer, US agents and illegal Radio Marti broadcasts actively fomented unrest – embassy incursions, sabotage and hijackings. On 13 July, the hijacking of a ferry resulted in the drowning of passengers, despite Cuban coast guards' efforts to save them; a Cuban policeman was shot, rioting broke out in Havana on 5 August and on 8 August Ship Lieutenant Roberto Anguilar Reyes was murdered during a hijacking. Fidel Castro stated, 'We cannot continue to be the guardians of the United States' coasts': Cuban coast guards would no longer turn back adults leaving Cuba illegally. He even encouraged Miami exiles to collect their relatives in their own boats. Effectively, he called the US's bluff.

For years the US has milked anti-communist propaganda from illegal Cuban refugees. Until this summer, all such refugees were guaranteed residence under the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966. Meanwhile, the US Consulate in Havana granted barely 2,000 visas out of an agreed yearly quota of 20,000. Suddenly faced with the spectre of a re-run of the 1985 Mariel Exodus, Clinton rescinded the 1966 Act. To appease the reactionary pro-Batista CANF, he then announced a series of hardline measures, including a block on remittances (at some \$300m per year a vital source of hard currency for Cuba). Meanwhile, thousands of refugees were detained – including at least 15,000 in the illegally-occupied Guantán-



Rural workers brigades armed with batons prepare to combat anti-social elements in Havana

amo Bay. The setting up of a US concentration camp on Cuban soil is a calculated further insult to Cuban sovereignty.

Inevitably, bourgeois commentators have snatched at this opportunity to attack a socialist country. While triumphantly denouncing food shortages, factory closures and the lack of consumer goods, few have had the honesty to mention Cuba's achievements in the face of overwhelming odds – for instance, a health care and education system unrivalled in Latin America – or to accuse the real culprit, the criminal blockade. *Guardian* journalist Noll

Scott even suggests a strategy to help the US overthrow Castro: 'a simple gesture of unconditional friendship ... a year's supply of soap ... Each cake embossed with the legend "a gift from the people of the USA". It would be humiliating, but impossible to refuse.' He then elaborates a series of 'gifts', tied to increasing conditions for 'reform' and 'democracy'. Close behind, the Trotskyists bay for political revolution: 'The task of overthrowing the Castro regime belongs to the Cuban workers and peasants themselves, not to false friends in Washington and Miami.' (*Workers Power*, September 1994). Their

shared concern is the destruction of the vanguard role of the Cuban Communist Party led by Fidel Castro. It is at heart an attack on socialism itself, and the hope it offers humanity. Journalist Ian Aitken is one of the few British journalists to have shown any integrity. He reminds us of the bloody repression of Batista in a pre-revolutionary Cuba 'of whorehouses ... and casinos, run by American mobsters for the benefit of gringo tourists arriving by the boatload from Miami every day. Meanwhile, most of the rural population was unemployed and starving.' Cuba's 'false friends' in the bourgeois and Trotskyist press should have no illusions – it is to that past it will return, if Clinton and his CANF supporters get their way and socialism is overthrown in Cuba.

There is no doubt that Cuba's back is against the wall. The 35-year US blockade, intensified last year by the Torricelli Act, and the collapse of Cuba's main trading partner, the Soviet Union, have taken their toll. To overcome the desperate shortage of hard currency now needed to buy such necessities as fuel and medicines the Communist Party has been forced to experiment with the market, opening its doors to joint ventures, allowing limited private enterprise, boosting tourism and, most significantly, legalising the dollar economy. This has inevitably led to an exacerbation of social divisions, as those with access to dollars can purchase everything from food to luxury items on the booming black market. In spite of the government's consistent attempts to explain this 'Special Period' to the masses, and its guarantee of a bare minimum of provisions to all through rationing, it

may not be able to control the political and economic consequences of these measures. However, as Communist Party member Enrique Guzman Karell told FRFI 'It's very hard to be so isolated – it's an objective problem with no real escape ... it's hard to maintain the kind of socialism we had before.'

With the flood of refugees now subsiding, the immediate task of the government is to get food into the state shops. As Raul Castro said, 'At the moment, beans are more important than guns.' There have been some limited successes this summer, with some factories resuming production and increased petroleum output through joint ventures, and the dollar is said to be dropping in value on the black market. The Communist Party and Fidel Castro still enjoy widespread support throughout Cuba, particularly in working class areas. Hundreds of passengers jumped overboard from hijacked ships rather than be taken to Miami. In the Malecon, vanloads of rural workers armed with batons, not police, put down the disturbances. In the words of the Cuban magazine *Bohemia*, 'the day that our revolution must call troops into the streets to fight the forces which seek to destabilise it, there would be nothing left to defend.' In Cuba, today, there is everything to defend, and real socialists here need to take a leading role in that defence. ■

This article will be discussed by South London FRFI at 7.30pm, Monday 10 October, Selkirk Pub, Selkirk Road, London SW17 (tube: Tooting Broadway) and by North London FRFI at 7.30pm, Monday 17 October at the Neighbourhood Centre, Greenland Street, London NW1 (tube: Camden Town).

The gains of the revolution are unique

Susan Yaffe, a student, visited Cuba on a work brigade organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. She spent a further two weeks living in a working class area of Havana.

The brigade worked in fields and on construction sites. Our input was less a direct help to the Cuban economy than an act of international solidarity with Cuba and the aims of the Revolution. We had talks on the background to the Revolution, and visited hospitals and schools, seeing for ourselves the amazing improvements in welfare and education – in contrast to the poverty of the shanty towns I saw during our stop-over in Venezuela.

However, being in a third world country was a shock. The buildings are very run down, and street sellers are everywhere – black-marketeers, people selling cakes they've made or bread. Children kept asking us for chewing-gum and baseball caps in the streets. But they looked healthy and were quite well dressed; they weren't asking for food – just the kind of commodities they thought tourists would have. When one of us gave a child a roll, he shared it equally with all his friends.

In Havana

My real experience of Havana began when I lived with a family in Marianao, just outside central Havana – six people in one small house. There was no running water except in the

kitchen. The houses around were very much in disrepair. The taps where I lived were the only water for the houses opposite, so they'd do their washing there. The whole community helped each other.

But they're finding it harder to survive and to keep up their good will – it's the grinding point now, after five years of the Special Period. The black market is the only way to survive as rations decrease. There's hardly any food in the shops, to buy with pesos, and the monthly rations aren't enough. On ration day, there was a carnival atmosphere: I was woken up early, given a glass of water and sugar, and we went by bike to pick up the allowance of bread, coffee, sugar, and other goods. It was also washing day, because the ration of soap had come.

In the centre I noticed the different treatment of tourists and Cubans. Cubans can now hold dollars, but they get secondary treatment in tourist shops. They're not allowed into hotels alone, and sometimes when I was mistaken for a Cuban I was sent to the back of the queue.

Nevertheless, the family I stayed with was pro-Fidel, and believed that the gains of the Revolution had benefited their country. Of course, they felt it's hard to be treated as second-

class citizens in their own country, but understood it was the only way to save Cuba in the face of the increasingly hard-line blockade – they were prepared to live with it.

Malecon

I was in the Malecon during the events of 5 August. It was a Friday morning and people were on their way to work, so there was a lot of commotion as they ran to see what was going on, and then passed on. Later we heard people smashing windows, and police shooting into the air to disperse the crowd. When we came back, there were two groups of maybe 600 people. One group was those who'd had enough of the problems – there'd been a real tension in Havana, and it was as if it had burst. The others were workers from the rural areas who'd parked their vans in the streets to stop too much movement and were all set to stop the trouble. The police were there, but participated less than the workers. We were shown out of the area by Young Communist League members.

It was all shown on television. On the day it happened, Castro called for people to come out in remembrance of the soldier who'd been killed [the Thursday before] to the Plaza de la Revolution. So on Sunday morning the CDR (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution) across the road got the whole community around and we went down there with thousands of other people, young and old.

Many problems

There's no doubt Cuba has a lot of problems. Other Brigadistas stayed

with people who were more middle-class, had better housing and access to dollars – and thus to more food from the black market. However, they were more anti-Fidel and more angry at their current economic situation than the people I stayed with. Access to dollars means you can get things off the black market and go into tourist shops; if you haven't, there's nothing you can do. So it's leading to class divisions, and of course there are people who are dissatisfied that they can't make more money, and with propaganda on the radio every night from the US, they're bound to

think there's a better life out there. But I was surprised how pro-Fidel many people without dollars were – they realise it's worth preserving the things they have got.

There were lots of articles in all the papers when I got back, but a lot of what they said was untrue. Cuba has made the most gains in all Latin America in welfare and education; the culture in Cuba, the social togetherness of the people, is unique. You don't see it here. People are prepared to sacrifice a lot, economically, for those gains, and for the majority, life goes on as normal. ■

Anti-blockade picket of US Embassy



On 6 September, FRFI joined a 100-strong picket of the US Embassy in London, called by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. Noisy, militant chanting against the illegal US blockade was organised courtesy of Defend Cuba Campaign, Communist Action and FRFI comrades. The sectarian tendencies of the CSC were inevitably upheld by its new chair, Ken Gill, ex-President of MSF (best remembered for his shameful treatment of South African ex-political prisoner David Kitson), who refused to take a speaker from DCC. The RCG then organised with DCC and Communist Action to ensure that messages were taken from all organisations which wanted to speak and democracy was upheld. Militant/Pathfinder demonstrated their preference for sectarianism by attempting to drown out the RCG speaker.

This is an edited version of a speech given by MAXINE WILLIAMS to an RCG Forum on the history of fascism and the tactics of the movement against it.

The buried history of the backers of fascism

We cannot discuss the question of how to fight fascism without understanding what it is, what social forces it is based on and how and in what conditions it grows. The past provides us with our best guide both in terms of the growth of fascism in the 1920s in Europe and in terms of the debates – life and death debates – that communists were forced to conduct about how to fight this menace.

But much of that past history has been deliberately buried. How many of you can guess who in 1920 published a newspaper with the banner headline 'The International Jew: The World's Problem'? It continued:

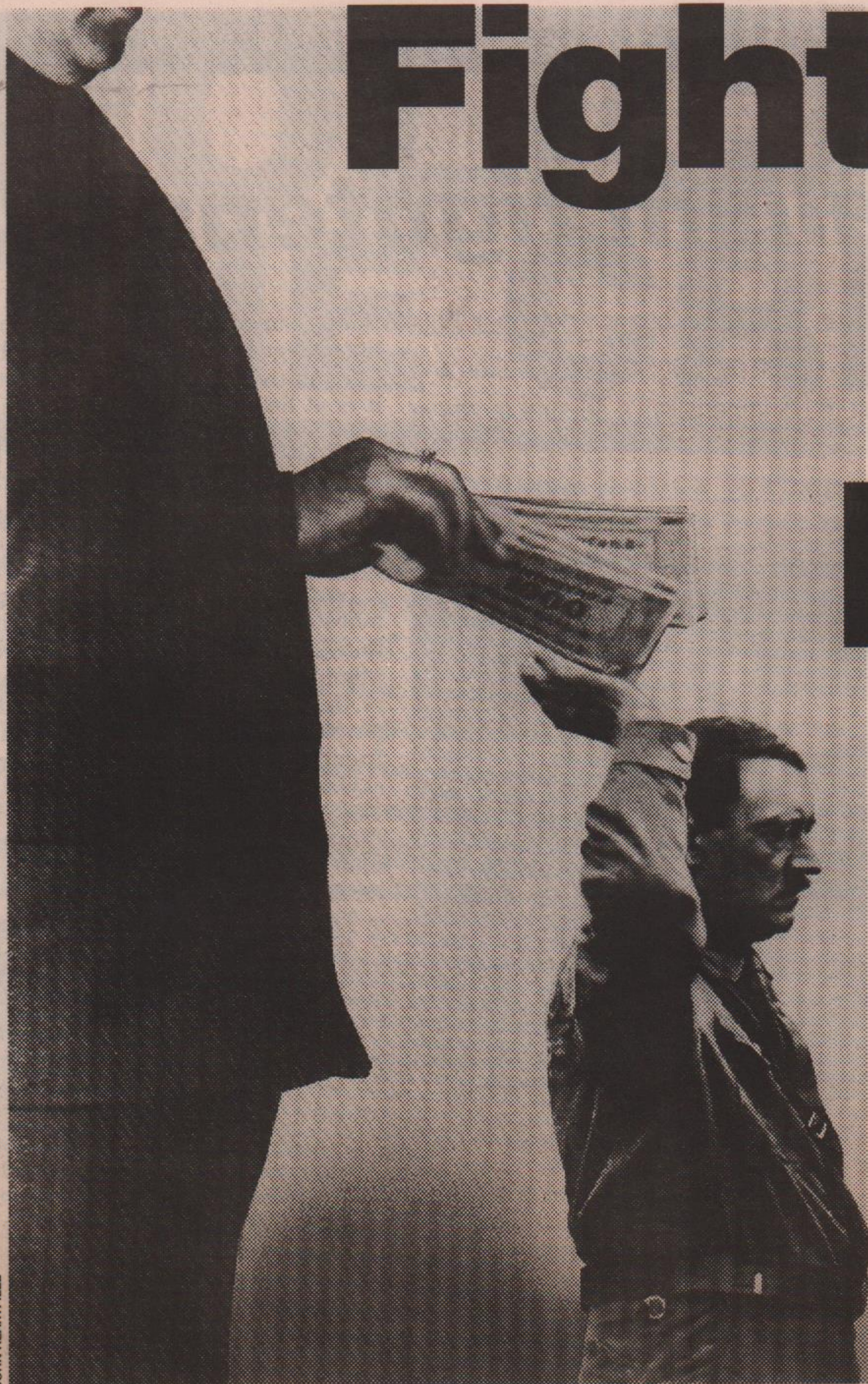
'There is a race, a part of humanity, that has never been received as a welcome part'. The Jews were, it said, conspiring to form an 'international super-capitalist government.' This was the 'prime' question facing all society. This same person went on in 1922 to publish a book called *The International Jew* which was circulated in all corners of the world. At the Nuremberg War Crimes trials, the former leader of the Hitler Youth Movement said he had become an anti-Semite at the age of 17 after reading this book: 'You have no idea what a great influence this book had on the thinking of German youth.'

The publisher concerned was none other than Henry Ford, good old US-apple-pie-family-saloon-car manufacturer. Not surprisingly, he is remembered today for saying you could have any colour car you wanted as long as it was black but not for saying you could have any political system as long as it was fascist and got rid of the Jews. Ford gave substantial amounts of money to the Hitler fascist movement and Hitler had a photograph of him on his office wall. In 1938 Hitler awarded Ford the Grand Cross of the Supreme Order of the German Eagle – only the fourth such award, one of the other three having gone to Mussolini.

Ford was not alone among international capitalists in his backing for fascism. In Britain, Lord Rothermere's *Daily Mail* headline on 8 January 1934 was 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts'. Rothermere felt that the victory of the Nazis in Germany would 'set up an additional rampart against Bolshevism'.

Such unpalatable facts about the pillars of capitalism have been buried in a society that is encouraged to have a memory just long enough to remember the last advert it sees. This selective amnesia was well displayed in the celebrations held recently to mark various anniversaries of the Second World War. The heirs of the appeasers and collaborators with fascism, who now rule the world, debated whether Germany should take part in its celebrations but not whether the former Soviets, those who bore the brunt of the Second World War, should do so. One of Hitler's major goals – the destruction of socialism, the annihilation of the Soviet Union – had been achieved by other imperialists fifty years after Hitler failed.

In Germany, the anniversaries had to be the occasion for the ruling class, fresh from its triumphs against the GDR and its own immigrant population, to pretend that there was a long and noble bourgeois democratic tradition in Germany. That those who rule today are the heirs of those who opposed Hitler. When an exhibition of anti-fascist struggle was held, bourgeois protests were long and



JOHN HEARTFIELD

'Far from providing resistance to fascism, the German bourgeoisie was one of its major supports, without which it could not have come to power.'

loud that communist resistance had been included. But the stubborn fact is that there was little effective bourgeois resistance to Hitler in Germany.

Far from providing resistance to fascism, the German bourgeoisie was one of its major supports, without which it could not have come to power. It was not only Henry Ford who financed Hitler, it was large German industrialists like Krupp, Thyssen and powerful bankers. And

circumstances such as those resulting from the defeat of Germany in the First World War. It is nothing of the kind. Fascism, like bourgeois democracy, is one form of the rule of the capitalist class. It is fraught with danger for the bourgeoisie and they resort to it only in certain extreme conditions when bourgeois democracy becomes untenable. History demonstrates that the main condition has been when a strong working class movement



Henry Ford receiving the Grand Cross of the German Eagle from Hitler's representative

when Germany lost the war and the Nazis departed, such men were still there, still reaping their profits, carefully nurtured by the Allies as a bulwark against the threat of Soviet communism.

These facts illustrate a central point in the Marxist view of fascism – that it is not separate from bourgeois rule but is one variant of it. There are those who would pretend that fascism is an aberration, a mass psychosis, a peculiar conjunction of

makes it impossible to inflict the necessary harsh conditions on the working class and threatens the political power of the ruling class.

We saw those conditions in both Italy and Germany in the 1920s. In Germany, after the First World War, bourgeois rule was chronically unstable. The capitalists experienced and never forgot the revolutionary events of 1918. At that time, the German working class was in ferment. They rose in insurrection, soviets and

Fight against fascism

Fight for

workers councils were set up, their impulse strengthened by the Russian revolution. With strikes, street battles and whole sections of the armed forces in mutiny, the country was ungovernable and on the verge of revolution. The Kaiser was forced to abdicate and a republic proclaimed.

And who did the bourgeoisie turn to in its hour of need? To the Social Democrats, placing them in government in order to crush the workers. Which they did in blood. Leading Social Democrat Noske proclaimed 'Someone must become the bloodhound. I won't shirk the task.' He armed the Freikorps, a fanatically right-wing army organisation, and turned them loose to murder thousands of workers and communist leaders. The revolution was defeated with the active assistance of the Social Democrats and it was these events that were to be key to the growth of fascism. The ruling class had seen how close the threat of revolution was and would neither forgive nor forget it.

To give one example of this process: Fritz Thyssen, multi-millionaire head of Germany's United Steel Works, had cause to dwell on the events of 1918. He and his father were arrested by armed workers and thought they were about to be executed. Instead they were taken to Berlin by train. On leaving the train Thyssen senior asked one of the workers who had met them off the train in Berlin to fetch his blanket. The worker replied: 'Who do you take me for? I am the Chief of Police of Berlin.' And indeed he was. This prominent communist, Emil Eichhorn, had been nominated to this post by the workers and had transformed Berlin Central Police station into what became known as the Red House. Imagine the terror of these bourgeois gentlemen and imagine the lengths to which they would go to ensure that such events never took place again. As Thyssen said: 'It was then that I realised the necessity – if Germany was not to sink into anarchy – of fighting all this radical agitation which, far from giving happiness to the workers, only created disorder. The Social Democratic Party endeavoured to maintain order but it was too weak. The memory of those days did much to dispose me, later on, to offer my help to the National Socialists'. Fascism, he believed, presented the possibility of a patriotic, nationalist workers party that would win the 'lower orders' away from Marxism. When the choice was between rule by the impoverished German workers or rule by the Nazis, the German ruling class did not hesitate.

Fascism and imperialism

The other factor underlying fascism is that of imperialism and nationalism. It was clear in Germany that an anti-working class programme was not enough for big business. Conditions of economic crisis afflicted cap-

italism worldwide and intensified the competition between imperialist powers. The First World War did not solve this problem. Nationalism was not merely an ideological tool for fascism, it was essential to rally the population behind the task of winning a bigger share of world markets and colonies for its ruling class. Without such economic superiority the bourgeoisie could not buy social peace at home. German fascism was obsessed from its earliest days with the 'German mission to win colonies. Though the First and Second World Wars took different forms, the essence remained the same – the fight to divide and redivide the world amongst the Great Powers. The British Empire was peculiarly vulnerable, belonging as it did to a power that was being economically eclipsed by the USA and potentially by Germany.

The German attempt to challenge British imperial dominance in 1914 was a disaster. The Versailles treaty following the war was a charter for its rival imperialists. It not only imposed heavy reparations on Germany but sealed off its economy, denying it access to international markets. German overseas investments were seized, as were its colonies. Its armaments and other heavy industries were physically dismantled. The aim of all ensuing German governments was to rid itself of these obstacles.

The task was an obsession for the German ruling class and this drive shaped the politics of Germany. Just as Thyssen's experience of the Communists in 1918 dominated his thinking so did the experience of Krupp under the Versailles treaty. He never forgot watching his armaments factories being physically smashed up by French and British troops under the terms of the Treaty. Any political force which would allow the expansion of German manufacture and would subsidise German rearmament would win his support.

The factors which underlay the decision of the capitalist class to support fascism have their roots in the very nature of capitalism. Political choices have material foundations. The inherent instability of capitalism, its need to maintain and increase its profits at the expense of the working class at home and super-exploitation abroad, drive its supporters towards militarism, nationalism and the annihilation of working class rights. Prolonged social peace in any capitalist country can only be bought at the expense of colonial exploitation. When Germany lacked this it was forced to turn upon its own working class, the political middle ground disappeared. The compromise, social democracy, quickly lost its strength in Germany, as society polarised on class lines. As long as capitalism exists this danger exists. And those today who talk of 'never again' can only say this with any sincerity if they wish to uproot capitalism once and for all.

In 1932 Hitler made a decisive



socialism

speech to 600 prominent German industrialists. The crux of it was that the nation was irretrievably split, half believing in private property and half wanting to abolish it. Many of the bourgeoisie, said Hitler, thought that the Nazi programme was too radical but:

'If it were not for us then there would be no more bourgeoisie alive in Germany today. The question of Bolshevism would long ago have been decided.'

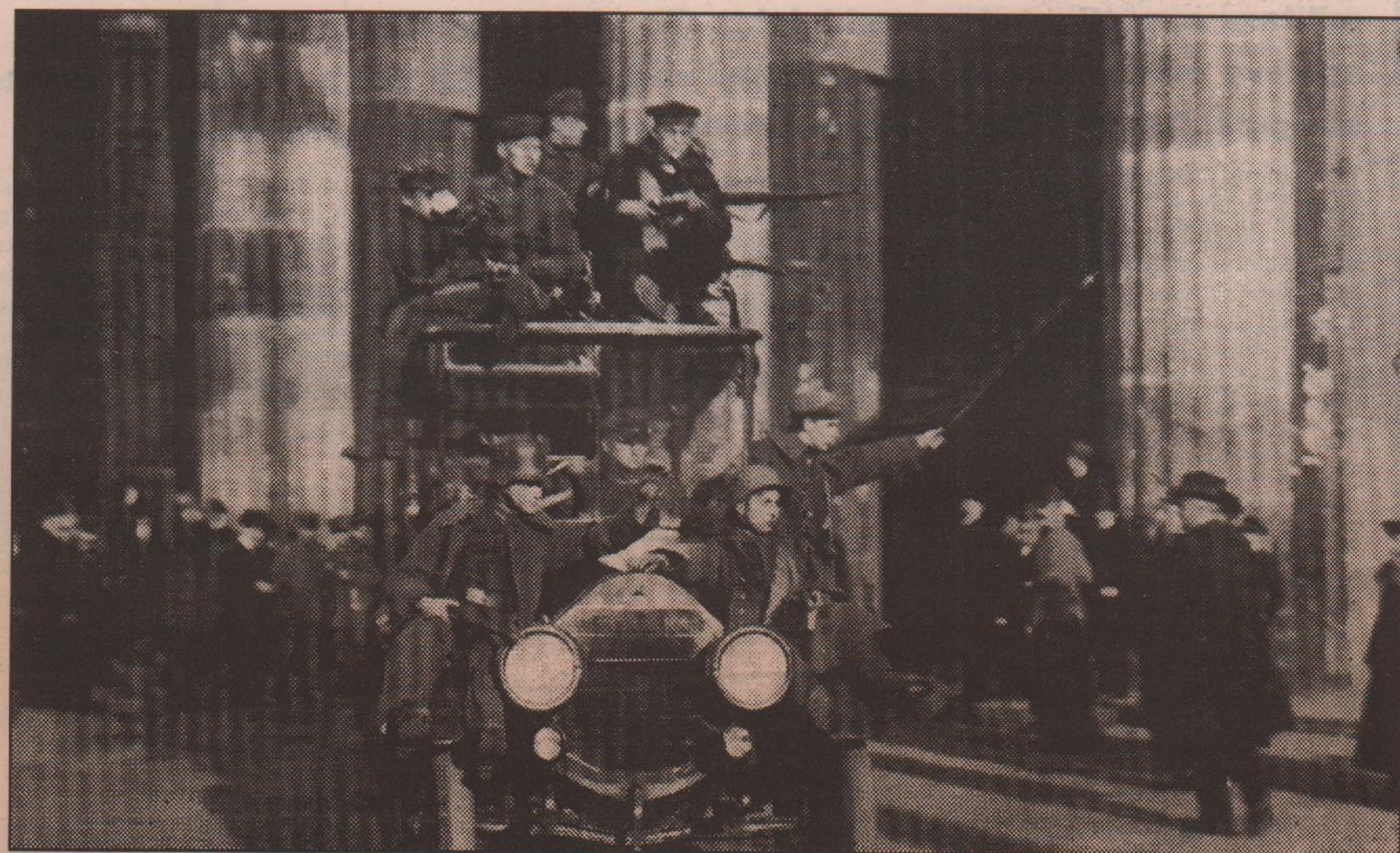
The impoverished working class, he continued, would have been entirely won over to Bolshevism. At the time of the speech, one third of the population was unemployed and the Communists had begun to eclipse the Social Democrats. The effect of this speech on the industrialists was astounding. Money began to flow into the Nazi coffers. Krupp, hedging his bets, had sent a senior member of his Board of Directors to the meeting. He returned a convinced fascist.

Hitler had offered the German ruling class something they longed for – a right-wing mass movement. This is one of the defining features of fascism. There are other forms of authoritarian capitalist rule, such as military rule, but fascism is distinguished by its mass base. Both the German and Italian fascists consciously studied the methods of left-wing movements in mobilising mass popular support although their target was the huge and threatened German middle class. This populist character, sometimes coupled with anti-capitalist rhetoric, created a difficult balancing act for the fascists. Whilst they must rail against the injustices of capital they must simultaneously persuade the capitalists that they would be safe in fascist hands. It was a risky business – a risk which only a seriously challenged ruling class would take.

By 1932 the challenge was enormous. The Communists got their highest election results – beating the Social Democrats – and bourgeois parties were collapsing. The bourgeoisie, some expressing misgivings (these misgivings were later to be dignified by the name anti-fascism), began decisively to throw in their lot with the fascists.

To rely, therefore, on bourgeois society providing effective opposition to fascism would be disastrous today. Once again we see capitalism facing a serious and prolonged crisis, seeking to impose cuts on the working class. Once again the big powers are flexing their muscles over international trade and influence. In such conditions a resurgence of racism, nationalism and fascism is taking place. We have only to look at recent events in Italy to see how the Italian bourgeoisie turned to fascist/nationalist organisations to rescue it from the crisis precipitated by the collapse of the ruling Christian Democrat Party.

For communists, the fight against fascism is also a fight to destroy the



Germany 1919: mutinous troops carry the red flag through the streets of Berlin

system which produces it. It is a fight for the rights of the working class and for the rights of those who suffer racist attacks not just from the fascists but from the police and the immigration authorities. It is also a fight for socialism – to ensure that the men of property, the wealthy and powerful are no longer in a position to drag humanity through the tortures of war and fascism again.

The lessons of anti-fascist struggle

When the question of what tactics should be used against fascism is raised, the British left starts to display an uncharacteristic interest in history. When the issue of how to fight the BNP is debated, the terms 'united front', 'popular front' and 'ultra-leftism' get bandied about a great deal. Yet these terms draw on debates that took place in very different conditions to those faced today. For example when German communists wrestled with the question of how to defeat fascism they did so in the context of a highly conscious, revolutionary working class which had recent experience of insurrectionary attempts to seize power, in a country where the Communist Party had 360,000 overwhelmingly working class members. And even more significantly where working class attempts to achieve socialism had been violently crushed by the Social Democratic Party.

These are scarcely the conditions which apply today. And yet when organisations like the SWP – whose major tactic against fascism is the construction of broad fronts with the Labour Party, like the Anti-Nazi League – deal with history they ignore both its differences and its lessons. They (as did Trotsky) attack

the German Communist Party for 'ultra-leftism', for refusing to build alliances with the Social Democrats and other sections of the bourgeoisie. For much of the period in question, the German Communist Party believed, with cause, that revolution was a real possibility. Their fight against fascism took many forms, including physical forms, but their overriding priority was the struggle for revolution. In fact, even at that time they did seek working alliances with the German Social Democratic Party against fascism. One of the conditions that the SDP placed on such an alliance was that the Communists never refer to the murderous and anti-revolutionary record of the SDP. The German Communist Party resisted such conditions.

No doubt the SWP today would have no problems with such conditions. After all it always calls for a Labour vote and was happy for example to ensure that the Anti-Nazi League did not support the call for an end to racist immigration controls. Its Labour ally had introduced many of these controls so it would have been embarrassing to refer to them. The builders of broad alliances today make sure that they are broad enough to include the Labour Party but not broad enough to include the rights of the oppressed. When the last ANL in the 1970s was faced with the choice of having a Broad Front pop concert in South London on the same day that fascists marched in the East End and pitched battles with them and with the police took place, the ANL chose that well known terrifier of the fascists – the pop concert.

The tactics of the German communists in the 1920s and '30s do require further study but whether right or wrong in this instance or that, they unquestionably put the interests of

the working class and oppressed first. That cannot be said of those who see the fight against fascism as a fight to cleanse British democracy of a 'Nazi disease'. The fascist menace is growing in the womb of bourgeois society and the fight against it is inseparable from the fight to build a socialist movement.

The central danger which faces the working class today is the growth of an ever more authoritarian and racist state. This development is taking place amid a deafening silence from what passes for the working class movement in Britain. The point is not, as *Living Marxism* would seem to argue, that the fight against fascism is a diversion from the fight against the state, but that the fight against fascism is part of a wider struggle against racism, against bourgeois society, for socialism. If you separate these things, you are saying that there

left should have been building opposition to these Labour councils and fighting for decent housing for all. But the left only moved in when white workers stopped voting Labour and some began to support the BNP, and black workers started asking why they should support a racist Labour party. That was the real concern – SOS meant, in this case, Save Our Social Democrats. Yet the fact is that there are large numbers of working class people, black and white, who are fed up with the Labour Party who are disgusted to hear it dithering about a minimum wage of £3.50 an hour when its MPs earn £40,000 a year. They can be forged into the beginnings of a socialist movement and provide both short-term opposition to local fascists and long-term hope to overthrow the system which breeds fascism.

Does that rule out alliances? Not at all. But they must be alliances that defend the people under attack and include their political views. It is rarely communists that place sectarian conditions on alliances. In Germany we have seen that the SDP demanded silence as their price for alliance even as the fascists were at the gates. Later, when the war was going badly for Germany, parts of the German army, industrialists and political class started to think of the future and murmur oppositional noises. The Communists tried to ally with them. The condition these worthy gentlemen demanded? That the programme of the first post-war German government must support private property and not mention socialism. Let us get our priorities right gentlemen, they said, fascism is just fascism, but money is everything.

Anti-fascism cannot be an end in itself. It must be part of wider political work on issues affecting the working class. It must be part of anti-racist activity that does not content itself with driving out fascist paper-sellers but also organises to boycott the filthy rantings of the *Daily Star* and its talk of 'bug-ridden waifs'.

If ideas alone do not drive us to see the connection between the growth of the strong, racist state and the growth of fascism, then reality will. Fascists in Europe have begun to physically assault disabled people. Meanwhile the British government has made it clear that disabled people are simply too expensive and 'respectable' newspapers have begun to pour scorn on the notion that disabled people have rights. Are these things not connected? Just as in Germany the state used the fascist attacks on immigrants (as its police stood idly by) as an excuse for tightening up its asylum laws.

There will have to be a long debate and discussion about how we move forward. We can assist the process by looking at the real history of events. We can, for example, reassert the now-to-be-buried memory of communist resistance to fascism in Germany. While German bourgeois opposition in exile plotted how to make Germany safe again for capitalism, the communists died. The average length of survival of a communist organiser in Nazi Germany was one month. Of the 300,000 communists in 1932, 150,000 were arrested and 30,000 murdered. It was they and the sacrifices of the Soviet people that made possible the setting up of the GDR. When the German bourgeoisie huffed in outrage that the recent anti-fascist exhibition included communist resistance, it brought to mind another exhibition. There was a group in Berlin, mainly working at the Siemens factory, mostly young Jewish communists and socialists, who published a newspaper of anti-fascist struggle during Hitler's reign. In 1942 Goebbels staged a huge anti-Soviet exhibition in Berlin. The young workers group entered the exhibition and set it on fire in eleven places. They were tracked down, tortured and executed. We must never allow such hard won lessons to be forgotten. ■

An end to Ireland's trou

On 31 August the Irish Republican Army announced 'a complete cessation of military operations from midnight'. The latest phase of armed struggle to achieve Irish self-determination had ended after 25 years of bitter protracted struggle. DAVID REED analyses the background to these dramatic events.

The Adams leadership of the Republican Movement had persuaded the IRA to take the path of 'a democratic and peaceful settlement' of the North of Ireland conflict. The struggle for Irish self-determination is to be pursued in the future by constitutional means and peaceful negotiations.

Adams and the Sinn Fein leadership had been working hard at convincing the Republican Movement to adopt such a strategy. However the bait on offer since 15 December 1993 – the Reynolds/Major Downing Street Declaration – had been rejected by the Republican Movement as a partitionist document retaining the unionist veto. The British government refused to go any further than this document and a stalemate prevailed.

The IRA's announcement of an end to the armed struggle unilaterally broke this stalemate. Nothing was gained. The unionist veto still remained. There was no commitment from the British government to persuade the Unionists to accept a United Ireland. The Republican Movement has chosen to go into negotiations without the threat of armed struggle. It has made an alliance with the Irish bourgeoisie in the South and the Catholic middle class in the North – a 'pan-nationalist front' of Fianna Fail, the SDLP and Sinn Fein. It will rely on the political pressure that this alliance can bring to bear on British imperialism to achieve its long term demands of a United Ireland.

Ten years ago I wrote that 'British imperialism will only leave Ireland when driven out by the revolutionary force of the Irish masses' (*Ireland: the key to the British revolution* (IBR)). This was the position then held by the Republican Movement. In July 1983 after Sinn Fein's election gains, the IRA had stated that the 'military struggle will not slow down to relate to Sinn Fein's political activity, if anything... the war is likely to be stepped up.' (*Magill* July 1983). Today the IRA has laid down its arms to rely totally on Sinn Fein's political activity. What has brought about this change of strategy? What can it achieve?

Imperialism on the offensive

The early 1980s saw imperialism, led by the United States and supported by Britain, unleash an unrelenting struggle against the socialist countries, the People's Republics and Third World anti-imperialist movements. With the collapse of the socialist bloc in 1989, imperialism's 'New World Order' saw the rebirth of colonial domination of Third World countries and the retreat of socialist and anti-imperialist forces internationally. 'Peace and democracy' were

now to be on imperialism's terms. The balance of class forces internationally has swung decisively in favour of imperialism. This is one major component underlying the latest developments in the Six Counties of Ireland.

In the run up to the IRA's 'cessation of military operations' many people have drawn analogies with the settlements in Palestine and South Africa. Adams has said that the Protestant people 'need a De Klerk to lead them and us into the next century' (*An Phoblacht/Republican News* 3 March 1994). But who has benefited from those settlements? Certainly not the oppressed masses who sacrificed so much in the fight for national liberation.

The agreement between the PLO and Israel in September 1993 was little more than the imposition of a neo-colonial settlement on the Palestinian people. The beneficiaries were the Israeli State, Palestinian businessmen, the leaders of the PLO and others fortunate to get jobs in a future Palestinian administration. For the Palestinian masses living in Gaza, the standard of living 'has declined substantially' and 'some prices have risen 50 per cent' since the settlement (*Financial Times* 8 Sept 1994).

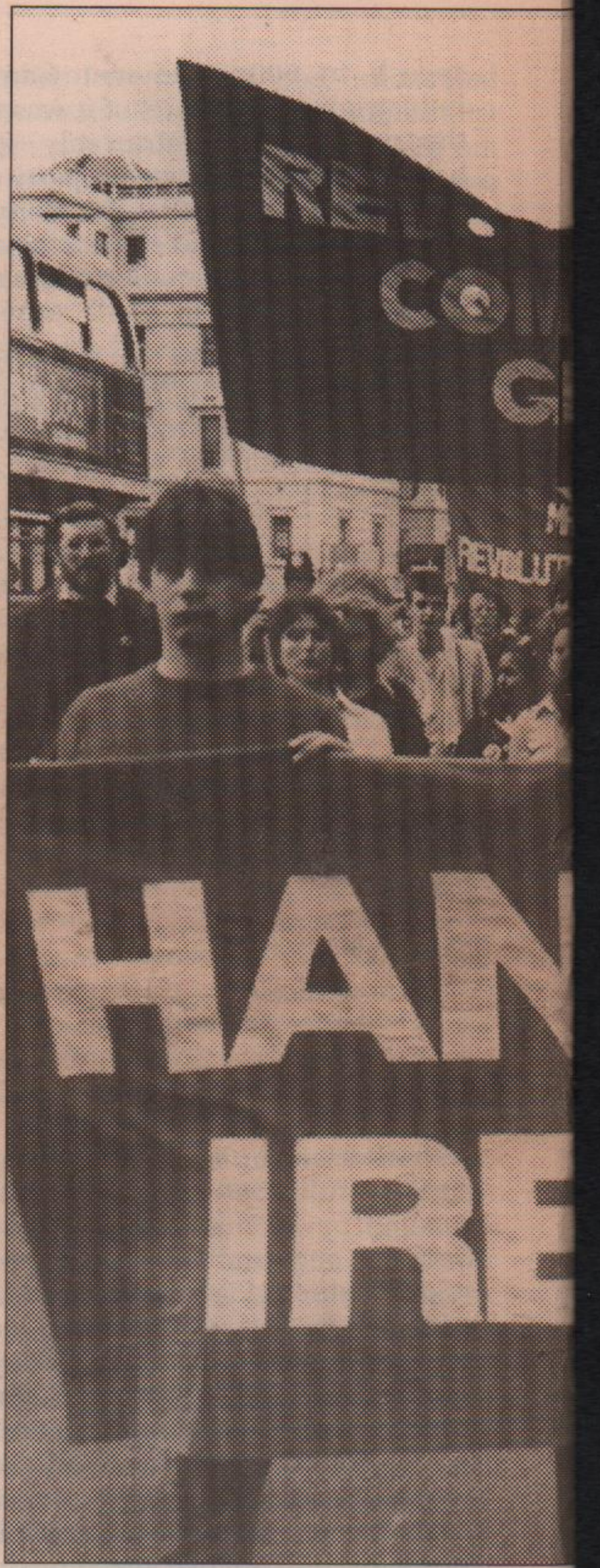
9 Sept 1994). There are reports of police breaking up strikes and firing rubber bullets and teargas at workers. It is Mandela who urges African workers to curb their right to strike in order to create stable conditions for foreign capital to enter the country. Meanwhile the white minority's privileged economic position has barely changed.

The De Klerk analogy is a dangerous one. De Klerk was leader of a white minority which could no longer sustain its political and economic supremacy or rely on the backing of the main imperialist powers. It had to negotiate with the liberation movements to get the best deal it could for the white minority. The Protestant majority in the Six Counties of Ireland is in a quite different situation, retaining the support of British imperialism and being under little immediate pressure to give up the union with Britain. The British government has guaranteed the unionist veto by insisting on a referendum in the Six Counties. It has been the IRA which has had to lay down its arms – removing a major pressure on the British government – so Sinn Fein can enter negotiations.

Even Norman Lamont has pointed out that 'resolutions of long running conflicts require...one party to the conflict to decide that their goal is unreachable.' This is what happened in South Africa. He continues: 'There is no evidence that the unionists are willing to change their allegiance from the United Kingdom. The question then is whether Sinn Fein and the IRA have decided their aspiration of a United Ireland cannot be realised. Since (the nationalists) form the minority (in the Six Counties)... they know that, taken to the ballot box, the unionist view would undoubtedly prevail.' (*The Wall Street Journal* 13 Sept 1994). It is hard to fault this logic.

Reynolds' statement in *The Observer* (18 Sept 1994) that it would take a 'generation of peace' before Ulster and Ireland could decide on a United Ireland, and even then 'the people might vote against it', substantially supports this point of view. Sinn Fein's response that 'we should not take pessimistic views at this stage' (Martin McGuinness) is not convincing. The most that can be achieved in the present circumstances according to Reynolds is a 'New Ireland' with 'Unionists and nationalists working together in a new Stormont assembly; with North and South working together on joint economic interests like trade and tourism'.

This outcome would have been rejected out of hand by the Republican Movement ten years ago. What important political and economic changes have occurred to change the balance of class forces in the Repub-



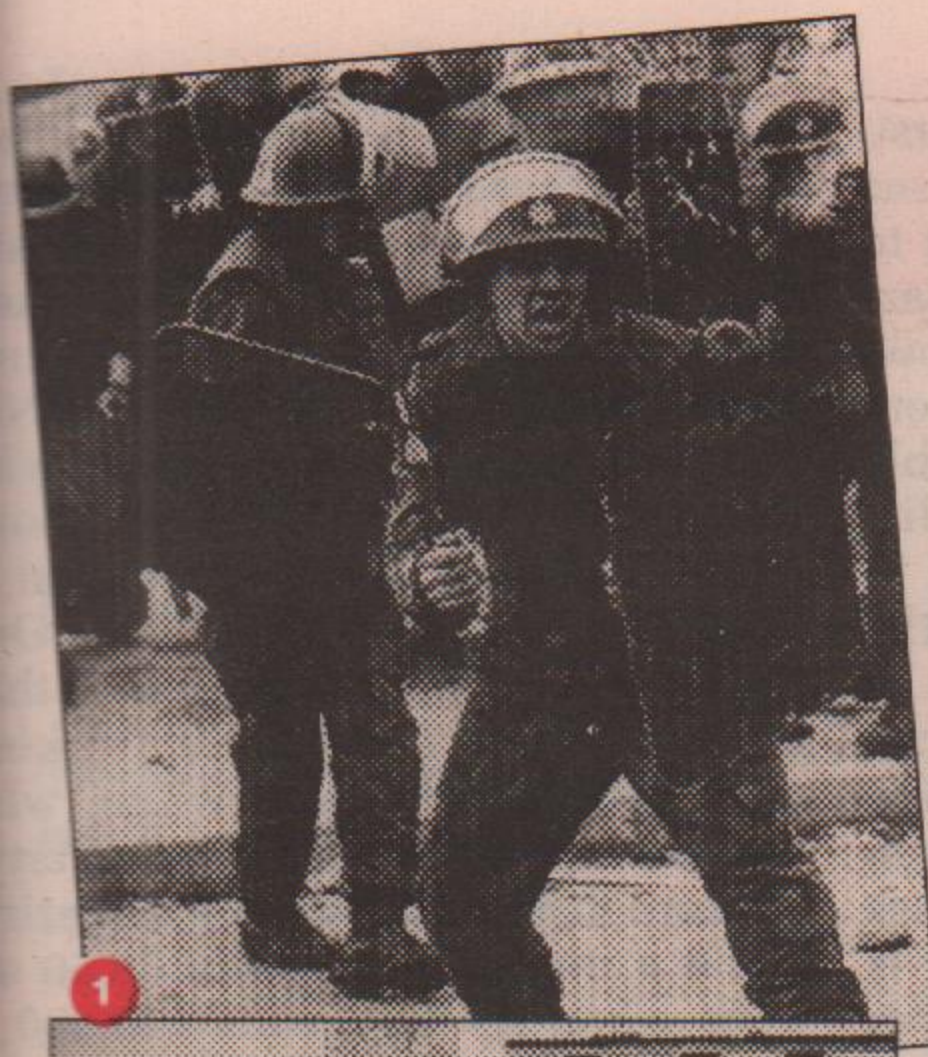
RCG contingent on the 1978 Prisoners Aid Committee de

lican Movement to such a degree that it has formed an alliance with the bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces of constitutional nationalism and limited its goal to a United Ireland in some distant future?

In addition to the decisive swing in the balance of class forces internationally in favour of imperialism, there are four further areas of economic and political change which have together helped to produce the present balance of forces in Ireland. They are changes in Britain's economic and strategic interest in Ireland; economic developments both in the North and South of Ireland; and finally changes in the balance of class forces in the Republican Movement itself.

Britain's interests in Ireland

At the beginning of November 1989, the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Brooke, said in an interview that 'it is difficult to envisage a military defeat of the IRA'. On 10 November 1989 he maintained that 'it is not the aspiration to a sovereign, united Ireland against which we set our face, but its violent expression.' He added that 'The British government has no selfish strategic or



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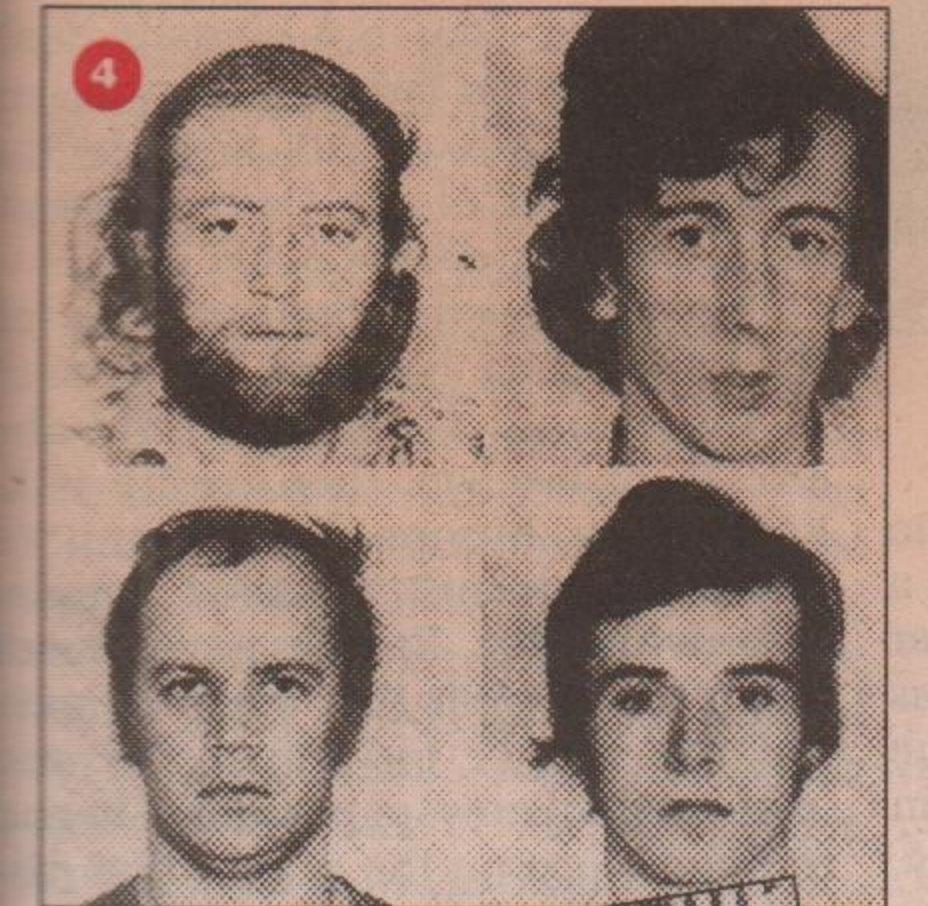
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3

1. The face of British Army brutality

2-3. The people organise: youth prepare petrol bombs; women warn of approaching army patrols with dustbin lids and whistles



4



5



6

4. IRA active service unit captured after the Balcombe St siege in 1975

5/6/7. Solidarity in Britain: Prisoners Aid Committee demonstrations in London 1977/78; RCG street meeting in a Manchester snow-storm calling for Hands off Ireland, 1979



In *Hands off Ireland!* the RCG called for a vote for the H-Block men in the 1979 general election

In South Africa, the ending of apartheid has not changed the economic and social conditions of the working class and oppressed masses. The main beneficiaries are those leaders of the liberation movements, the 'Communist Party', trade unions and others who are now part of the new administration. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has accused the administration of enriching itself in the same way as the old white administrations. The General Secretary of the Communist Party – close allies of the ANC – has said the new rulers were in danger of only representing the bosses as they squandered huge amounts of money (*Financial Times*

bles?



monstration

conomic interest in Northern Ireland...' (AP/RN 9 and 22 Nov 1989). This was the beginning of a different tactical approach to the Republican Movement and it is this approach which is embodied in the Downing Street Declaration.

For some while the balance of Britain's 'economic' interests would suggest withdrawal from the Six Counties of Ireland. Britain's occupation of the North, its military siege of nationalist areas and the maintenance of loyalist privilege have required subsidies of around £4bn a year, with combined military and law and order costs alone at greater than £.5bn. To this must be added the large compensation and insurance costs of the IRA bombing campaign in the Six Counties and Britain.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Britain's strategic interests no longer demand the occupation of the North of Ireland. T E Utley's view in the mid-1970s that 'British security is hardly compatible with the existence of a Cuba a few miles from her eastern shores...' has little resonance today. So there is nothing really exceptional in the statement that Britain has no 'selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland.'

What the statement does not say is that Britain has no *political* interest in Northern Ireland. And this is the heart of the matter. For Britain does have a political commitment to retain the partition of Ireland and the union with Britain.

Some argue that this commitment is central to the preservation of the United Kingdom. Adams himself says that the British government 'may see the weakening of the union as the first stage in the disintegration of the United Kingdom.' (AP/RN 3 March 1994). While it is the case that sections on the right of the Tory party hold to this view and Major depends on them and the loyalist MPs for his majority, this has not been the primary long-term concern of the British ruling class.

What the British ruling class is determined to prevent is the resurgence of the only force which has threatened its rule in Ireland - that of a mass popular anti-imperialist movement based on the Irish working class and prepared to use whatever means necessary to achieve its aims. The continued partition of Ireland and the maintenance of the Union; the military occupation of the North of Ireland; the vicious repression directed at the nationalist working

class communities; the various schemes for 'power-sharing'; the creation of the 'unofficial security forces' of loyalist paramilitaries; the concessions made to the Twenty Six Counties government; and finally the overtures to the Republican Movement offering a place at the negotiating table in return for a cessation of the armed struggle, are all part of this ruling class strategy.

For the last 25 years British imperialist governments, Labour and Tory, have been determined to isolate and destroy the revolutionary wing of the national movement with its base in the working class nationalist communities of the North of Ireland. For this movement holds the key to uniting the Irish working class in the fight to drive British imperialism out of Ireland - a fight which would not only threaten the Irish capitalist class but also would revitalise the anti-capitalist struggle in Britain.

In 1973 John Biggs-Davidson voiced this fear when he said:

'...What happens in Londonderry is very relevant to what can happen in London, and if we lose in Belfast we might have to fight in Brixton or Birmingham...' (IBR, p228)

A year earlier the Provisional IRA had brought down Stormont.

When Brooke says that it is not the aspiration of a United Ireland he opposes but its 'violent expression', he is also expressing this fear. Every ruling class demands that it alone has the right to use violence in defence of its interests. It fears most an effective challenge to this 'monopoly of violence' because it exposes its vulnerability and strengthens opposition to its rule. That is why Brooke will tolerate the Republican Movement expressing aspirations to a United Ireland as long as it does not use revolutionary means to bring it about.

In the process of maintaining partition and attempting to defeat the Republican Movement over the last 25 years, the British ruling class has created within Loyalism a fascist paramilitary movement. This movement acts as 'the unofficial security forces' of the British army, and its role is to terrorise the nationalist working class communities with its murder gangs and death squads. It becomes more active when the security forces curb their attacks on nationalists to comply with changes in the political situation, for example, during a truce or talks between Republicans and the British government. However such a fascist monster develops a life of its own and can get out of control. So in an attempt to curb the loyalist paramilitaries as it draws the Twenty Six Counties government and the Republican Movement into its plans for 'Northern Ireland', the British government has had to offer, at least in the medium term, a cast iron political commitment to the Unionists. It will not change the constitutional status of Northern Ireland unless a majority in the North of Ireland vote for it in a referendum - it will retain the loyalist veto. In this sense the British government has to maintain the Union. But underlying that commitment is its overall priority to take whatever steps are necessary to destroy revolutionary nationalism with its roots in the nationalist working class.

Economic developments in Ireland

Changes in the economic balance between the northern and southern economies have opened the way for the southern Irish ruling class to have a greater influence on the outcome of developments in the Six Counties.

The decline of the traditional manufacturing industries in the North and the failure to attract multinational capital on a large enough scale has forced the Six Counties economy to rely increasingly on subsidies from Britain. Industry is five times more subsidised than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Jobs



John McCluskey, released Irish PoW, and Malcolm Pitt, Kent miners leader during the strike, clasp hands in solidarity at the Irish Solidarity Movement conference, 1984

and income from the private sector are rapidly being replaced by those of an ever-growing subsidised public sector. Thirty years ago the private sector employed seven people for every one in the public sector. Today one in three jobs are in the public sector with half the remaining jobs indirectly dependent on it. About 30 per cent of the Six Counties GDP comes from subsidies. Although private sector output per head is only 64 per cent that of Britain, the subsidy ensures consumption is 82 per cent of Britain's. These subsidies which are necessary to sustain loyalist jobs and loyalist consumption in a declining industrial economy suck in imports resulting in a trade deficit for the northern economy of some 30 per cent of GDP.

In contrast to this the southern economy is the fastest growing in the European Community. Low taxes on profits and government grants have brought about 1,000 foreign-owned plants in high-tech industries to the South, rapidly transforming the economy over a 20 year period. Between 1973-86 US companies created seven times as many jobs in the South as they did in the North. By 1989 multinational companies produced 69 per cent of the South's net industrial output and about three-quarters of its

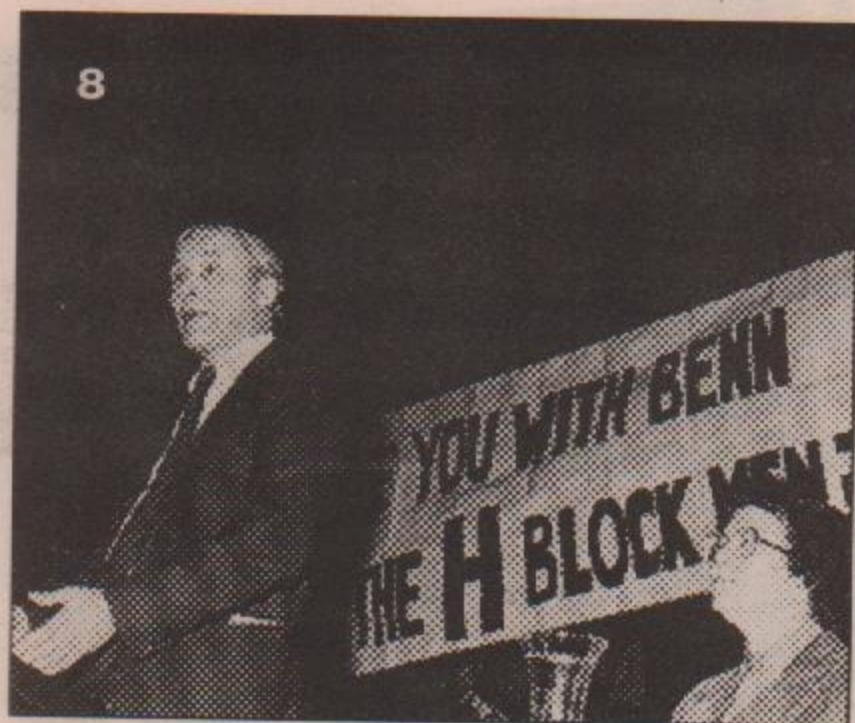
profits. This has led to a reversal of the traditional North-South economic balance. 30 years ago the North had more manufacturing jobs than the South; now the South has twice as many. The North used to have a trade surplus with the South now it has a trade deficit of over £350m. The South's GDP has grown by 3.9% a year since the mid-1960s compared with 2.6% in the North. Today northern business leaders are pushing for a political settlement involving the South because of the profitable investment opportunities which would arise from closer economic and political links.

The change in the balance of economic power gives the southern ruling class more political weight and independence in its dealings with Britain - a process reinforced by Ireland's membership of Europe. By the mid-1980s, the mutual fear, North and South, of growing support for the Republican Movement in the wake of the hunger strike led Thatcher to agree to the so called Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. The southern government had already proved itself a reliable ally in repressing the Republican Movement. It was now to be increasingly drawn into the

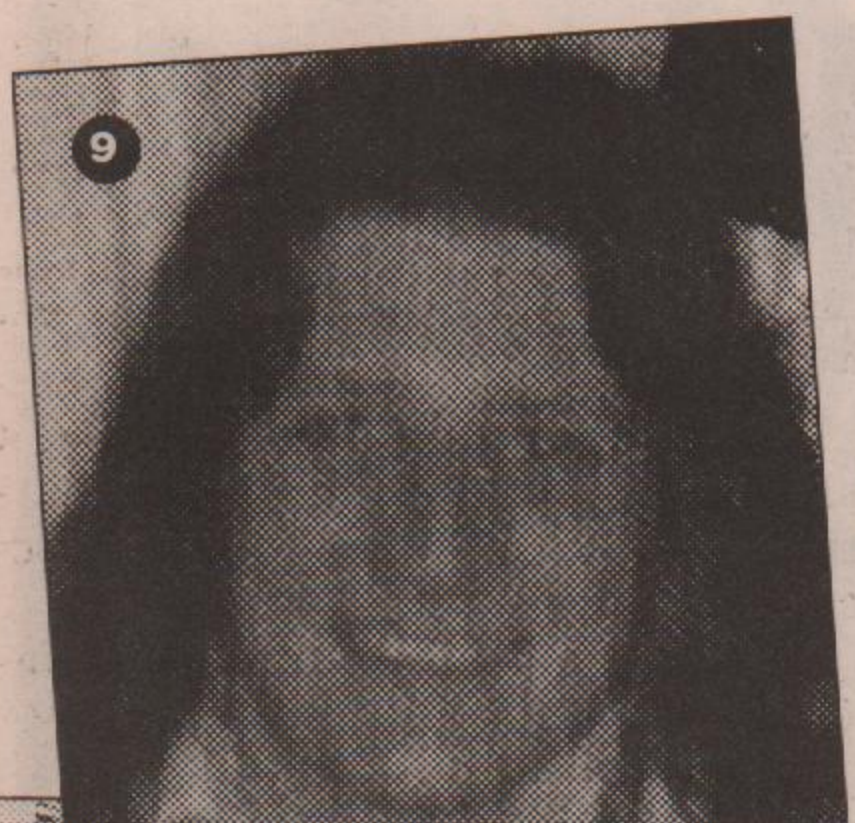
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In the wake of Bobby Sands death on hunger strike, southern working class youth battled with gardai outside the British embassy in Dublin



8. Are you with Benn or the H-Block men? 1980 RCG protest against the Labour Party left-wing's refusal to support Irish prisoners fighting for political status



This strategy continued even when Ireland exploded after the death on hunger strike of Bobby Sands. When the dispossessed youth of Dublin entered the prisoner campaign and took to the streets with stones and petrol bombs with the slogan 'RUC-Gardai', the National H-Block Committee condemned them as 'small and unrepresentative elements'.

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process of finding a political settlement to the Irish national question. British imperialism had failed to defeat the IRA or undermine its support in the nationalist working class communities in spite of growing repression and hardship. The involvement of the South was yet another attempt to make constitutional nationalism a credible alternative for the nationalist working class. The success of this strategy would be dependent on whether the leadership of the Republican Movement could be drawn into this process. It is to this we now turn.

Changes in the Republican Movement

The Republican Movement, like all national liberation movements, consists of an alliance of different class forces. Because of the sectarian character of the northern statelet, the movement has deep roots among the most oppressed sections of the nationalist working class in the northern urban areas. It has been these roots which have ensured that revolutionary nationalism has been, until recently, the predominant ideology of the movement.

A sizable Catholic middle class has been created in the Six Counties as a result of the post-war developments of state welfare. Advances in the education system, access to college and university have been of particular significance. The Catholic middle class has continued to benefit from the ever-growing subsidised public sector necessary to sustain the loyalty of the Protestant working class. From the days of the civil rights struggles at the end of the 1960s, sections of the Catholic middle class had been involved directly or indirectly with the Republican Movement but their political influence has been limited. This all began to change at the beginning of the 1980s.

From the mid-1970s onwards the prison struggle became of increasing importance in the North. The ending of political status for Irish political prisoners led to the building of a working class movement in support of the prisoners, led by the relatives of the prisoners, in particular the women – the Relatives Action Committees. This movement had a tremendous resonance not only in the North but throughout Ireland and in Britain. It was a political movement which saw the struggle of the prisoners and the revolutionary struggle to drive Britain out of Ireland as one and the same struggle. Massive street protests and demonstrations and increased military actions by the IRA were used to demand prisoner of war status for Irish political prisoners.

The British government resisted the demands of the movement. The prisoners threatened to go on hunger strike. The struggle needed to be intensified at all levels if the threatened hunger strike was to be avoided. This did not occur. Instead, in October 1979, the National H-Block Committee was formed and the political direction of the prisoner campaign changed.

To be either a member of the Committee or in the campaign it was only necessary to support the prisoners on an humanitarian basis. The prisoner campaign was divorced from the revolutionary national struggle to drive Britain out of Ireland. Sinn Fein endorsed this change. The leadership of the prison struggle changed as political forces outside the Republican Movement and the nationalist working class joined the campaign.

Prominent middle class Catholics

were drawn into the campaign in an attempt to pressurise Fianna Fail in the South and the SDLP in the North to persuade the British government to grant the prisoners their demands. This strategy continued even when Ireland exploded after the death on hunger strike of Bobby Sands. When the dispossessed youth of Dublin entered the prisoner campaign and took to the streets with stones and petrol bombs with the slogan 'RUC-Gardai', the National H-Block Committee condemned them as 'small and unrepresentative elements'. Events in Dublin were cancelled to stop them disrupting the 'peaceful and dignified demonstrations'. A great opportunity to draw an important section of the Irish working class behind the prisoners and in support of the national struggle was lost. (See IBR pp304-371.)

A month before his death Bobby Sands was elected MP to the British Parliament after a remarkable by-election victory. This was to have an important effect on the Republican Movement after the defeat of the hunger strike. For the anger of the nationalist people was increasingly diverted into building support for Sinn Fein in the local and parliamentary political arena. In June 1983 Gerry Adams won West Belfast. In November 1983 Sinn Fein removed the ban on discussing abstentionism at the Ard Fheis. Very soon after, abstentionism was no longer policy for the southern and European parliaments. All these developments did not take place without strong opposition but the nature of the movement was changing. In February 1985 talks between Sinn Fein and the SDLP took place. Little progress was made. Talks began again in 1988. The pull towards constitutional nationalism was intensifying.

The growing strength of petty

bourgeois class forces within the Republican Movement was reinforced by the political and economic changes in Ireland and internationally outlined above. The reactionary character of the British Labour Movement, which actively collaborated with British imperialism, and the appalling record of the British left on Ireland and its opposition to the Republican Movement, removed any significant pressure on the British government from inside Britain. By late 1989 the British government saw a window of opportunity opening to draw Sinn Fein into negotiations. Contact took place with the Republican Movement from October 1990 to November 1993. In September 1993, the continuing dialogue between Hume and Adams led to proposals being presented to the Twenty Six Counties government. In December 1993 the Downing Street Declaration was published. The pressure on the IRA to give up the armed struggle intensified.

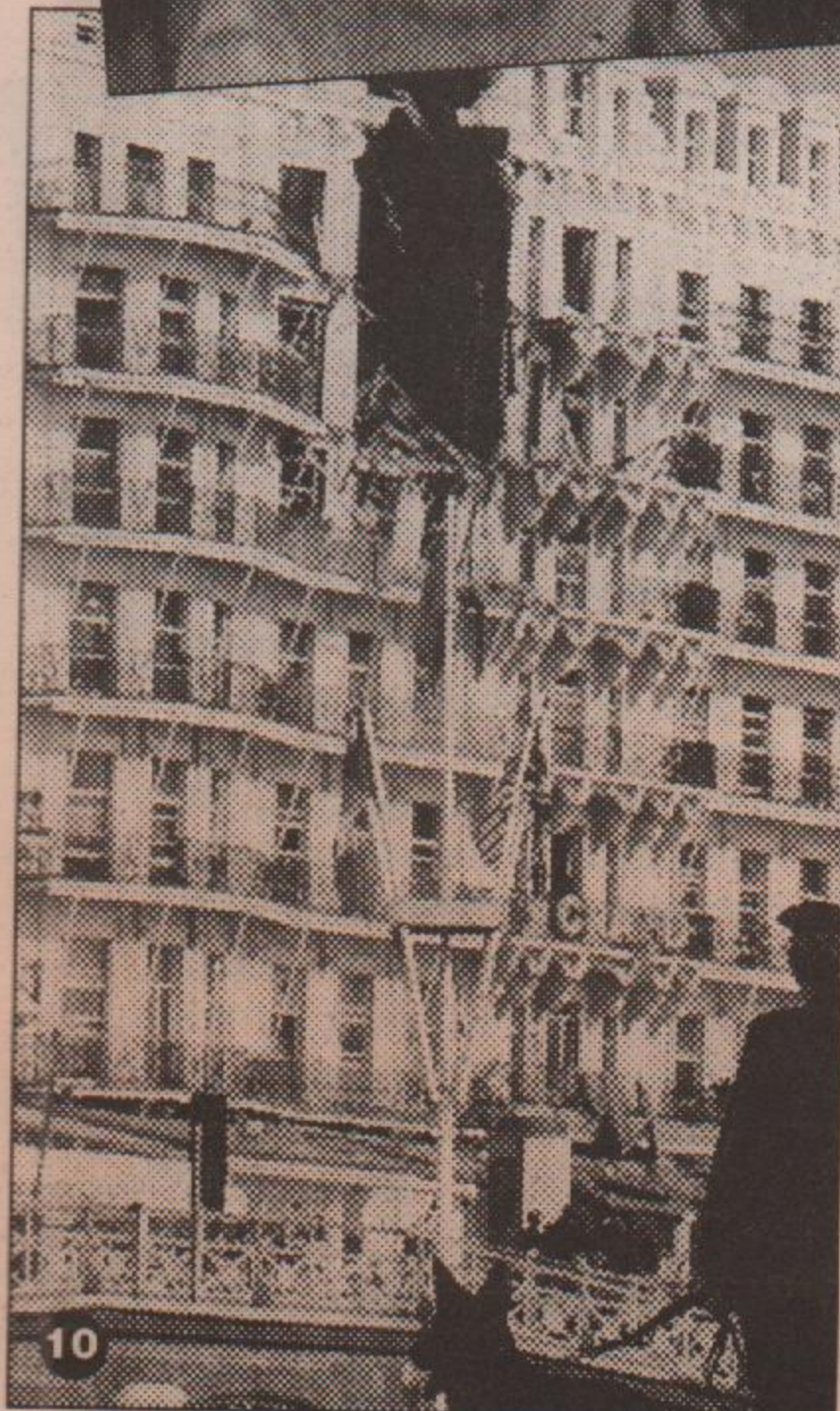
Armed struggle should always be subordinate to and guided by a political strategy. In the case of the Republican Movement there are difficulties because since 1974 Sinn Fein has been a legal organisation – a political move by the British government to create divisions in the Republican Movement. In the 1970s the armed struggle was an integral part of the mobilisation and organisation of the nationalist working class, of a people's rising to drive British imperialism out of Ireland. However in the 1980s the situation gradually changed as Sinn Fein moved into the bourgeois political arena.

The armed struggle, while vitally important in defending the nationalist community from the loyalist death squads, increasingly appeared in conflict with Sinn Fein's political aspirations. At best it was a pressure

on the British government to respond to Sinn Fein's political demands. And it was effective. No one can doubt the impact of the bombing of the City of London in 1992 and 1993 in forcing the government to make overtures to Sinn Fein. But there is a downside. Following the change of strategy in the early 1980s the nationalist working class were politically demobilised and the armed struggle ceased to have an integral connection with the mobilisation of the people in an anti-imperialist war. In these conditions the armed struggle is increasingly experienced as a burden on the working class communities as repression and hardship take their toll. This is why the political leadership of Sinn Fein was able to persuade the IRA to lay down its arms without a massive protest from the nationalist working class.

Conclusion

The struggle is not over. The economic, political and social problems which keep forcing the national struggle on to the political agenda still remain. The Six Counties is a sectarian statelet. British imperialism has not left Ireland. The political prisoners are still in gaol. The nationalist working class faces massive economic deprivation and discrimination with unemployment levels more than twice that of the loyalist working class. Should the Sinn Fein leadership be drawn into any proposed 'New Ireland' Administration, in the Six Counties or Twenty Six Counties and have conferred on it the status and privilege of bourgeois parliamentarians, it will find itself in conflict with the nationalist working class – those people of no property who have always been a bedrock of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland. ■



9. Bobby Sands – the first of the ten prisoners to die on hunger strike; murdered May 1981
10. 1984: IRA checks in at Brighton's Grand Hotel during the Conservative Party Conference. Mrs Thatcher narrowly escapes with her life



11/12. The RCG-initiated Irish Solidarity Movement campaigned for support for Irish self-determination. Groups were established across the country. Demonstrations shown were in 1983 and 1985



Boom in the City: IRA bombs rocked the City of London in 1992 and 1993, causing severe damage and demoralising the British ruling class

Islamic Fundamentalism's

WAR ON WOMEN

In March, two schoolgirls were shot dead at a bus-stop outside Algiers because they were unveiled. In Bangladesh, Taslima Nasrin faces death threats from the fundamentalist opposition and imprisonment by the government after criticising Islam. In Pakistan, a prominent Islamist in General Zia ul-Huq's government argued on TV that women should 'never leave the confines of their homes except in emergencies' and that punishment for rape should cease until women had been banished from every aspect of public life.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism means the fall of one half of humanity - women. But it also means the destruction of the best traditions of the mass movements produced during the decades of anti-imperialist struggle. The subordination of women means the subordination of the poor majority as the world's rich prepare for a new round of money-making.

A woman's place . . .

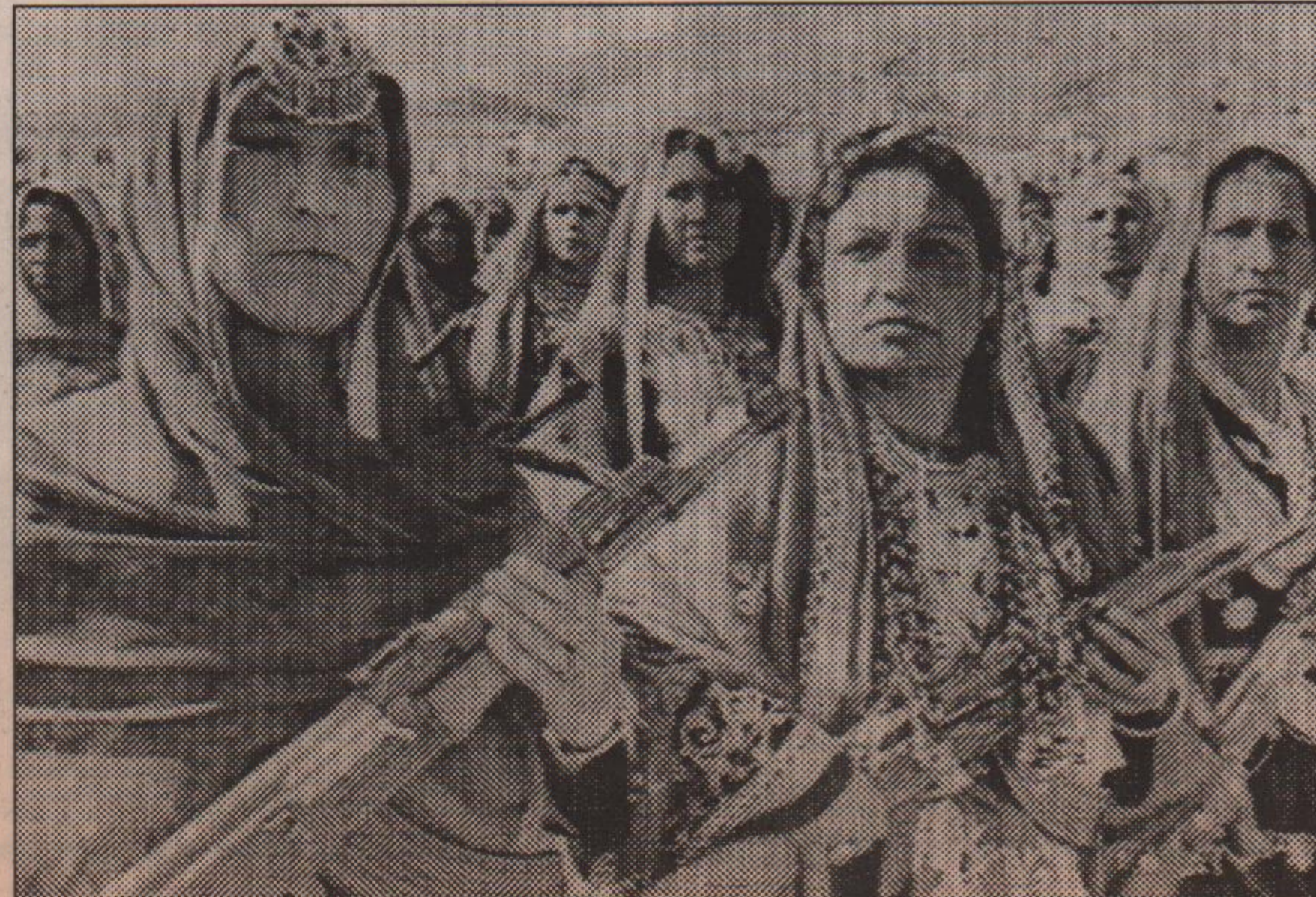
Communists do not object to religion as long as it is confined to personal belief and does not oppress others. Islamic fundamentalism, however, is not a religious movement: it is a political one. It represents the interests of largely urban bourgeois and petit-bourgeois forces who, feeling the squeeze in imperialism's new world order, turn to Islam out of devotion not to god but to mammon. These forces want a better deal from imperialism and mobilise the masses to win it. In order to destroy the anti-capitalist potential of the mass movement they galvanise, they raise the banner of Islam and the reactionary traditions which have been practised in its name.

A slogan in Iran proclaims: 'Islam is our ideology, hijab our bastion'. The hijab is a head-scarf for women, a less repugnant version of the chador or burqa, a black tent covering the whole body, a walking prison with bars at the eyes. These coverings have been seized on by fundamentalists as tokens of women's inferiority, their subordination to the males in their family. They reduce women, as a 22-year-old refugee from Algerian fundamentalism succinctly put it, to 'a vagina on legs'.

The inequality of women is a feature of all class society and it is an unfortunate fact that few men of any class and any country need much persuading that women exist to serve them. But in the countries where Islamic fundamentalism is on the rise, women's contribution to the liberation movements and the influence of socialism has won them considerable gains. In 1984, there were more women in professional and managerial positions in Egypt than in the 'UK'. In 1986, despite Khomeini's repressive measures against them, women still made up 19 per cent of Iran's teachers, compared to 17 per cent in the then West Germany. After Iraq's independence in 1958, women won the right to education, employment, divorce and contraception. Often these rights were enjoyed mainly by middle class women, but the economic growth that followed independence drew working class and peasant women into the labour force and this inevitably eroded the old practices of veiling and seclusion. Only terror can reimpose these practices on women.

The fundamentalists are motivated partly by sheer greed: they want the slice of the post-independent cake won by women. But most of all, they want to destroy all vestiges of the movement that won those gains. By

The anti-abortion alliance between Islamic fundamentalists and the Vatican at the population conference in Cairo was a rare show of unity. Only one issue could bring two such hostile brothers together: women. As the global economic crisis deepens, the condition of the majority of women is worsening everywhere. In the first of a series of articles on women in the new world order, SARAH BOND examines the terror campaign against women being conducted by Islamic fundamentalists and considers its political consequences.



Afghan women defend the revolution with Soviet AK47s

restoring age-old privileges enjoyed by men over women, they seek to erode the egalitarian and democratic vision, so inimical to their interests, that guided the anti-imperialist movement. In London or Bonn, the privileges of white labour over black and immigrant labour divide the movement. In Cairo or Algiers, if the fundamentalists have their way, it will be the privileges of peasant and working class men over their women.

Women and the anti-colonial struggle

In the countries now threatened by Islamic fundamentalism, the anti-imperialist struggles had to pit themselves not only against the might of colonising armies, but also against a feudal social structure legitimised by Islam and bolstered by colonialism. This social structure served to protect private property in land: women's position was subordinated to the production of heirs and the provision of domestic and often agricultural labour. It is not surprising that when the liberation movements sought to challenge this social system, women flocked to their ranks.

For example, Cherifa Bouatta describes the critical role played by women in Algeria's liberation struggle, from engaging in guerilla struggle in the countryside and in towns, to nursing, carrying messages, transporting arms and money. 'The "Battle of Algiers"' she says, 'could not have taken place without these women.' Among the liberation heroines were Baya Hocine and Djoher Akrou, sentenced to death by the French when both were just sixteen years old and saved only by international protest.

With women's sudden burst into public life, the old restrictions crumbled. As one commentator observes, '... the example of the presence of urban female militants ... induced the peasants to admit that women could also make a contribution to the struggle ... [Women's] cloistering was lifted when they received the support of the ALN [National Liberation Army]'. Houria, a veteran

liberation fighter, describes relations between her and her male comrades: 'There was total respect between us ... In the djebel [mountains], we were all equals; the djounouds [male mountain fighters] did their washing, they used to cook; I used to carry weapons like them'. The struggle gave her, the lowest of the low, a position that earned her respect and dignity. She says of her past: 'They were my years of happiness. It was the fraternity, the respect, I can't tell you.'

Afghanistan

A similar picture emerges in Afghanistan, where the feudal restrictions were particularly vicious and women could be condemned to death for merely talking to a stranger. Even before the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) took power in 1978, reactionary elements had been mobilising anti-women activities. In 1970, a mullah called Gulbeddin Hekmatyar shot at the uncovered legs of women, splashing them with acid. Hekmatyar later became a leading figure of the



anti-communist mujahedin and was hailed by Reagan and Thatcher, not to mention much of the British left, as a 'freedom fighter'. 5,000 Afghan girls bravely demonstrated in protest against Hekmatyar's barbarous acts.

When it came to power, as well as redistributing land to the peasants, the revolutionary government introduced wide-ranging measures to improve women's position. These measures won the Afghan revolution strong support amongst women, particularly in urban areas. Of the seven militia commanders appointed to the Revolutionary Council in January 1986, four were women. But the changes also earned the revolution the hatred of the mullahs and family elders.

The focus for their opposition was the literacy campaign which had been launched to address the 98 per cent illiteracy rate amongst women. So appalling was the prospect of their wives and daughters being taught to read and write that hundreds of thousands simply took their families and left the country, many to return as counter-revolutionaries in the US-backed mujahedin. According to Valentine Moghadam, 'Two men killed all the women in their families'. Many PDPA cadre sent into rural areas were murdered.

The butchers of the Afghan counter-revolution bombed their way back to power, with over \$2 billion of CIA funds. En route, they destroyed hospitals, schools, irrigation systems. And what was their first piece of legislation? The reimposition of the veil.

Palestine

In Palestine too, the fundamentalists have sought to win the mass movement away from secularism and socialism through the re-subordination of women. Hamas started its war on women in Gaza. This is significant: Gaza is one of the poorest regions of Palestine and was the strongest bastion of the intifada. Any

attempt to take the democratic, anti-capitalist character out of the mass movement would have to start in this cradle of anti-Zionism.

In the first year of the intifada, graffiti appeared: 'Daughter of Islam abide by sharia dress'; 'Hamas considers the unveiled to be collaborators of a kind'. In May 1988, religious gangs broke into schoolrooms to demand that girls wear the hijab. In September 1988, uncovered schoolgirls were attacked. The harassment escalated until, according to Rema Hammami, 'By December 1988, one year after the intifada erupted, it was almost impossible for women to walk around Gaza without wearing some form of head-cover'.

What a victory for the fundamentalists, and how simply won! Stones once reserved for Israeli soldiers now targetted unveiled women, with no effective opposition from the PLO. As Salim Tamari, an academic at Bir Zeit university, comments, 'On this crucial issue, the left, and nationalists in general retreated'. It was not until mid 1989 that the Unified Leadership of the Uprising declared its opposition to the attacks on women. Graffiti appeared warning that 'those caught throwing stones at women will be treated as collaborators'. 'Women', said other graffiti, 'have a great role in the intifada and we must respect them'.

But words were not enough and by this time, as Tamari comments, 'the battle had been lost in Gaza'. Arafat's Fatah has ordered its women to veil, claiming it is the only way to keep them on the streets. Fatima, an activist from Beit Hanoun, understands the significance of such a concession 'you have to understand that what they want is not the hijab alone. They start by imposing the hijab on you, then enforce the the jilbab [full-length dress] and end up pushing us back home'. She has been proved right. From February 1990, the hijab campaign was stepped up in Gaza and now women are forced to wear the jilhaab. The campaign is now well under way in the West Bank. The PFLP has estimated that 'the Intifada has lost 50% of its activists' as a result. Hamas has certainly earned the funding which a former Israeli military governor admits providing 'to help create a force that would stand against the leftist forces'.

It is a sad reflection of the divisions within the liberation movement that it was unable to defend its women against stone-throwing boys. Palestinian progressives will no doubt debate amongst themselves the reasons for the failure to organise amongst the women themselves, as the force which had the least to gain from the rise of political Islam. But for the moment, with women off the streets, and Hamas having assumed the mantle of radical opposition to Zionism in the aftermath of the Jericho-Gaza deal, the movement has been immeasurably weakened.

The lesson is clear: progressive movements ignore the question of women's oppression at their peril. It is a lesson for the left in the imperialist countries in particular, which has so neglected this issue, leaving it to some distant date, 'after the revolution'. The revolution can only succeed, and counter-revolution be thwarted, if the divisions created by the subordination of women are consistently fought. If women are buried, the movements which they helped build, and the hopes for human progress and development which they kindled, will be buried along with them.

Crisis in Turkey Part 2

Turkey is in profound crisis and its ruling class has launched a severe attack on the working class to try and solve its problems. Six hundred thousand workers have been sacked in the past five months, some 5-6 million people have been pushed to the edge of absolute poverty. Fascist organisations are mobilised to attack socialists. An atmosphere of extreme Turkish chauvinism has been whipped up by the military-controlled media. The Islamic fundamentalist Welfare Party is growing in strength; its candidates winning elections in areas that were once the preserve of the left. Following an examination of multinational investment in Turkey (see FRFI 120), TREVOR RAYNE investigates the crisis and its consequences.

Underlying structural weaknesses in the Turkish economy broke into a financial crisis when the Turkish lira (TL) fell 270 per cent against the dollar from 10 January to 5 April. In 1992 TL7,000 bought a dollar. By mid-April this year the rate had collapsed to TL41,000.

In January Turkey's international credit rating was demoted to a 'junk' status. Access to foreign loans and foreign investment was threatened. The 'junk' rating expressed international finance's alarm at the expansion of Turkey's domestic and foreign debt and accompanying inflation. Foreign debt had grown by 10 per cent in 1993 to \$67 billion. Repayments on this sum for 1994 were scheduled to be \$9.1 billion or seven per cent of the national product. The budget deficit for 1993 was targeted at \$10.75 billion, but doubled this amount. Debt repayments consumed eight per cent of the national product.

From 1988 to 1994 the state's budget deficit has grown twenty-four fold. The war against the Kurds and subsidies to loss-making state enterprises and municipalities boosted state spending. Before 1988 up to half the budget was financed by foreign loans. By 1991 over 95 per cent of it was funded by the state's central bank and domestic borrowing. The state paid for itself by just printing money. Inflation raced over 100 per cent.

To maintain its borrowing the state offered ever higher interest rates, rising to over 400 per cent. As the cost of borrowing rose so debt and interest multiplied, threatening to send the budget deficit into an uncontrollable spiral and the TL into hyper-inflation. With substantial multinational investment in Turkey and \$67 billion of loans at risk, the International Monetary Fund intervened.

State borrowing grew as corporation tax on company profits played a dwindling role in contributions to state revenues, with no compensatory rise in other taxes. In 1987, 15 per cent of total tax revenue came from corporation tax, today the share is about 7 per cent.

After 1988 there was a partial increase in real wages with no substantial increase in the tax burden borne by wages and salaries. Turkish capitalism has not been able to bear this improvement in wages. Companies turned increasingly to borrowing from home and abroad to finance their accumulation.

Both corporate and state debt growth have accelerated the process of concentrating wealth into the hands of relatively few domestic and international capitalists. Recent figures show that just 880 buyers hold TL316,000 billion six-month Treasury bonds (a form of government borrowing). Fifty per cent of Treas-

ury bonds issued are bought by just 18 concerns. It is to these that the extraordinary interest accrues.

After the Gulf War, Turkish banks increased their borrowing from the international capital markets. A government policy of liberalising capital flows was intended to create a stable Turkey integrated into the European Union. Turkish banks sought to borrow cheaply in foreign currency and lend short term at high rates in TL. One result of this was a tripling of trade on the Istanbul stock exchange. Another was a perilous exposure to foreign exchange liabilities.

As the TL fell, those liabilities became more expensive and difficult to service. Creditors withdrew foreign exchange deposits, fearing for their money. A banking collapse loomed. Three banks failed; their creditors included the Commonwealth Bank, the National Bank from Australia, Paribas of France and UBS of Switzerland. In May, the Turkish bank Garanti took over Bank Ekspres. Garanti had previously raised share capital in the USA through the merchant banks Baring Brothers and Lazard Freres. A restructuring of the Turkish financial sector was underway in coordination with the international banks.

'Austerity Programme'

Whether it could be carried out or not, the Turkish government's austerity programme announced by Prime Minister Tansu Ciller on 5 April had to win IMF approval if more credits were to be forthcoming. The programme aimed to cut the budget deficit in half in 1994 by increasing revenues and cutting state expenditure. This amounts to a cut of the deficit by 9 per cent of the national product in a single year. Compare this to the entire Lamont/ Clarke public sector restraint programme which amounts to 4 per cent of Britain's national product.

Revenues were to be raised through higher prices charged by state enterprises. Value Added Tax was raised. Spending on loss-making state enterprises was to be cut. Thirty thousand state workers were to be laid off. The privatisation programme was to be speeded up with the intention of raising \$3.5 billion to help close the budget deficit. Wages would be frozen and there would be cuts in social benefits. Large credits given to farmers would be cut back. Inflation was to be halved by the end of the year.

Following the austerity programme's announcement, the World Bank agreed a \$100 million credit to support the privatisation of state oil refining and petrol stations (which Shell, BP and Castrol from Britain are keen to buy into), an airline and iron and steel works. An IMF team arrived in time for the Turkish police to attack a May Day demonstration in Istanbul, injuring many members of



Women guerrillas of the People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan (ARGL). The Turkish state's war against the Kurds has exacerbated its financial crisis

the Party of Socialist Power (SiP). The IMF approved the programme and provided a \$742 million credit arrangement to back the Turkish state.

Five months after the austerity programme's declaration, inflation is higher than it was in April, at 108 per cent. Short of the expected privatisation proceeds the budget deficit target has been revised upward from TL110,000 billion to TL140,000 billion. In September the Defence Ministry said it was \$300 million short for arms purchases this year, and that 30 per cent of Treasury funds were 'unaccounted for'. The privatisation programme has stalled with international buyers unwilling to commit funds until the economy has stabilised and factions of the government wrangling over the legality of the process. The IMF credit facility is jeopardised and the World Bank is warning that loans and other credits may be withdrawn if the privatisation programme is not speeded up.

There have been 597,000 workers sacked in the past five months. Unofficially, if workers in the informal sector, small workshops etc, are considered, the number is over a million. For many workers, real wages have fallen by up to 70 per cent. TL 54,000 billion of wages has not been paid to workers in employment during the second half of this year. For example, government workers won an index-linked wage offer, but the inflation-proofing differential has not been paid since June.

The executive of the Turk-Is trade union confederation, representing 600,000 public sector workers, accepted the government's suspension of the collective agreement to inflation proof wages. The leadership of the confederation, like the composition of the government with liberals and Social Democrats, argued that the suspension of the agreement was necessary because of the 'crisis' and 'sacrifices' had to be made for the 'sake of the nation'. The government has said it will issue the workers with state bonds to be paid in six months. This is tied to the proposal to privatise the state enterprises. The government and its Social Democrat

allies in the union leadership are touting privatisation and neo-liberalism as a solution to the crisis. The government intends to establish a Social and Economic Council, a corporatist organ of trade union leaders, ministry officials and employers similar to those employed in fascist Italy and Germany.

Workers in the petro-chemical, defence and construction industries have protested to the government and demanded to be paid as agreed in the collective agreement. They condemn the union leadership for making deals with the government without consulting the members. The tearing-up of the collective agreement is viewed as part of an attack on trade unions and any protection of workers' rights. Television and press reports have accused workers who defend the collective agreement as seeking to divide and destroy the country. The newspaper of the fascist National Action Party carries articles targeting trade unionists for violent attack. Branches and members of the SiP have been picked out for systematic attack. Some trade union leaders have called disciplinary meetings to expel members who resist capitulation. However, they have failed to stem spontaneous working class resistance.

Before the crisis there were 2 million trade unionists, there are now 1.1 million. There are divisions in the trade union movement, and many workers are hesitating to choose to resist under the state's threat of 'accept what you're given or be sacked'. However, an opportunity exists for socialists to organise among the workers and create a basis for better organised and more radical resistance.

The fascists and the Welfare Party

The Turkish military has orchestrated a vicious anti-Kurd and anti-Greek campaign through the media. This has been intensified with the onset of the crisis. At the same time there is evidence that Ciller's government is drawing closer to the fascist National Action Party of Arpaslan

Turkes. This party is violently anti-Kurd, seeking only a military solution to the Kurdistan issue. Its ranks supply many of the troops of the murderous Special Forces. The Party openly states its support for the current government and is manoeuvring to replace the Social Democrats in a coalition. Ciller is reported to meet with Turkes while his fascist gangs attack the organised workers.

After the 1980 military coup the state expanded religious education, built mosques and trained Imams in a deliberate policy of countering socialism. The Welfare Party was founded in 1983 and has reputedly been funded by Saudi Arabia, Iran and some in the Turkish bourgeoisie. It has worked among the urban poor, the hundreds of thousands who have come from the Anatolian plains to the big cities. In March Welfare won elections in 28 out of the country's 76 municipalities, including Istanbul and Ankara; it holds the reins of local government for 66 per cent of Turkey's population. The March election saw Welfare double its share of the total vote on its 1989 figure to over 18 per cent. It has done particularly well in working class constituencies.

Welfare has worked among the urban poor, the hundreds of thousands who come to the big cities from the countryside, and using the language of social justice, hostility to the extravagances of the rich and anti-Western and anti-IMF rhetoric, it has filled a political vacuum for those disillusioned with the dominant parties. There are several factions within this Islamic movement including apparently left elements. The military are generally hostile to the Islamic movement, but favour the more mature, longer established sections.

For all the contending classes and parties in Turkey, the situation is fluid and volatile. Given the failure of the austerity programme to produce the results desired by the international banks, more ferocious measures still will be aimed at the working class. Fascism lurks in the corridors of power as it did before the 1980 military coup. ■

The six prisoners achieved 'the impossible' before their recapture: they broke out of the Whitemoor Special Security Block, a prison within a prison. They evaded security cameras, cut through fences, scaled walls topped with razor wire...

The attempt was valiant and the retribution vicious, violent and cowardly. The state has often accused the IRA of 'cowardice' - what is more cowardly than a group of uniformed prison officers repeatedly beating defenceless individuals who are in chains and handcuffs? Andy Russell wrote to FRFI:

'You heard right about the systematic torture sessions...I now have ripped ligaments in my right arm. I was cuffed behind my back and sat on face downwards until the early hours of Saturday morning - it was gone 3am when the cuffs were removed. The favourite torture tactic was for one of them to savagely pull the chain holding the cuffs up my back - end result the ripped ligaments. Outside the gaol I had them sitting on me under the same conditions (cuffed and face down) while one pulled my head back for another to kick. It was the same for Danny McNamee who was in the strongbox alongside the one I was in and who received 11 stitches in his head, Dingus Magee and Liam McCotter. Peter Sherry and Liam O'Duibhir were caught by the police later and firstly taken into police custody. This stopped them getting the same treatment, as the police had seen they were unmarked.'

Andy's brother Stephen visited him a week later: 'I was prepared for him to be battered but not for anything like what I saw. He can't move one of his arms at all as the ligaments

Whitemoor torture

Some of the jobs whom John Major would like to put in prison are already there - they work there. And following the courageous and daring attempted escape by six prisoners from Whitemoor gaol on 9 September, a gang of these sadists (otherwise known as prison officers) took the law into their own hands. There has been a hue and cry about the escape and who is to be held responsible for it, but predictably not a word about the vicious extra-judicial retribution carried out against those who tried to gain their freedom. NICKI JAMESON reports.

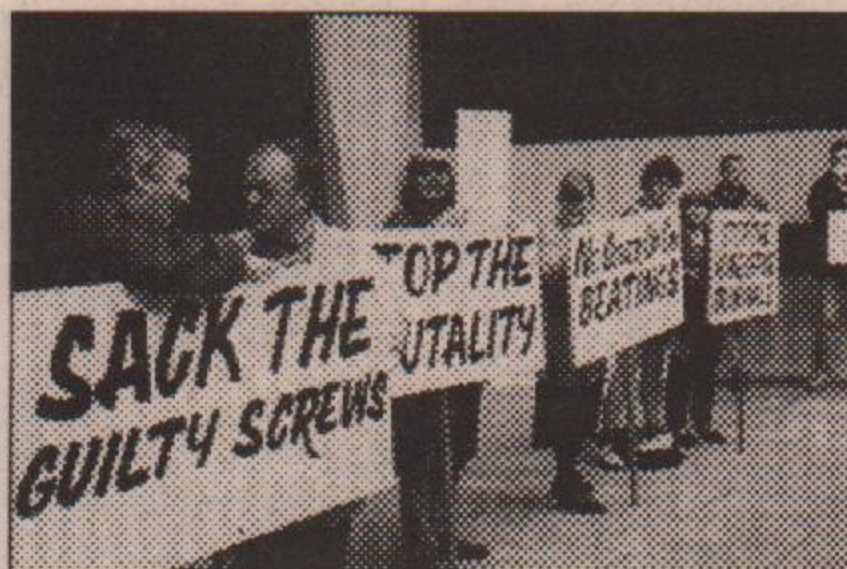
are so badly torn. Both his eyes have been blackened and in one of them you can't see any white at all, only red. His face and body are covered in cuts, scratches and bruises.'

Following the escape attempt, the gutter press was awash with lies about 'luxurious' conditions in Special Security Units (SSUs): 'Lobster take-away for IRA killers', 'IRA bombers £250,000 free phone calls' etc. Following the discovery of Semtex in a prison store, their hysteria knew no bounds. Whitemoor, probably Britain's most oppressive gaol, was suddenly a 'holiday camp'.

The POA is having a field day in its never-ending battle for more overtime, more money and more jobs for its members. With the support of ex-Board of Visitors chair, Paddy Seligman, it is locked in a war of words with the Prison Service about who is to blame for the 'lax security' and 'excessive privileges' accorded to the 'most violent and most vile in our society' (David Evans, POA official on *World at One*).

The SSUs are *not* luxurious. The 'excessive privileges' referred to consist mainly of permission for prisoners to keep books, tape-recorders,

televisions and other personal possessions in their cells. These items are not provided by the prison but purchased by families and friends outside. SSU prisoners are totally



FRFI and members of the Russell family picketed the Home Office to protest against the beatings

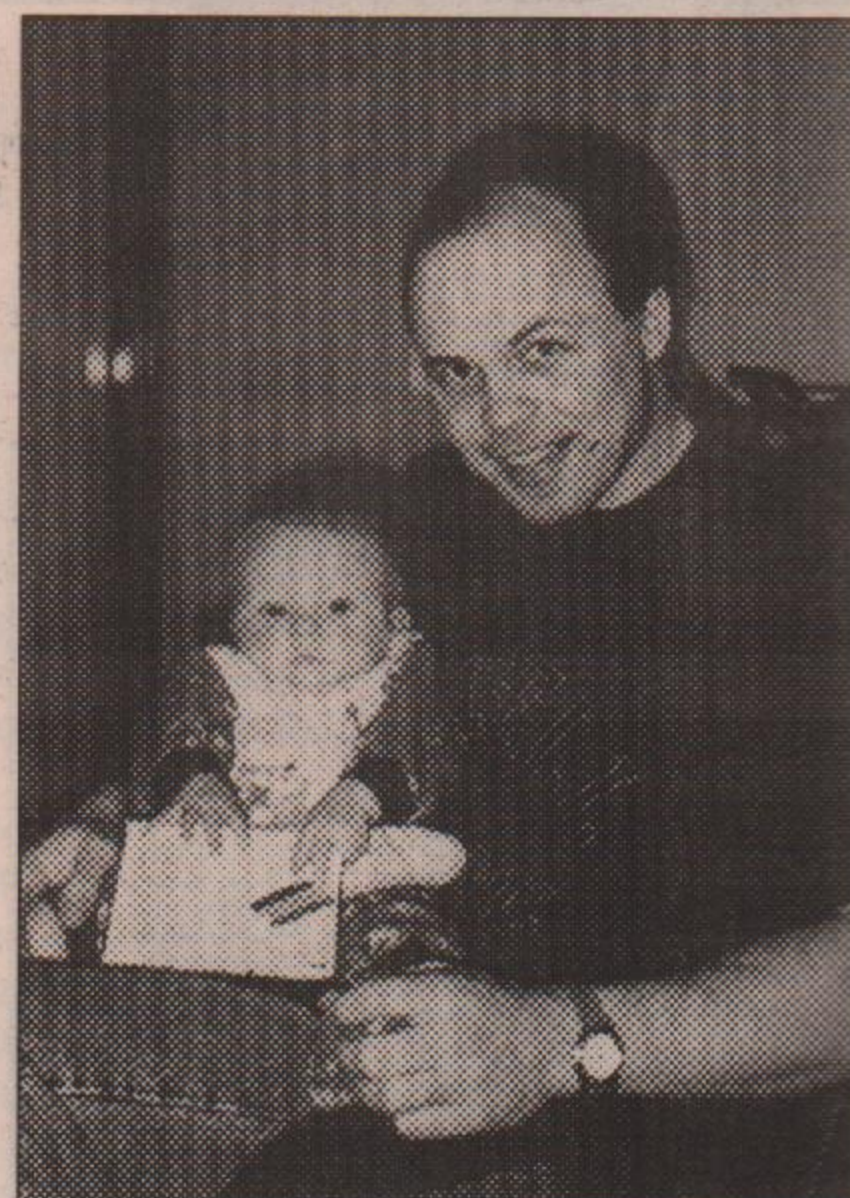
segregated from all other prisoners and their visitors heavily vetted. Their isolation is acute and, as stated in a letter to *The Guardian* by the British Irish Rights Watch, the 'artificial and unnatural environment can have serious long-term effects on the psychological and physical health of inmates'.

Whoever wins the war of words and whatever the verdict of Sir John Woodcock's inquiry into how the

escape attempt could happen, the people who will be punished will be the prisoners.

In one form or another all long term and high security prisoners in both Whitemoor and other gaols will be made to suffer in revenge for the escape and it will be exploited by Michael Howard and friends to win sympathy for repressive policies already in the pipeline. Plans have been announced already for more restrictions on 'non-cooperative inmates' and more intrusive and frequent searches of both prisoners and their visitors; rumours are circulating that closed visits (a glass screen between the prisoner and his visitor) will be introduced for all high security prisoners. Such retribution will in turn bring about further resistance.

FRFI sends solidarity greetings to Paul (Dingus) Magee (BR3783) Gilbert (Danny) MacNamee (L48616), Liam McCotter (LB83693), Liam O'Duibhir, Peter Sherry (B75880) and Andrew Russell (JA0223). We ask our readers to send them cards and messages of support to HMP Whitemoor, Longhill Road, March, Cambs PE15 0PR.



Andy Russell

POWs' Birthdays

Harry Duggan 338638
HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Brasside, Durham DH1 5YD
31 October

Sean Kinsella 758651
HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5NX
5 November

Paul Norney 863532
HMP Frankland
11 November

Brendan Dowd 758662
HMP Whitemoor, Longhill Road, March, Cambs, PE15 0PR
17 November

Full Sutton brutality

Over the last few years the regime at Full Sutton prison has become more and more vindictive and the segregation block grown notorious for its brutality. Last year Jimmy Walker committed suicide there; prisoners insist his death could have been prevented.

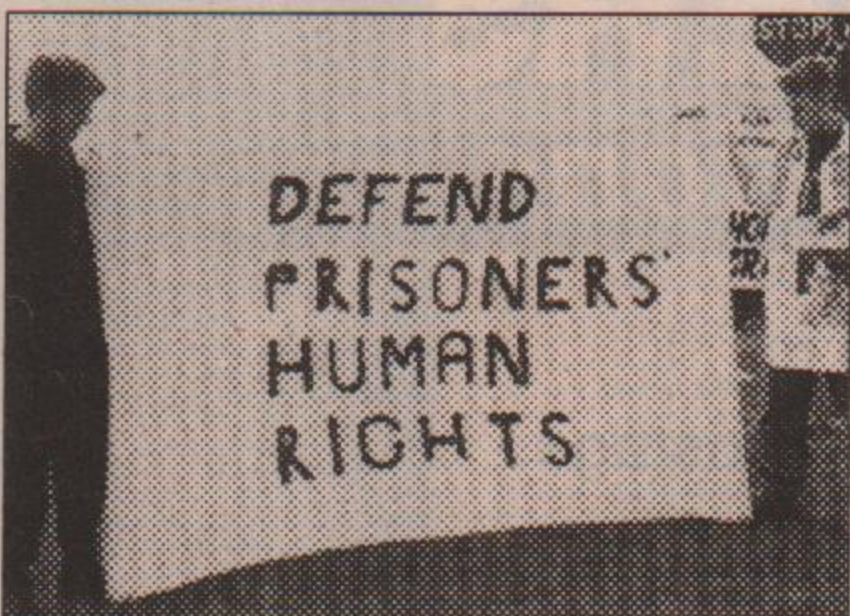
Andrzej Jakubczyk has undertaken the urgent task of exposing the Full Sutton block to public scrutiny. In July he completed a detailed dossier chronicling attempted suicides, a series of serious assaults and a general regime of continuous petty harassment and negligence. Copies of this dossier were sent to Humberside police and the local media. This proved extremely effective and suddenly a blaze of adverse local publicity hit Full Sutton.

FRFI has also received a 'Request/Complaint' form submitted to the Area Management in May by Warren Edwards and countersigned by nine other prisoners who support his allegations that 'certain officers ... are taking it upon themselves to inflict unnecessary acts of brutality on inmates ... that go way beyond the means of normal restraint.' He cites one particular incident which he describes as typical: 'a black inmate ... was set about in a very vicious manner and then placed in isolated confinement for two days without receiving any proper medical treatment.'

On 8 August Satpal Ram, who is serving life for the self-defence killing of a racist who attacked him, was taken to the Full Sutton block, beaten up and sent on a 'lay-down' to Durham. He was returned to Full Sutton on 9 September. On the journey between the two gaols he was violently assaulted and racially abused: forced to lie face down on the floor of the van, put in a body belt and told 'this is how you black scum should travel.' On arrival he was

charged with assaulting one of the screws who had held him down, and placed in a strip cell. Readers are asked to send letters of solidarity to Satpal Ram (E94164), HMP Full Sutton, Moor Lane, York YO4 1PS.

Supporters of Full Sutton prisoners travelled from Leeds, Manchester and London to demonstrate outside the prison on 3 September. Our demands were that there be 'No cover-up', that the abuses in Full Sutton be investigated fully and that all prison officers found to be implicated be immediately sacked. Unless the regime in the block improves drastically, protests both inside and outside the prison will become an increasingly regular occurrence.



Protesters at Full Sutton

STOP PRESS

After two months intensive campaigning against being held in the north, Alan Byrne was moved from Full Sutton back to Parkhurst on 22 September.

Britain's racist justice

Until the Home Office completes its plan to close, privatise, or otherwise destroy its Research and Statistics Department, it remains ironically the most meticulous and consistent producer of information with which to criticise government policy. *The Ethnic Origins of Prisoners* (Home Office Statistical Bulletin), released this August, confirms once again the racist nature of British 'justice'.

It is an already relatively well-known and shocking fact that in the region of 16% of male and 26% of female prisoners are black or from 'ethnic minorities'. The current study seeks to break down these figures in various ways. The first and most potentially controversial is by dividing UK passport-holders from 'foreign nationals'. By excluding 'foreign' prisoners, the percentage of the prison population from ethnic minorities falls to 12% for men and 14% for women, still a large proportion. The stark difference between the percentages of women prisoners can mainly be accounted for by the high number of female 'drug couriers' in British prisons. These women, unlike two of their British counterparts who were bailed out by John Major and pardoned by the King of Thailand, receive little publicity or assistance and never a royal pardon.

The report goes on to compare the number of men and women from the various different ethnic groups to the percentages of the same groups in the population of England and Wales as a whole. Among most groups the discrepancy, once 'foreign' prisoners are conveniently discounted, is no longer enormous, but Afro-Caribbeans still make up 9% of the male and 10.4% of the female prison population, in stark contrast to the

1.3% of the resident population of England and Wales who are Afro-Caribbean. No amount of tinkering can explain away the racism responsible for such a huge proportion of British prisoners being black.

The figures quoted so far are based on information collected in June 1993, since when the number of 'non-British' prisoners has increased still further. The number of imprisoned asylum-seekers has tripled in the last year, with over 600 currently in custody (235 in prisons, 10 in police cells and the rest in detention centres). Persecution and surveillance of the most political refugee communities, in particular the Kurds and Turks, is certain to result in yet more imprisonment of 'foreigners'. All prisoners without British passports can expect to serve 'double punishment': a gaol sentence followed by deportation. In many cases deportation is tantamount to a death sentence.

The rest of the Statistical Bulletin is based on less recent material, mainly gathered in 1990. Here too startling inequalities are revealed, this time in the different sentence lengths handed out for similar offences: for the crime of 'wounding', Afro-Caribbean men received substantially longer sentences than Asians, Chinese, Arab or mixed race men who, in turn, received

longer sentences than white men. For drugs offences Asians received by far the longest sentences (on average four years, nine months), followed by men of Chinese, Arab and mixed origin, followed by Afro-Caribbeans; once again white men received the shortest sentences (on average two years, five months). And dispelling myths about 'black criminality', the study reveals that 60% of white males had more than six previous convictions, as opposed to 48% of Afro-Caribbeans and 28% of Asians.

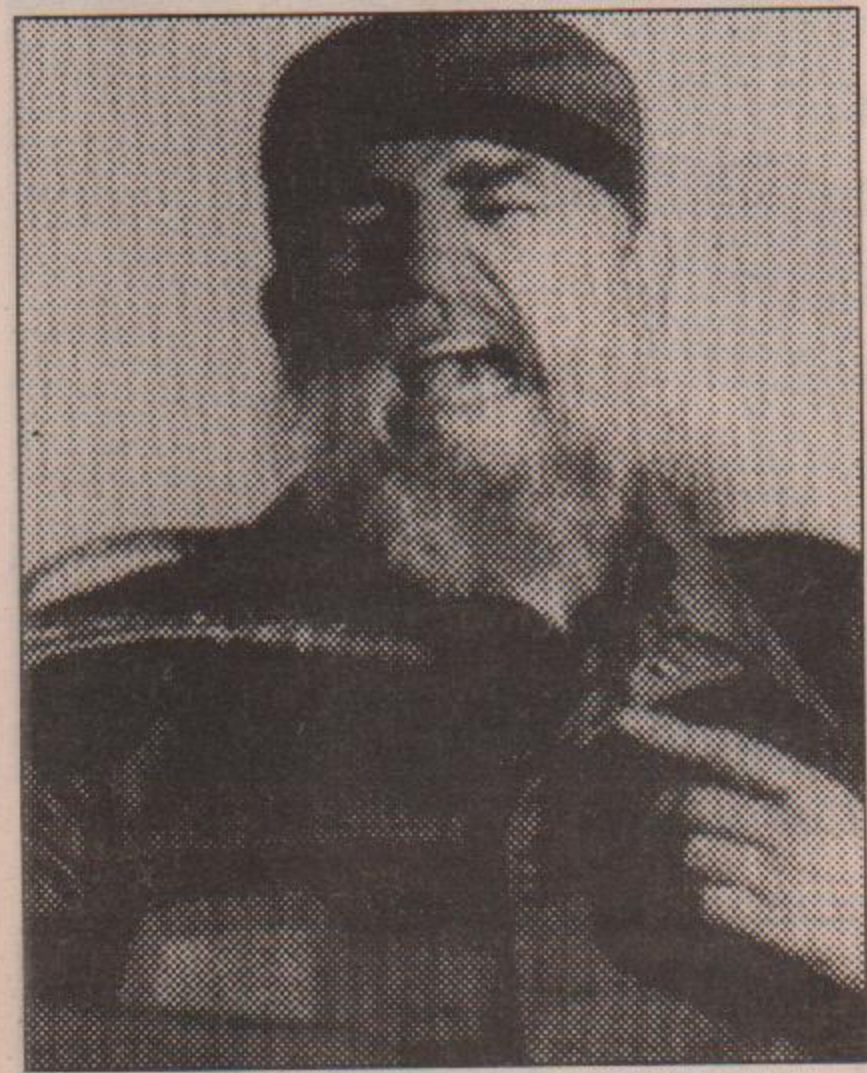
Taking together all prisoners sentenced in the year up to 30 June 1990, (excluding life sentences, fine defaulters and civil prisoners), black juvenile males received an average of 16 months in custody, as opposed to 12 months for whites; the average sentence lengths for adult men were 25½ months for Afro-Caribbeans, 21 months for Asians and 18 months for whites. The Bulletin quotes a 1988 Crown Court survey which points out that 'black defendants are more likely to plead not guilty, with the result that they forego the discount that applies for a guilty plea'. This sentence speaks volumes about racist policing: the simple fact being that black defendants plead not guilty more often because they are not guilty more often.

Another survey, *Social Trends 1994*, contains more damning confirmation of the same racist policies. It reveals that in 1992 76.7 per 10,000 of the Afro-Caribbean population were in prison, compared to only 19.4 per 10,000 whites, an eight-fold difference, and Afro-Caribbean women were almost 20 times more likely to be in gaol than white women.

Nicki Jameson

Castro defends socialism

■ **Face to Face with Fidel Castro: a conversation with Tomás Borge**, Ocean Press 1993, £5.95



As imperialism intensifies its assault on Cuba, the revolution continues its struggle for survival. To understand how this is possible in a Third World country, read *Face to Face with Fidel Castro*, a series of conversations with Tomás Borge (a poet and founding member of the Sandinistas) and the Cuban leader.

The book covers a wide range of topics from the 500th anniversary of the European colonisation of the Americas to Castro's views on literature and the relevance of history.

Contrary to the imperialist media

image, the Cuban government is not a dictatorial regime. Castro explains the nature of the Cuban government in detail and shows its democratic character. The population (not the Communist Party) select and vote for representatives – who don't have to be and often are not party members – at all levels of government. Castro says that in Cuba a single party system 'made it possible for us to stand firm against all the United States' threats and aggression. How could our country have stood firm if it had been split up in 10 pieces?' Cuba is a one-party system but in imperialist countries multi-party systems amount to different views supporting the capitalist system.

Differing views are permissible in Cuba, and what's more the Cuban people are armed! In the imperialist version of democracy, Castro convincingly argues, 'those who do not have the resources cannot set themselves any political goals. The same methods are used in seeking votes as in trying to get consumers to drink Coca-Cola'.

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a painful blow for Cuba and Castro is very clear about where the blame lies. While acknowledging the decisive role of imperialism he also recognises the existence of internal forces bent on destroying it: 'Imperialism couldn't have destroyed the Soviet Union if the Soviets them-

selves hadn't destroyed it first'. Castro acknowledges the Soviet Union needed reforming and believes that Gorbachev intended to improve socialism, not destroy it. 'He was a friend to us ... he did everything possible to respect Cuba's interests and to preserve the good relations between the Soviet Union and our country. Nevertheless he unquestionably played a role in the events that took place.' Castro argues that the reform process moved too fast and that anti-socialist forces worked within the Soviet system to aid its downfall. With the destruction of the authority of the Communist Party, Castro argues that 'the main pillar' of socialism and the USSR was destroyed. 'For all who did not want to fall under the yoke of US imperialism the Soviet Union constituted an enormous advantage which was lost when it disappeared.'

A very interesting part of the discussion covers Castro's critique of Soviet policy from the Stalin era to the USSR's demise. Castro argues that rather than allowing the Soviet Union time to prepare for war, Stalin's non-aggression pact with Hitler in 1939 greatly expanded the Nazi war-machine. After the pact, Hitler was able to invade and occupy much of Europe, seizing vast human and material resources. Castro says that the Soviet people should have been mobilised sooner and were ill

prepared for Hitler's attack in June 1941. However, Castro adds, once the war was on, Stalin did a fine job of leading the Soviet Union.

Discussing Stalin's domestic policy, Castro regards his agricultural policies to be among his gravest errors. By placing trust in the small farms under private ownership for too long food production was 'paralysed'. Stalin attempted to remedy this by rapid forced collectivisation. This was, says Castro, 'very costly both economically and in terms of human suffering.'

Castro admits that every revolution makes mistakes and that Cuba is no exception. In the construction industry, for example, enterprises found that they earned more on putting component parts of buildings in place than on finishing touches. This led to disasters such as towns being built without water supply systems. In 1986 Cuba embarked on a rectification programme to solve these problems. As a result production and efficiency improved.

This book is a must for all those interested in socialism in general and Cuba in particular. Castro recognises the enormous difficulties facing the socialist movement and the harsh conditions now facing the Cuban people. But the Cuban people will not surrender passively to the IMF and imperialism whose policies 'throw millions of people out of work and into poverty and hunger and constitute an extremely brutal violation of human rights.'

Francis Squire

Brazilian women fight back

■ **Women in Brazil** edited CAIPORA Women's Group, Latin American Bureau, 1993, £5.99

Without the mass participation of women in social and political life, there can be no talk of any progressive movement in society. This book on Brazil confirms the point. According to the World Bank, Brazil is the most unequal society in the world: millions of families eke out a miserable living on tiny plots of land, 30 million people are without running water, 40 million on the edge of starvation.



Women form the backbone of the fightback against these conditions. They sustain the movements for landless families, form the core of social organisation in the shantytowns fighting for elementary services – water, electricity and sanitation. And to each struggle, as this book shows, whether against exploitation, racism or for basic democratic rights – they bring an uncompromising determination born of their desire for a better world for themselves and their children.

Like elsewhere under capitalism, women in Brazil generally either form cheap labour for local and multinational capital, displacing men in low-skilled, low-paid jobs in textiles, electronics and other industries or are forced into domestic service. Through the contributions of the women themselves, this book recounts their experiences of oppression, and their fightback.

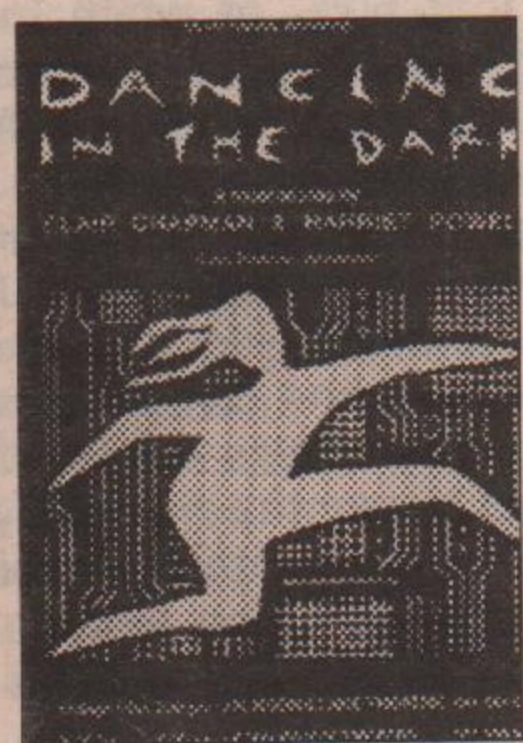
In Europe the idea of a women's movement has been replaced by middle class feminism – some of whose prejudices the editors of this book unfortunately share. Mass collective women's participation in the struggle to change society has been replaced by individual advances for a tiny minority of women within bourgeois society. Brazil may be able to teach us something better.

Eddie Abrahams

Dancing as the banks dry up

■ **Dancing in the Dark A Musical Play** by Clair Chapman and Harriet Powell. 21 Sept-1 Oct 7.30pm Jacksons Lane Theatre 081 341 4421; 3-15 Oct 7.45pm Lilian Baylis Theatre 071 278 8916

A musical play set in the ground floor of a tower block in Newham in the year 2015 after a world economic crash – it doesn't sound much to sing and dance about. But *Dancing in the Dark* is fun, with lots of jokes, true romance and clever choreography. It is a celebration of ordinary people making their own history (though not, as Marx noted, in circumstances of their own choosing).



To create an entertainment from the serious, possible and realistic scenario of a global ecological and economic collapse of the capitalist system is only possible from a socialist viewpoint. The death of the capitalist system can lead to power for the people. The terrifying images of anarchy and war used by the ruling class as a warning of what could happen if capitalism fails are triumphantly challenged in this play. 'Trash the Cash' the people sing as the banks dry up and credit ends and the community learns that it can only survive through mutual aid.

For sheer joy *Dancing in the Dark* is a great performance. The excellent cast includes Richard Seymour who wrote and directed *Looks Like Freedom*, the play about anti-apartheid activists which was reviewed earlier this year in FRFI.

Susan Davidson

Testimony of a woman of the Bolivian Mines

■ **Let Me Speak** Domitila Barrios de Chungara with Moema Viezzer, Monthly Review Press 1978

This is the story of the wife of a tin miner from the Bolivian Andes, and her fight to be part of the struggle for the self-emancipation and liberation of the working class. The story of the fight for basic human rights in a community who have nothing, and the maturing of political consciousness with the concrete realisation that there is an alternative system.

The book was written after the International Women's Year Tribunal held in Mexico in 1975, to which Domitila had been invited to represent the Housewives Committee of Siglo XX. She made the longest journey of her life and met with disappointment. She came up against a type of women's struggle that she had not conceived of: middle class educated women who said that men were the problem. For Domitila and her *compañeras*, their struggle had

been all along to convince the men, by their words and their actions, that not only was their place in the struggle, but that the working class struggle was doomed to failure without the active and equal participation of the women.

The book gives a good historical and economic analysis of Bolivia from an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist perspective. It is an inspiring book to read, especially in a time when socialism and communism are regarded by many as past failures. It is a necessary read for those whose criticism of communism is that it belongs to the realms of intellectual discussion unrelated to practical solutions. Domitila had little formal education, but as a victim of the poverty, degradation and humiliation that defines the lives of the working class in the oppressed nations, she fought for communism.

'What I think is that socialism in Bolivia, like in any country, will be



the tool which will create the conditions for women to reach their level. And they will do so through their struggle, through their participation. And their liberation will be their own work. At this moment it's much more important to fight for the liberation of our people alongside the men. I think machismo is a weapon of imperialism just like feminism is. The basic fight isn't between the sexes, it's the struggle for liberation, from a class perspective.'

Hannah Caller

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Bay of discord

■ **Guantánamo: the bay of discord** Roger Ricardo, Ocean Press, 1994, £4.95

'The island of Cuba still has a small piece of territory encircled by barbed wire, extensive land mines, and occupied by hostile troops under a foreign flag. This occupied territory is Guantánamo Naval Base, the United States' oldest overseas military installation.' This timely publication details some of the history of US imperialist aggression against Cuba, in particular the forced occupation of the Guantánamo naval base.'

Ricardo shows that the continued occupation of Guantánamo is a political act, a symbol of US power and a calculated insult to the Cuban people. It is recommended as an introduction to the history of US aggression and imperialist ambitions in Cuba.

Bob Shepherd

Haiti Clinton's colonialism

On 19 September, US forces landed in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince as part of 'Operation Uphold Democracy' in which some 15,000 US troops are expected to occupy the country. This, the world was told, would restore to power the democratically elected Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was deposed on 30 September 1991 by a military coup led by General Raoul Cedras. As crowds gathered to watch the landing, US officials using loudhailers announced: 'This is not an invasion, we are here to work with the Haitian army.' EDDIE ABRAHAMS examines the US operation.

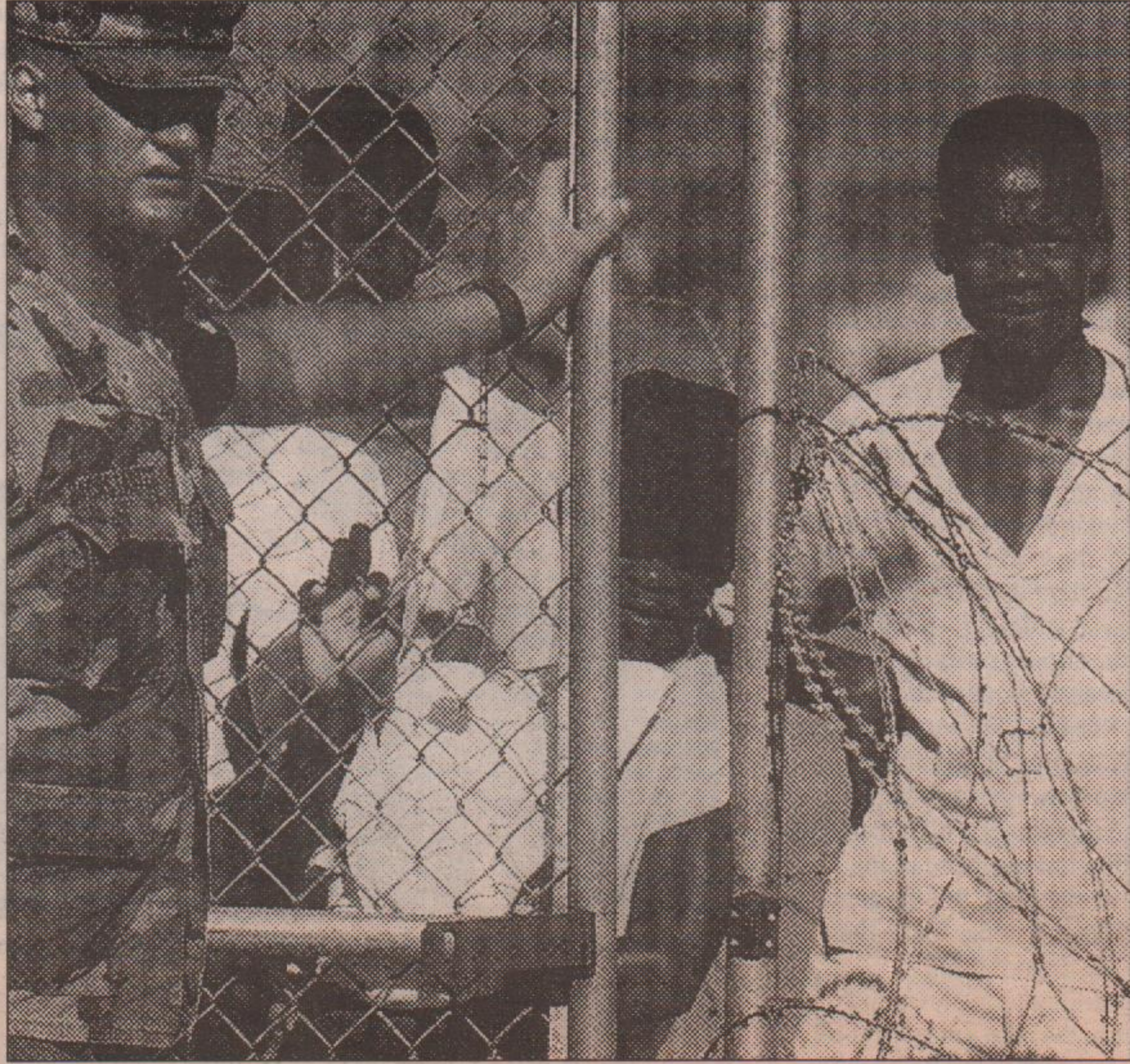
By any stretch of the imagination this was a most puzzling first step in a democratic exercise. For this is the very same Haitian army that deposed Aristide and has so far slaughtered more than 5,000 Haitian workers, peasants and popular activists in the space of 3 years. The US's democratic credentials were called into question one day after the occupation. On 20 September US soldiers looked on passively as Haitian police using guns and clubs attacked demonstrators who chanted 'Handcuff Cedras - give me Aristide right now'. One demonstrator was clubbed to death.

The rhetoric of 'Operation Uphold Democracy' conceals a thoroughly anti-democratic programme that the US Administration has prepared for Haiti. Under the US brokered agreement, the military junta will be required to step down by 15 October. Cedras and his colleagues will be given an amnesty and may not even

be required to leave the country. The military machine will be 'retained and retrained' by the US. Real power will remain with the army and Aristide will be president in name only.

Aristide is forbidden from standing for Presidential elections in 1995. His economic policy will be determined by the IMF. After 2 years of a US embargo, a major operation is required to restore infrastructure - rebuilding bridges, rural roads, port facilities and services such as waterworks. In return for assistance IMF and other donors are demanding wholesale privatisation, the lifting of import restrictions and tariffs as well as cuts in the public sector workforce from its current figure of 45,000.

Aristide was deposed at the height of the capitalist world's triumphal celebrations of its defeat of the socialist bloc. Capitalist politicians then



talked of the global victory of democracy over tyranny and dictatorship. But this rhetoric applied only to the socialist bloc, only to progressive governments. For three long years, the US did nothing whilst Cedras's military junta slaughtered Haiti's poor who had mobilised under the banner of a movement called *Lavalas* (Avalanche). Indeed, the US Admin-

istration had reason to be thankful to Cedras.

Aristide, a left-wing social democrat was elected on a tidal wave of popular mobilisation. During the US-orchestrated elections in December 1990 he campaigned on a radical populist platform promising welfare and food for the poor. Against all US expectations he trounced their pup-

pet Marc Barzin, getting 70 per cent of the vote to Barzin's 12 per cent. Aristide's election let loose a massive social movement of the poor. Fired by this victory, democracy threatened to become an instrument of the majority. Popular organisations were formed as the working class and peasantry prepared to fight for a better life against the tiny minority of the rich and their US backers. This was not acceptable to the US ruling class.

With workers' wages at 14 cents an hour, Haiti was a lucrative source of cheap labour for agricultural producers and for US firms assembling manufactured goods - sporting, textile and electrical appliances - for export. US capitalists and a tiny local bourgeoisie have grown enormously wealthy while the rest of the nation virtually starves. Half of the country's 7 million population receives only 75 per cent of its nutritional requirements. 55 per cent of the population is unemployed. Haiti has a mortality rate of 95 per 1000 live births and one in ten babies die before they are one year old. In Port-au-Prince, of 700,000 people only 50,000 receive water. Fifty per cent of the population is illiterate.

Over many generations such conditions, existing side by side with a minority flaunting BMWs, Mercedes and other obscene luxuries, produced massive popular rage and anger which could be kept in check only by the most dictatorial of means. To this end the US has intervened dozens of times to crush popular democratic movements, and was quite happy to finance the infamous Duvalier dictatorship which ruled by means of the hated Tonton Macoute death squads.

For the capitalist class, democracy is only acceptable if it does not threaten the interests of the wealthy. In the balance, the embarrassment of Cedras's coup at the height of capitalism's democratic pretensions was easily outweighed by the advantages he offered in destroying an incipient mass movement which Aristide could not control, and which threatened US wealth in Haiti. Only after having given Cedras sufficient time to destroy the mass movement did the US begin thinking of the cosmetic surgery of removing him. An economic embargo was imposed to placate international demands and domestic 'public opinion'. This embargo, by further starving and exhausting the population, facilitated the military junta's repression. But it simultaneously unleashed a tidal wave of hungry, starving refugees seeking sanctuary in a racist and unwelcoming US.

It was at this point that the US administration decided that Cedras must go. He was, in any event, never Washington's favoured instrument in Haiti. Furthermore, whilst having destroyed the popular movement he has failed to restore social stability and peaceful conditions for capitalist exploitation. So the US has concocted the return of a repentant petit-bourgeois Aristide who in his years of exile has learnt the ABC of neo-liberal economics. The US now hopes that a tamed Aristide along with the Haitian army will create conditions which can secure a safe transition to new pro-American government at the 1995 elections.

Before the US intervention Renald Clerisme - founder of the peasant and farm worker organisation *Tet Kole* (Heads Together) rightly warned: 'A lot of people think military intervention will solve the problem. We can accept neither US nor UN intervention because it would mean accepting a massacre of our people.'

'Intervention will not be against the military but instead against the grass-roots organisations. In fact, a military intervention will give the Haitian military even more power.'

South Africa

Wind of Change?

It was typical of the British that the first visit of a Prime Minister to South Africa for 34 years should evoke a mountain of sentimental, self-serving clap-trap about Harold Macmillan's 'Wind of Change' speech to the white South African Parliament in 1960. In the context of the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960, Macmillan's efforts were mealy-mouthed - a gentle hint to old friends. The ensuing 34 year absence did not stem from abhorrence of apartheid - it was business as usual throughout, including breaching the UN mandatory arms embargo. A subject which Major dodged. CAROL BRICKLEY reports.

For anyone who has supported the long and bloody struggle for liberation, both John Major's platitudes and President Mandela's thanks for the Government's 'secret help' stank of a deep duplicity. Between bouts of mutual gush and sessions at the cricket net, the real purpose of the mission was to lay ground rules for the future exploitation of the black working class.

Apart from the requisite sportspeople led by Sir Bobby Charlton to provide light relief on a dusty wasteland which passes for a township sportsfield (free coca-cola and a T-shirt for the kids), Major's team was indicative of its real purpose: Howard Davies (CBI director general), Tim Barker (vice chair Kleinwort Benson - investments), Earl Cairns (chief executive SG Warburg - brokerage), Michael Dobson (chief executive Morgan Grenfell - merchant banking), Sir Christopher Benson (chairman Costain - construction), Sir Ralph Robins (chairman Rolls Royce).

Their mission was to ensure that conditions will be ripe for Britain to build on its existing £10+ billion stake in

South Africa - this will require, according to Major, 'self help, hard work and individualism' - the chief tenets of the freemarket, ie, low wages and less state intervention. The range of know-how on offer includes the 'skill' of privatisation.

The message did not fall on deaf ears. The new government led by the ANC has not been slow to adjust its policies to embrace the free market. Since June there have been strikes and walkouts in metal, paper, mining, oil and road freight industries resulting in lost production worth R3bn (£535m). Additionally a five-week strike in the motor industry led to a loss of R2-3bn. The government has begun to learn its lessons well - it used troops to bust motorway blockades by striking truck drivers, fired rubber bullets and tear gas at crowds protesting against a 500 per cent increase in water and electricity rates in a Johannesburg township, and badly damaged the motor workers' strike by announcing cuts in tariffs on car imports of 20 per cent - ostensibly to comply with Gatt. The government has so far failed to remove VAT on basic food, and is now preparing for the possible pri-



Batting for British imperialism

vatation of railways, airports and ports, water and electricity, both in breach of election promises.

NUMSA's general secretary bitterly complained of the 'history of betrayal' towards organised workers after taking power, and spoke of the determination of COSATU to prevent this. However, the ability of the trade union movement to oppose government duplicity without breaking its long-standing political alliance with the ANC has to be in doubt. A tripartite alliance of business, government and unions - the National Economic Development and Labour Council - is to be set up with the sole purpose of keeping the workers in line behind a low-wage economy in order to compete with fast-growing Asian economies.

In his address to the recent COSATU convention, President Mandela made the issues clear: 'Without us tightening our belts it will be difficult to get our

economy to grow'; 'There are five million people who are unemployed, who don't know where to find food, who don't know where to find a place to sleep. That is your problem to solve.' It is clear that the working class will be made to pay for bringing South Africa into line with foreign investors' expectations and for any redevelopment which is possible after that. It is also clear that big business, the protected white civil service and innumerable layers of government will not be asked to pay. Archbishop Tutu has led criticisms of the new regime for its self-enrichment in the style of the old white regime. The general secretary of the Communist Party took time at the COSATU convention to lambast the new government for siding only with the bosses and squandering money: 'We pledge to continue the struggle . . . against the gravy train in the upper echelons of the public sector.'

Two unwelcome reminders of *realpolitik* marred the upbeat optimism of Major's visit. Like a wicked witch incanting her spell over the feast, Mrs Thatcher spoke of reluctance to invest in a country which might succumb to violence: South Africa would not be a priority for global investors. And one day later, the European credit rating agency, Iba, gave South Africa a low rating on a par with Mexico, Argentina and Hungary: 'If the government can establish a credible fiscal track record over the next couple of years, the rating could well improve.' These warnings are clear: the new South African government must keep on the free market track or face the consequences. For the working class that means lower wages and little chance of the promised redevelopment programme. The trade union movement will have to make a choice: between its alliance with the ANC and the independent interests of the working class. ■