

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Anti-imperialist paper of the Revolutionary Communist Group

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MARCH FOR MANDELA

REPORT AND PICTURES PAGES 6-7

Viraj Mendis Campaign racist attacks – we fight back

In the first two weeks of March, the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign emerged victorious after a fascist offensive unleashed by Home Office Minister of Deportations, David Waddington and sections of the British racist press.

- 2 March: Viraj, who faces deportation, was given a job by Manchester City Council. Waddington said this was an insult. The gutter press headlines read 'Mendis must go'
- 9/10 March: After a series of threatening letters, an armed fascist gang attacked the church where Viraj is in sanctuary. A supporter was stabbed in the back of the head. Another supporter was attacked in her home by masked fascists, who carved a swastika on her hand with razor blades.
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NO DEPORTATIONS! • VIRAJ MENDIS MUST STAY! • FIGHT THE IMMIGRATION LAWS!

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Broadwater Farm: a history of struggle

The 'disturbances' on Broadwater Farm estate did not start 6 October 1985, nor even the week before that when the police carried out paramilitary exercises in the area. The 'disturbances' began as soon as black people on the estate decided to organise themselves and lobby for community services for all.

Throughout the 1970s the estate lacked most of the provisions originally planned for a community of 3,000 people: shops, pub, launderette, a doctor's and dentist's surgery. Transport facilities remain poor. There is no secondary school near enough to be part of the community. Under both Labour and Tory administrations another sink estate has been created to house slum clearance residents cheaply.

A fight for improvements began in 1981. Claford Sterling, Vice President of the Youth Association, told *FRFI*:

'The concerned people in the community came together and said, "What you really need is resources and facilities." And that is how the Youth Association actually started.'

The new association was mostly young, mostly black, spoke for all and not only actively argued for community services, but also bitterly complained about policing on the estate. From the start, every step forward won for the residents was seen by the police as a loss for them. Every gain was matched by growing police harassment.

In November 1982 the police occupied the estate with 400 SPG riot police after a local march of protest against police harassment and arrests. Despite the fact that the crime rate was actually falling on the estate, thanks to the self-organisation of the community, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Newman labelled the estate

a 'symbolic location' requiring special police attention.

The police regard any organisation of poor and oppressed communities as a threat to their control of the people. That is why they have been trying to destroy the Youth Association ever since it started.

After the shooting of Mrs Groce and the death of Mrs Jarrett black people marched for justice



BROADWATER FARM

No justice for black people

WINSTON SILCOTT

The press have portrayed Winston Silcott as a vicious subhuman thug ruling Broadwater Farm by fear. Yet Floyd Jarrett speaking at the press conference following the trial, gave a different picture.

He said that he has been to school with Winston Silcott, that Winston Silcott was his friend. No mention of any 'reign of terror' nor did Floyd Jarrett show any sign of being in the grip of 'voodoo-like fear'. Commenting on the sentences, Floyd Jarrett said 'It's like they killed my mother all over again.'

The Silcott family came to Britain from Montserrat in the Caribbean nearly 30 years ago. They were part of the post-war campaign to recruit cheap black labour from British colonies to help rebuild the economy after 1945.

Like many black youth, Winston Silcott was targeted by the police from an early age. The local Tottenham police developed a hatred for this tall, strong black youth who spoke up for the rights of his friends and protested against racist policing. One of his friends told *FRFI* that Winston was constantly hounded because:

'... on many occasions in the past he has been outspoken and has complained to local councillors about his treatment by the police.'

In February 1985 he objected to the invitation to Princess Diana to open the Youth Association. He felt that her presence was a cover-up for the continuing poverty and racism that dominated the lives of the people on the estate.

It is no surprise that the police have tried so hard to frame him. As Winston Silcott said the only enemies he has are '... the police ... just the police.' He has paid a terrible price for being a voice of protest.

On Thursday 19 March the conspiracy organised by the state, the police and the media succeeded in securing guilty verdicts against Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghip, in the Blakelock murder trial at the Old Bailey. All three were given mandatory life sentences. In Winston Silcott's case Justice Hodgson recommended that he serve at least 30 years. This is the equivalent of a fixed term sentence of 45 years.

Within minutes of the verdict the Metropolitan Police were celebrating their victory by beating up and arresting Mark Braithwaite's brother and another man.

The quality of these convictions, even by the standards of bourgeois law, was so low that former US trial judge Margaret Burnham described the verdicts as 'a gross miscarriage of justice'. Even before the end of the trial Margaret Burnham told *FRFI* that any convictions on the basis of the evidence in the trial would be 'inherently unreliable'.

'Inherently unreliable'

So 'unreliable' was the evidence that Justice Hodgson ruled that two of the juveniles had to be acquitted. The police withdrew the case against the third juvenile.

Hodgson described the treatment of one of the juveniles as 'burdensome, harsh, wrongful and unjust'. He dismissed the charges because the police had acted in clear contempt of the juveniles' legal rights. One 13 year old had been kept in his underpants and a dirty blanket for three days without access to family or lawyers. This, he said, would have been enough to justify acquitting an adult never mind a boy of 13.

None of this, however, was said in front of the jury. Nor did Hodgson rule along similar lines when summing up the case against the three men. Yet their treatment was as illegal and brutal as that of the juveniles.

Engin Raghip was arrested so brutally that his wife had a miscarriage, losing, as she said, an innocent child as well as an innocent husband. Engin Raghip, unable to read or write, was eventually forced to sign a false statement. Engin Raghip was at home with his brother Jamail at the time that Blakelock was killed. His statement was inherently unreliable.

REPORTS BY
SUE DAVIDSON AND
TERRY O'HALLORAN

'Our 12 year old was kept in a police van in a car park for 36 hours ... They beat up our son ... (We) phoned for 2 days and no one would tell us where he was ... police acted like German Nazis ... If they get away with it they will try it on other kids ...'

**Statement from
Raghip family**

Mark Braithwaite was regularly called 'a fucking murdering black bastard' in a series of brutal interrogations. During one session the police were drunk as well. His conditions were such that he was physically sick. Finally he too signed a series of confused and contradictory statements. He too had alibi evidence. He described his own statements as 'lies' extorted under pressure. His statements were inherently unreliable.

Winston Silcott, the major target of the police conspiracy, made no 'confession' despite being stripped and held in isolation for three days. His alleged remark, 'Those kids won't give evidence against me ... you just wait and see ...', was treated as though it was a confession. The *Daily Mirror* (20 March 1987) also regarded the alleged remark, in answer to the police asking him if he had any enemies, 'Yes, the police ... just the police', as further evidence of his guilt. Such remarks are

not even evidence. They are inherently unreliable.

The prosecution's star witness, Jason Cobham, was certainly exposed as unreliable. Under forceful and persistent cross examination by Mike Mansfield, Cobham admitted that he was a liar being coached in his lies and paid for them by the police.

There was no forensic evidence connecting any of the three to Blakelock. From the 1,000 photographs taken on the night (and despite the action of *The Sun* in printing Winston Silcott's picture) there was no identification evidence connecting any of the three to Blakelock. There was, in short, no reliable evidence against the three - except, of course, that Mark Braithwaite and Winston Silcott are black and Engin Raghip is a Turkish Cypriot. This is usually enough for British courts and the British media.

'picked out to have no justice'

After the verdicts, Mrs Silcott, Winston Silcott's mother, said 'Some of us seem to be picked out to have no justice'.

Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghip were picked out to have no justice. The police wanted Winston Silcott because he has always stood up to them. They also wanted bodies for the killing of Blakelock. The British state wanted to make sure that those who resist police racism and violence get the message: 'Resist and we will use our police, our laws, our courts and our media to crush you.'

Bourgeois courts are inherently unreliable for the working class and oppressed. Left to themselves, these courts will act to protect a ruling class which depends on racism and police violence to exist. Only the pressure of the community, organised and fighting on every level inside and outside the court, could have tipped the 'balance of forces in favour of the three. But the fight is not yet over.

The three will appeal. The time now must be used to build up a strong public campaign in defence of the three. Only such a campaign could force the state to release those whom it has 'picked out to have no justice'.

Community under siege

The Broadwater Farm rising was sparked off by the police-killing of Mrs Cynthia Jarrett. The police, however, seized the opportunity to attack the whole community.

They prevented a protest from leaving the estate and attacked the marchers. The community fought for the right to protest against the murder of Cynthia Jarrett. On the evening of 6 October, the community fought back against a paramilitary style police attack. The police got what Bernie Grant so aptly described as a 'bloody good hiding'.

In the months after the rising, the police mounted a huge operation to get their revenge against the community. For six months the Farm was under siege with 2,000 police on call, and 200-400 present on the estate.

- More than 360 people were arrested. Many were released without charge after 50 hours detention.
- Hundreds were held in police cells and: denied solicitors; deprived of sleep, clothing and food; racially and sexually insulted and abused. Many were beaten. Many were held naked.
- All were questioned about Blakelock and threatened with life imprisonment. Most were asked for names, especially the name of Winston Silcott.
- 50% of the detainees were juveniles. Approximately one third were white.
- Hundreds of juveniles were treated in the same violent, sadistic and illegal way as the 13 year old who was acquitted.

With collusion from local workers, the police took control of post deliveries, milk deliveries and other essentials, frequently cutting off these services altogether. The DHSS also colluded with cutting off benefits and handing over information.

This was how the police created the conditions for the Blakelock show trial.

Trial by the racist British press

From the beginning of the trial, the press has worked to ensure the success of the police frame up of Winston Silcott, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite.

On 22 January (the trial started on 14 January) the newspapers were filled with sensational and racist headlines:

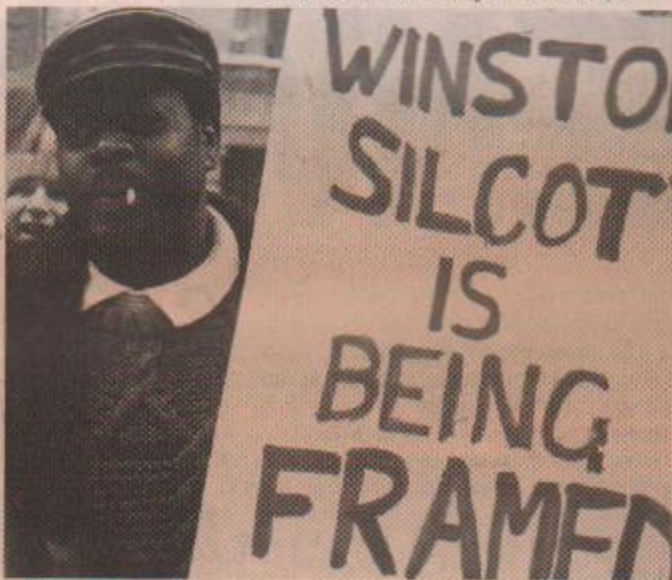
'Mob "planned to put PC's head on pole"' *Daily Telegraph*
 'Riot mob tried to behead PC Blakelock, says QC' *The Guardian*
 'Screaming mob "tried to hack off PC's head"' *Daily Express*
 'Merciless mob "tried to hack off PC's head"' *The Times*
 'Put his head on a pole' *Daily Mail*
 '"They said they would put his head on a pole"' *Daily Mirror*.

All based on wild claims made by prosecution barrister, Roy Amlot. Wild claims derived from a statement made by a 13 year old after hours of being interrogated whilst wearing only a blanket and underpants; a statement which the youth withdrew and Justice Hodgson dismissed as 'fantasy'.

None of the papers which had headlined this fantasy, headlined the fact that it was a fantasy.

The Sun not only printed this same rubbish, they ran it with a picture of Winston Silcott. The prejudicial effect of doing this was so obvious that even the judge was moved to protest. Yet the trial was allowed to continue.

'... These police, this judge and this jury, they have wives, children and grandchildren, they have this stain on their conscience... Silcott is innocent... I may be the next to be shot in the back... Winston is innocent and you all know it.'
 Mr Silcott



ANDREW WARD/REPORT

After the verdicts, the racist press really let themselves go. Winston Silcott was 'evil' (*Daily Mirror* and *The Sun*); a 'violent gangster' (*Daily Mirror*), a 'giant black gang leader' (*The Sun*) leader of a 'savage mob' (*Daily Mail*); he 'ruled Broadwater Farm estate with a voodoo-like grip of fear' (*Daily Mirror*); he is 'an animal... who was yesterday caged for life for the SECOND time in his wretched existence.' (*The Star*)

The community itself came under the same vicious racist attack. Blakelock was the 'victim of savages' (*The Sun*). The youth were 'Hooded animals out for blood' and the 'Beasts of Broadwater Farm' (*The Star*). The repeated theme of savagery coupled with repeated references to Winston Silcott being black has only one purpose: to identify black people, and black youth in particular, as sub-humans threatening society.

All this racist filth not only helped to ensure the guilty verdicts, it also now justifies the increased powers of the police and justifies further attacks on democratic rights such as the right to release on bail.

Only a determined public campaign, constantly countering the racist press, could have tipped the balance in favour of the community under attack. Such a campaign could have asked why there is no talk of 'savages' and 'animals' when 5 year old children are shot dead in their beds (John Shorthouse), when black mothers are shot and paralysed in their own homes (Cherry Groce) and when black mothers are killed in their own homes (Cynthia Jarrett).

Halting the retreat

Editorial

On Thursday 19 March, the police finally exacted their revenge for the killing of PC Blakelock on Broadwater Farm Estate in October 1985. On the flimsiest evidence three men were given life sentences. The trial, lasting two months, was the culmination of a reign of police terror on Broadwater Farm Estate, which followed the uprising. In the months following October 1985, black youth were rounded-up, brutally interrogated, denied the most basic rights, and forced to sign 'confessions'. Their family homes were raided. The community was under siege. All this was exposed in the evidence given to the Old Bailey trial, but even so, three men were found guilty without a scrap of real evidence against them.

Nearly 12 years ago over a period of seven months between August 1975 and March 1976, 16 Irish men and women and one Englishwoman, the friend of one of the Irish men, were sentenced to massive gaol terms for actions they did not carry out. The Birmingham Six received life sentences; the Guildford Four were given life sentences ranging from 30 years to natural life and the Maguires were sent down for between 4 and 14 years. The main evidence against them was their own 'confessions' beaten out of them during police interrogation and/or very flimsy, now totally discredited, forensic evidence. All were innocent, framed by a conspiracy of the police and British judicial system at the highest levels, aided and abetted by anti-Irish hysteria whipped up by the British press.

Today all the guilty verdicts have been challenged. Books and TV programmes have appeared that demonstrate their innocence. Only the Birmingham Six case has so far been referred to the Court of Appeal. 17 people have spent, and the majority are still spending, years of their lives in the hell holes that are British prisons simply because they are Irish or in the case of Carole Richardson had a relationship with an Irish man.

The Broadwater Farm trials of today and those Irish trials of nearly 12 years ago share many things in common. Both expose the way the British police and judicial system deals with oppressed people fighting back against British imperialism and British racism. Whether it is the Irish people fighting for the democratic right to self-determination or black people and other oppressed sections of the British working class fighting against police racism, harassment and brutality they can expect not even a modicum of justice. This is intended as a warning to others not to take up the struggle, not to side with those fighting for freedom and justice.

British terror and murder in the occupied Six Counties of Ireland and police brutality, murder, and racist harassment in the inner cities of Britain have become 'publicly' acceptable forms of violence - the violence of the state. The paratroopers who shot fourteen Irish people dead in 1972 and the police who shot Cherry Groce and killed Cynthia Jarrett walk free. But when the Irish people strike back through a bombing campaign in Britain or black and white youths from the inner cities hit back with stones, petrol bombs against an increasingly organised, and armed, para-military police force, there is 'public' outrage and hysteria - for this is the violence of the oppressed.

The working class in Britain has failed to take sides, to condemn state violence and to defend the right of the oppressed to use violence against their oppressors. The consequence of this has been a rapid erosion of our fundamental rights to organise, demonstrate and take political action, together with a strengthening of the state machine, the police, courts and prisons, in order to crush any fightback.

The Birmingham bombings in 1974 were used as a pretext to introduce the anti-Irish Prevention of Terrorism Act (now extended to all fighting for national liberation). Political struggle on the Irish issue was being criminalised. Police powers were increased and special squads of trained, increasingly armed police were set up to deal with 'terrorism' - that is violence for political ends. Show trials, hyped up by the media, took place where flimsy evidence and 'confessions' beaten out of suspects became acceptable in the fight against 'terrorism'. In the Six Counties from 1976-1979, under Kenneth Newman, then head of the RUC, the systematic torture of suspects to force out 'confessions' allowed non-jury courts to imprison Irish people, often for life. Now these methods are being transferred to Britain.

Kenneth Newman was chosen to be head of the Metropolitan Police soon after the 1981 risings in Brixton. His experience in Ireland made him the ruling class's choice. After the October 1985 rising at Broadwater Farm many of those arrested were held for days with no access to solicitors, relatives or friends. Some and, in particular, those brought to trial for the killing of PC

Blakelock were brutally interrogated, often under illegal conditions, and forced to sign 'confessions' or 'name names'. Winston Silcott was held naked except for a paper bag for three days. A show trial has now taken place.

The uprising at Broadwater Farm has also been used as the pretext to develop special anti-civilian police squads - Territorial Support Groups (see article). There has been no public outcry, barely a murmur about this very serious and dangerous development.

This process can and must be halted. But it will only be possible if a new working class movement is built which breaks from the official Labour movement and unequivocally takes the side of all those fighting back against British imperialism, racism and police violence.

The official labour and trade union movement is in retreat. It has always condemned the fightback of the oppressed and has often spearheaded the attack against them. A Labour government was in power at the time of the Irish show trials in Britain in the mid-1970s and during the torture of the suspects in the Six Counties from 1976-9. The main British socialist organisations have concentrated their political work in the official Labour movement inevitably aping fundamental aspects of that movement's politics. They have always attacked the armed struggle of the Irish movement. At the time of the Birmingham bombings the *Morning Star* (CPGB) condemned 'terror bombings'. *Socialist Worker* said planting bombs was an act of desperation. All the Trotskyist left condemned the bombings saying they prevented the mobilisation of British workers against imperialism. In reality the left was too cowed to even attempt to build a movement against the PTA or the show trials in the 1970s.

The risings of black and white youth in British inner cities have been similarly condemned by the British socialist organisations. The CPGB called the rising in St Pauls in 1980 'primitive'. The IMG (now *Socialist Action*) said the use of bricks against the police in Southall in 1979 was 'a big mistake born of anger and frustration'. The SWP developed a theory after the 1981 risings that black youth were not part of the working class but a 'lumpen proletariat', the 'vulnerable underbelly of the working class'. By 1985 the risings were 'vicious and brutal' (*Morning Star* wing of the CPGB) involving 'frustrated youths... looting and burning' (*Focus* Eurocommunist wing of the CPGB). *Socialist Worker* saw the risings as 'signs of... desperation' and *Militant* regarded them as 'aimless violence'.

For all these organisations the real struggle was to be found elsewhere in the official Labour movement - the movement that had then only recently betrayed the miners and was in headlong retreat. Not only did they attack the risings but they stood idly by or made empty gestures when the ruling class trampled on the rights of those involved.

Their politics rest on a sterile anti-Marxist dogma, that is, the possibility of transforming the official British Labour and trade union movement into a fighting working class movement, the basis of a real socialist movement, at some time in the future. This ahistorical standpoint could be simply dismissed as middle class fantasy but for its political consequences. These have been serious. They have meant that the state's assault on black and Irish people has gone unanswered. And it is precisely because of this that a conspiracy of the police, the judiciary and the media succeeded in having three men from Broadwater Farm found guilty of murder by a jury without a shred of evidence to prove the case.

The lessons must be learnt. A fight back is possible if socialists give priority to taking action now in defence of those fighting back against imperialism, racism and police violence. The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign shows what can be done. If a broad-based campaign had not been built Viraj would have departed to Sri Lanka a long time ago. The church where Viraj is in sanctuary would have already been raided by the police and Viraj dragged off. The determination of the campaign to stand up to Waddington, to the fascists and to the gutter press which is baying for Viraj's blood has meant that sections of the official Labour movement have given real support to the campaign.

A victory for Viraj is possible if British socialists recognise that one real struggle to defend a black communist faced with deportation and possible death is worth a hundred ideal programmes for building a socialist movement in the future. A victory for Viraj can show the way forward for thousands of working class people who want to fight back now against the racist frame-up of the Broadwater Farm defendants, and against all police racism, violence and harassment. That is how the new movement will be built. The RUC is in the forefront of building it.

The fire next time

The police and the ruling class, with the yapping assistance of the press, have seized on the Blakelock trial and the accompanying racist hysteria to mount further attacks on democratic rights.

Winston Silcott was on bail at the time that Blakelock was killed. This fact is being used to attack bail rights. The press, Tory MPs and others are calling for a 're-examination' of the Bail Act.

In fact, there are already far more people remanded in custody than there is prison space for. Hence the overcrowding and packing of prisoners into police cells (see Prisoners Fightback page this issue). Rates of offending while on bail are extremely low. This is to say nothing of the small detail that Winston Silcott did not kill Blakelock.

Winston Silcott is simply a convenient excuse for giving ruling class judges and magistrates unrestricted power to throw working class and oppressed people behind bars.

'Armoured cars and tanks and guns'

So runs the Irish song about internment. The Metropolitan Police has now created Territorial Support Groups in each police division. These squads will use armoured cars and are trained in the use of CS gas, plastic bullets and guns. On the night of the Blakelock verdict armoured cars were moved into Tottenham police station.

The TSGs are an anti-civilian force established, trained and equipped to attack

any section of the people who physically confront police violence and racism. The press hysteria about 'savages', 'animals' and 'Beasts' coupled with carefully stage-managed rank and file 'revolts' against 'softness' by senior officers, is providing the climate of public opinion in which the police can give the people 'a bloody good hiding'.

The state is equipping its police, organising its laws and preparing its courts and prisons for the next round of risings. All the more reason why the fight to defend legal rights and oppose increased police powers has to take place now.

Support the framed prisoners

FRFI is asking its supporters to send messages of solidarity to:

● **Winston Silcott** (B74053), HMP Wormwood Scrubs, Du Cane Road, PO Box 757 London, W12 0AE

● **Engin Raghip**, HMP Wormwood Scrubs

● **Mark Braithwaite**, (B78965), HMP Chelmsford, Springfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6LQ

No to Police Order

On 1 April the Public Order Act will become law in its entirety, and on 4 April the Coalition Against the Public Order Act (CAPOA) will be marching in protest. The Public Order Act seriously limits our right to demonstrate freely and spontaneously. The Act gives massive and frightening new powers to the police:

- Six days written notice of any march must be given to the police.
- The police have the power, under the Act, to dictate the length, route of the march and the number of people to attend if they express any belief that the demonstration or picket may result in serious public disorder.
- The police also have the power to apply to the local council concerned or the Secretary of State for an order banning all marches in a given area for up to three months. They can do this where they think 'imposing conditions would be insufficient to prevent serious public disorder.'

CAPOA is a broad organisation comprising anarchist, communist, green, squatters', women's lesbian and gay and anti-racist organisations. They have joined together to coordinate resistance to this repressive piece of legislation. As two members of CAPR (Campaign Against Police Repression) said, basically the law means that '... you are not allowed to disagree with the state's point of view on anything.'

This Act is a direct and brutal reaction to such recent events as Wapping, the Miners' strike, the Stonehenge convoy and the Broadwater Farm and Brixton uprisings. In the same way that the Labour Party scabbed on and betrayed all these groups in their struggles, we cannot wait for the Labour Party to renege on its promise to repeal the Act. The way to fight the Public Order Act is not to wait for the election of a Labour government.

We must act now if we wish to retain the right to demonstrate. The act must be made unworkable. Join us to march for the right to march on 4 April at Malet St. at 1 o'clock.

Kate Lorimer and Leigh O'Connor



BOB GANNON

extremism and higher taxes/ rates is particularly prominent in the GLC area... Patricia Hewitt is former secretary of the National Council of Civil Liberties.

• Kinnock committed himself at the Labour Party Conference to removing cruise missiles within a few months of the election of a Labour government. This week, prior to his visit to Reagan, Kinnock has begun to backtrack, announcing that a Labour government would delay the removal of cruise missiles, pending the outcome of superpower talks. Protests from the left of the party have been muted.

• Kinnock has praised as 'particularly positive' the acceptance by South Wales NUM of six day working as a condition of the NCB opening a new pit at Margam. Such interference is a gratuitous stab at Arthur Scargill who opposes the decision and is at present facing divisions in the NUM on this issue.

• This week Kinnock has launched a further attack on black sections, following their conference in Nottingham. Labour has six black candidates in the next election and the racist Sun is already gunning for them. Kinnock, desperate to hang on to white working class votes, has now won NEC backing on a resolution threatening disciplinary action for those who continue to engage in 'separatist' activity.

• Kinnock's attack on black people in the Labour Party is particularly sick in view of a decision at the recent Scottish Labour Party conference to withdraw a motion which argued that membership of the Orange Order is incompatible with membership of the Labour Party.

Labour AFTER GREENWICH

Labour's defeat at the Greenwich by-election has become a watershed for the left. The loss of this formerly safe Labour seat to the Alliance - it has been Labour since 1945 - has suddenly brought forth the horrifying vision of a third Thatcher government, with all that it entails.

The left claim that candidate Deirdre Wood was not allowed by the leadership to stand firmly enough on left wing policies. Her slogan 'Deirdre Wood understands Greenwich' certainly summed up the apolitical campaign. The right claim that it was Wood's left wing policies, such as her support for gay rights, that alienated voters.

The truth is that Greenwich show-

ed clearly how Labour's traditional bases of support have been eroded by eight years of Thatcher government. The Tories have succeeded in quite precisely buying off sections of the skilled working class and middle classes. And, on the other hand, Thatcher has also succeeded, through ratecapping, in the deliberate destruction of Labour councils' ability to deliver the goods locally in

the form of jobs, houses and other economic and social benefits. The collapse of Labour's opposition to ratecapping has destroyed their credibility in the eyes of those sections of the working class most oppressed by Thatcher's attacks. After all, it's no use talking about equal rights if you can't provide houses, repairs, decent schools, nurseries, teachers, social services - the list is endless. In Greenwich, SDP candidate Rosie Barnes was able to pose as opposing not only Thatcher, but also the local Labour council, attacking them on fundamental issues such as housing. Having given up the

ratecapping fight, Labour had no answer.

Labour lost 4,000 votes to the SDP. Kinnock's response has been to move even further rightwards.

• Instead of standing up to the Tories' campaign on the 'loony left', backed up by the lying filth peddled in the likes of *The Sun*, Kinnock and his cronies have themselves turned on the left. Hence the letter from Kinnock's press secretary Patricia Hewitt to London Labour MP Frank Dobson '... The "loony Labour left" is taking its toll: the gays and lesbians issue is costing us dear amongst the pensioners; and fear of

The defeat at Greenwich is a watershed for the left. Since then Labour has slipped to third place in the opinion polls for the first time. For Kinnock, it means that even more drastic shifts to the right are necessary - but then, as Greenwich shows, he will be entering the territory that the Alliance and even the left of the Tory Party occupy so much more successfully, without the embarrassment of left wing baggage. For the left, it shows how far they will have to go if they want to support a Kinnock victory at the polls.

Olivia Adamson

IN BRIEF

TEACHERS' STRIKES CONTINUE

A new wave of teachers' strikes has begun in opposition to Baker's Bill which sets out the pay and conditions which he is imposing on teachers by law. At issue are no longer just the 'divisive salary scales of Baker's deal and the open-ended definition of teachers' duties (like covering for 3 days for absent teachers). Now teachers are enraged by the withdrawal of negotiating rights from their unions. Baker is hinting strongly that he wants a no-strike deal in return for a restoration of bargaining rights to teachers' unions.

The two largest unions, the NUT and the NAS/UWT have jointly held a series of half-day strikes throughout the country. A second wave of strikes is now taking place.

In London, the so-called 'progressive' Inner London Education Authority is also doing its bit to clobber teachers by threatening compulsory redeployment for hundreds of secondary teachers. These measures are described by ILEA as 'opportunities'. The dispute has been enlivened by demonstrations of school students at County Hall, organised by the National Union of School Students. Demonstrations by anyone connected in a real sense with education - like school students or

teachers - seem to be anathema to the ILEA. They have now threatened teachers 'inciting' pupils to demonstrate with disciplinary proceedings for 'gross misconduct'.

Olivia Adamson

A DANGEROUS BADGE

The *London Daily News* (28 March 1987) reports that Fachtina O'Cealligh, former manager of the Boomtown Rats, was given a conditional discharge and charged £75 costs in Highbury magistrates court for an offence under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. His 'offence' was to wear a badge saying 'Out of the ashes arose the Provisionals'.

Terry O'Halloran

HEALTH DIVIDE UNDER THATCHER

A new report from the Health Education Council *The Health Divide* shows the toll that 8 years of Thatcher's government have taken on the health of the working class. The government tried to suppress news of the report by putting pressure on the Health Council chairman to cancel the press conference launching the report.

The report shows that working class people have a significantly lower life expectancy than 8 years ago when Thatcher came to power.

There are marked divisions between North and South, but most damning are the differences between low and high income groups. Death rates for men and women semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers in the North are 88% and 70% higher respectively than among professional and managerial classes. Similar divisions exist elsewhere.

Eight years of Thatcher's vicious anti-working class policies have brought this about. It comes as no surprise that the government not only wanted the report suppressed, it is also abolishing the Health Education Council completely.

Olivia Adamson

CONSCRIPT LABOUR AND DOLE LIES

The government is planning to conscript unemployed youth into enforced cheap labour. Employment Minister Lord Young has clearly indicated that the Tories' election manifesto will include proposals to stop the benefit of school leavers who reject a two-year YTS place. Young described this as 'the conscription of common sense' - the remedy for the unemployed who 'decide to lie in bed'.

Despite recent Tory propaganda, unemployment figures have continued to grow in 1987. Even the Bank of England points out that apparent falls are mainly due to the never-ending growth of special

schemes which take 5,000 a month off dole statistics.

Since the Tories were elected in 1979 there have been 18 changes in the way unemployment figures are calculated. Now the government aims to abolish monthly unemployment figures altogether. They plan to replace them with an already existent 'quarterly labour survey' which always produces reduced figures: for example in 1985 it showed 2.81 million unemployed - when 3.13 million were claiming benefit.

The 'Restart' scheme is a central part of this fiddle. It has restarted only 0.7% of those interviewed for jobs, while withdrawing benefit and a place in the dole queue for thousands. A survey on Merseyside showed that only 238 of 38,711 interviewed found work, while 2,450 had their benefit stopped. The survey found that one Jobcentre sampled had referred 14 interviewees to a possible job. 13 of these were sent after the same caretaker post, which paid £48 for a 48-hour week.

Dave Burton

THATCHER'S FAN CLUB

Lo and Behold! The House of Commons Select Committee on trade and industry has concluded there was a 'concert party', illegal collusion, in the Sikorsky-Fiat bid for Westland. Labour MP Robin Cook accused Lord Hanson and Rupert Murdoch of paying over the odds for Westland

shares. The 'Fan Club' is no secret in the City: a coterie of financiers ready to put a fraction of their fortunes at Thatcher's disposal, buying their places in her court.

I wonder why no one other than *FRFI 66* has pointed out that it was the same team of Morgan Grenfell and Cazenove that served Guinness in its bid for Distillers that orchestrated the Sikorsky-Fiat bid for Westland? An embarrassing coincidence for the Fan Club or something more!

Trevor Rayne

Adds Terry O'Halloran:

The Department of Trade and Industry is seeking a court order to force Jeremy Warner of *The Independent*, to reveal the name of the civil servant who provided him with vital information to expose insider dealing. The DTI claims it needs the information for its investigations. The truth is that the DTI wants to stop civil servants from helping journalists to expose corruption.

On Thursday 26 March editor of *The Independent*, Andreas Whittam-Smith, told the court that he would defy any order to reveal the source. It is to be hoped that *The Independent* sticks to this principled position.

CATERPILLAR OCCUPATION

On Monday 23 March the Caterpillar company went to court in an attempt to end the 10 week old workers occupation of its Uddingston fac-

tory. The same day, workers voted by 418 to 354 to continue the occupation. The management immediately confirmed that the 800 workers would be given 90 days notice, meaning that they would be made redundant from 11 May. Originally the full 1,200 workers were behind the occupation but 400 white-collar workers voted to pull out. Following the judge's ruling on 26 March that the occupation is illegal, workers voted on 30 March, by a narrow majority (369-363), to continue the occupation.

Not content with just occupying the factory, the workers decided to put their skills to good use. They went ahead and made a tractor worth £70,000 and are at present trying to send it to the people of Nicaragua. The 'Pink Panther', as it is called, is at present trapped in the City Centre of Glasgow. An injunction granted to the Company is preventing the tractor from being transported to Nicaragua.

The Caterpillar workers have taken a defiant stand against this US based multinational company. And now is the time they need as much support as possible. The demonstration in support of workers on 28 March showed that the support is there for workers, but it must not end there. There are support groups being set up all round Scotland. Write to the address below and find out if there is one in your area.

Send money and messages of support to Thomas Stevenson, Treasurer, 17 Campsie View, Bargeedie, Bailieston, Glasgow. *Gerry Martin*

Nothing for the poor in budget

'While semi-detached Britain thrives, the economic and social conditions of black people, the poor, the unemployed and the low-paid are going to get far worse. The ruling class has consciously created this divided nation as a means to holding on to its power as the economic crisis of capitalism sharpens.' (FRFI, December 1986).

In this divided nation, nearly a third of the population live in or on the margins of poverty, 94% of jobs lost since 1979 have been in Northern or Western regions. The gap between low paid and high paid workers has widened by some 30% under Thatcher.

Details of the gulf between rich and poor are revealed in the government's own annual statistical survey, *Social Trends 1987*. The share of income of the poorest 40% of households fell from 8.7% in 1981 to 6.4% in 1983. By contrast, the richest fifth increased their share from 46.4% to 48.6% in the same period. The number of families on or below supplementary benefit level rose from 3.9 million in 1979 to 5.5 million in 1983. Long-term unemployment (ie over a year) soared from 25% of the total jobless in 1979 to 41% by July 1986.

Against this background, Chancellor Nigel Lawson presented his Budget. Almost exactly a month before Budget Day, it became clear that increased government revenues would give Lawson money to play with. This came from VAT receipts from a consumer boom in imported goods, from stamp duty on frenetic share trading since the City 'Big Bang', and from Corporation Tax on profits raised by deepening exploitation.

It was widely predicted that a huge Budget tax handout would result. In the event, Lawson used his £5.6 billion in hand to give generous tax cuts to the better off, and to reduce public sector borrowing: thus bribing voters and further pleasing the City in one go. Shares gained £3 billion on the day.

Lawson's Budget gave £2.6 billion in tax cuts. The basic rate was cut by 2p, giving about £3 a week to someone on average earnings. However, many low-paid workers gained under £1, while someone on five times average earnings gained £6.62. A report by the Low Pay Unit, *Two Nations - Double Standards* clearly shows this as a continuation of Tory policy. The report

shows that income tax has been reduced by £8.1 billion since 1978/9. Only 8% of this went to the 6½ million taxpayers with incomes under £125 a week. On the other hand, 50,000 people earning over £70,000 a year got 11% of it: an average tax cut of £367 a week. Of the £8.1 billion given away in income tax, one-fifth went to the richest 1%, and nearly half to the richest 10%.

Since 1979 the burden of tax has been shifted onto the poorest. While the rich are much better off, the overall burden of tax has increased, without any improvement of public services. The tax bill has been spent

The budget made one or two other adjustments in favour of the rich. The starting point for Inheritance Tax was raised from £71,000 to £90,000, and it was made easier to avoid it altogether. Tax concessions were made for those who could afford private pension schemes. The Duke of York's allowance in the civil list rose by 50%, to £50,000 per annum. By repealing the Exchange Control Act in his Budget, Lawson merely formalised the removal of a block on the mobility of capital: the Act had been suspended in 1979 by Geoffrey Howe.

Thus the only significant features of the 1987 Budget are the cuts in income tax and in government borrowing. The decision to use available funds to benefit those in work, the better paid and the rich represents 'quite clearly an electioneering Budget' in the words of the *Financial*



Cities rot while 'The City' booms on unemployment.

A single person on half the average male earnings has had a 9% increase in tax since 1979, whereas a person on 10 times the average earnings had a decrease of 22%. A married man with 2 children on half the average earnings has had a 100% increase in tax since 1979, whereas a person on 10 times the average has had a decrease of 22% (figures cited by Low Pay Unit).

Times; and shows the contempt the Tories have for the unemployed. But more importantly, it shows the determination of the ruling class to reinforce and deepen the division between the two nations. Of course the Budget did nothing for the unemployed: for it is the very existence of mass unemployment which secures for semi-detached Britain its fragile and parasitic prosperity. *Dave Burton*

Whites will vote to stay in power

On 6 May, South Africa's white minority will elect a white government and a white President at its first general election for years. The black majority do not have the vote. Black political leaders are in gaol and in exile. Botha has spent the last two years unleashing terror against black people who have organised to fight apartheid. Thousands are still detained and tortured. But this will not be at issue during this election campaign which is devoted solely to the question of how the white minority can hold on to its power and wealth.



Worrall - 'liberal' apologies for Apartheid

In the run up to the election both the South African and the British press have written hundreds of words on the divisions occurring left and right around the National Party. The key word in the elections is 'reform' and the 'politician of the month' is Denis Worrall, former Ambassador to Britain. Worrall returned to South Africa in February to stand against Chris Heunis, the Government's Constitutional Affairs Minister, in the Helderberg constituency near Cape Town. He is described as heading a 'break-away movement of Nationalist reformists' and leading a 'left wing revolt'.

Worrall represents a trend within the white minority that wants to

LORNA MORGAN

preserve white rule whilst removing the more extreme aspects of apartheid. He argues for the abolition of the Group Areas Act and all discriminatory laws, regulations and practices but won't call for an end to the State of Emergency. He calls for constitutional negotiations with black leaders but is opposed to 'one man, one vote'.

Worrall's differences with Botha rest on how to preserve white supremacy, not on destroying it. The extreme right-wing favour outright repression of the black majority and in order to retain the Afrikaner vote, Botha has stuck to this path. Worrall argues that force alone can't stem black people's resistance to apartheid. In order to avoid revolution he is prepared to entertain and enter alliances with traitors like Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha movement. Worrall has been hailed in the British press as a 'liberal'. This 'liberal' was Ambassador to Britain from 1984 to 1987. He ably represented the apartheid regime in a period covering two states of emergency in South Africa - 21 July 1985 to 7 March 1986 and the current one which began on 13 June 1986.

He represented a regime that has murdered nearly 3,000 black people since 1985 and detained 23,000 political activists including 8,000 children under the current state of emergency. This 'liberal' has also found cause to interfere in British political life. In 1984 an embassy official paid £25,000 to bail four arms smugglers to South Africa who have never returned to Britain to stand trial. It's this 'liberal' who complained to the Foreign Office about City Group's pickets outside the South African embassy and, through the Metropolitan police, attempted to have them banned. This 'liberal' has instructed his staff to collaborate with the police in an attempt to silence the Non-Stop Picket.

Worrall's attempts to reform apartheid piecemeal fashion will fail, just as Botha's phony reforms failed in 1984 when they were met with the resistance of the black masses. Worrall admits 'I am not against the National Party, but against its present leaders.' Black people in South Africa owe nothing to Worrall and his phony reformism. The only guarantee to their freedom is the total destruction of apartheid - a task they have taken into their own hands. The UDF has called for mass protests on May Day that will 'be heard in every corner of the world.'

TOWNSHIP KILLINGS

The township of KwaMashu, Natal, has been the scene of murderous attacks on young black supporters of the UDF by supporters of Buthelezi's Inkatha.

On Monday 16 March seven youths aged between 15 and 17 years old were murdered by Inkatha supporters from the neighbouring settlement of Lindelane. On Tuesday 17 March one youth was murdered and another seriously wounded. The killings arise from a fierce political battle between the UDF and Inkatha for control of KwaMashu.

Whilst UDF supporters in Natal are targets of brutal attacks, Buthelezi has asked Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok for more power to arm his supporters and for control of KwaZulu police stations.

The killings have been deliberately misrepresented in the British press. *The Guardian* on 18 March carried the headline, *Seven youths killed in Zulu feud*. What is happening in the townships is not a 'Zulu feud'. It is a conflict between two trends: Inkatha who collaborate with the apartheid regime to gain power and privilege for themselves; the UDF, a mass democratic organisation and part of the liberation struggle. It's no surprise that the regime backs Inkatha in the hope that its forces will destroy those fighting apartheid. The British press by repeating the regime's lies about tribal violence is directly aiding apartheid.

The jailing of Phil Penn

Last month we reported that Phil Penn a leading member of the Workers Revolutionary Party (*Workers Press*) was in prison as a result of a set-up by *Newsline* supporters who turned police evidence against him. FRFI interviewed Sandra Penn, Phil's wife, on the issues behind his imprisonment.

The incident took place on 3 May at Wapping. Phil was going back to the van to get a camera when a group of *Newsline* supporters tried to provoke him. Phil was so upset by their abuse he left Wapping, but then went back, thinking that he shouldn't leave simply because of their taunts. On his return, four of them started a fight. Two hit him with banner poles. Phil had to defend himself, and one man, wearing glasses, had his eye injured. The police arrived and arrested Phil.

At this point, the incident could have been dropped. But instead, says Sandra, 'Torrance and Healey seized it as a chance to get Phil by ordering the witnesses to turn police evidence... They knew the charge carried the possibility of a custodial sentence and that Phil had a young family'. The jury found Phil guilty, even though they had been reduced to laughter by the ludicrous description, given by one witness, of Phil 'whirling one man round his head and hitting others with him.' The judge at Southwark Crown Court, where many of the Wapping cases

were tried, announced that he would 'have to make an example of him'. Phil was sentenced to 12 months in prison, of which 8 are suspended.

Sandra explained why Phil had been singled out. 'For the last few months before the split in the Party, Phil had been Healey's personal driver. Healey had assumed Phil would stay on his side. But when Phil found out about Healey's abuse of women comrades, he changed sides... The attack at Wapping wasn't the first. Phil was attacked on Balham High Road and in Leicester with staves and Stanley knives...'

Sandra concluded 'Thanks to everyone in RCG/FRFI for cards and letters of support. The class conscious solidarity from all has been an inspiration. The *Newsline* rump have breached a basic class issue by turning police evidence. They've made a big mistake. Printers' support groups at Wapping asked the rump not to march with them.'

FRFI condemns the role of *Newsline* in the jailing of Phil Penn. Phil is at present in Wormwood Scrubs. (Write to Phil Penn,

L27055, HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs, PO Box 757, Du Cane Road, London W12 0AE.) We send Phil our greetings - we hear he's in good spirits - and look forward to his release in April when he will once again be free to take up his work in defence of Irish prisoners.

Olivia Adamson

Message to the RCG from Phil Penn I want to thank all those who sent messages of support, the comrades from the VMDC, Kamran Mashadi, City AA. I am in here for a brief period, unlike those who for the liberation of their country are held in criminal conditions, as in South Africa and Ireland... I and the WRP have many differences with the RCG... Nonetheless, we are well aware that it is only in joint struggle on major questions that these differences can be clarified. I have no wish to over-dramatise the reason for my imprisonment. Healey never wanted clarifications. If they crossed class lines and acted as police witnesses, if they lied in court in order to maximise my sentence, it was only because they had no alternative, they would not face the questions raised by myself and others in the WRP. Please send my regards to the Campaign to Free the Framed Irish Prisoners.

IN BRIEF

DEATH OF COMRADE HONONO

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism has learned of the death of Comrade Nathaniel Honono 'Tshutusha', South African freedom fighter who was buried in Harare on 16 January 1987. Born in 1908 Comrade Honono worked throughout his life for liberation in South Africa. He was driven from his job as a teacher, driven from his home, detained in solitary confinement without trial and finally forced into exile. Representatives of the ANC, PLO and PLO gave homage to Comrade Honono at the memorial service. He was known for his open and honest approach to all the liberation movements. *Trevor Ray*

BLOOD SUCKING BANKS

Brutality, repression, the attack on black people's rights and the severe censorship of the press are good banking profits. That is the message coming from the imperialist banks and the racist South African regime.

A year ago the bankers refused to meet South Africans' request for a long term rescheduling of its debt. The growing resistance of the people was reported daily on the world television screens. Today the bankers mistakenly believe that the people's struggle has been repressed and they are now prepared to get down to business. They have done a deal with the racist regime and agreed to a three year rescheduling arrangement for \$13bn of the outstanding debt (\$23 bn). \$1.42 bn of the \$13 bn debt originally frozen by the South African authorities in August 1985 will be repaid by June 1990. The other \$10bn outside this will, as agreed initially be repaid as it matures and interest payments will continue to be paid on all the debt. The banks have once again bailed out South Africa.

Standard Chartered bank reports a 5 per cent fall in pre-tax profits last year from £268m to £254m. However Stanbic its South African subsidiary increased its profits by £37m. Stanbic's results are based on the commercial rand rather than the lower financial rand (used for exporting funds) - a clear statement that Standard Chartered has a long term commitment to South Africa. *David Reed*

THE REAL PRESIDENT

According to a poll being carried out by the Johannesburg daily newspaper *Sowetan*, Nelson Mandela should be President of South Africa. In an interim result, Mandela came top with 303 votes in a poll to discover who should be governing South Africa. Oliver Tambo was placed second with 202, and Zeph Mothopeng, jailed PAC leader, came eighth with 190. P W Botha received 59 votes, but since black people are denied the vote, Botha will get a bigger proportion of the vote than he deserves on 6 May.



SHARPEVILLE COMMEMORATION

On Friday 20 March, the 27th anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre was commemorated at a rally in London organised by the PAC.

City AA singers took part in the event and Tony Cuffie spoke from the platform for City AA. Speaker after speaker condemned the AAM's sectarianism towards the PAC who, in fact, organised the pass laws demonstration in Sharpeville on 21 March 1960.

The rally called for support for the Sharpeville Six who are facing the death sentence. Tony Cuffie said the City AA was inspired by the fighting people of South Africa and called for support for all liberation forces. *AA*

THE GOOD, THE BAD...

City of London Anti-Apartheid Group members have spent the last two months mobilising support for the March for Mandela. 14 March was not just a London event. Supporters came from as far apart as Cornwall and the Highlands of Scotland. The march was testimony to the reputation City AA and the Non-Stop Picket have earned as determined fighters against apartheid and racism.

Those who came on 14 March made a choice. They chose to ignore the sectarianism of the AAM leadership who have spent the last two months since the AAM AGM in January spreading rumour, gossip, threats and lies about the Picket and City AA, instead of getting on with the job of fighting apartheid. City Group measures its success by how many people join the struggle, the AAM seems to measure its success in terms of how many it can dissuade from supporting City Group. Here are just a few examples:

- Members of Huddersfield and Stroud AA groups were told by AAM national office that there was no demonstration on 14 March. They came anyway.
- Merseyside AA group asked the local peace band to cease playing at the local Non-Stop Picket Support Group events—they were given short shrift.
- An AAM member in Leyton Labour Party proposed a motion to his constituency that Harry Cohen, the local MP, cease support for the Non-Stop Picket. This was defeated overwhelmingly.
- Westminster Labour councillors received 'a visit' from AAM representatives who argued that support for the Non-Stop Picket should cease on the grounds that it is 'non-stop'. Apparently they are concerned that City AA will not know when to stop! No problem—'We are here till Mandela is free'. That may be too long, however, for the AAM to stomach.

Socialist Action, who are making it their personal crusade to oppose the Non-Stop Picket, are especially keen to wipe out Merseyside Non-Stop Against Apartheid. The 'official' local group, Merseyside AA, which is dominated by Socialist Action, has issued a series of scurrilous written statements attacking City AA and the RCG—and they say that City AA and its supporters are dividing the movement! Merseyside AA are putting twice as much energy (and paper) into fighting the Non-Stop Picket as into mobilising support for the struggle.

Nonetheless, Merseyside Non-Stop Picket supporters are holding an all-day street event on 4 April, and will be coming to London on 19 April to celebrate the first year of the picket. On 6 May they will be erecting polling booths in Liverpool as part of the campaign against the whites-only election in South Africa.

A group, including RCG members and supporters, WRP and DAM and students from Kilmarnock College travelled down from Glasgow to support the March for Mandela. On the way back from the march the Glasgow contingent stopped in Manchester to visit Viraj Mendis in sanctuary. All these people are now keen to be involved in more work against apartheid and against racism in Britain. They plan to attend the VMDC conference, picket shops selling South African goods and support the 6 May campaign.

...AND THE UGLY

The AAM leadership is trying to swiftly cover up the results of their sectarianism in Haringey AAM. Once a lively, active AA group, Haringey was the victim of a leadership coup orchestrated by the AAM leadership in 1985 after local activists had the temerity to organise a party for David Kitson on the first anniversary of his release from 20 years in apartheid jails. Dominic Tweedie, arch opponent of City AA, was promoted to puppet-chairman in order to impose the leadership's line. The local CP held a recruiting drive of its members to join the AAM in time for the AGM which elected Tweedie as Chair. Before that he was hardly ever seen at a local group meeting. Haringey AA members became the first to suffer under the new local group constitution imposed by the AAM. A short history of gerrymandering followed including suppressing the fact that a general members meeting voted to support the Non-Stop Picket. Tweedie, however, got too big for his boots and even some of his committee could no longer tolerate his behaviour. They are now trying to remove him as Chair, but, Marcos-like, he will not budge. It is unclear where Tweedie's support is coming from. Meanwhile the AAM are pretending that this tragic debacle is nothing to do with their activities. But they cannot cover up for the fact that a once-active AA group has been sabotaged by undemocratic behaviour.

Future court dates

April 14: Tunde, assault on police, Bow St. 10am
April 16: Amandla and Satish. Highway and police obstruction. Horseferry Rd. 10am
April 22: Richard and Tunde, assault and police obstruction. Wells St. 10am
April 28: Dele, assault on police and noise under byelaws. Wells St. 10am
April 28/29/30 May 1/4: Kayode, Tinuke, Jan, Linda, Theresa, Ruby, Adam, Dave. Various charges from June 13 1986. Wells St. 10am
May 12: Simone, police obstruction. Wells St. 10am

PUBLIC MEETING

SOUTH AFRICA—BREAKING THE BRITISH CONNECTION

Thursday 2 April 7.30pm
Tolmers Square, Community Centre,
Tolmers Square, Euston, London NW1
(nearest tube Euston)

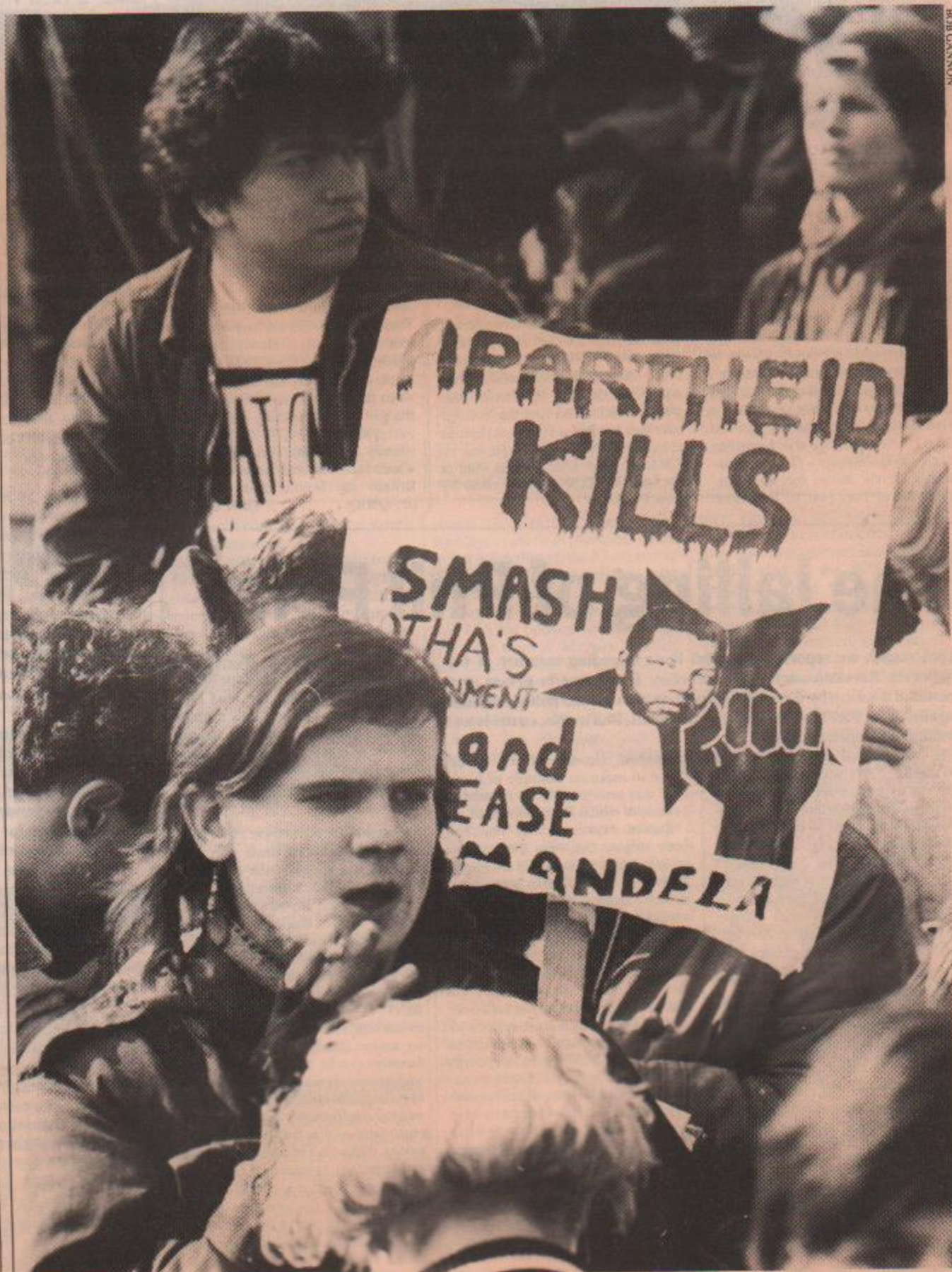
Speaker

Carol Brickley—Convenor of City AA/FRFI Editorial Board
Video and Singers



14 MARCH 1987

March for





MANDELA

'All the best movements, all the movements that win, all the movements that create revolutions are made and led by rejects. City AA are proud to be rejects.' Carol Brickley, Convenor City of London Anti-Apartheid Group

'Those of you who are here have had to make a choice... By joining this march, by supporting the Non-Stop Picket, you too are helping to build this new movement. You too are helping to break the sectarian mould of British politics. Together we can build the kind of movement in Britain that the black people of South Africa are demanding of us.' David Reed, Revolutionary Communist Group.

On 14 March 5,000 people marched for Mandela. 5,000 people marched for a fighting, active, democratic anti-apartheid movement. 5,000 people rejected sectarianism and stood with City AA. 5,000 people defied the Department of Environment ban on marching to Trafalgar Square and the police ban on stopping outside the South African Embassy.

They came from all over Britain, from Cornwall to Dundee. For an hour and a half they came into Whittington Park, filling the area. Non-Stop Picketers, youth, unemployed, women, black people, anti-apartheid activists, trade unionists, peace campaigners, anti-racists, communists, socialists, gays and lesbians, anti-deportation fighters, musicians. All manner and variety of people united by their opposition to apartheid and British collaboration with apartheid.

The rally speeches and messages showed the breadth of support the march had won: Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, Anwar Ditta, Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, Justice for Stephen Shaw Campaign, Hemel Hempstead ACTT, Gypsy Power, Dunnes Stores strikers, BTR Hangers strikers, Hatfield Main NUM, WRP (*Workers Press*), Revolutionary Communist Group and David Kitson as well as Carol Brickley for City Group.

David Reed, for the Revolutionary Communist Group, explained the

'We've got to fight back against apartheid in South Africa and against apartheid against our black community in Britain. You've got to look at the struggle of Viraj Mendis to see what's happening in this country. I know that if we keep on fighting like Viraj then one day we'll see Nelson Mandela free.'

Anwar Ditta

significance of the Non-Stop Picket and the march: 'The picket's success has made it a mobilising focus for all those who want to take effective action against apartheid. Its broad support covering the whole of the democratic movement in Britain has turned the Non-Stop Picket into the major anti-

TERRY O'HALLORAN

apartheid activity taking place in this country.'

The very success of City Group's work has, however, provoked 'an organised sectarian campaign... to undermine the Non-Stop Picket and this march today.' 'A major effort' had been made 'by the official Anti-Apartheid Movement, not to fight apartheid, but to sabotage the major anti-apartheid activity taking place in this country today.'

'The only reason why South African coal is cheap is because its paid for with the bones and blood and bodies of the black miners in South Africa... We are proud to be associated with City AA in organising this demonstration to free Mandela.'

Dave Douglass, Hatfield Main NUM

Alan Barnes, BTR-Hangers, had told us earlier how TASS headquarters had tried to prevent him from coming to the march. The nationwide campaign of sabotage failed miserably as the militant determined crowd in Whittington Park testified.

David Kitson, a prisoner of the apar-

teness he described the mobilisation against it of the embassy, the police and 'the reformist and opportunist leaders of the British trade union movement.' 'All of us standing here today', he said, 'are doing the right thing in showing our unity in action.'

Carol Brickley, speaking for City Group, wound up the rally. 'I look around me today and I see lots of rejects. Rejects of Thatcher's Britain. Rejects who are going to take up the fight. To do that we have to remove a whole layer of people who think they have the power... They don't have the will to change things. That will... lies outside the traditions that

'We hope that our contribution as strikers against apartheid... will help in some way to bring the end of apartheid one day nearer... We would like to commend the people who picket the South African embassy for the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners.'

Catherine O'Reilly, Dunnes Stores striker

have been created over the last 30 years in Britain in the labour movement. The will and the energy lie with the people who are determined to fight... We're all proud to be rejects of a rotten system. It's a system that we're going to be destroying.'

The 'will and energy' was apparent throughout the march. Thousands filled the streets of North London marching, chanting and singing. The large and well supported FRFI contingent was testimony

'BTR stands for oppression whether its in South Africa or Britain... I know that something is drastically wrong when Nelson Mandela is still in jail after 25 years. If the official Anti-Apartheid Movement is so smart why the hell is he still in? They haven't done the job.'

Alan Barnes, BTR-Hangers striker

to the role played by the RCG in building this movement.

When the march reached Trafalgar Square there were already nearly a thousand people gathered. Soon the road outside the embassy was packed. From Duncannon Street down to Northumberland Avenue, thousands stood shoulder to shoulder in defiance of the Department of Environment's ban and the police ban on stopping at the Embassy. After nearly an hour the march moved off to the Temple.

The march was a milestone in the building of a new movement. The

1 YEAR FOR MANDELA

first anniversary of the Non-Stop Picket

SUNDAY 19 APRIL

outside the Embassy

2PM - BE THERE!

Bring daffodils

'The only way to fight back is unity. Unity between everyone who knows the score and those who don't yet.' Dominic Wall, Justice for Steven Shaw

sabotage by the AAM leadership and their allies was defeated. The boycott by the main organisations of the left failed to prevent 5,000 people from taking part. The DoE's ban failed to prevent us from demonstrating at the Embassy.

The success of the march proves that there is now the beginnings of a new move-

ment on a national scale. In building that movement we will face ever more vicious attacks from the opportunists but 14 March proved that they can be defeated. As this new movement grows the left will be forced to abandon its boycott and sections of the organised labour movement will be drawn in. As David Reed said 'A new movement is on the march. Come and join us.'

HISTORY REPEATS...

1980 Holloway Road, North London: On 21 June police from Holloway led by an Inspector Gilbertson arrested four FRFI supporters at a street meeting. The police objected to: 1. Collecting money 2. Use of the megaphone 3. Alleged obstruction of the highway.

1987 South African Embassy, Trafalgar Square: A Chief Inspector Gilbertson takes over policing of the Non-Stop Picket. The police object to: 1. Collecting money 2. Use of the megaphone 3. Alleged obstruction of the highway.

In 1980 the 4 FRFI supporters were acquitted of obstruction and Inspector Gilbertson was spotted reading the LSE prospectus in court, while his constables wrecked the prosecution case by telling contradictory lies in the witness box. As a parting shot Gilbertson remarked about FRFI: 'You will never build anything with that paper'. At the time we promised that he would eat his words. Seven years later, now an LSE graduate, C I Gilbertson clearly hasn't learned anything...

Picket makes a people's arrest

On Saturday 21 March non-stop picketers turned the tables on a white South African racist who has been harassing us since December.

His usual tactic is to accost picketers at bus-stops or in tube stations and tell them it is 'in their interests' to stay away from the South African Embassy. In the last few days this intimidation has been increased. On 11 March the South African, together with another, apparently British man, confronted a regular picketer in Charing Cross station and threatened him with a knife. On Friday 13 March a group of young women from the picket were passed a note in McDonalds telling them to 'stay away from the Embassy'.

On Saturday 21 March Lorna Reid was leaving the picket with 2 children. The South African approached them and came out with his usual line about staying away from the Embassy. Lorna says, 'By this time I was fed up with this coward skulking around threatening people. I stopped him from leaving while the children ran back to the picket and fetched 2 comrades. We made a citizen's arrest and took him to the WPC on duty outside the Embassy. Metropolitan police arrived and searched him, finding a two-way radio and a pair of handcuffs. I said he'd bought in a shop.'

When people on the picket recognised the racist they began to shout angry slogans at him. 'Racist scum - off our streets'. The police put him in a car and later said this was not an arrest but 'for his own safety'. He was driven off to Cannon Row police station and released 10 minutes later. He came straight back to Trafalgar Square and was spotted lurking in Duncannon Street.

This is a man who has made threats to many picketers; he carries offensive weapons and he picks on women and children. What do the Metropolitan police do? They take him into custody 'for his own protection' and let him go straight back to the Embassy whilst they pursue their enquiries.

City AA activists whose 'crime' is to want an end to apartheid and to demonstrate on the streets of London, are searched, held over night, sexually and racially abused by the same officers who treated this racist with such care and consideration.

Nicky Renste

6 May

Vote to FREE MANDELA

On 6 May apartheid South Africa will elect a white President and government in a white-only election.

Black people will not have the vote

THE TRUE LEADERS OF SOUTH AFRICA ARE IN JAIL

Join us to remind the South African Embassy in London and Mrs Thatcher in Downing Street that while Nelson Mandela is in jail, this election is a fraud and an insult to black people

On 6 May VOTE MANDELA

Set up a polling booth in your town centre, town hall, college - anywhere. Become a volunteer election agent



For voting cards and more information contact: Norma Kitson, Returning Officer, City AA, BM City AA, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 01 837 6050

CAMPAIGN ROUND-UP

LABOUR PARTY NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VISITS VIRAJ

On 20 March, two members representing the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party visited Viraj Mendis in sanctuary to show their support for his fight against deportation and to discuss ways in which the NEC could practically help. Syd Tierney, chair of the Labour Party and Diana Judea agreed with Viraj and Father John Methuen that leading Labour MPs must raise the issue of fascist attacks in Parliament. In addition they agreed that Thatcher, Waddington and Hurd must be called upon to lift the deportation order and publicly condemn the racist attacks on Viraj and his supporters.

NO REST FOR WADDINGTON FROM VMDC

The VMDC tracked down racist Waddington again on Friday 27 March - this time at St Albans Conservative Party, where he was holding a surgery on racist attacks! What hypocrisy from the man responsible for inciting the vicious attacks on the VMDC! London VMDC and RCG were there, to give Waddington a hot reception, on a picket held by St Albans AA, supported by COHSE and the SWP.

The St Albans comrades said that Waddington should be sent back to where he came from: but we told them that he wasn't welcome in London either.

LONDON VMDC TARGETS WADDINGTON

Within an hour of hearing of the 9 March attack on the Church, the London VMDC Support Group mounted a picket of Waddington's twee little town house, situated in a discreet and select south London suburban square. It was 11pm at night and Waddington must have choked on his bedtime cocoa when he heard our slogans shatter his smug tranquility. Joined by members of City AA, 20 of us gave Waddington a warning that we would hound him non-stop until Viraj wins his right to stay. Frightened, Waddington put off the

ground floor lights, rushed upstairs and peered out from behind closed curtains. Our banners left him in no doubt and he naturally immediately called the police. Being rather slow, they arrived just when we were planning to leave.

Waddington, don't call us - we'll call you!

MANCHESTER NUT REFUSES TO GIVE VMDC A PLATFORM

On 11 March over 2,000 teachers attended a rally in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. The VMDC produced a special leaflet detailing the connections between the racism of immigration controls and racism in schools, as well as the issue of the racist murder of Ahmed Iqbal in a Manchester school last year. Despite the support of many teachers present, the VMDC was not allowed to address the meeting, or even permitted to make an announcement. The VMDC urges all anti-racist teachers to fight against the narrow minded position of some of their local leaders who censored the VMDC on the grounds that they were not teachers.

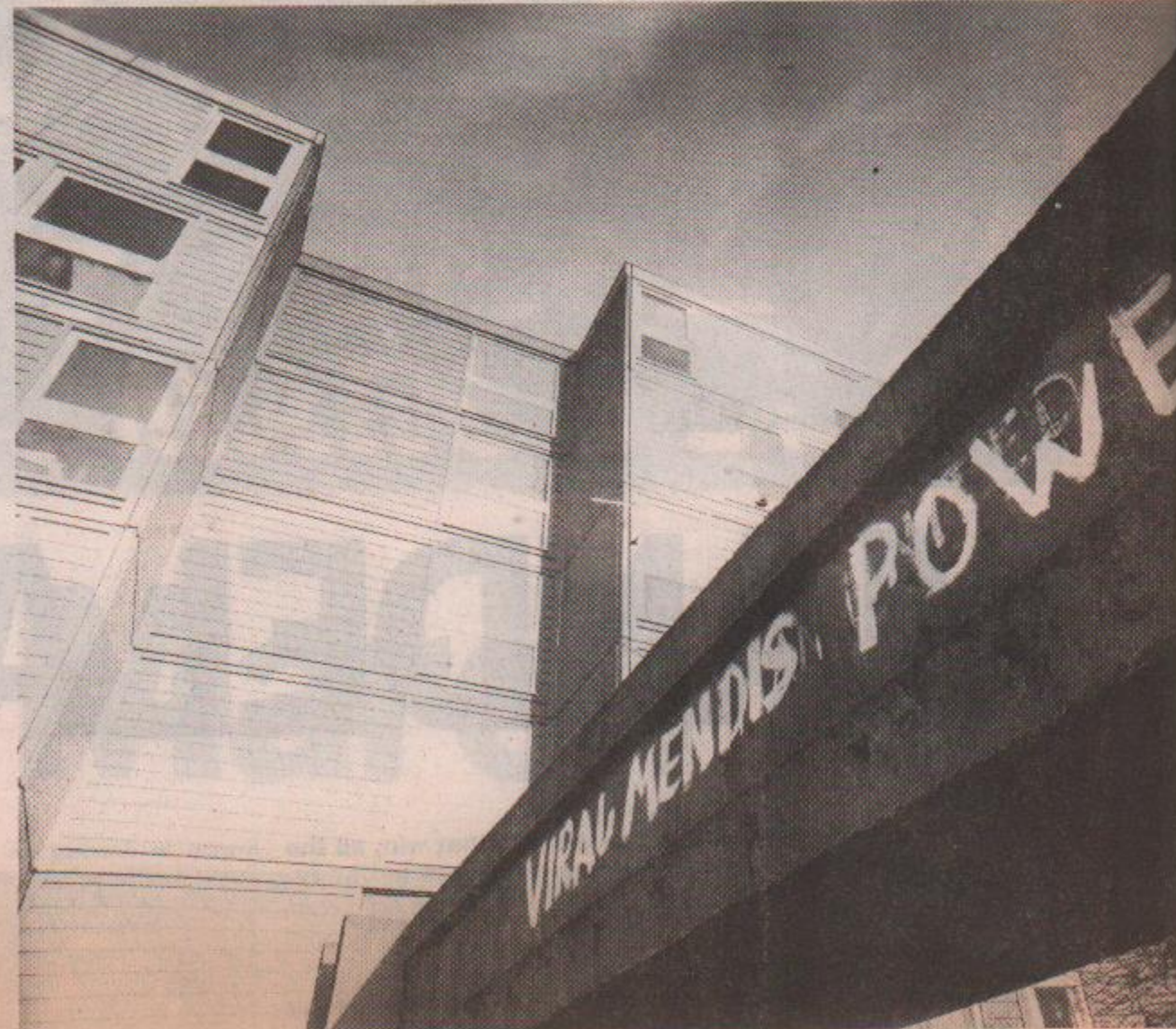
TRADE UNION SUPPORT FOR THE VMDC

The VMDC wishes to thank those members of the local EETPU, who while in dispute with the BBC, lifted their picket for the VMDC in order to allow Brass Tacks to film the campaign at work. The VMDC also received messages of solidarity from trade unionists in Sweden who have registered to come to the conference.



**VIRAJ MENDIS MUST STAY!
NO DEPORTATIONS!**

RACE



Waddington and press incite fascist thugs

Home Office Minister Waddington and the racist press have stooped lower and lower in their offensive against the VMDC. In the past, Waddington has attacked Viraj for being a 'damn nuisance' and a 'social security scrounger', while his supporters are nothing more than a 'mob... of prostitutes and communists'. Since 2 March when Viraj was appointed Immigration and Nationality Officer for Manchester City Council, Waddington and the press have shown they are prepared to use any methods available to them to attack the VMDC - including inciting fascist terror.

WADDINGTON'S PROPAGANDA - AND ITS RESULTS

3 March

Waddington appears on TV and condemns Viraj's appointment as 'an insult to the people of Manchester, when you think of all the people who live in Manchester today who could do that job... it really is an insult to all of them.'

4 March

The VMDC office receives several racist and threatening phone calls, by people 'insulted' by Viraj being given a job.

5 March

The Daily Express, taking its lead from Waddington, prints an editorial 'Mendis Must Go!' denouncing the offer of a job to Viraj as 'just outrageous' and stating 'He is still here because of the misguided protection of a muddle-headed priest... Mendis must go.'

6 March

The Sun follows suit and describes Viraj's

appointment as 'ludicrous' and attacks the City Council for being 'loonies... running the asylum'.

The results of this were more racist phone calls to the VMDC: 'We are going to kill you, you left-wing scum. If you think you're safe in that fucking church you've got another thing coming.'

On the afternoon of 6 March Radio Manchester received a phone call saying there was a bomb in the church and that 'if Viraj Mendis does not leave the church within 30 minutes then the bomb will go off and Viraj Mendis will die'. The police used the bomb scare as a pretext to demand that Viraj leave the church. Suspecting an obvious police ploy to arrest him, Viraj naturally refused to leave.

9 March

The VMDC office receives even more threats: 'You're not going to get away with this you bastards. It's an insult that this Paki should be given a job. He's dead that Paki. I am going to petrol bomb that church.' A touch more vulgar and crude, but the message is that given by David Waddington.

The result was, on the evening of 9 March the first serious attack on the church (see main story).

10 March

Yet more racist phone calls and then the second serious attack on VMDC supporter Sue (see main story).

13 March

Still more racist calls: 'Well we're going to get the bastard, you've been lucky once, but we'll get the Paki in the end.'

16 March

A fascist British National Party member

throws packages of BNP leaflets and newspapers over the Church wall.

17 March

Father John Methuen, the rector at the Church where Viraj is in sanctuary receives a letter from the BNP threatening him, his family and children: 'We do not like wogs hiding in our churches, this man is an illegal immigrant and homosexual pervert, and we plan to rid the world of the filth you support.'

19 March

Two men enter the church in an attempt to attack Viraj and 'get him out of the church.' They are dealt with by VMDC stewards.

Throughout this period Waddington remained silent. He has refused to grant Viraj a work permit or lift the deportation order. He has also refused to condemn the racist attacks. Just as Goebbels, the Nazi propagandist, incited racist pogroms against Jewish people, David Waddington and the racist press have given a green light to the worst fascist scum to mount attacks on Viraj.

It is a measure of the growing significance and strength of the VMDC that the press is continuing its campaign relentlessly. Despite knowing full well the consequences of their attacks, The Daily Star has joined the witchhunt. On 24 March it called on 'a couple of dozen to march right in, grab him (Viraj) by the tamils, put him on the next plane to Sri Lanka.' They conclude 'NOW that REALLY would be a jolly jape.'

Unfortunately for the ruling class and its media hacks, the VMDC is now stronger and much better prepared to resist gangsters inspired by them.

★ NATIONAL CONFERENCE

SATURDAY/SUNDAY
11-12 APRIL (Starts 10am)
CHURCH OF ASCENSION,
HULME, MANCHESTER

This conference has acquired added importance since the fascist attacks on the VMDC and the successful campaign to repulse them. 500 people will gather at the Church to discuss the best way forward to secure a victory for Viraj and discuss the way forward for an effective anti-deportation movement in this country.

The Conference will be a gathering of activists. It will discuss proposals for a national demonstration, a major intervention in the forthcoming general election and a charter for a national anti-deportation movement.

Send in the form below to VMDC Conference Organising Committee, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Manchester M15 5AL Tel: (061) 234 3168

If my organisation will be attending the VMDC conference on 11/12 April.

Name _____

Address _____

Tel _____ Organisation _____

Please send _____ leaflets and _____ posters to help mobilise. Enclosed is £ _____ donation towards costs. Accommodation needed Creche needed Please enclose details

**VIRAJ MENDIS
WILL STAY!
STOP ALL DEPORTATIONS
NOW!**

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:-

- VIRAJ MENDIS ● A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SANCTUARY MOVEMENT IN THE USA ● REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST GROUP ● ANWAR DITTA ● CITY OF LONDON ANTI-APARTHEID GROUP ● FATHER JOHN METHUEN

WORKSHOPS ON:-

- How to organise an anti-deportation campaign
- Sanctuary and the struggle against deportation
- The labour movement and Britain's immigration controls
- The role of the law
- The significance of the new visa restrictions
- Women and immigration controls

Join the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign

Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign
c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL (phone 061-234 3168)

London VMDC Support Group
BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX (01 837 1688)

Glasgow VMDC Support Group
c/o Box 10, 340 West Princes Street, Glasgow

Leeds VMDC Support Group
Box FRF1, 59 Cookridge Street, Leeds 2

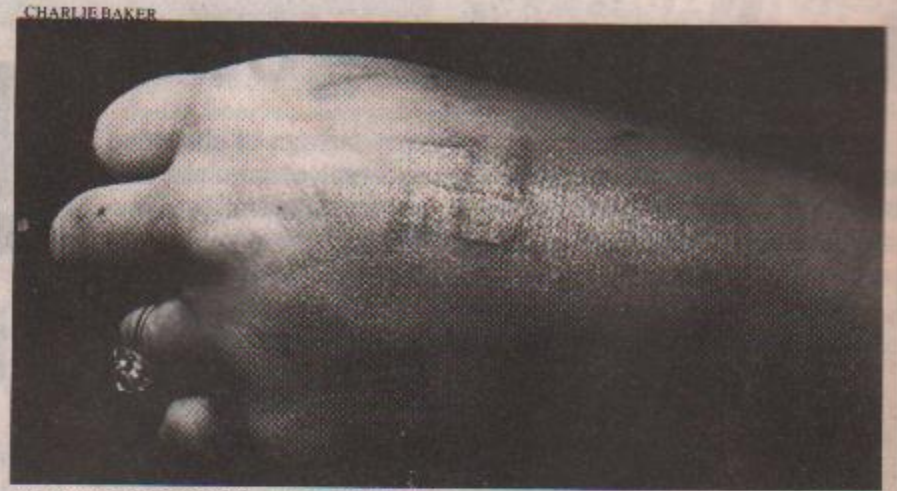
Tyne and Wear VMDC Support Group
c/o Gateshead Law Centre, 13 Walker Terrace, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear

Brighton VMDC Support Group
c/o External Affairs, University of Sussex SU, Falmer House, Falmer, Brighton

Dundee VMDC Support Group
c/o FRF1, PO Box 27, Dundee DD1 9DR

Bristol VMDC Support Group
Joanne Mayer, 33 Kingston Road, Salthill, Bristol BS3 1DS

ST ATTACKS BEATEN BACK



VMDC supporter's wrist - carved by fascists

The fact that Viraj Mendis, a black communist and member of the Revolutionary Communist Group, has built an unprecedented range of broad support in his struggle against deportation has brought on the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign (VMDC) the wrath of the most reactionary sections of British society.

During the first two weeks of March, the VMDC emerged victorious from a serious battle against a fascist terror offensive unleashed by Home Office Minister Waddington and sections of the racist British press. On 2 March, Viraj was offered a job by Manchester City Council as Immigration and Nationality Officer. Waddington publicly denounced the appointment as did the *Daily Express* and *The Sun*. Taking their cue, fascist hooligans began with a flood of telephone and letter threats. On the nights of 9 and 10 March these threats were translated into violent attacks on the Church where Viraj is in sanctuary, and on VMDC supporters.

door, and when I opened it 3 men wearing balaclavas burst in. They painted swastikas on the doors, smashed things in my flat and punched me. Before leaving they cut another swastika on the back of my hand with a razor blade saying "here's something you won't forget."

These terror tactics, designed to drive away popular support, isolate the VMDC and leave it open to even more serious attacks, failed miserably. Indeed the opposite has happened. Sue, speaking to FRFI, expressed the view of the VMDC and all its supporters when she said: "These attacks have only made me more determined to support Viraj in any way I can."

FASCISTS ATTACK

On Monday night, 9 March, 6 fascists entered the Church pretending to be VMDC supporters from Birmingham. Armed with carving knives, crowbars and screwdrivers they attacked VMDC stewards, stabbing a man in the back of the head. After causing extensive damage to the Church they were forced to flee having failed in their declared aim of snatching Viraj from sanctuary. On the following night, cowards that they are, 3 masked racists attacked Sue, a VMDC supporter, when she was alone at home after an emergency meeting to discuss the previous night's attacks. Sue told FRFI what happened:

"After the meeting I went home. A few minutes later there was a knock on the

THE VMDC RESPONSE

The VMDC's response showed again why Waddington and the press are so violently opposed to Viraj and the VMDC. An emergency appeal for support met with an overwhelming response. Within hours of the first attacks, more than 50 people rushed to the Church. Calls for assistance with stewarding led to a flood of volunteers. Dozens of people who had not been involved in the campaign agreed to help. A picket was placed on the *Daily Express* whose editorial 'Mendis must go' preceded the first attack.

By 11 March, the day after the attack on Sue, the VMDC and its allies scored an even more significant victory against the racists. Piccadilly Radio had invited an NF

member to be guest speaker on a phone-in programme. Together with Anti-Fascist Action and many other organisations, the VMDC determined to put a stop to this. A picket of Radio Piccadilly was planned. During the day intensive political work was done. By early evening the NUJ chapel at Piccadilly Radio held a special meeting and agreed to withdraw their labour from the programme. It was cancelled. One of the journalists, Justin Carogan, came to the Church to show his solidarity. A major victory for all anti-racists in Manchester.

The NF's defeat was celebrated by a tremendous gathering the same night at the Church. Over 200 people turned up in an impressive demonstration of support. Local people, students, women's organisations, anarchists, the Jewish Society, left organisations such as Socialist Organiser, the Socialist Workers Party and Workers Against Racism and of course Anti-Fascist Action whose tremendous support has been shown by their presence at the Church ever since. In an even more significant development, black and white working class youth from the community also began coming to the Church to offer support and some have now stayed ever since to defend Viraj.

By 18 March, the VMDC sealed its first victory against the racists when, having



Wreckage of Sue's flat after fascist attack

succeeded in banning the NF from Piccadilly Radio, two RCG members - Chris and Terry - appeared as guest speakers in a phone-in on the VMDC. Over 1 million people listen to this Wednesday night phone-in and they all heard clearly the VMDC's anti-racist and anti-immigration control message. These developments and successes are a measure of the VMDC's political work and its methods of organisation and political work.

THE WAY FORWARD

The Home Office, Waddington, the racist press and their fascist friends have declared their determination to expel Viraj with whatever means they have available - the law, the courts, the police and their unofficial terror squads. *The Star* is leading the baying pack, openly inciting its racist readers to attack the Church and kidnap Viraj. Waddington has also rejected appeals from the Bishop of Manchester who brought to his attention the Amnesty International statement and other evidence of gathering support for Viraj. It is clear that the ruling class is determined not to concede. Much is at stake. A success for the VMDC would open the prospect of a major and powerful campaign against all deportations and immigration controls. It is therefore the duty of all socialists and trade unionists, anti-racists and anti-fascists to focus now on mobilising to win this struggle.

The VMDC's democratic and non-sectarian structure has allowed it successfully to counter both state and fascist attacks and marks a significant step forward in the struggle. The RCG recognises the qualitative step forward that the VMDC has made in uniting an extraordinarily wide range of forces to defend a black communist from deportation. The national conference on 11/12 April 'Viraj Mendis Will Stay! Stop All Deportations Now!' will discuss the practical and political problems involved in winning Viraj's right to stay. It will also deal with the issues of building a nation-wide anti-deportation movement. That is the task ahead for the socialist movement in this country. The RCG is fighting for such a movement. We call upon all individuals and organisations that are opposed to racism and immigration controls to join us in this fight.

Above: one of many examples of popular support for VMDC



These pages have been compiled by: Eddie Abrahams, Chris Fraser, Nick Hill, Adrian Levy, Viraj Mendis, Sarah Ricca, Virman Man, Chas and Gordon

DETAINEES TO BE HELD IN PRISON HULKS

On 11 March, Douglas Hurd announced that the Home Office has been bargaining with Sealink British Ferries to purchase the MV Earl William, a 3700 ton car ferry. Douglas Hurd wants the ferry not for the purpose of cruising Home Office ministers and other social undesirables around the Hebridean coast but to serve as a floating immigration detention centre for refugees and immigrants refused entry into Britain. This ferry, like its sister ship the Herald of Free Enterprise, involved in the Zeebrugge disaster, has in-built engineering errors. Yet the government is only too pleased to place 300-400 black people within its bowels.

The immigration service citing both lack of immigration detention accommodation and the large 'influx' of black visitors described the ferry as 'ideal'. It holds up to 400 beds - the direct equivalent of the number of black people the immigration service are already refusing entry.

RAJWINDER SINGH DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

After 7 weeks in sanctuary support for Rajwinder Singh is growing. In spite of attempts by Geoff Lawler, Tory MP, to divide the community, all the Sikh Temples in Bradford have rallied to Rajwinder and his family. Sikh temples and Christian groups such as the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice and the Reading Religious Society of Friends have also extended their support. Minister of deportations, David Waddington, tried to undermine the campaign by making the incredible 'offer' that if Rajwinder leaves sanctuary and the country, he can then reapply for entry from India. This 'offer' was rejected outright by the family and the fight continues.

Send messages of support and donations to Rajwinder Singh, c/o Gurunanak Sikh Temple, Wakefield Road, Bradford 4 (cheques payable to Rajwinder Singh Defence Campaign). Come to campaign meetings every Wednesday at 7pm at the Temple. For further information ring Bradford 727318 or 723557.

anti-Tamil repression

The Sri Lankan government has intensified military operations against the Tamil people and liberation movement. Hoping to starve and crush the 800,000 Tamils on the Jaffna peninsula, President Jayewardene has imposed a blockade on the supply of fuel and other essential commodities. At the beginning of March, the Sri Lankan air force conducted raids on Tamil areas hitting hospitals and homes. In the villages of Valvetty, Valvettiturai and Uduppiddy, buildings in which children had taken refuge were systematically bombed. At Nainativu, 35 passengers were butchered when hit by a bomb. In another incident 32 fishermen from Gurunagar were also gunned down.

Sri Lanka now spends US \$600,000 daily in its genocidal war against the Tamil people. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund and imperialist governments channel financial assistance through the Sri Lankan Aid Consortium, allowing the purchase of arms and ammunition from Israel, South Africa and other reactionary regimes. Britain supplies tanks, helicopter gunships and patrol boats. In addition, with Thatcher's blessings, the now notorious mercenary supply service KMS

(Keeny Meeny Services) has been involved in setting up and training Sri Lanka's brutal Special Task Force. Some 60 of them have walked out having no stomach left for the atrocities meted out by the monster of their own creation: the Special Task Force.

Tamil guerrillas are fighting back with determination. The defence of the city of Jaffna itself is co-ordinated mainly by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE): the Tigers run their own schools, farms

and factories, with their own postal service and system of tax collection. Policing is by the Tamils themselves, with 'Peace Committees' set up to administer justice: no informers or collaborators are tolerated.

For the Tamil liberation fighters negotiations will not be on the agenda until their 3 conditions are met: the end of restrictions on fuel and fishing supplies; the withdrawal of the 1979 Prevention of Terrorism Act; and the release of 3,000 Tamil youth detained under the Act.

While conducting genocidal war against the Tamil people, Jayewardene is pursuing an equally relentless campaign against Sinhalese people who support the Tamil liberation struggle. At the end of March, the trial began of 13 people (10 of them Sinhalese) accused of conspiracy to overthrow the state. The Sri Lankan government, deemed democratic by those who wish to deport Viraj back to Sri Lanka, is in fact nothing more than a fascist stooge defending the interests of imperialism and its own ruling class.

Reagan salvaged

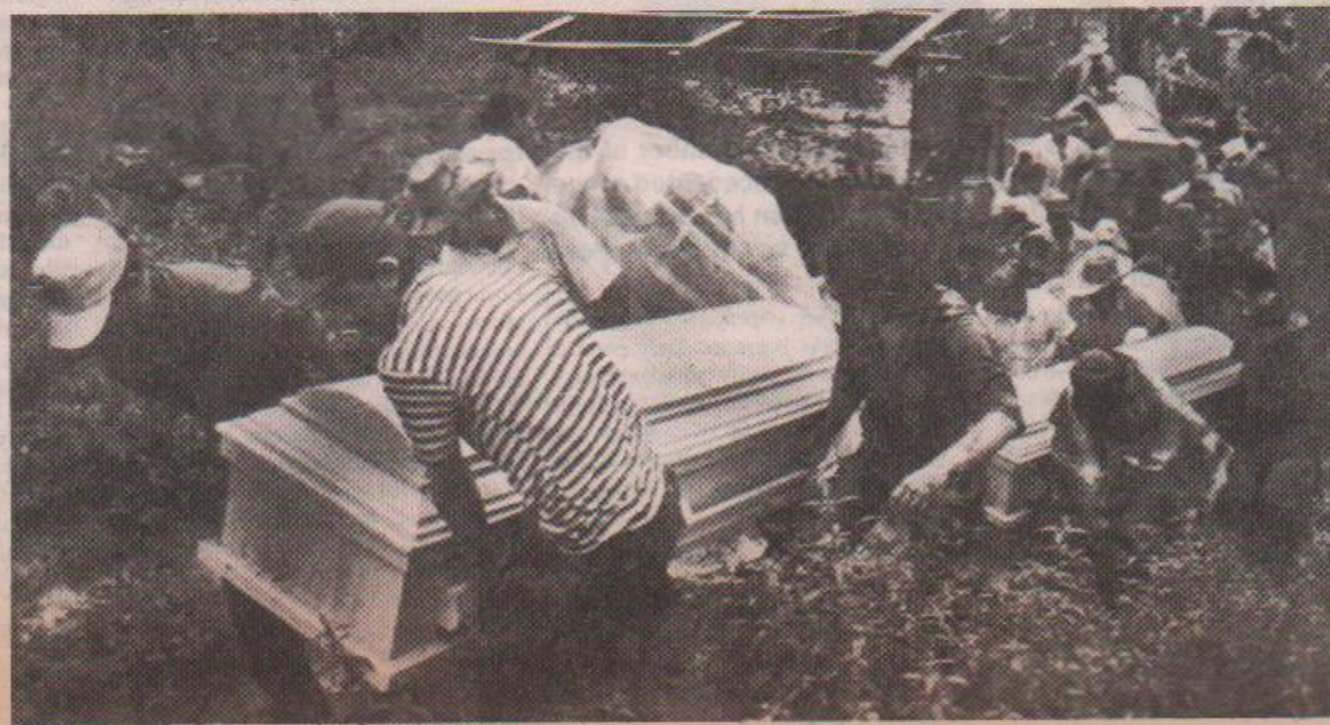
In the midst of the lies and incompetence, the farrago of shredded documents, a failed suicide attempt and an outbreak of amnesia, that have been the Reagan administration's response to the Irangate revelations, the Tower Commission had two vital objectives for the US bourgeoisie. The Presidency, having been reined in, and all-but scuppered, had to be saved if serious damage to the power of the US state was to be avoided, and the debate on US foreign policy had to be cut-short before it brought into question the whole basis of US imperialist objectives and methods. Reagan finally got the message and complied, 'I endorse every one of the Tower Board's recommendations.'

The US state is the executive body of the US bourgeoisie, it cannot act above and beyond the interests of that bourgeoisie. Reagan's band of business cronies and adventurers have been ushered off stage. With the appointment of Howard Baker as White House Chief-of-Staff, the US ruling class has decided that if there is going to be any delegating it will be to representatives of their choosing, not to characters drawn from the President's favourite collection of comic books; 'I have also directed that any covert activity be in support of clear policy objectives and in compliance with American values'. Reality and not rhetoric, the balance of class forces and not fantasy will guide their policy for the remainder of Reagan's presidency.

The 20 March issue of the *New York Times* provides evidence that covert operations against Nicaragua have not been abandoned, only now they are firmly in the hands of the CIA. The CIA is providing the contras with precise information on Nicaraguan dams, bridges, electrical substations, port facilities and telephone exchanges. Maps, floor-plans and blueprints have been supplied ready for a 'spring offensive'. Such CIA involvement is reminiscent of 1984 when they mined Nicaraguan harbours before the Congressional ban drove Reagan to employ North and his network of auxiliary organisations.

Disgustingly, the now Democrat-controlled Senate voted through the final

\$40 million instalment of \$100 million military aid to the contras. In May, 50,000 US servicemen will take part in exercise Solid Shield around the borders of Nicaragua, timed to coincide with the 'spring offensive'. The US ruling class is united on the need to destroy the Sandinista government. Neither North's nor Poin-dexter's testimony will change that.



Nicaraguan peasants carry victims of Contra terror

Aquino-Army alliance against NPA and left

'The answer to the terrorism of the left and the right is not social and economic reform, but police and military action.' President Corazon Aquino addressing troops at the Philippine Military Academy. 22 March 1987.

A Pepsi-Cola sign hung above the altar as armed forces chief General Ramos held Mass and distributed chicken dinners on the first anniversary of the downfall of the Marcos regime. Pepsi-Cola helped sponsor the celebrations. Imperialism is generally satisfied with the Aquino government's performance, thus far.



Two anti-communist vigilantes in the Philippines

IRANGATE

Thatcher's collusion exposed

When US President Reagan addressed the British Houses of Parliament in July 1982 and called for a 'world crusade for freedom against communism' he received a standing ovation. He must have been impressed with his reception, for the Tower Report on the Irangate affair shows how deeply the British government and its mercenary appendages were drawn into the 'crusade'. Today, while two El Salvadorean revolutionaries languish in British gaols, the British army is training a El Salvadorean officer at Sandhurst military college.

TREVOR RAYNE

Reagan has had no greater ally in his war-drive against Nicaragua and Central America than the Thatcher government. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* has regularly reported on British support for the war against the Sandinistas since Thatcher's adviser, Sir Alfred Sherman, met with contra leaders in 1983. The Tower Report reveals that three British 'security' firms, KMS Ltd, Falconstar and Intersec, all manned by ex-SAS officers, were each approached to give covert support to the contra operations. Claiming an exclusive, the *London Daily News* said it had uncovered the real identity of KMS and its trade. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* revealed that identity, Keeny Meeny Services, its location and role as an auxiliary to the British state in FRFI 60 in June 1986.

London Daily News investigations reveal that Oliver North visited London in 1984. The first group of KMS mercenaries flew out to Central America in mid-1985. A total of 50 men were eventually deployed, assigned to train the contras and fly supply missions. KMS is run by ex-SAS officers; Falconstar and Intersec were dissolved and taken over by Major Alasdair Morrison, SAS commander at the 1980 Iranian embassy siege. These organisations have frequently been used by the Foreign Office for 'plausibly deniable' operations, such as in Oman and Sri Lanka, where overt British military intervention would be politically embarrassing.

Baroness Young, for the Foreign Office, has denied allegations that KMS were acting with government approval. Margaret Thatcher has refused to comment on her association with Major Walker, the head of KMS. However, *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* is well aware of Mrs Thatcher's intimate links with specialists in covert operations. Alfred Sherman is a former 'speech-writer' for Thatcher, others who have provided this service include Robert Moss and Sir Robert Thompson. Moss was on the Committee of 40 assigned to overthrow the Allende regime in Chile. His services have since been employed variously in Latin America, notably for the Uruguayan government in its war against the Tupamaros. According to the Red Cross 85,000 people have been tortured and over 5,000 have disappeared from Uruguay since 1973, 300,000 have fled the country. Thompson helped devise Operation Phoenix in Vietnam which resulted in 40,000 deaths. Moss and Thompson are CIA contacts.

The Observer has disclosed that on 15 February 1986 a British merchant ship, the Silver Sea, was loaded at Southampton with uniforms, jeeps, boats, and communication systems and set sail for Costa Rica. Storms forced it to pull into the French port of Brest. The ship's chief officer says that the cargo was destined for the contras with British government permission. The ship was hired for six such missions.

Most significantly, the Tower Report discloses that on 26 March 1986, Oliver North attempted to obtain Blowpipe launchers and surface-to-air missiles from Shorts of Belfast. The British government has refused to give a guarantee that it will not supply these weapons to the US for use elsewhere or for re-supply.

Following upon these revelations the Labour MP George Foulkes has accused Thatcher of meeting with North in Downing Street and liaising with former CIA Director William Casey on the supply of the missiles. The Foreign Office has rejected his call for an inquiry into Thatcher's part in Irangate. She denies meeting with North. The British government is waging war against the Nicaraguan people.

week magazine revealed that President Reagan has recently authorised an escalation of CIA activity in the Philippines. A dozen agents have been added to the CIA station strength of 115, their operational instructions are said to include aerial reconnaissance and covert political activity.

In the area around Davao City, Mindanao island, the first results of the counter-revolutionary drive are visible. Twenty three thousand peasants have been driven from their villages to seek refuge in churches and schools. In Davao City itself, the military has moved onto the streets in force, while an armed gang, Alsa Masa (people arise), is directed jointly by the military and one Juan Pala against those suspected of being sympathetic to the communists. Pala uses the local radio to target suspects. He claims inspiration from Goebbels and Hitler. The tactic of orchestrating death squads to empty the cities of revolutionary forces was used successfully by imperialism in El Salvador.

Aquino has issued an order disbanding the notorious Civilian Home Defence Force, auxiliary gangs, but has done nothing to prevent the construction of these new, more lethal, formations. Her usefulness to imperialism depends upon her being able to represent a middle-way between fascist repression and revolutionary change. This illusion requires that Aquino both distances herself from the barbarity of counter-revolutionary war and presents the prospect of real advances for the masses.

Such prospects do not exist. The foreign debt of \$27.8 billion will result in a net capital outflow of \$1.1 billion this year. Debt service repayments consume over half the foreign-currency earnings. Already 88 per cent of Filipino families live below the total poverty threshold. The last shreds of People's Power will be torn from Aquino. The estimated strength of the New People's Army has grown by 2,000 to 24,000 over the past year. It is hitting back hard: the military acknowledge an average of 8 fatalities a day since the ceasefire ended.

Trevor Rayne

On 8 February the National Democratic Front representatives announced the ending of the 60 day ceasefire. Within a week the vote on the constitution brought 80 per cent support for six more years of Aquino's presidency. Set against a background of three failed right wing military coups it was more a vote against fascist destabilisation than for the content of the constitution. However, the vote reaffirmed Aquino's legitimacy, and, critically, she bestows that legitimacy upon the army.

While Aquino milks every last drop of popularity with promises of further democracy and land reform, she is presiding over a determined imperialist onslaught against the mass organisations whose struggle undermined the Marcos regime. Even while the 'peace-talks' were in progress a stream of mercenaries and 'counter-insurgency' experts filed into the Philippines. Professor Roy Prosterman of the University of Washington has been drafted in to direct the land reform programme. Prosterman's expertise was deployed in Vietnam during Operation Phoenix, a 'strategic hamlet' programme which took 40,000 lives. He was later assigned to El Salvador during the early 1980s. Some 35,000 people were murdered, 75 per cent of them peasants, according to the UN Commission on Human Rights, while Prosterman served as chief agricultural adviser to the junta. *Soldier of Fortune* magazine has been running adverts for mercenaries to go to the Philippines, the British firm KMS Ltd is reported to have sent ex-SAS men into the country, and Major General John K Singlaub, who collaborated with Colonel Oliver North to fund the Nicaraguan contras, has also surfaced in the Philippines. Alongside these developments News-



Cows have cantered through Barcelona, milk and wine have flowed down Madrid avenues and tractors have blocked many a main road as farmers protested against milk quotas and competition from other EEC countries. Doctors have burnt their white coats outside the health ministry, calling for higher pay. Relatives of drug addicts have banged saucepans outside a police station, demanding stronger action against pushers. Armed policemen have surrendered when outnumbered by furious steelworkers who had kidnapped a company director for the day. This week's strikers included university students, teachers, hospital workers, miners, railway workers and truck drivers.

The Economist, 28 March 1987.

Scene of the funeral of Txomin Iturberen, hero of the Basque liberation struggle killed in a car crash in exile in Algiers. Buried 8 March.

Just nine months ago Socialist Party (PSOE) Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez was returned to power with 44 per cent of the vote. Spain had joined the EEC at the beginning of 1986 and NATO in March. With the help of a few dirty tricks 'Felipe' had conjured up visions of wealth and plenty safeguarded by democracy and got his way. Now the tricks are useless and the visions gone. In their place is a savage attack on living standards, with a government imposed 5 per cent wage ceiling, factory closures, and the systematic impoverishment and dispossession of peasants and farmers. All this against a background of the highest unemployment in Western Europe, 21 per cent, 3 million people.

Military spending has practically doubled since the PSOE came to power in 1982. Over the past year the share of wages in the national income has fallen by 6 per cent, while that of profits has risen by the same amount. In Spain they say 'The poorer the people get the more banks there are!'

None have experienced the bitter reality of Gonzalez's deceptions more than the youth, (half of all those aged 16-24 are out of work) and the Basques. It is their struggles, the youth against the rotten education system and for a future, and the Basque people against repressive legislation and for democracy and national liberation, that show the way for the working class to fightback and win.

Herri Batasuna traps PSOE government

Herri Batasuna (HB) cleverly outmanoeuvred the Government at every step in a whole process of judicial proceedings to enable a remand prisoner, elected MP for HB in the November elections to the Basque Parliament to present a speech as candidate for the Presidency. After only small rumblings amongst establishment politicians when Juan Carlos Yoldi was elected on 30 November and when he was granted temporary leave from prison to present him credentials as MP in Vitoria, Euskadi, there was uproar when HB then nominated him as their candidate for the Presidency.

The stage was set and the establishment politicians were trapped. Yoldi is on remand, accused of being a member of ETA. According to the very laws the Madrid Government so lovingly calls to mind to evoke its idea of 'democracy', Yoldi is innocent until proven guilty, and as such, in possession of all the rights of a normal citizen. He was therefore 'legally' entitled to be candidate to the Presidency, despite all the enraged and ironically anti-Constitutional gibberings of the PSOE, (Socialist Party). Important members of the PSOE went as far as denouncing HB's candidate as a terrorist, only to be reminded by press and judges alike that according to the Constitution that the PSOE itself supported, Yoldi was as innocent as themselves, and one liberal newspaper dared term Vice-President Alfonso Guerra 'anti-democratic' given his declarations concerning HB's candidate. Whilst the Right in general call-

HELEN

ed for legal reforms, conservative Basque nationalists wisely restricted themselves to accepting the legal decisions of the relevant Courts, presumably to avoid loss of face with their electorate.

Additionally, as no obstacles had been placed to Yoldi's first prison transfer to sign his credentials a month ago, the Basque Parliament now found itself obliged, by logic and legal coherence alone, to accept the second transfer request for the opening session of the Basque Parliament on 26 February. A last desperate attempt by the State Attorney General, based on technical matters of wording in HB's transfer request, aimed at preventing Yoldi's appearance, was unanimously rejected by the relevant Court.

It was a triumph for the patient struggle by radical Basque nationalists to get the message of the real alternative to current Basque politics heard and accepted as a real democratic choice. It also gives additional meaning to HB's much publicised decision to attend the Basque Parliament only when tactically appropriate, given their profound disagreement with the actual legal situation of the same.

This was just one of these occasions and Yoldi was legally entitled one and a half hours in which to pronounce HB's electoral programme to the four corners of the earth (over 200 journalists and TV reporters were present from both the Spanish State and abroad), and to the full house

of Basque politicians. Significantly, only José María Benegas, General Secretary for PSOE in Euskadi, absented himself during Yoldi's speech, arguing that no remand prisoners should be allowed in Parliament, and unable it seems to perform the very democratic practice he preaches of tolerance and co-existence within the institutions.

Yoldi used his one and a half hours to calmly but forcefully denounce the grave situation of Basque political prisoners in Spanish jails, and to outline HB's proposals for a future Euskadi in four broad themes: a Basque-orientated economy, complete priority for the development of Basque culture and language in education and other cultural spheres, political negotiation between ETA and the Spanish army, and the reunification of all Basque territories, currently divided between two regional governments in the Spanish State and one in France.

The power and self-discipline of Yoldi, at 24 years of age and subject to tremendous psychological and physical pressure during his recent transfers from prison to prison, is a tribute to the determination of those fully aware of the need to radically alter the path of Basque politics in order to realistically fulfil the hopes of their people. Today Yoldi is in prison again. But his message will have given new courage to all those involved in the long, hard struggle to construct a new Euskadi, and will have reached the ears of all those fighting for a new society throughout the world. Gora Euskadi Askatuta!

'Despite reports to the contrary, we... remain under siege after 136 days... in the last 3 weeks, 9 women and 3 girls have been shot and killed and more than 30 wounded.'

In Shatilla too, conditions remain desperate. Hunger remains widespread. Pregnant women are suffering spontaneous abortions and people are fainting due to weakness from hunger. As piles of rubble grow, packs of rats are thriving and attacking children in the camps.

Syria intervened in West Beirut on 22 February in order to smash a developing alliance between progressive Lebanese forces and the Palestinian resistance. Since then, President Assad has announced that his main bourgeois allies among the Muslim community have agreed on a 'new' plan to 'end the civil war'. Phalangist

President Gemayel and the Phalangist militia - the Lebanese Forces - have also given backing to this plan.

Under any circumstance such a plan has virtually no chance of success. The oppressed Lebanese masses will not accept yet another proposal for a sectarian division of power and spoils among the bourgeoisie. Such schemes have no chance of success whatsoever whilst the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese progressive forces remain in position. Thus Assad continues to oversee Amal's war to destroy and disarm the Palestinian camps as a first step towards imposing a counter-revolutionary sectarian settlement. **Eddie Abrahams**

Correction: We apologise to Dr Pauline Cutting for referring to her, in our March Extra, as a nurse. She is in fact a surgeon.

Below we continue publication of notes from our correspondent in Palestine (see February FRFI 66). Following massive protests by Palestinian youth in Gaza against the murder of 2 Gazan students on 5 December 1986, the Zionist

machinery of repression was put into operation. In scenes reminiscent of Ireland or South Africa, our correspondent describes the experience in an 'Israeli' military camp used as a detention centre.



Israeli repression in the Gaza

Two hundred and fifty people were arrested during the week, the majority being aged between 13-18. In the military camp they were severely beaten with sticks and rifle butts. Gazans began referring to the camp as 'Ansar No2' after the notorious 'Israeli' detention centre in South Lebanon.

One of the detainees held here from 9-14 December told me that there were on average 45 people in his room measuring about 8 metres by 5 metres. They had only 5 mattresses between them and 1 blanket for every 2 people. He was beaten for 3 or 4 hours before being taken to a room where other detainees were sleeping. 'I was taken to room 3. The blindfold was removed and I was handcuffed again, this time with my hands in front. On the way to the room, the beating was continuous. One of the soldiers kicked me into the room and I fell.' The following day 'we were ordered to stand up and sit down, over and over again. Four detainees were made to stand with their faces to the wall. A soldier began to shout 'come here, you!' without using names. So some turned round and were beaten immediately. When I and my

friend protested they beat us as well.'

In another incident, the same person woke up at night when he heard a boy crying. 'I saw one of the soldiers with a 13 or 14 year-old boy. I raised my head and saw that he had a knife at the boy's chest.' Another detainee reported that a 13 year old boy was savagely beaten. He was crying out 'I'm dying' and the soldier was replying 'I'll beat you to death.'

Detainees we spoke to told us of the psychological war they felt was being waged against them. K told us 'the soldiers insulted us and accused us of throwing stones, all the time beating us. They threatened to shoot us and one soldier took up position and prepared himself as if to shoot us. The other kind of pressure they brought on us concerned water to drink and going to the toilet. The latter was especially difficult. The toilet was 2 holes in the ground. Two detainees had to go together and at least 2 soldiers stood over them, just in front of them with their guns.'

Loyalty to the PLO is unquestionable. In Nouseirat Camp on 10 December, Palestinian flags were flown on telephone wires and students tied together red and black keffiyas (scarves) red for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and black for Al Fateh - symbolising the unity in their own ranks and implicitly demanding the same from the outside leadership. Don't believe anyone when they say the people of Gaza support Jordan's options or 'autonomy', its 100% wrong. Nothing like that will ever be accepted. The longer the occupation goes on the more determined people become in their desire to return to their homeland, no matter how difficult that may seem. The idea of Palestine is firmly rooted and a part of the people's consciousness and imagination. In every conversation I have had, I have never met anyone who will accept any kind of compromise with 'Israel' which is seen as walking hand in hand with the US.

In the otherwise heavily controlled Gaza Strip, these demonstrations gave an injection of confidence to the Palestinians. On the same day as flags were hung from telephone wires, the students scaled off the Nouseirat camp to the 'Israeli' army with makeshift roadblocks. That day, the camp was called 'the Republic' and 'Liberated Palestine'. Maybe the authorities thought they had Gaza tamed, but the opposite is true - Gaza is alive and kicking, but it chooses its moments, that's all.



EMERGENCY APPEAL

Lebanon refugee camps still under siege

Medical Aid for Palestinians - a registered charity doing tremendous work in the camps have issued an urgent appeal for funds.

We urge all readers to send donations immediately. Cheques or POs payable to: Medical Aid for Palestinians. Send to: MAP, 29A Enford Street, London W1H 1DG

'NEW' PLAN FOR LEBANON

In the 5 weeks since Syrian troops occupied West Beirut, Amal's war against the Palestinian camps continues unabated. Amal, Syria's main bourgeois ally in Lebanon, still encircles the camps bombarding them regularly with heavy artillery and sniper fire. Amal militias are also preventing free access of food and medical supplies.

Dr Pauline Cutting and 2 nurses working in Bourj al-Barajneh wrote to Medical Aid for Palestinians:

IN BRIEF

EMBARRASSED TORIES WANT 'RE-DRAFT'

A report written by Sir James Hennessy, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, on the prison protests of 30 April 1986, has proved to be 'too politically sensitive' for the Tories in an election year. This is not a government report but one from a so-called independent body - the Inspectorate of Prisons. Unfortunately for the Tories, the report has severely criticised the role of prison officers in the protests and they want a re-write.

REMAND PRISONERS IN SQUALOR

Over 360 people are being held on remand in police and court cells - 80 of these are women in the South East alone. These cells are windowless, damp and below ground. The prisoners are locked up for 24 hours a day. One woman, Maxine Seaman, now in Holloway, who had been moved from one police cell to another for 5 months, didn't see daylight for two and a half weeks. Nearly 4 years ago Leon Brittan, then Home Secretary, promised that the government would stop the use of police cells by the end of 1983. The promise lasted for 2 days into 1984 and since then the numbers have risen steadily.

Twenty women are being held in cells at Highbury Corner magistrates court, London, because of overcrowding at Holloway. There is no natural light in the cells, the electric light is kept on all the time and there are no exercise facilities. The distress caused to the prisoners has led to one woman mutilating herself and another smeared shit on the walls of her cell.

PRISONERS SPEAK OUT

Two regular readers of *FRFI* have told us of the continuing repression they and other prisoners are facing. John Schofield in Wakefield jail has been subjected to systematic abuse from the governor and POs and Dave Richards in the Scrubs has endured non-stop harassment from 'the thugs in blue'.

On 16 February John tried to post a letter to us. At 4pm a PO informed him that his letter had been stopped. He demanded to see the governor who denied this - despite the fact that he had the letter in his hand 30 hours after posting! The governor's 'problem' became clear when he asked John who *FRFI* was.

Since then, the POs have practiced 'a new form of harassment' on John. 'Forgetting' to let him slop out after meals and 'forgetting' to let him go to the library. On one morning John heard the rest of the landing being opened up, but by 6.15pm he had still not been allowed to slop out or get water. So he started to ring the alarm bell and when 6 POs came he demanded to be taken to a strip cell 'until the harassment stopped'.

His action forced the Assistant Governor to ensure he was treated the same as the other prisoners. But, he was charged with assault on a PO and for ringing the alarm bell. He lost a total of six weeks remission fighting for basic rights.

Dave was accused by the governor at Albany of being 'subversive, a trouble maker and anti-authority'. (In other words standing up for his and other prisoners' rights - 'the system can't handle solidarity').

He has been on 10/74 lie down (solitary confinement) twice within 5 weeks and moved from prison to prison. At Albany, Dave saw the strip cell used twice. 'Both times it was black prisoners' who were locked in the cell and one was given 3 days cellular confinement (solitary) as well. Dave says 'the amount of racism dished out to black inmates is really bad'. Like John, Dave has also had letters stopped and letters from his family 'held back for days on end.'

We sends warmest greetings to these two comrades and ask readers to write in protest to the governors at Albany and Wakefield jails. (RMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, RMP 5 Love Lane, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 9AG).

Alexa Byrne

Hurd's early release fraud

Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, has proposed using his powers of executive release to free 6,000 short-term prisoners to ease prison overcrowding. This move has nothing to do with any concern for prisoners. Hurd fears an outbreak of rioting in the packed prisons during the run up to the general election. Hurd's move is a cynical fraud.

There are now 49,000 prisoners in prisons designed to hold 41,000. Leeds prison has 206% overcrowding; Birmingham 190%; Pentonville 160%; Liverpool 152%; Wormwood Scrubs 139%; Wandsworth 122%. Thousands of prisoners are held in filthy conditions, crammed three to a cell, locked up for 20 or more hours a day, denied work and exercise.

Hurd has no proposals to deal with any of this. The prison population is rising by some 300 a week - a new prison the size of Wandsworth would have to be built every month just to keep up. Hurd's fraud would simply reduce the population for the duration of the election. Thereafter we would be quickly back to the present situation.

The so-called opposition, led by Kinno, has no proposals either for bringing a real and lasting reduction in the prison population. Having climbed aboard the law and order bandwagon, Kinno is not about to jump off in support of the prisoners.

Prisoners and their supporters have to organise themselves to demand real im-

TERRY O'HALLORAN

provement and not cynical frauds. Over the years prisoners have put forward demands which would immediately reduce the prison population: 50% remission and reform of the parole system in particular. *FRFI* says let those who claim to support civil liberties and democratic rights campaign now for an emergency programme:

- Immediate implementation of 50% remission in England, Scotland and Wales
- Immediate restoration of parole rights taken away by Leon Brittan in 1983
- Immediate implementation of automatic annual parole review for life sentence prisoners
- Immediate across the board reductions in maximum sentences

Prisoners should no longer allow self-styled defenders of civil rights, Labour politicians and trade union leaders to get away with occasional expressions of 'con-

MOST PRISONERS IN EEC

Figures for 1 September 1986 show that the United Kingdom has the highest number of prisoners, both absolutely and proportionally, of any country in the EEC.

The UK had 53,971 prisoners (95.3 per 100,000 of the population). West Germany was the nearest rival in total population at 53,619. Luxembourg was the nearest rival proportionally with 88.5 prisoners per 100,000 of the population. The UK imprisons proportionally nearly twice as many people as the Twenty Six Counties and nearly three times as many as Greece and Holland.

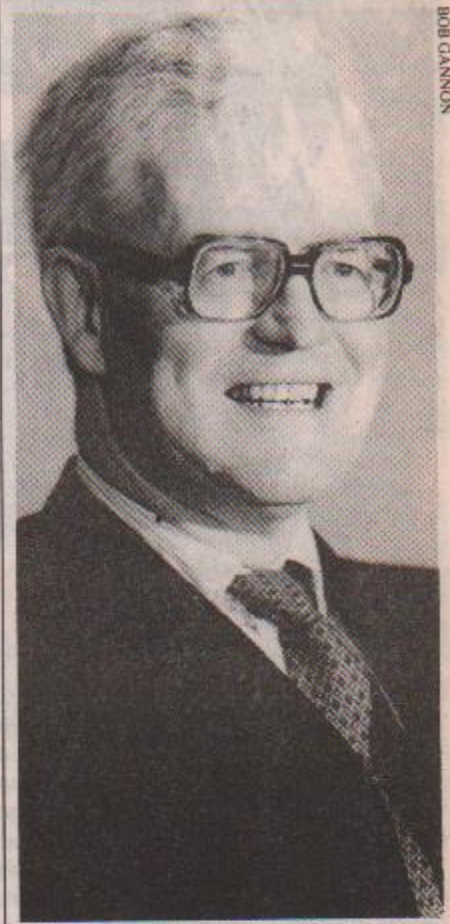
THE CONDITIONS

● In Leeds prison there is one bath for every 216 prisoners; one urinal for every 17 prisoners; only 259 prisoners (20%) have any work; 600 prisoners (46%) spend more than 20 hours a day locked in their cells.

● In Wormwood Scrubs there is one bath for every 351 prisoners; one urinal for every 15; only 470 prisoners (33%) have work.

● In Wandsworth there is one bath for every 111 prisoners; 648 (42%) have work; 1,100 (71%) spend more than 20 hours a day locked in their cells.

cern'. Prisoners, and their supporters, should demand real action now.



More egg on Hurd's face this month over the continuing failure of the prison authorities to present remand prisoners in court. A prisoner at Brixton jail, Raymond Savoury, was prevented 5 times from appearing in a London magistrates court. Hurd was forced to apologise to the High Court for Savoury's non-appearance.

given the chance to express themselves in any other way? Certainly not in Peterhead.'

Since the protests, all the leaders have been held in the notorious Inverness Cages. The Cage consists of a concrete box, seven paces by five paces. The front of the box has bars. On the 'public' side is a passage about one pace wide. The prisoner is left in there for 24 hours a day. Since November, William Ballantyne, and probably all the others too, has never left the Cage once. The toilet is a chamber pot left in the Cage and slopped out only once a day. The light is kept on 24 hours a day. The prisoners will face the brutality of the Cage regime for at least the next six months.

Ten years for protest

The state is taking revenge on the leaders of the rooftop prison protests at Saughton, Peterhead and Barlinnie. Andrew Walker, William Ballantyne and John Cant Smith have all been given 10 year sentences for their part in the Peterhead protest. Gordon Smith, Anthony Kinnon, James Gardner and Colin Duncan received sentences ranging from 6 months to seven years for taking part in the rooftop protest at Saughton. The leaders of the Barlinnie protest can expect the same 'justice' when they go to court.

During the Peterhead trial, a statement from John Cant Smith was read out. It said, 'Can anyone ever understand the horrors of prison without being part of it, feeling the anxieties, knowing the helplessness, living in isolation? Prison life does not provide the creative correction and training needed for a man to be able to make a new beginning on the outside. Instead, it is geared to use men as labour,

GRAHAM JOHNSON

punish them if necessary and disregard their inner spirits as of no consequence. Physical and mental brutality does exist in Peterhead. This matter can only be resolved with the introduction of rehabilitation. If the prison authorities insist on treating prisoners like animals, then prisoners will naturally continue to act like animals.



On the roof at Peterhead last November

Prisoners (including myself) have been described as incurable psychopaths, subversive, and hell-bent on destruction. This can only be described as an excuse rather than a truth. I ask you, have prisoners been

Overcrowding is so serious that prison officers at Barlinnie have taken industrial action. Not that they care about the prisoners. They are only concerned about the difficulties of 'controlling' prisoners in such conditions. The prison officers banned new prisoners from being admitted into Barlinnie for two weeks. The action ended on 2 March. Barlinnie is still chronically overcrowded.

Barlinnie hunger strike



John Gallagher

On 7 February, John Gallagher, a prisoner in Barlinnie jail, began a hunger strike which lasted for 40 days. He was forced to take this action because he had been kept in solitary confinement for over 4 months. John Gallagher had been in the Barlinnie Special Unit until October, but was moved out of the rehabilitation unit, and immediately put in indefinite solitary confinement. Throughout his hunger-strike, the prison authorities continued to deny that it was taking place.

On Tuesday 17 March, Gallagher announced that he was going to stop taking any liquids (he had been taking 3 cups of tea, without sugar during his hunger-strike). News also came out of Barlinnie that Sammy Ralston, who was at the centre of the Barlinnie rooftop protest in January, had been on hunger-strike since 28 February.

The action of John Gallagher and Sammy Ralston had mass support from Barlinnie prisoners. A total of 650 prisoners in A, B and C halls decided to show their

solidarity by refusing food.

On Wednesday 18 March, faced with death within 10 days if he kept up his hunger-strike, John Gallagher ended the hunger-strike. Sammy Ralston is at present still on hunger-strike.

It is not clear whether John Gallagher is still being held in solitary.

Graham Johnson

Please send messages of solidarity to John Gallagher and Sammy Ralston at Barlinnie Prison, Glasgow, Scotland.



Apologies to Mick McCallum for putting his name to the wrong picture in *FRFI* 66. Above is the real Mick McCallum. Anyone who wants to help his fight for Scottish prisoners' rights should write to him at: 74E, Buchanan Road, Kirkmichael, Helensburgh, Dumbartonshire

New evidence

Two months ago the Home Office announced that the case of the Birmingham 6 was being referred to the Court of Appeal because of new evidence but that no action was being taken on the Guildford 4 because there was no similar 'new evidence'. Yorkshire TV's *First Tuesday* team has now successfully called Douglas Hurd's bluff by producing a completely new alibi witness for Paul Hill. Yvonne Fox has testified that on the night of the Woolwich bombing she and Paul's aunt and uncle were together. Having again reviewed the evidence in the case the *First Tuesday* team asked Lord Devlin what kind of justice the Guildford 4 had received. His answer? 'None!' The convictions were 'totally unsafe'.

Meanwhile the Birmingham 6 have all now been moved to Long Lartin prison where they are meeting daily to prepare their case for the Court of Appeal. The prisoners have called for massive publicity and support to ensure that they will win and finally be released.

Despite the growing publicity there should be no complacency amongst the supporters of the framed prisoners. The Home Office has proved itself to be a master of delay and manoeuvre. It regards every day more that it can keep the prisoners inside prison and thus keep the wraps on the whole issue, as a victory. Not only the reputation of prominent individuals but of the British legal system as a whole is besmirched by these cases. There is a lot at stake. The fight for the release of the prisoners must therefore continue to be a hard one.

This was also the message of the first public meeting held by the recently formed Free the Framed Irish Prisoners Campaign. The 55 strong meeting, held in Kilburn on 18 March, attracted considerable local support. Speakers included Maire O'Shea, John MacDonnell (former Deputy leader of GLC), Maggie Mellon (RCG), Charlie Walsh (WRP Workers Press), Workers Power. Maire O'Shea stated that we must make such a nuisance of ourselves that it is more uncomfortable for the state to keep the prisoners in gaol than to release them. Several speakers pointed out that these were not miscarriages of justice but frame ups resulting from political decisions made to teach the Irish people a lesson. Speaking for the FFIPC Maxine Williams emphasised that the campaign was broad, open to all and democratic because only the widest possible support would win these cases. Solidarity messages were received from Gareth Peirce (Solicitor), Teresa Shanahan (Councillor), Phil Penn (currently in Wormwood Scrubs), the Irish Freedom Movement, the Birmingham 6 Campaign Bolton, City AA Group and the Irish POW campaign. The FFIPC is organising monthly pickets of Downing Street calling for release of the prisoners.

Jim O'Rourke

SUPPORT THE FRAMED PRISONERS PICKET DOWNING STREET
Wednesday 1 April 6-7pm
Followed by a Campaign meeting in Camden Town Hall

INLA's tragic feud

The bloody and bitter factional struggle inside INLA (the Irish National Liberation Army) has claimed twelve lives since last December. It is a tragedy that some republicans in Ireland should be involved in such fratricide. It has brought only extra suffering to the nationalist community and comfort to British imperialism and its supporters. Sinn Fein no doubt voiced the wishes of the nationalist people when Gerry Adams said:

'In order that there should be no misrepresentation of the republican position, it is quite clear that both sides (of INLA) have ceased to play any role in the anti-imperialist struggle. They should disband.'

struggles on either side of the border. The key campaign was the military struggle against the British forces in the North.'

How does *Socialist Worker* think Ireland will be liberated, if not through armed struggle? Some hazy and romantic notion of workers uniting around bread and butter issues and then going on to... who knows what, is the nearest *Socialist Worker* ever gets to describing a strategy for liberating Ireland. The 'small' problem of the

national question is forgotten as is the 'small' problem of occupation by British imperialist armed forces. And most of all, the *Socialist Worker* neglects to mention the fact that socialists in Britain should be concerned not with offering pacifist advice to the Irish movement but with building solidarity here in Britain with their struggle - something which is entirely absent from the SWP's political concerns.

Far from its commitment to the armed struggle leading the INLA astray as the SWP maintains, the political origins of

INLA may have made it vulnerable to the current developments. It split off from the Official IRA in 1974 claiming to offer a 'socialist' alternative to the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein. The question could be legitimately asked: why did INLA set themselves up as a separate liberation organisation when the dominant anti-imperialist movement had a mass working class base? This is not to belittle the individual commitment or dedication of many INLA members, such as the INLA men who were murdered during the hunger strike of 1981, to the anti-imperialist cause. It did however mean that INLA's social base was a limited one and its role as a force in the liberation movement, apart from the IRA/Sinn Fein, unclear.

What is absolutely clear however, is that it is not the business of British socialists to use the appalling and tragic difficulties of the liberation struggle, as a stick with which to beat the movement for national liberation.

MAXINE WILLIAMS



EASTER RISING

Seventy one years ago, on Easter Sunday 1916, the Irish people struck a telling blow against British imperialism. The Easter Rising, although it lasted only a week before it was brutally suppressed, gave an immense spur to the struggle for national self-determination. The Irish working class, under one of its greatest leaders, James Connolly, played a significant role in the Rising. The green flag of Ireland was hoisted over Liberty Hall in Dublin, symbolising the commitment of the working class to Irish freedom. James Connolly, executed by the British for his part in the Rising, had a profound understanding of the relationship between the struggle for national liberation and socialism:

'Where better could that flag fly than over the unconquered citadel of the Irish working class, Liberty Hall, the fortress of the militant working class of Ireland.'

'We are out for Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish? Not the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord; not the sweating, profit grinding capitalist; not the sleek and oily lawyer; not the prostitute pressman - the hired liars of the enemy. Not these are the Irish upon whom the future depends. Not these, but the Irish working class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared.'

'The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. They cannot be dissevered.'

Twenty Six Counties--

So what's new?

On 10 March after lengthy political manoeuvring, Charles Haughey became 26 Counties Prime Minister. He was elected to the premiership only on the casting vote of the Speaker. In what was one of his last acts as leader of Fine Gael, Garret FitzGerald gave Haughey a cordial welcome and pledged support for his government providing it did not add to the £22bn national debt. Already the signs are there that Haughey's reign will mark little real change. The new Foreign Minister Brian Lenihan, has said that 'cutbacks', the issue that precipitated the fall of the last government, will be necessary in the Budget. To get such cuts through Haughey will rely on the support of Fine Gael and therefore his government looks fairly safe for some time yet.

Also set to continue is the collaborationist strategy enshrined in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Fine Gael's new leader Alan Dukes has made it plain that his party's support will be withdrawn should Haughey tamper with the Agreement. Predictably

Haughey has responded by saying that he will not seek to renegotiate the Agreement and will operate it as did the previous government. It did not take long for Haughey to cave in on this. In the coming months of spring and summer as the loyalists con-

tinue their promised campaign of violence against the nationalist community, Haughey's years of ambiguous rhetoric will again be put to the test. A further test will be Fianna Fail's attitude towards the soon to be implemented Extradition Act, another brick in the Twenty Six Counties wall of anti-Republican legislation.

Embarrassingly, revelations about direct co-operation between senior gardai and the British army/RUC continue to emerge from two former British army officers. The two claim that senior gardai were recruited by British army intelligence to provide detailed information on republicans living in the Twenty Six Counties and also to clear areas where the British could illegally cross into the Twenty Six Counties. They detail covert operations in which murder, corruption and bribery took place. Alan Dukes, as the former Justice Minister, was sufficiently stung by these allegations to call a press conference to refute them.

Christine Russell

Even before the present feud emerged it had been clear for some time that INLA was in serious difficulties. The 'supergrass' strategy adopted by the RUC in the 1980s had decimated the small organisation. Although many of those held on the word of paid informers like Grimley and Kirkpatrick were eventually released, dozens of INLA supporters had spent years in prison. Additionally, the RUC had evidently managed to infiltrate informers into senior positions in the organisation. These factors, coupled with intensive state surveillance and attack (including shoot to kill operations like that which claimed the lives of Seamus Grew and Roddy Carroll), appear to have fatally weakened the organisation. In such circumstances personal feuds, degeneration and gangsterism are all possible consequences.

We would expect British imperialism and its supporters to be gloating over the present developments in INLA. It is disgraceful however to see British so-called socialists using the situation to launch an attack on the armed struggle as a whole. This is precisely what *Socialist Worker* has done in an article entitled 'The INLA killings are a warning to socialists: You can't liberate a country through the barrel of a gun'. The article goes on to locate the problems of INLA as an obsession with the armed struggle:

'Yet the formation of the IRSP did not focus on developing working class

Gerry Adams in London

During Gerry Adams' recent much-publicised visit to Britain to take part in the Oxford Union debate, he also spoke to a packed meeting in Hornsey Town Hall. The meeting on 4 March was jointly organised by the IBRG, LCI and TOM. Before arriving to address the meeting he and two companions were detained for several hours under the PTA.

Gerry Adams began his speech by emphasising the links between the struggle of black people and the Irish people: 'We have a common enemy and we have a common struggle' he said and reminded the Irish people present that they should be mindful of racism.

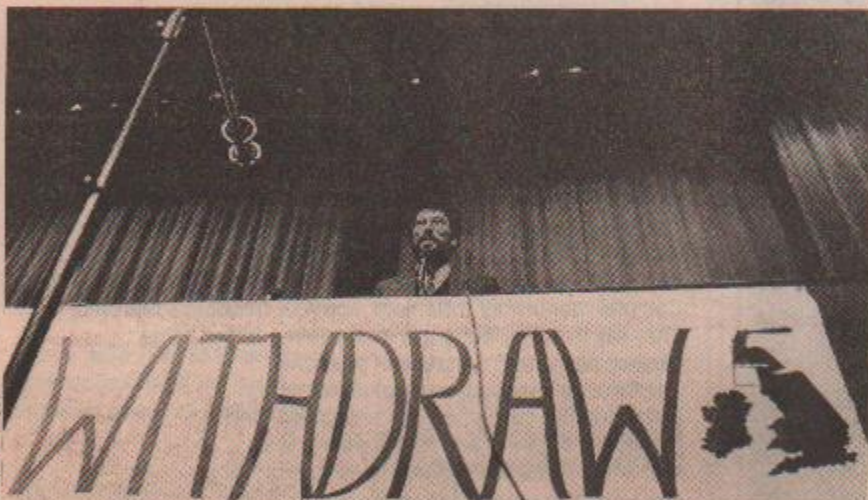
He poured scorn on the Hillsborough agreement saying it had brought no improvements in the lives of the nationalist people. He repeated Sinn Fein's view that British withdrawal from Ireland is the only answer. The British government must adopt a decolonisation strategy, abandon the Government of Ireland Act and prepare for withdrawal. In the new circumstances created by withdrawal, representatives of all Irish people would have to negotiate the future. Republicans would guarantee the civil rights of minority sections.

Adams geared much of his speech to his

He pointed out that there were many issues on which the candidates in an election could be challenged:

- 'the world and his brother knows that the Guildford 4 and the Birmingham 6 are totally innocent'. They stand as a warning that all Irish people run the risk of ending up in prison.
- since 1982 Irish women prisoners have suffered over 3,500 strip searches. These are going on also in prisons here in Britain; Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson are currently being subjected to this.
- Shoot-to-kill and plastic bullets are now measures which threaten people in Britain, but they are used all the time in Ireland.

Why should any anti-imperialist person elect politicians to visit these deprivations



audience of Irish people living in Britain. His message was clear. They could do something to change the situation and aid their fellow countrymen. They could use their votes sensibly. He repeatedly urged people not to vote in a forthcoming election except for candidates who will commit themselves to the decolonisation of Ireland. He said that 60% of Irish people in Britain voted Labour - 'although why is beyond me'. The strategy of the Labour leadership was as colonial as any pursued by Thatcher.

and practices on the Irish people, asked Adams. He pointed out that all governments, including Labour, had presided over structural discrimination and inequalities in the Six Counties.

The national liberation struggle has many sides, he emphasised, from the military to the cultural. It would continue until victory. The IRA has shown that all the repression thrown at them was 'never going to work'. Messages of solidarity from many organisations, including FRFI were read out. MW

SOLIDARITY TO VIRAJ MENDIS FROM PRISONERS

I write to you in a letter of solidarity to let you know that I'm with you in spirit in your fight against deportation. I'm proud of you for standing up to the might of oppression to claim your right as a human being not to be deported back to Sri Lanka where you would without doubt be murdered or else put in prison for life. But I'm more proud to know that you're helping others in their fight, that is why I don't see your case as a one man show; it is for all people being oppressed by the nationality act and for a person such as yourself to take on such a task, I see it as one of honour on your behalf for the working class people.

Like myself, Viraj, you are imprisoned. There are many other who support you, and they are prisoners too, but they don't go to jail. They are in jail or should I say hell, in this whole western world. Because in this western world, capitalism is prison. But people are starting to break their chains because they want to be free. It's people like you, Viraj, who are helping them to achieve freedom. I support you Viraj and so do many others over here in Ireland.

From a Republican Prisoner of War in H Block 4

PS FRFI is a brilliant newspaper and it should be commended for the good work that it carries out for the working class. I salute you Viraj and may you be free soon to live out your life as you please free from oppression. Slán.

I am writing this letter to you under the same situation in which you now find yourself, that of imprisonment. Yours is imprisonment in the sense that British imperialism has forced you to take this sanctuary in a church. Although the circumstances of our imprisonment may differ, our common bond is our will to fight against the injustices of the British capitalist regime.

I am writing this letter to you on behalf of myself and fellow republican prisoners of war here in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh, to offer the hand of solidarity to you in your continuing struggle. Your struggle is our struggle and your eventual victory is a victory for us all and it is to this end which we will support you full heartily. Take care, all the best.

Republican Prisoners of War in the H-Blocks

We've read of your struggle against deportation and wish to extend greetings and solidarity to you. Those who recognise revolutions only when dramatic shifts in economic, political and social relations occur ignore the fact that it is the totality of the individual and numerous struggles, the coming together of all the progressive and revolutionary forces under the direction of the vanguard party that not only demands these shifts, but makes them. To that end, where oppression and exploitation exists, there too must be found the revolutionary waging the fight against it.

Good luck for the future from all the lads in H-Block 2 and I would say they express the thoughts of all in the blocks.

Signed by 34 Republican Prisoners of War in H-Block 2.

I think it was James Baldwin who once said 'if they come for you in the morning they will come for us at night'. He was referring to the state's attempt to rail road Ms Angela Davis to the gas chamber. What was true then is with equal force true now in your case.

Clearly, at issue here is not just the question of one individual being victimised by our insensitive state, it is far far more than that. What we are witnessing in your case, is a deliberate and vicious attack on a class, a movement and the very essence of the anti-racist struggle. In short the state's attempt to deport you possibly to your death forms an integral part of the general onslaught against mass consciousness and awareness. And if we permit the state to silence your voice, we would have allowed the state to fashion yet another tool for intimidating the millions of us who so desperately need to struggle for radical/revolutionary change.

And if for no other reason than the need to support the quest for change, we must fight for your right to stay.

So we who are waging the struggle in these concrete and steel catacombs can do no less than extend our solidarity and offer our support. Your struggle is our struggle. Revolution is the solution.

Wadi Williams
HMP Gartree

POLICE GET IT WRONG - AGAIN

Dear FRFI, Once again, Cannon Row police have failed in their attempts to get a City Group non-stop picketer convicted. On Wednesday 25 March, I was accused of using threatening words and behaviour to PC AD 125. In his evidence, officer John Dickson claimed that he had arrested me because he had feared for my personal safety, apparently because I had directed a torrent of verbal abuse at a member of the public who was becoming very angry. I was supposed to have struck the officer on the chest and sworn at him while attempting to reach this very

angry, but non-existent, member of the public. Under cross-examination, officer Dickson added gloss to his claim of my guilt by telling the court that I had personally apologised to him once inside the cells of Cannon Row - a blatant lie as was the rest of the prosecution evidence.

Whilst summing-up, the magistrate told the prosecution that he found their evidence very confusing and even doubted that they were aware under what charge I was being prosecuted.

This was a humiliating defeat for the police and may there be many more of them at pending trials. Viva the Non-Stop Picket.

David M



VIVA THE NON STOP PICKET

Dear FRFI I must congratulate City Group on the success of the march for Mandela (14 March). I have never seen such a wide range of groups represented on such a demonstration. People from many different campaigns and groups took the opportunity to speak, and to sell their literature. This was concrete proof of the open and democratic nature of City Group. I am sure that this contributed

to the excellent atmosphere and spirit of comradeship on the March. I even saw someone selling AA News - I hope he marched as well!

As Carol Brickley said - action against apartheid must be non-stop - that must be our commitment. This march demonstrated the breadth of support (and potential support) for the Non-Stop Picket and City AA's ability to organise and mobilise for a major event.

Viva the Non-Stop Picket!
Dave Wolfendale

DEFENDING THE REVOLUTION

Dear FRFI

I read with some amazement Patrick Newman's reply to Comrade Ralph (February FRFI). He reduces the differences between Lenin and Stalin over Georgia to the question of language. From that it seems to follow that if there was no language problem in 1956 Hungary, then the question of national self-determination did not arise. Patrick Newman is wrong on both Georgia and Hungary. In Georgia, Lenin sought a solution of a federation of independent republics. He sought 'a war to the death on dominant nation chauvinism'. That he thought was Stalin's position. He was right. (See, for example *Lenin's Last Struggle* Chapter 4).

It is very difficult to see how where foreign armies enter a country and remove a government that is not 'the destruction of the right of a nation to self-determination'. Newman would appear not to think so. That Trotsky may be wrong on the capacity of the Soviet economy to grow is neither here nor there to this basic question. No explanation is given in his reply by Newman.

The answer may lie in what he says about the relation of democracy and the defence of the revolution. He

justifies the suppression of democracy in Georgia (so in Hungary? so in Britain?) by the need to defend the revolution. Lenin who took that line wrote before the destruction of democracy in the Bolshevik party. He envisaged the revolution having the support of the majority, the masses, the peasantry and the proletariat. Thus he could justify to himself the suppression of democracy. The majority would be on his side. But that condition did not last long in Russia. The party clearly no longer felt it had the majority or it would not have suppressed political freedom. In suppressing freedom outside the party it had to suppress it inside the party. In the longer run collectivisation under Stalin meant the majority, the peasants were against the state.

Now with hindsight it is fairly straightforward to see the risks (including to the revolution itself) inherent in placing the value of the revolution before all other values. To repeat slogans on 1918 without thought of what came after is to give a present to conservatives and capitalists. It is their especial pleasure to argue that socialists are not democratic. It is essential that socialists do not follow Comrade Newman into that here. In societies imbued with liberal values socialists will have little success otherwise.

John Hales

REPLY TO JOHN HALES

I read John Hales' letter with equal amazement, as it gives the reader no idea that in the case of both Georgia and Hungary, the issue is a life-and-death struggle between imperialism (in his terms 'societies imbued with liberal values') and socialism. It is not a question of 'foreign armies' entering 'a country' and removing 'a government', but the army of a socialist country giving help to socialists in a socialist country who are trying to prevent the restoration of capitalism.

To deal with John Hales' other arguments point by point. I did not 'reduce the differences between Lenin and Stalin over Georgia to the question of language.' What I did say was that the only specific case of national oppression cited by Comrade Ralph concerned the question of language. In fact, my reply

refers to 'actions' taken by Stalin, but this was not the place to discuss the differences between Lenin and Stalin over the question of Georgia.

The Bolshevik party did not 'suppress political freedom' as such: it suppressed those 'socialist' parties (the Mensheviks and SRs) which, during a civil war, either actually helped (the right wing) or refused to struggle against (the left wing) counter-revolution.

Given British socialists' abysmal record in combatting anti-Sovietism, it ill becomes a British socialist to complain about the supposed 'destruction of democracy in the Bolshevik party'. Let the writer get some elementary class facts straight: 'the peasants' were not against collectivisation, only the rich peasants (kulaks) and sections of the middle peasants and their supporters, that is a minority of the rural population.

Patrick Newman

CAN'T HAPPEN HERE

A cool Friday evening, March eighty-five, Thirty minutes before Leon arrived, Hundreds of protestors peacefully stand, Hundreds of police round the corner in vans, The charge leaps from Transits, the demo explodes, People were screaming as heads hit the road, Truncheons were flying and truncheons were hitting - Bad things were seen at the Battle of Brittan, The steps of the Union were bloodied and smitten - Terrible scenes at the Battle of Brittan.

Shattered and stunned discussed what they saw, A call came for witnesses - up stood Steven Shaw, Said, 'I'm prepared to be counted, to say what I've seen', Didn't realise til later just what this would mean; Harassment and burglary, til finally one day, Off-duty violence from a dark alley way, And Disgusted of Longsight was angrily smitten - 'We've the greatest police in the world here in Britain', And Disgusted of Longsight was angrily smitten - 'Kick the subversives and reds out of Britain'.

Police tried police, independence ignored, We tried to believe it was all above board, The DPP published and Steve's fate was sealed, Complain about your treatment, and your freedom's repealed, They say that they'll charge him if he ever comes home, 'Justice perverted' - a crime of their own, The Director's report was carefully written, But things like corruption don't happen in Britain, No lies were spoken and no lies were written, Coz things like injustice don't happen in Britain.

'It's a few bad apples', the Liberals cry, 'The British Police's standards are high'. Go over to Ireland and ask dead children's mums, Ask Cherry Groce about police use of guns, Ask them in Brixton, in Handsworth, Moss Side, Ask Wapping pickets if Steven Shaw lied, When the statutes come in and the laws are re-written, Who's left to fight for justice in Britain? When the history books shut and the gravestones are written, Will you have fought for justice in Britain? **The Big J, 1987**

The Justice for Stephen Shaw Campaign can be contacted at: c/o Manchester University Students Union, Oxford Road, Manchester M13

POLICE THUGS

Dear FRFI, On Sunday 8 March at 1.30am my sister Anne, my sister Esther, my brother Matthew and two family friends, Louise and Freddie Hand, were returning home from Mr and Mrs Hand's ruby wedding anniversary party.

As they crossed into Warwick Way they were set upon, without warning or excuse, by a mob of police thugs. Esther had the front of her dress ripped and was thrown to the ground, punched and kicked. Louise was also systematically beaten. All five were arrested. Esther, Anne, Matthew and Louise are charged with being drunk and disorderly; Freddie with ABH against a police officer.

As a result of the beating, Esther had extensive bruising all over her arms, legs, chest and back, particularly to the base of the spine. Her feet had to be bound and she has suspected nerve damage in the right foot (she's lost the feeling in two toes). The police stamped on her feet.

Louise had to have one foot and one arm bandaged. She had the same extent of bruising as Esther. She may have suffered internal damage as well.

We are not prepared to allow such gratuitous police violence to go unchallenged. We are suing the police and organising a local benefit in Pittlicote to pay for legal costs. We will fight this case to the end.

Terry O'Halloran
London

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READ FRFI—where the action is

5000 march for Mandela

- One year non-stop picketing
 - Viraj Mendis in sanctuary
 - National conference – Viraj Mendis will stay.
- Stop the deportations**

Over the last year RCG members and supporters have been part of building two of the most successful campaigns in Britain today.

Who hasn't heard of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group's Non-Stop Picket outside the South African embassy, London? A demonstration on the doorstep of apartheid's representatives that has continued day and night since 19 April 1986.

Who hasn't heard of Viraj Mendis, threatened with deportation to Sri Lanka? The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign (VMDC) has burst through to local and national press with their resolute and defiant defence of Viraj's right to stay in Britain.

Both campaigns have built a reputation for being exciting, dynamic and determined. Above all they are successful.

The Non-Stop Picket outside the South African embassy will continue until Nelson Mandela, the recognised leader of the South African people, is free. It has massive support. It has united the broadest possible forces in the fight against British collaboration with apartheid. No one can deny that the Non-Stop Picket is the major anti-apartheid activity taking place in this country. City Group's March for Mandela on 14 March proved that the potential exists for a mass movement against apartheid.

The RCG has fought for this success. Our organisation and our newspaper have played a vital part in the development of this movement.

While young people in London are maintaining the Non-Stop Picket 24 hours a day, new and broad forces have been drawn in to 24 hour activity to defend Viraj Mendis in sanctuary. The VMDC also has mobilised across

the political spectrum. In the last month fascists, encouraged by Waddington and the racist media, thought they could get away with attacking Viraj in sanctuary and his supporters. But the real strength of the VMDC was revealed in the response to these attacks.

Far from being intimidated the VMDC went out to the local community, black youth, students, Anti Fascist Action (AFA), and British socialist organisations to defend the church. The response was immediate and effective. The church and Viraj were defended and the fascists were fended off.

The Non-Stop Picket and the VMDC are virtually the only successful, political activities taking place on the streets of Thatcher's

Britain.

In the last eight years under Thatcher millions of people have been plunged into ever increasing poverty and unemployment. They are at the receiving end of Thatcher's attacks on democratic rights and trade union rights, the escalation in physical and political racist attacks and organised police violence. And Thatcher remains unchallenged.

Millions of people are suffering under Thatcher precisely because of the retreat of the Labour Party and trade union movement. Millions of people are not represented by any party standing for election – the poor, the oppressed, those fighting unemployment and racism. Neither are they represented by any of the major political organisations on

the left who have concentrated entirely on the official Labour and trade union movement.

A real socialist movement in Britain will be spearheaded by anti-racists and anti-imperialists fighting for the fundamental democratic rights of the people against British imperialism – fundamental democratic rights that the Labour Party and trade union movement are selling off one by one.

The political organisation of these forces will lay the basis for a socialist movement in this country. The new fighting movement against British imperialism will attract the best sections of the labour movement who have been betrayed by Kinnock. This new movement will unite all sections of the working-class on the basis

of genuine equality. VMDC and City Group are part of this new movement.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! has given a voice to, and represented the interests of the VMDC and the Non-Stop Picket as it does on all issues facing the working class and oppressed. Only FRFI gives consistent support and coverage to these campaigns and provides political direction for all activists fighting on these issues. This means that FRFI has a critical role to play in mobilising people to build a new movement. A monthly FRFI can no longer provide an adequate organising focus.

At its meeting in March the RCG Political Committee decided to launch a £10,000 fund drive to allow FRFI to go fortnightly

from January 1988. We need £10,000 to pay for the equipment and the full time workers required for a fortnightly paper.

To achieve this target we need your help. You can

- Donate a sum of money on a regular basis.
- Organise fundraising events.
- Ask other supporters for donations.
- Order stocks of FRFI to sell every month.

The target must be reached by October. Six months non-stop fundraising means the RCG can contribute in a very real way to the building of a new movement against racism and imperialism.

Lorna Morgan

SUPPORT THE DRIVE FOR A FORTNIGHTLY FRFI

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April 26: The Soviet Union and the fight against imperialism. (Introduced by Patrick Newman, author of the FRFI series on the Bolshevik revolution.)

May 3: Ireland – the key to the British revolution.

All at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn).

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The success of the February 1917 revolution in Russia was followed by a situation of dual power. The bourgeoisie set up a Provisional Government, the working class and peasantry formed their own organisations, the Soviets (councils). The struggle between the two antagonistic powers was to be the crucial question for the next 8 months of the revolution.

Below: Petrograd workers meeting. Inset the 'socialist' Kerensky, a member of the Provisional Government



THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES formed early 1906, mainly supported by the peasantry and the rural intelligentsia, demanded the socialisation of the land: the Soviet should force the Provisional Government to make concessions. Its left, internationalist wing, was strongly opposed to the war.

THE MENSHEVIKS formed August 1903, based on the labour aristocracy and the petty bourgeoisie, and especially strong in Georgia. Supported the Provisional Government, as it did not consider the working class strong enough to take power. Its left wing was internationalist and supported radical democratic measures.

THE BOLSHEVIKS formed August 1903, communists: supported by the working class and the oppressed: for an alliance of the working class and peasantry to take power via the Soviets.

SECOND in a series of articles on the Russian Revolution 1917. Part 1 was in March

DUAL POWER

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Formally, power lay with the Provisional Government. On 26 February, as the tempo of the revolution seemed to slacken, the Tsar ordered the dissolution of the only existing national representative body, the Duma (Parliament). The next day the deputies were preparing to disperse when it became clear that the insurrection was gaining strength. The deputies from the bourgeois parties and the right Mensheviks hurriedly formed a Provisional Committee.

The Committee tried to make a deal with the Tsar. On 2 March the Committee sent an envoy (Guchkov) to attempt to persuade the Tsar to abdicate in favour of his nephew, Grand Duke Mikhail. When Guchkov read the act of abdication to a crowd of workers and soldiers, they did not reward him with the expected gratitude. He was immediately arrested by the workers and threatened with execution. The Duke himself, when told that the Government could only guarantee him his crown and not his head, prudently preferred to preserve the latter.

The Tsarist dynasty had ended with a whimper, because of its own cowardice. With the utmost reluctance, the Committee then formed the Provisional Government, which took office on 3 March.

The most important posts were in the hands of conservative bourgeois parties. Filling a minor post was the only 'socialist', Kerensky.

The first measures of the Provisional Government seemed very radical: complete amnesty for all political offences; freedom of speech, press, assembly, strikes and trade union association; and abolition of all caste, religious and national limitations. The police were to be replaced by an elected people's militia. Local administrative bodies were to be chosen by direct equal and general ballot. It also declared its intention to hold elections for a Constituent Assembly.

In fact, the Provisional Government was simply yielding before established facts - political prisoners had already been released by popular action, and the police force driven into hiding. It did not call for

the soldiers who had made the revolution to have the right to elect their officers; and the suffrage for the civil administration was for males only.

It avoided the issues affecting the popular masses who had made the revolution: an improvement in the position of the working class; land for the peasantry; and an end to the war.

THE SOVIETS

During the 1905 Revolution the people had formed Soviets as an alternative government. The idea was quickly revived. The Soviet organised the food supplies for Petrograd, controlled the army and communications and withheld financial resources from the old regime.

Above all, the Soviet had the support of the Army. On 1 March it issued Order No 1. Committees were to be elected by all units of the armed forces. Every unit was to obey the Soviets. Off-duty soldiers were to have the same political and civil rights as other citizens; and officers were forbidden to strike soldiers, or to use the humiliating form of address, 'Ty'.

THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP

At first neither the composition of the Soviet nor its leadership truly reflected the revolutionary mood of the people. The soldiers had (proportionally) six times as many delegates as the factory workers; and many members of the intelligentsia who had done little fighting managed to insinuate themselves into the Soviet.

On 27 February, the leadership of the Soviet, the Executive Committee, was formed by right-wing Mensheviks. As deputies in the Tsarist Duma they had access to suitable meeting rooms in the Duma building (the Tauride Palace); others released from prison earlier that day headed straight for the Tauride. Bolsheviks released at the same time made a different choice: they went to the Vyborg District to join in the fighting.

Why didn't the mass of workers and soldiers seize power directly through the Soviets? There were two related reasons: the bourgeoisie was class conscious and well organised,

the workers and peasants were not, as yet.

THE CRAFTY BOURGEOIS

The ruling classes knew how to appear to be revolutionary with a capital R. 'People who had no more to do with the revolution than last year's snows...' noticed the journalist Sukhanov '... now overflowed with love of liberty...'

The intoxicating mood of the first weeks of the revolution meant that the people gladly welcomed everyone who said they were in favour of the revolution. At the political meetings which went on night and day, audiences were not so much interested in what was said as in the revolutionary enthusiasm of the speakers.

So a communist soldier watched an amazing scene at one of the naval bases. An elderly officer almost certainly loyal to the Tsar until a few days previously declared himself to be a 'Christian socialist', shouting in a hysterical voice 'Long Live the great Russian revolution!'. All the sailors sprang to their feet - the deceitful officer got more applause than anyone.

WHY THE REVOLUTION SUCCEEDED SO EASILY

This was the price of the ease with which the revolution succeeded. Only in the capital city, Petrograd, was there an active revolutionary movement. Elsewhere, the old administration gave way without a struggle. In the second city, Moscow, street demonstrations took place only after the victory in Petrograd; there were no barricades, and no shooting in the streets. There was virtually no movement at all in the countryside.

The revolution succeeded so quickly and, as it seemed, so radically, '... as a result of an extremely unique historical situation, absolutely dissimilar currents, absolutely heterogeneous class interests, absolutely contrary political and social strivings have merged, and in a strikingly "harmonious" manner.'

(Lenin, 'Letters From Afar First Letter' CW 23 p303).

Lenin considered this to be 'The

First Stage of the First Revolution'. The next stage would see class interests assert themselves more and more strongly, with a corresponding increase in tension between the Provisional Government and the Soviets. The strength of popular feeling was so great that in this struggle the openly bourgeois parties were of little significance - the political battles were fought out between 3 parties which all considered themselves to be 'socialist': the Socialist Revolutionaries; the Mensheviks; and the Bolsheviks. How did each of these parties propose to resolve the situation of dual power?

THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARIES (SRs)

For the first 5 months of the revolution, the SRs were apparently by far the strongest party. They had more delegates (400 out of 2,500) to the Petrograd Soviet than the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks put together. In Petrograd, they drew their support from two main sources - the soldiers, who were mainly peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie; in Moscow, they also had a strong attraction for the peasant-workers who formed a much larger proportion (27%) of the workforce than in Petrograd.

The petty bourgeoisie - professional people, white-collar workers, and small traders - joined the SRs in large numbers. The upper middle classes did so because their traditional party, the Kadets, was too obviously conservative; the lower, a powerless social class, because the SRs' vague radicalism seemed to promise an improvement in their position without a struggle.

The SRs were 'Socialist' in name only, as they considered the socialisation of industry premature under Russian conditions; and their claim to be 'Revolutionaries' was equally misleading. They did not desire the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, only a substantial series of concessions by the bourgeoisie to the peasantry and workers.

Outside the towns, the SRs had widespread support among the peasantry and the rural intelligentsia, based on their agrarian programme demanding that land was 'to belong

to all the people', a central feature of the SR programme since its first party congress (1906).

THE MENSHEVIKS

At its first effective congress, July-August 1903, the Russian socialist movement split into two groups. The majority, the Bolsheviks (literally 'Majorityites') wanted a centralised, disciplined organisation of committed revolutionaries; the minority, the Mensheviks, ('Minorityites') thought that a loose organisation, which included well-intentioned sympathisers, would suffice.

This expressed different political conceptions of the Russian revolution. The Mensheviks considered that in a backward, mainly agricultural country such as Russia, the conditions were not ripe for a struggle for socialism. The working class was to support the liberal bourgeoisie in a struggle against Tsarism, to ensure the victory of capitalism which alone could create the material preconditions for socialism. Thus the working class party did not need to be organised for a direct struggle for power, only to support the bourgeoisie. The Mensheviks feared and distrusted the peasantry as a 'dark force' of ignorance and reaction.

In 1917, the Mensheviks' position was very similar to that of the SRs: the Soviets should pressurise the Provisional Government into making concessions to the working class and peasantry, but their ultimate objective was a democratic capitalist republic.

In the towns they were supported by the backward workers and the labour aristocracy which, compared to Europe, was an insignificant social group. Nationally, the Mensheviks' power base was Georgia, an area in which small traders and middle peasants predominated.

THE BOLSHEVIKS

Since 1903, the Bolsheviks had consistently argued for a revolutionary alliance between the working class and the peasantry, recognising that the bourgeoisie would not carry through the struggle against Tsarism. Because of its opposition to the

war, it had suffered severe repression. Nonetheless, in 1917 it had substantial support among the factory workers in Petrograd. Yet it was a tiny minority in the Soviets, lagging well behind the Mensheviks. Although its programme expressed the interests of the peasantry, it had as yet little direct influence outside the towns.

At the outbreak of the revolution it had no centralised leadership inside Russia. During the revolutionary days Bolshevik workers, especially in the Vyborg District, played a leading role, but acting as collectively-minded class-conscious workers rather than being directed by a party centre.

With the fall of the dynasty, Lenin, in exile in Switzerland wrote 5 'Letters from Afar' (7-26 March), explaining the tasks of the party. Essentially, the Provisional Government should not be trusted, as it would not bring peace, bread, freedom and land. At first the Bolshevik Party in Russia adopted the same position. Its paper, *Pravda* ('Truth') reappeared on 5 March under the editorship of Molotov, denouncing the Provisional Government as 'a government of capitalists and landowners'. Vyborg District party resolutions called for the recognition of the Soviet as a provisional revolutionary government.

However, from 13 March, when Stalin and Kamenev took over the editorship of *Pravda* and under the influence of the middle-class elements of the Party leadership, the party veered sharply right, towards the Mensheviks. The Provisional Government was now to be supported 'insofar as' it took measures favourable to the working class and peasantry.

The struggle to decide the vital issues of the revolution - peace, land and freedom - was only just beginning, yet the only previously consistent revolutionary party seemed to be joining the ranks of the opportunists. How did the Bolshevik Party re-arm itself? How did the masses react to the growing struggle for power between the Provisional Government and the Soviets?

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