

FIGHT RACISMS! FIGHT IMPERIALISMS!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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IRISH REPUBLICANS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE TARGET FOR BRITISH IMPERIALISM: PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS THE FUNERAL OF CHILD SHOT BY THE BRITISH ARMY DURING INTERMENT WEEK 1971/COLMAN DOYLE



THATCHER'S TARGETS

- SINGLE UNEMPLOYED YOUNG PEOPLE
- PENSIONERS
- THE UNEMPLOYED
- SICK AND DISABLED PEOPLE
- THE POOR
- BLACK PEOPLE
- IRISH REPUBLICANS
- COUNCIL TENANTS
- THE HOMELESS
- SCHOOL CHILDREN
- TEACHERS
- HEALTH WORKERS
- MINERS
- TRADE UNIONISTS
- GAYS AND LESBIANS
- UNMARRIED COUPLES
- IN OTHER WORDS, YOU

THATCHER'S HIT LIST

THE BUDGET: A lesson in class politics page 2
IRELAND: THE MURDER MACHINE centre pages

Contemptuously brushing aside its critics, the Thatcher government used the 1988 budget to appeal to the naked greed of its constituency and crudely line the pockets of the rich. The wealthiest 5 per cent of the population will receive a net handout in 1988-9 of nearly £2bn or 45 per cent of the total net tax cut, primarily from a reduction in the top rate of tax to 40 per cent. An amount that is approximately equivalent to the shortfall in government funding of the National Health Service between 1981 and 1987. DAVID REED reports.

THE BUDGET - A LESSON IN CLASS POLITICS

The budget is a lesson in class politics. Any appeal for compassion for the less well off is dismissed with the usual series of half-truths (that is lies) and vulgar prejudices which have become the hallmark of Thatcher governments. In reality there has been a massive transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich. If you earn £70,000 a year then, at a stroke, the budget gave you an extra £150 a week - to encourage incentive and enterprise, we are told. On £8,000 a year you gain £3 a week. However, if you rely on social security benefits then the new legislation will mean that at least 43 per cent of claimants will be worse off. This estimate comes from the government's own Social Security Advisory Committee, and has the merit, at least, of exposing Thatcher's and her ministers' lies. The reality is almost certainly worse. Government figures show that £613m will be lost to claimants by the new system in one year. No incentives or enterprise for the poor, just a battering.

The budget reduced inheritance tax on a £2m estate by £345,000. At the same time the new social security changes will force those most in need to go into debt, to take a loan to pay for one-off household items such as cookers and beds. Previously there had been grants. The amount given to the rich by the reduction in inheritance tax (£200m in 1989/90) is almost equal to the amount allotted to the Social Fund (£210m) from which loans for one-off household items will be paid. What a lesson in class politics! No disguising whose interests are served here.

The overall tax people pay, including National Insurance Contributions (NICs), VAT and rates, is still higher today than in 1978 before Thatcher took office. A married couple, one working, on the average wage paid 40.5 per cent of income in taxation in 1978 compared to 22.4 per cent today. What has occurred however is a continuous reduction in taxation for those on higher incomes - a redistribution of income from the poor to the rich. The top rate of income tax in Britain, 40 per cent, is now the second lowest of the largest capitalist countries - the lowest is the US with 34.7 per cent. The starting rate of tax at 25 per cent is the second highest - the lowest is France with 12.5 per cent.

Once NICs are taken into account, as well as the reduction in income tax, it becomes clear how the tax system benefits the rich. National Insurance is paid on all income up to £15,860 a year. At that point it is cut off and not paid on any additional income. The full rate of 9 per cent is paid on incomes above £5,460. Between £5,460 and £15,860 a year the marginal tax rate (tax paid on every additional pound earned) is 14 per cent. Between £15,860 and £21,905 it falls to 25 per cent and above £21,905 it rises to 40 per cent. So the marginal rate of tax for someone earning £400 a week is 9 per cent less than someone on £105 a week, and that of someone earning £2000 a week is only 6 per cent higher than someone on £105 a week. The statistics show the effects of this: a married couple, one working, on half the average income pays more tax (income tax and NICs only) in 1988 than 1978 - 18 per cent of income compared to 16 per cent; someone on the average income pays slightly less, 26.0 per cent compared to 27.8 per cent. Then come the real winners: if you earned twice the average income you pay 27.8 per cent in 1988 compared to 31.4 per cent in 1978, and on ten times the average income 37.6 per cent compared to 66.5 per cent in 1978.

Lawson boasted that no one anymore would have to pay a higher rate of tax than 40 per cent. He was talking about his own class. The poor are not even considered. Once the social security changes are taken into account, on conservative estimates, at least 500,000 families will have marginal tax rates between 60 and 90 per cent. This arises from the rapid withdrawal of means tested benefits as incomes of the poor rise very slightly. Unlike the rich, some of the poor will keep just a few pence of each additional pound they earn.



Left: Nigel Lawson, right: Kinnock scared off

PANDERING TO PREJUDICE

Even Lawson's so-called tax reforms which might formally appear progressive, such as the independent taxation of married women, pander to Tory prejudices and class interests. The married couples' allowance, the difference between the current married man's allowance and single person allowance, will still be assigned to the husband, who will be allowed to transfer it to his wife if he has insufficient income to use it fully. This means that if the husband is not earning, the couple will be worse off under the new system - previously the full married man's allowance was transferable. But if the husband is earning and his wife has investment income, the couple will be better off. Both the husband and wife will now be able to have full use of the capital gains tax exemption of £5,000 each.

In line with Tory prejudices the budget changes, 'to remove the tax penalty on marriage', penalises unmarried couples who have children - they will now only be able to claim one additional personal allowance between them. Mortgage interest relief will no longer relate to the person but the property bought. This will limit tax relief available to a group of first time buyers buying a home jointly while allowing wealthy couples to buy a second home with the benefit of tax relief on both homes. This 'tax reform' benefits wealthier and generally older married couples.

KINNOCK DISOWNS PROTEST

The budget was indeed a lesson in class politics. What it required was an equally strong working class response. But in Parliament, at least, it was not to be allowed. A Scottish Nationalist MP was removed from the House for disrupting the prayers before the budget speech and the Labour left showed a flicker of real life when it forced an unprecedented suspension of proceedings by chanting 'shame' in unison as a protest at the Chancellor's crude class measures. But all this was very quickly stamped on when Kinnock got up to speak. As usual we were treated to moral indignation and bluster but no demand for action until it came to putting down those who disrupted the Chancellor's speech. 'I say to my comrades: do not get mad, get even...' 'In this House, and elsewhere in this democracy, argument is always superior to the course of action we have seen this afternoon'.

If nine years of Thatcher governments have taught us anything, it is that the ruling class has little time for argument or democracy when pushing through its own class interests. Class power is what changes things. Parliament is merely the rubber stamp. The Labour Party under Kinnock has excluded, isolated and demobilised anyone, inside or outside the Labour Party concerned to take up and fight for the interests of the working class and oppressed. Today as a result we have the pathetic spectacle of a Labour Party forced to rely on the unelected, anachronistic House of Lords merely to place the tiniest obstacle to Thatcher steamrolling through her reactionary class programme. This is the context in which a disruption of the Chancellor's speech is to be welcomed as some sign of political life.

But real class power lies outside Parliament. The next election is of little consequence to those facing real poverty and deprivation now. Kinnock's statesmanlike posturing is a distraction to the task facing us now. For Thatcher will only be stopped when ordinary working class people on her hit list start hitting back. ■

The fight for gay rights

Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill will become law on 1 June. Fortunately, the clause, far from driving people back into the closet, is drawing more and more people to come out. People who have never been involved in any kind of politics before are now becoming politically active. DAVE McLEOD reports.

After an emergency demonstration in London, when 12,000 people marched at only three weeks' notice, it was the turn of Manchester. On 20 February almost 25,000 marched in the largest demonstration for lesbian and gay rights ever, outside of the United States.

This magnificent demonstration was called by the North West Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Equality (NWCLGE). Anderton must have had orders from God to lay off as there was a very low police presence. There were, however, as many anti-Anderton chants as there were against Clause 28.

There is now considerable debate about the way forward. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) argue that motions must be pass-

ed by local authorities, Labour Party wards and trade union branches to refuse to implement the law. They also argue for motions to defend those who fall foul of the clause. Fighting for non-compliance is vital but it would be extremely politically naive to rely on the Labour Party and trade unions. The Labour Party never seriously opposed the clause in parliament. When it comes to the crunch both they and the trade union leadership will sell out, as they usually do.

The lesbian and gay movement must fight to forge links with other oppressed sections. Clause 28 must be part of a broader campaign making links with black people, Irish people, health workers, the unemployed, tenants' associations, anti-deportation campaigns and national liberation solidarity groups.

It would be a major political mistake not to make these links. Only when the oppressed rise up and fight back en masse will the imperialists concede anything. ■

Gay teacher wins

AURIEL FRENCH

Dr Austin Allen was sacked from his job at Grange Upper School on 14 March by Bradford Education Authority for allegedly discussing homosexuality with his pupils. But on Monday 21 March, this decision was overturned by a unanimous vote of Bradford Council Labour Group who launched an inquiry into the case.

Dr Allen denied that he discussed sex with his pupils, but said he had answered a question from them about being gay.

Disregarding warnings not to speak to the press, Dr Allen campaigned to get his job back. Teachers at the Grange and other



Dr Austin Allen

Bradford schools planned a half day strike in support of Dr Allen; he received over 100 messages and letters of support from all over the country, including from former pupils. In the face of this fight back the Education Authority hurriedly had to rethink their decision. After hearing of the Labour Group's vote Dr Allen said, 'I think the events of the past two weeks have highlighted the potential problems that Clause 28 will create'. His actions and solidarity from his fellow teachers and the community show too that it is possible to fight for gay rights and win. ■

Abortion rights attacked

SUE SWATRIDGE

By the end of March David Alton's anti-abortion Bill had completed the committee stage in the House of Commons. Alton and his supporters had every reason to celebrate.

The 18 week upper limit remains intact. Only two amendments were accepted: abortion will be allowed after 18 weeks for severely deformed fetuses; and for women under 18 who have been raped or suffered incest. According to the perverted minds of the anti-abortionists, women over 18 who have been raped or suffered incest are less traumatised and would therefore realise that they were pregnant within the 18 week limit.

If the Bill goes through with the 18 week time limit intact, the effective time limit will be 15 or 16 weeks. Thousands more women will be denied the right to abortion. Already the deterioration in the NHS is preventing working class women from actually getting abortions under the present legislation.

The 'exemptions', insulting and degrading in character, will not be available to the majority of women. The so-called 'compromise' positions of 20, 22 or 24 weeks will not effect the fundamental reality of the Bill: that even fewer working class women will have access to abortion. Alton regards this as the first step to the outlawing of all abortions within twenty years.

The Fight the Alton Bill campaign must not only, even at this late stage, reach out to win the active support of working class women, it must also be the start of a positive campaign for real access to abortion for all women. ■

No fascists

TONY OPENSHAW

The VMDC has participated in all the events called by NWCLGE and spoke at the 3,000 strong Leeds anti-Clause 28 march. VMDC will be supporting the national march in London. NWCLGE, for their part, have agreed to join the VMDC's Friday march on 8 April, the national day of action against the clause.

At the Lesbian and Gay conference on 12 March, Kursad Kahramanoglu, Chair, opened by supporting the NWCLGE's press officer who until two years ago was a leading member of the National Front. This fact was kept from the majority of NWCLGE members.

After heated arguments and a walkout by women's groups and two VMDC members, the organisers agreed to a debate. The conference rejected the NWCLGE's motion and agreed to complete opposition to all forms of oppression including racism and fascism.

To fight effectively against Clause 28 the NWCLGE must tackle racism and fascism seriously. It must also fight openly and democratically attracting the broadest range of forces. ■

Ex-tyrant visits Britain

JONATHAN COHEN

The Dalai Lama, who visits Britain in April, once presided over Tibet's barbaric feudal system where impoverished serfs could be maimed, blinded or killed at the whim of landowners and powerful monks. His supporters attempted to carry out an armed revolt against democratic reforms in 1959, but were defeated and fled to India. They received CIA arms and training until 1972. More recently the US and Britain have been encouraging China's reactionary policies over Kampuchea and Afghanistan, and many British companies have a stake in China's rapid economic development. So Britain would not insult China by officially inviting the Dalai; instead, 'unofficial' channels are used to keep the Tibetan nationalist option open for when it is needed to attack socialism in China.

Britain's right wing and liberal media will parrot the Dalai's groundless allegations of 'genocide' in Tibet while praising this ex-tyrant to the skies. Anyone who sees the Dalai as some sort of 'national liberation' figure should cast away their illusions. ■

BIRMINGHAM SIX

Health threatened

JIM O'ROURKE

Gareth Peirce, solicitor for the Birmingham Six, has told FRFI about the men's health. She warned 'They cannot continue indefinitely in fighting spirits'. She described serving a sentence for something you have not done as a 'perpetual assault on the sanity.'

Hugh Callaghan has a history of nervous illness and a duodenal ulcer. He has been in and out of hospital since September and missed several days of the appeal because he was coughing up blood. Gerry Hunter and Paddy Hill appear to be under great strain.

What the men are up against was made clear by Lord Denning, former Master of the Rolls, when he said on television that 'confidence' in the law was more important than freeing innocent people: 'I would put aside all those... cases in favour of upholding our system of justice.' Framed Irish prisoners must stay in prison because their release would expose 'our' system of justice for what it is: a ruling class instrument of repression.

The only answer to this, more urgent now than ever

given the men's health, is to build an effective campaign. The weakness of the present campaign was shown by the Irish in Britain Representation Group demonstration on 20 March which attracted only 700 people.

The weakness of the campaign stems from the decision to rely only on 'respectable' methods of campaigning aimed at winning the support of middle class and bourgeois elements. Now, before it is too late, there must be a decisive turn to involving all forces in the fight. This is crucial as the men seek leave to appeal to the House of Lords.

FRFI is therefore calling for a united national demonstration. RCG and Manchester Irish Solidarity Committee comrades have won the support of the North West Birmingham Six Campaign for this call. The Free the Framed Irish Prisoners Campaign has written to the London Birmingham Six Support Group urging their support. Only a united effort along these lines has a chance of creating sufficient pressure to secure the men's release. ■



British soldier at Republican funeral with gun

Cops get film

TERRY O'HALLORAN Secretary, London Freelance Branch, NUJ

On Monday 21 March the BBC and ITN refused an RUC request for untransmitted film of the killing of two British soldiers at a Republican funeral. Both organisations said they would not release the material without a court order.

On Tuesday 22 March Thatcher attacked the BBC and ITN in Parliament: 'Either one is on the side of justice in these matters or one is on the side of terrorism.'

On Wednesday 23 March the RUC threatened to arrest senior TV executives under Section 11 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984 and Section 13 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. Both the BBC and ITN immediately caved in.

Two things stand out in this shabby episode. Firstly Thatcher's linking of establishment bourgeois institutions such as ITN and BBC with 'terrorism' marks a step forward in the government campaign to obliterate all traces of independence in the media.

Secondly the cowardly behaviour of the BBC and ITN has set a precedent for the use of the PTA and EPA to obtain film from journalists. This precedent will undoubtedly be used to strengthen police efforts to use journalists as their spies.

So far the NUJ and other media unions have confined themselves to verbal protests. What is needed is a serious consistent campaign among union members to win their support for action to defend the independence of journalists from the control of the state. ■

THATCHER IN TURKEY

It was smiles all the way as Margaret Thatcher lapped up the adoration of Turkey's fascist rulers. This renowned opponent of terrorism and defender of human rights had nothing to say on the Turkish regime's torture of political prisoners and outlawing of political opponents, during her April visit. Instead, Thatcher served as an emissary of British finance, construction and engineering capital, which are seeking to increase their stake in Turkey. ■

On Monday 21 March 600 people packed Conway Hall in Red Lion Square to commemorate the 28th anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 when 69 people were gunned down in cold blood. On 21 March 1960 thousands of black people answered the PAC's call and marched on police stations throughout South Africa in peaceful protest against the pass laws. It was a turning point for the liberation struggle. The commemoration rally organised by City AA, was in itself an historic occasion. It was certainly the largest rally ever to be held in London to commemorate Sharpeville. It was also unique in assembling representatives from all sections of the South African liberation struggle. JENNY SUTTON reports.

It was about time such a rally happened. Over the years there has been a concerted attempt to wipe the PAC's role in the Anti-Pass Campaign out of the history books. As Gora Ebrahim, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the PAC said in his speech:

'What has been written in blood cannot be rewritten in cheap ink'

Sharing the platform with Cde Ebrahim were Oupa Ngwenya, head of the Cultural Secretariat of AZAPO, David Kitson, ANC (suspended) and former South African political prisoner, Comrade Vi from SWANU and Anton Raja of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. British representatives were David Reed of the Revolutionary Communist Group, Sharon Atkin, Mike Howe of the Humanist Party and Ronnie Tomlinson from City AA. It was, as David Reed pointed out, a rally of the banned.

'City AA was banned from the official Anti-Apartheid Movement. David Kitson, after serving 20 years in prison fighting apartheid, is banned in some Anti-Apartheid Movement circles for refusing to condemn City Group. Sharon Atkin was banned from being a Labour candidate after justly calling the Labour Party racist... SWANU of Namibia is banned from platforms of the official Anti-Apartheid Movement... history has demonstrated... that banning a fighting movement only strengthens it... this is a rally of the banned, and therefore a rally of future victories...'

Chaired by Carol Brickley, convener of City AA: the rally reflected City AA's principled stand of support for all sections of the liberation struggle. Speakers throughout the evening paid tribute to those who died at Sharpeville and Langa and the role of the PAC in the 1960 Campaign. They were united also in their commitment to no compromise, and no collaboration, with the apartheid regime. Gora Ebrahim summed up the mood of the evening:

'The vehicle for change in apartheid South Africa can never be the regime... the genuine vehicle for change... can only be the oppressed, exploited, disenfranchised and dispossessed

REMEMBER SHARPEVILLE

struggle will not end before the masses of the people have achieved their freedom, their justice and their democracy; that is, until national liberation and socialism have been established in South Africa... that is why, while supporting unconditionally all sections of the movement fighting apartheid in South Africa, our solidarity as communists is aimed at bolstering the people fighting for national liberation and socialist revolution. We do this by giving support to all those fighting apartheid in South Africa, so ensuring that the representatives of the black working class and oppressed have a voice in Britain...'

Linking the struggles in Britain and South Africa Cde Gora Ebrahim emphasised the need to challenge racism in Britain: a fundamental principle of City AA's solidarity work:



Gora Ebrahim speaking

otiated... but... can only be realised by waging an unconditional and protracted armed struggle...'

Oupa Ngwenya, from AZAPO, stressed the need for struggle encompassing and uniting all political trends in the movement.

'We have always stood for the non-sectarian principle... we are in no way political dentists, to extract Mandela amongst the rest of the political prisoners... we value each and every tooth on the bone-crunching jaw that needs to crush to dust the system of racism and capitalism...'

David Reed from the RCG focussed on the importance of democracy for the future of the struggle in South Africa and Britain; without democracy the working class and the oppressed and therefore the fight for socialism will be silenced:

As a communist, I want to see the black working class and oppressed win power in South Africa, for only if that happens is it certain that the

'We in Britain are increasingly feeling the sharp edge of imperialism. That is why we are here today in solidarity with the South African struggle. Britain, South Africa's oldest partner and mentor is now going down the same road that the Botha regime has gone... Mr Thatcher won't even pick up a telephone to help save the Sharpeville Six. It has produced a rich man's budget and the poor people's despair, it is cutting education, scuppering the health service, introducing the Poll Tax and trying to destroy the trade unions, and does not stop at shooting unarmed Irish people...'

The rally was in essence an expression of revolutionary opposition to imperialism both in South Africa and Britain. It is the imperialist past and present of the British state which not only shapes its foreign policy and its racism, but also underpins the ideology and practice of Labour leaders who David Kitson described as 'reformist and supine'.

Only the widest and most democratic movement which is willing to challenge its enemies head on will ensure freedom. As David Reed said:

'How can you support the democratic rights of the fighting people of South Africa when you deny those rights to the people in the solidarity movements in Britain...? How can you insist on choosing which section of the movement is to receive that support? It is for the people of South Africa to determine who shall lead their struggles, and not the British Anti-Apartheid Movement. Anything else is British racism, part of that imperialist legacy that has done so much to weaken the British working class movement over the years... the solidarity movement in Britain has to be non-sectarian, open and democratic... for only a movement of the more oppressed sections of the working class in Britain can give the kind of solidarity which will support the forces in South Africa fighting for liberation and socialism...'

After the rally the audience and speakers marched down to the South African Embassy led by Batucada Mandela and City AA singers to the Non-Stop Picket - the practical expression of the political message of the rally. The police tried to stop the demonstration from marching in the road - but in City Group fashion, the march entered Trafalgar Square in procession to hold a short torchlit rally outside the Embassy and place wreaths and flowers at the gates in memory of the Sharpeville dead and in honour of the movement they died for. *Aluta Continua.* ■

Two years non-stop against apartheid

In its two years the picket has:

- Fought and won a campaign against the police ban on demonstrating outside the South African embassy.
- Supported politically and financially the magnificent strike by the South African National Union of Mineworkers.
- Launched campaigns for Moses Mayekiso and the Sharpeville Six.
- Collected more than £7000 for the families of political prisoners.
- Collected over 600,000 signatures on the release Mandela petition.
- Held mass rallies to commemorate the Soweto uprising, the Sharpeville massacre, for South African women's day, for Mandela's birthday, for Moses Mayekiso and his four comrades, for the Sharpeville Six, and held Christmas on the picket twice.
- Continued to resist racist and sexist police harassment and won 94% of all charges brought against picketers.
- Received coverage in South African newspapers, *The Sowetan*, *New Nation* and *The Weekly Mail*.

The Non-Stop Picket continues as the main focus of anti-apartheid activity in Britain. Thousands of people, mainly young, have become involved in the struggle against apartheid and British collaboration through participating in the picket. One of the most important developments in City Group in the second year of the picket is regular panel discussions involving political activists from Britain and Southern Africa which are open to all members of City AA and members of the public. Through the panel discussions activists are regularly learning about the struggle against apartheid from representatives of different trends in the liberation movement.

The success of the Non-Stop Picket's struggle against the sectarianism of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and its allies and the non-stop harassment from the Metropolitan Police is due to the dedication and commit-

ment of all City Group members and supporters. City Group has always put to the fore the interests of the South African masses and proved that consistent and principled action against apartheid is the way forward for building a real, active and democratic movement against apartheid. The RCG is fully committed to the Non-Stop Picket and urge all our readers to march with City Group on 16 April to celebrate two years of non-stop action against apartheid and join us outside the South African embassy until Nelson Mandela is free. ■



'The picket is very popular in South Africa. When the people cannot express themselves it helps to relieve the tension to know that people in Britain are sacrificing themselves to your cold weather. Keep going.'

Joyce Mokhesi, sister of Francis Mokhesi one of the Sharpeville Six, speaking to FRFI immediately before her return to South Africa.

YEAR TWO

1987

April South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU), Postal workers and mineworkers on strike against apartheid. 18,000 railway workers are sacked and six are shot dead by South African police. Territorial Support Group officers and the 1986 Public Order Act are used against us.

May White-only elections are held in South Africa on 6 May. 1.5 million black workers and 500,000 students participate in mass stay away demonstrations in protest. City Group members, Adam, Liz and Irene throw paint on the embassy. The police move the picket to Duncannon Street. City AA defies the police ban and in seven 172 of us are arrested for demonstrating outside the embassy.

June SARHWU wins its strike and the 18,000 workers are reinstated. Botha renews the State of Emergency. Paul Boateng MP, addresses us on the picket on the anniversary of the Sowetan Uprising and pledges his support for the campaign against the police ban.

July COSATU adopts the Freedom Charter. Nelson Mandela is 69 on 18 July. City AA defeats police ban and we return to the pavement outside the embassy. Nine Labour MPs join the picket. 300 people attend City AA's rally 'Under attack - We fight back.'

August South African National Union of Mineworkers (SANUM) launches greatest strike in South African history for improved wages. 352,000 black miners go on strike affecting 52 gold mines and collieries. The strike lasts for seven weeks. 44,000 miners are sacked,

300 are arrested and nine are murdered. SANUM returns to work securing the reinstatement of sacked miners, improved holiday allowance and death benefits. City AA holds a rally and public meeting in support of SANUM, sends £500 to the solidarity fund and pickets Consolidated Goldfields.

September South African Defence Force troops invade Angola. South African backed terror in Mozambique and Zimbabwe increases. The jury at Southwark Crown Court refuses to convict Adam, Liz and Irene for throwing paint on the embassy on 6 May. City AA lobbies the TUC and Labour Party conferences.

October South African terror against the frontline states continues. 400 members of the South African controlled South West Africa Territorial Force refuse to fight in Angola. The trial of Moses Mayekiso and his four comrades begins. 1000 people join City AA's March for Moses Mayekiso. The picket survives the hurricane!

November Govan Mbeki (ANC) and John Nkosi (PAC) are released unconditionally from apartheid jails after 25 years. City Limits magazine presents the picket with their award for 'Best demo' '87.

December AZAPO and NACTU activists are detained. AAM AGM refuses to support all forces fighting against racism and apartheid in Southern Africa and votes not to support any of the existing campaigns for Moses Mayekiso. Two black picketers, Ronnie and Tunde, are viciously attacked by police on the

picket. Adam and Jimmy are attacked on a tube train by three men claiming to be off duty police officers.

1988

January Fighting between supporters of Inkatha and the UDF in Pietermaritzburg escalates.

City AA steps up the campaign to save the lives of the Sharpeville Six. MPs Terry Fields and Keith Vaz lead a delegation to Downing Street. City AA members obstruct Zola Budd in the Gateshead race. Tyneside AA had previously agreed to a 'no disruption' deal with Labour councillors.

February The apartheid regime bans 17 anti-apartheid organisations and places restrictions on COSATU. City AA and AAM mobilise for an immediate protest outside the embassy. The AAM tries to impose its own bans on speaking rights for City AA and the RCG.

March Botha sets 18 March as the execution date for the Sharpeville Six. City AA holds a press conference, a delegation to Downing Street and mass rallies outside the embassy. 600 people attend City AA's rally on 21 March to commemorate the Sharpeville massacre. The *New Nation* newspaper is closed down. City AA launches a campaign to close down South African Airways, No Rights, No Flights.

April ANC representative Dulcie September is murdered in Paris and anti-apartheid activist and author Albie Sachs is seriously injured by a car bomb outside his house in Maputo, Mozambique. City AA celebrates two years of non-stop action against apartheid.

SHARPEVILLE SIX: AAM sectarianism continues

LORNA REID

As soon as the execution date for the Sharpeville Six was announced (Friday 18 March), RCG and City AA comrades organised an intensive programme of action to save their lives, including a press conference followed by a delegation to Downing Street and mass rallies outside the South African embassy.

Comrade Gora Ebrahim, Foreign Affairs Secretary of the Pan African Congress addressed City AA's press conference on Wednesday 16 March. He described the proposed executions as 'judicial murder' and said

'The aim of the regime to carry out these executions is specifically to intimidate and terrorise the dispossessed and oppressed majority in our country... If the regime goes ahead and carries out the executions we are convinced that to do this on the eve of the 28th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre will result in a new turning point in the struggle.'

Sharon Atkin and Andy Higginbottom, secretary of City AA, also spoke at the press conference which was chaired by Norma Kitson. The press conference was followed by a delegation to Downing Street to hand in City AA's letter to Mrs Thatcher demanding that she directly intervene on behalf of the Sharpeville Six.

City AA mobilised for mass rallies outside the South African embassy on Tuesday lunchtime, Wednesday and Thursday evening. The AAM had organised a similar plan of action. However, at a time when the maximum unity was required to mobilise hundreds of people for the Sharpeville Six the vicious sectarianism of the AAM was given a new lease of life.

On Wednesday 16 March 400 people demonstrated outside the South African embassy, the majority of them non-stop picket supporters. Immediately City AA offered joint platform and chairing, but the AAM refused. City AA carried on with its rally undaunted by the AAM's attempts at disruption, allowing all organisations present to speak. When the AAM announced an ANC speaker, everyone with City AA remained quiet and listened. Following a minutes silence City AA's chair, Richard Roques, announced a Black Consciousness Movement speaker: the AAM tried to disrupt his speech - the interruptions were led by Clive Nelson, full time worker for the AAM. Whilst Botha was preparing to commit another outrage against black people in South Africa, the AAM was concentrating on trying to silence representatives of the liberation movement.

When it became clear that City AA were not going to be intimidated Nelson called for talks. His immediate demands were that SWANU, the BCM and the RCG would not be allowed to speak, and the only posters at the front of the picket would be AAM placards. City AA told him to go and impose his bans elsewhere. After two years of Non-Stop struggle against apartheid, the police, the embassy and fascists, City AA was not going to disappear or abandon democracy at the behest of Nelson. The AAM's rabble was unable to silence

City AA's rally as all the speakers continued to address the crowd above their noise. The only time Nelson and his officials bowed to pressure to share speaking rights was on Tuesday afternoon when the press and media were reporting the picket, which was supported by a number of Labour MPs.

Despite the AAM publicising a continuous vigil outside the embassy from 6pm Wednesday to 9am Friday, they packed up and went home on Thursday after the stay of execution had been announced. On Thursday afternoon 150 black students from Brixton college marched from their college to the Non-Stop Picket to protest about the proposed execution, fully aware that the fight to save the lives of the Sharpeville Six must not stop.

SOUTH AFRICA NOTES

NO RIGHTS! NO FLIGHTS!



Security staff assaulting a City AA member during the occupation of South African Airways.

City of London Anti-Apartheid Group has occupied South African Airways offices in Oxford Circus four times in the last month, on each occasion forcing the racists to lock their doors and cease business. On the third occasion the protestors were assaulted by the Airways' own security guards, expelled, and then arrested by the police outside for highway obstruction. Then the magistrate at Marylebone court places imposed bail conditions on the defendants not to re-enter the offices. It's called collaboration! The campaign goes on...

DEJA VU (We've seen it all before)

In response to the projected Rugby tour of South Africa, and the rumoured participation of Welsh 'rugger' players, Hanif Bhamjee, titular head of Welsh AAM, threw caution to the winds. He warned Welsh players who might tour South Africa to think again... participation might imperil Cardiff's chances of hosting the 1994 Commonwealth Games. This is called getting your priorities straight. Readers of FRFI will remember the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games in 1986 when the AAM threw all its resources into sabotaging the black nations' boycott. Bob Hughes MP, AAM Chair had to muster all his allies to whitewash the whole affair. More whitewash has been ordered...

Apartheid terror: home and abroad

On Monday 21 March, millions of black South African workers took part in a mass stayaway to commemorate the massacre of 89 people at Sharpeville and Langa in 1960. The regime continued its programme of terror inside and outside the country: hangings, cross-border raids and assassinations are the order of the day. The regime is pushing the law to prevent foreign funding for anti-apartheid organisations, but on the far-right, the fascists of the AWB and Conservative Party are gaining ground. CAROL BRICKLEY reports on the last month's events in South Africa.

SAVE THE SHARPEVILLE 6

Four days before, on 17 March, the Sharpeville Six were granted a temporary stay of execution for a month by the courts. The Six were due to hang at dawn on the following day.

Despite an international outcry – which *did not* include a personal appeal by Mrs Thatcher – PW Botha refused to grant clemency. It was only a last ditch appearance before the court, showing that one of the main state witnesses against the Six had committed perjury under duress from the security police, that forced the judge to grant the stay of execution.

INTERNAL TERROR

The regime, however continued with its planned lynchings of black people. Two young black men were hanged within a week of the stay of execution: both for their involvement in the township uprisings in 1985-6. More than 40 black people face hanging for political 'crimes' in the coming months.

South Africa holds the world rec-



Gaining ground: AWB fascists on the march

ord for hangings, and in this as with everything else, apartheid rules. Last year there were 164 executions – only eight were white. In the years following the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 hundreds of black people were hanged for fighting apartheid as a warning against political activity. The regime is all set to repeat its bloody history in 1988.

EXTERNAL TERROR

On Monday 28 March the South African forces raided the Botswanan capital, Gaborone, and murdered 3 women and a man whom they claimed were ANC 'terrorists'. In fact they were refugees.

On Tuesday 29 March Dulcie September the ANC's Chief Representative in France was assassinated in Paris outside her office, and a week later Albie Sachs, prominent white South African, ex-political prisoner and author was badly injured when his car exploded outside his house in Maputo, Mozambique, where he was working for the Mozambican government.

Supreme cynic, Pik Botha, apartheid's Foreign Minister, claimed that

the murders were the result of internal feuding in the ANC. But the world knew that the murders had all the hallmarks of apartheid terrorism.

No one was duped by this claim in France. Hours after the murder of Dulcie September a bomb exploded outside the South African Embassy in Paris, shots were fired at its consulate in Marseilles and the South African tourist office in Paris was sacked by Young Communists.

PW Botha's claim that he could not interfere with the judicial process in relation to the forthcoming hangings of the Sharpeville Six, did not, apparently apply to the six soldiers in Namibia whose trial for murder of a leading SWAPO member was halted by Botha. Exercising his 'presidential powers' Botha claimed that the charges must be dropped because the murder was carried out in good faith while combating terrorism in an 'operational area'. Botha and Thatcher are obviously in close communication: Gibraltar and the North of Ireland are 'operational areas' for British terror.

THE RISE OF FASCISM

But none of these strong arm tactics have managed to impress the white voters of Randfontein who elected Corne Mulder of the right-wing Conservative Party at the by-election on 29 March. If the 'general' white-only election is held next year, there is every chance that the Conservatives could win up to a third of seats.

This was the third by-election that the Nationalists have lost in the last few weeks. In the lead-up to the black municipal elections due to be held in October, and with the threat of defeat among their own white constituents next year, there will be no lessening of the terror in the coming months.

SA troops beaten back

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES

There has been a substantial change in the situation in Angola. For the last three and a half months South Africa, using infantry from the UNITA counter-revolutionary organisation, troops of the so-called Namibia Territorial Forces and regular units from its own army, has futilely tried to capture the town of Cuito Cuanavale, which is located west of the river of the same name in South eastern Angola.

Cuito Cuanavale is 200 kilometres southeast of Menongue, located on the far left of the positions defended by Cuban troops in southern Angola. A group of Angolan brigades had retreated to Cuito Cuanavale, which has an airport, in November given the major South African escalation in October to avoid UNITA's defeat in Mavinga, approximately 150 kilometres south east of Cuito Cuanavale.

The South Africans made ample use of infantry, tanks, long-range heavy artillery and planes. Their ultimate objective was to destroy in Cuito Cuanavale the Angolan troops that had participated in the offensive in the southeast against UNITA.

At the request of the Angolan government, in early December Cuban advisers were flown into Cuito Cuanavale for the infantry brigades of the Angolan People's Liberation Armed Forces (FAPLA), the artillery and tank units together with some personnel that specialises in artillery and tanks.

In mid-January, given South Africa's constant effort to capture Cuito Cuanavale, Cuban units of armored infantry, tanks and artillery were sent there to reinforce the heroic FAPLA fighters who, with the help of a limited number of Cuban advisers and specialists, were defending the position.

Heavy-caliber long-range South Afri-

can artillery rained down more than 20,000 155mm shells on the area of Cuito Cuanavale, but it did not shake the resistance of the defenders.

Every effort by the South African troops and their allies to capture Cuito Cuanavale has been countered with a rain of artillery fire and air strikes. Cuban-Angolan planes have played a brilliant and heroic role in the combats. The pilots have undertaken genuine feats by constantly and implacably attacking enemy columns and groupings.

South Africa has shattered its teeth against the iron resistance at Cuito Cuanavale, whose capture the enemy announced nearly two months ago, on January 23.

The Angolan soldiers have conducted themselves with admirable courage. They bore the brunt of the fighting since they made up the majority of the defenders.

Their forces suffered a few hundred casualties, both dead and wounded. Between December 5, when the first personnel arrived in Cuito Cuanavale, and March 17, the number of Cubans killed or wounded is 39; their families have been duly notified. Most of the casualties occurred in the last two months.

According to data taken from enemy communications and Angolan and Cuban commanders' estimates, the enemy has suffered heavy losses, including hundreds of soldiers from the so-called Namibia Territorial Forces and the regular white forces of South Africa. For the last 16 days there has been no new attempt to capture Cuito Cuanavale.

The South African racists have received an unforgettable lesson. By stopping the racist apartheid troops in their tracks, the heroic Angolan and Cuban fighters at Cuito Cuanavale have become an extraordinary symbol of the dignity of the peoples of Africa and the world.

March 17, 1988 reprinted from Granma

Adam Bowles imprisoned

ADAM BOWLES

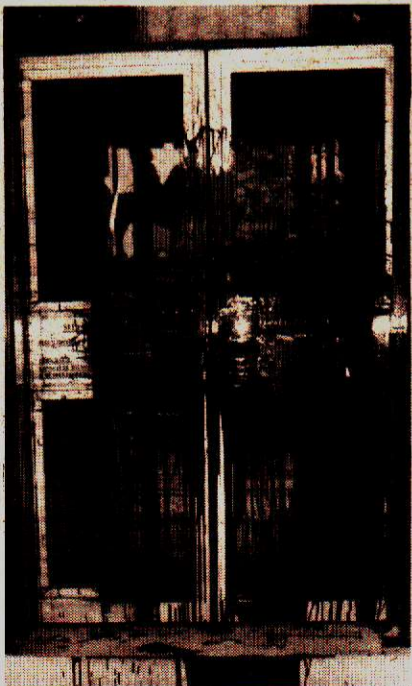
On 23 March I was sentenced to 14 days imprisonment for causing criminal damage to the racist South African embassy. On 6 May 1987, the day of the illegal white-only elections in South Africa, Liz and Irene Minczer and myself threw red paint at the embassy causing £1300 worth of damage and closing the embassy for three days.

At our first trial in September 1987 we were able to present a legal defence to the jury. We argued that we had used reasonable force to prevent a crime – apartheid is denounced as a crime against humanity by the United Nations. Our witnesses included David Leigh of *The Observer* who gave detailed evidence of the criminal activities of the apartheid embassy here in Britain; Comrade Zolile Keke of the PAC who gave details of his imprisonment and subsequent torture at the hands of the apartheid regime; and Comrade Norma Kitson who described our anti-apartheid work in this country and said that we were 'of the highest morality'. The judge instructed the jury to find us guilty but the jury refused to be intimidated and failed to produce a majority verdict after some hours of deliberation. Frustrated by the result the prosecution pressed for a retrial.

Back to Southwark Crown Court in March 1988. This time the Recorder acted swiftly against our defence. He ruled against our witnesses being heard at all and placed restrictions on the press to prevent them reporting his judgement in the papers until the verdict had been given. We had to dismiss our barrister John Reilly in

order to make political submissions to the jury.

The jury returned to ask if given that UN had declared apartheid to be a crime against humanity, could the defendants be considered to have used reasonable force to prevent the continuation of that crime? The judge said no. The jury returned its verdict



of guilty. I was jailed and Liz and Irene Minczer were given two year conditional discharges with £250 costs each. The two other charges relating to damage to a policeman's uniform and underwear had earlier been dismissed due to the lack of police evidence.

I was taken to Brixton prison. The jail is old and dilapidated with no

visible facilities for prisoners. I was held on 23 hours lock up with only twenty five minutes exercise a day. This time is the only period of association with other prisoners. I was in a cell 6' by 12', shared with another prisoner. All meals are eaten in the cell. All meals are given to prisoners between 7.30am and 3.30pm. Apart from a cup of tea at 5pm the cell doors do not open from 3.40pm to 7am the next morning. Applications have to be made for everything from receiving newspapers, purchasing essential toiletries to ensuring a special diet.

I am especially grateful for the cards and letters that I received from RCG branches and City AA members from all over the country. It is really uplifting to know that there are people outside fighting for you and I believe that it also affords you some protection inside. On the Saturday there was a big picket held for me outside the prison. While I did not hear it myself the news travelled to me by Sunday morning and this was a big boost.

The other prisoners were all very supportive of me. In conversation with a group of black prisoners after my visit on Monday, they congratulated me for damaging the embassy. We also talked about the conditions in Brixton jail. When the Home Secretary banned the right of remand prisoners to receive their own food inside only one prisoner had objected. A black prisoner said to me 'If it had happened in the States, say at San Quentin, the prisoners would have burnt it down'. I learnt a lot at first hand about the terrible conditions that prisoners face. What long term prisoners who come into conflict with the screws face I can only imagine. The fight for prisoners rights must be waged, led by the prisoners themselves and supported by communists and democrats outside.

When I was released I was met by forty people outside. Thank you to everyone who supported me. Forward to end British collaboration with apartheid.

Martin Luther King

A man for his times

Martin Luther King was the man for the times, and the time called out for such a man. Post war America emerged from World War Two to dominate the imperialist world. And although the ruling class spoke less than their British counterparts about 'defeating fascism' it did justify its brutal world wide repression of progress in the name of 'American Freedom and Democracy'.

Major sections of the American working class, enjoying the fruits of the post war economic boom, colluded in this myth of democracy. This led to a decade of reaction and defeat for the labour and trade union movement. From 1946 onwards a series of anti-communist laws were introduced by both state and labour organisations. In 1949 alone, eleven communists were indicted under the Smith Act, with the full blessing of the CIO (Congress for Industrial Unions - the TUC of the USA) and sentenced to an average of five years hard labour for 'conspiring to organise with the CPUSA (Communist Party of USA)'. This was the USA of General MacArthur, of witch-hunting of all progressives, democrats, liberals and dissidents.

The majority of black people, or Negroes as they chose to be called at that time, lived in the Southern States. In addition to gross class exploitation, they suffered from a series of local racist laws, varying in intensity in each county of each state. These were known as the 'Jim Crow' laws and extended to every aspect of life and labour leading, in effect, to apartheid.

In 1949 members of the Progressive Party (a legal grouping of the illegal CPUSA) carried out a strong campaign against these racist laws in seven Southern States. Comrades of the Progressive Party, among them Paul Robeson, held rallies, meetings and activities in dozens of counties, breaking every local law in the process. Indeed, this struggle for desegregation and basic democratic rights had continued in some form or other all over the Southern States since the 1920s, often led by communists.

Yet it was Martin Luther King who gave the struggle the unity and confidence it needed to swell into a mass movement of civil disobedience.

MASS PROTEST

When, on 1 December 1955 in Montgomery Alabama, Mrs Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white passenger, she was not the first person to have been arrested for such an offence. Just one year previously the United States Supreme Court had ruled that school segregation was illegal and the Federal government had recently banned segregation on buses travelling between one state and another. The seeds sown by the committed struggle of hundreds of individuals was about to burst into the flower of mass protest. And Martin Luther King stood at its head.

For ten years the movement accelerated along the lines seen to be the most successful - civil disobedience, passive resistance and mass protest. In the course of the struggle the true

As communists we remember Martin Luther King with admiration and salute his contribution to the struggle against American racism. Not only did he give magnificent voice to the deep wounds resulting from generations of white supremacist bigotry but he also led a living struggle that mobilised the masses to fight racism in the USA at both local and national levels. SUSAN DAVIDSON analyses his contribution to the struggle.



face of American democracy was seen by the world. In 1963 world newsreels showed the vicious attack with water cannon, dogs and batons on a large demonstration of school children in Birmingham, Alabama. Interviews with the Governor, George Wallace, and Federal Chief Eugene 'Bull' Connor, embarrassed the President and Federal Administration because of the gross racism displayed.

'I HAVE A DREAM'

And so, after a decade of struggle against local government, Martin Luther King found himself supported by President Kennedy. Further, now that a movement of size and signifi-

cance existed the old guard opportunists of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) were brought in to head off the movement and to restrict it to legalistic demands. In the words of Malcolm X, 'that shrewd old fox (Kennedy) he said, If you aren't in it, I'll put you in it. I'll put you at the head of it. I'll endorse it. I'll welcome it. I'll help it. I'll join it.'

At the same time activists, some from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, had become critical of the tactic of passive resistance and others urged armed defence of the communities. Further, they saw that the struggle must go beyond desegregation to issues of Black Power

that concerned the ghettos of the Northern Cities. It was this process, followed by the black uprisings in the mid and late sixties which gave rise to the Black Panther Party in 1966.

And so, at the peak of its public success, the March on Washington in August 1963, the movement was riddled with dissension. The 250,000 audience, a quarter of them white, gave a rapturous reception to Luther King's great speech, 'I have a dream'. But at the same time there were scuffles on the platform over speaking rights.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The last five years of Martin Luther King's life exposed the limitations of the single demand for Civil Rights. In 1964 he received the Nobel Prize for Peace and saw the signing of the Civil Rights Act which banned discrimination in any organisation funded by the American government. In 1965 he campaigned for voter registration in Selma, Alabama, leading a march of 30,000 people into Montgomery where ten years before Mrs Parks had refused to move to the back of the bus. That same year the Voting Rights Bill became law.

His experiences campaigning among the poor people inevitably led King to take up broader issues. In 1968 he toured the country recruiting people for a great Poor People's March on Washington. He led a dem-

Left, King in the early '60s; Below, the massive Civil Rights march on Washington DC, 1963.

onstration to protest against police brutality during a dustman's strike for higher pay in Memphis, Tennessee. Above all, the people themselves were making their own demands for justice in a growing wave of ghetto rebellions. There were 24 inner city uprisings in 1964, 38 in 1966, 128 in 1967 and 131 in the first half of 1968 alone.

THE PROMISED LAND

Martin Luther King spoke out against what he considered to be the self-destructiveness of violence. He continued to preach that the other way, peaceful protest, was the only means of fighting poverty and unemployment. But he was no coward, and no

NOTES

£5,000 AWARD

Michael Edgehill, a black man from Swiss Cottage, was paid £5,000 in an out of court settlement by the Metropolitan Police. In June 1986, the police raided a local pub where Michael was headlocked by an officer who 'punched me in the face so many times that I nearly lost count.' Michael was determined to fight his case so that 'the officers involved should be made to know that they cannot just beat up members of the public and get away with it.'

RACISM IN MANCHESTER SCHOOL

Manchester City Council has been embarrassed by the findings of a report into the stabbing of 13 year old Ahmed Iqbal Ullah at Burnage High School. The report concludes that the murder had racist connotations and recommends the removal of the headmaster.

IRANIAN TO SUE POLICE

In March Mohammed Hajiazim, an Iranian, was found guilty of a parking offence and fined £175. He is now suing the police. When he was arrested for the offence he was violently beaten by the police. A few days after his release from custody, Mohammed had to be rushed to hospital for an emergency operation and had to have a testicle removed.

PARENTS FIGHT POLICE RACISM

Black parents in Eltham, south London, have formed a committee to demand an investigation into police attacks on four black youths in March. The police officers stopped a school bus, dragged out and arrested a black youth. More police then arrived whereupon three more black youths were arrested amid protests from black and white pupils.

RACISM IN FRENCH PRISONS

France, like Britain, has a prison overcrowding problem. To deal with this the French government is planning to reduce the number of prisoners - not by any progressive legislation on sentencing but by deporting prisoners from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia who make up about a fifth of the prison population.

POLICE LIES

Marcus Skellington, whose arrest last year led to fighting between police and black youth in Chapeltown, Leeds, was cleared of all charges after it was shown that the police were lying in court. They claimed Marcus had kicked a police car door. The appropriate photographs showed an impenetrable hedge in the way.

sell-out. The Federal administration could not silence his insistent pleas for social justice. When he spoke out against American involvement in the Vietnam War he was a doomed man. He was assassinated by a white man, James Earl Ray on 4 April 1968 - almost certainly on the orders of J Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI.

The day before he was murdered, Martin Luther King had addressed a large crowd, concluding with the words, 'I have seen the promised land'. He was 39 years old. He had campaigned actively for only eleven years. ■

Fighting for Viraj Mendis

Today, more than ever before, Viraj Mendis' life is in serious danger. With the situation in Sri Lanka deteriorating by the day, the VMDC has heard that Viraj's appeal date is to be announced at any moment. SARAH RICCA calls for action.

The Home Office, expecting the verdict to go in its favour, is preparing to enforce the deportation order and send Viraj to his death. In a letter to Eddie Newman MEP, in February, Hurd's lackey, Renton, states 'Douglas Hurd has made it clear that he must reserve the right to take positive action to enforce the deportation order if Mr Mendis is not prepared to comply with the law... I should add that both Douglas Hurd and I very much hope that common sense will prevail.'

The only 'common sense' is to fight for Viraj's life and for his right to remain in Britain. In the coming weeks the VMDC is faced with an enormous task of uniting and activating all the support it has built over the past three and a half years, and, in particular, since Viraj's sanctuary began 15 months ago. Today more than ever it is necessary to mobilise all forces possible to save Viraj's life.

Three thousand organisations and individuals have already been asked to endorse an emergency pledge demanding that the Home Office lifts the deportation order against Viraj. The pledge notes that 'now more than ever, [Viraj's] life would be in great danger should the deportation order be enforced. The situation in Sri Lanka has deteriorated drastically since the July 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka

agreement. Since then the murder of Sinhalese who allegedly sympathise with the Tamil people has become an everyday event. Viraj Mendis, a Sinhalese known for his open support for the Tamil people, will undoubtedly be in mortal danger.'

The racist Home Office, determined to deport Viraj, is brazenly refusing to recognise the danger facing Viraj. By the day of the appeal, the emergency pledge campaign must show the Home Office that all honest, democratic and anti-racist forces will stand by Viraj in his life and death struggle.

Alongside this work, the VMDC is calling onto the streets the tens of thousands of people who have supported Viraj's struggle over the past 15 months and more. While planning a major picket of the appeal court, it is also mobilising for a massive demonstration on Saturday 28 May to warn the Home Office that any action to deport Viraj will be met with major resistance. The slogans for the next period must be:

- Viraj Mendis will stay
- No to death in Sri Lanka
- No to police attacks on the sanctuary
- No to deportations

A massive popular mobilisation can

force the Home Office to back down and lift the deportation order against Viraj, and with it the death sentence

Join the VMDC's fight - Join the fight to save Viraj's life

- Help the VMDC build the 28 May demonstration
- Distribute and get endorsements for the pledge from your local MP, Church, councillors and anti-racist and democratic organisations
- Invite the VMDC to speak at meetings of your organisation
- Send a donation urgently

If you want further information, leaflets, posters and other campaigning material fill in the form below and

that hangs over his head.

We urge all supporters to join the VMDC in its work today. ■

return to: VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL (Phone 061 234 3168)

I/we want to join the VMDC's campaign

Name

Address

..... Telephone

Please send us leaflets

..... posters pledges

Enclosed £..... donation

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION MANCHESTER

**Viraj Mendis Will Stay!
No to Death in Sri Lanka!
No to Police Attacks on the Sanctuary!
No to Deportation!**

Organise and mobilise to save Viraj's life!

Saturday 28 May
Assemble 12 noon Albert Square
March to the Sanctuary



Black Sections visit Viraj

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

Taking time off from their national conference in Manchester, 50 members of the Labour Party Black Sections made a solidarity visit to Viraj in his sanctuary on Saturday 26 March.

With the delegation was Bernie Grant MP who, after giving a message of solidarity, made important commitments to help the campaign. He pledged to raise the matter in the House of Commons and to arrange meetings for the VMDC with Labour's Campaign Group. The delegation also sponsored, and promised to get at least one black MP to join, the VMDC's 28 May national demonstration in Manchester.

Marc Wadsworth, Black Sections organiser, after declaring that the VMDC, and City AA's non-stop

picket were the two most important campaigns in Britain, said that Viraj's fight was 'a beacon for black people' and a 'symbol of our resistance'. His message was echoed by Sharon Atkin, Women's Co-Ordinator, who is herself threatened with expulsion from the Labour Party for exposing its racism.

The Black Sections have long recognised the VMDC's significance for the struggle against racism. At last year's Labour Party conference they joined the VMDC in its successful fight to win a unanimous emergency vote supporting Viraj's right to remain in Britain. With Viraj's appeal impending, and his life in greater danger than ever before, the Black Sections can make an important contribution to his victory by ensuring that every single Labour Party branch and organisation takes up Viraj's fight as a central part of their commitment to oppose racism. ■

SRI LANKA: Inciting murder

TREVOR RAYNE

'Think of Sri Lanka as the witches' cauldron. Blood and venom are added daily. Stir these vigorously into the original poison of religious-racial loathing... The consequence during the past month has been at least 100 more deaths, mostly of "innocent bystanders"...' (*The Economist* 2 April 1988)

To the British correspondent in a Colombo hotel, the scene outside must look sinister indeed, but the murder is no more mindless primitivism than the correspondent is a detached observer. The violence is coldly calculated to drive Tamils out of the eastern province and away from the strategic port of Trincomalee, and the reportage designed to conceal the real identities of the criminals and their victims.

The Indian forces' offensive against the Tamil people and the Tigers continues. In a typical week at the end of February, seven Tamil civilians were killed, eight Tamil women were raped and four Tamil houses destroyed. In mid-March 'Operation Vaira' was launched involving five brigades of Indian special forces, totalling some 10,000 men, who were directed to capture Tiger leader Prabhakaran dead or alive. Presumably, the Indian Army believes that with Prabhakaran dead mass Tamil resistance to their occupation will end.

However, the worst atrocities are

being deliberately cooked up in the east. The Sri Lankan army has armed reactionary Muslim groups and directed them against Tamils. At the same time, under Indian supervision, the smaller Tamil groups TELO and EPRLF have attacked Muslim peasants. Despite vigorously denying these atrocities the Tigers are invariably blamed by Colombo and Delhi alike. The aim is to divide Tamil and Muslim communities, dispossess both of their land, and hasten Sinhalese settlement.

A series of massacres of Sinhalese in the east, again denied by the Tigers, has had the convenient (for Jayewardene) effect of reintroducing Sri Lankan army patrols in the east. Under the 'peace accord' they were confined to barracks: their release was intended to assuage Sinhalese chauvinism, which has been menacing Jayewardene. The 28 March grenade attack on a council meeting in Matara, south of Colombo, injuring nine people, and inflammatory articles in the Sinhalese press against India, would suggest that Jayewardene's UNP remains compromised by its association with the Indian government.

Speaking directly to FRFI from Madras a Tiger representative stated that 'The LTTE is continuing to resist the Indian Peace Keeping Force. Meanwhile we are engaging in diplomatic activities to encourage Rajiv Gandhi to stop the offensive and begin serious negotiations with us.' ■

CAMPAIGN NEWS

■ On 18 March, the VMDC received a letter of solidarity from the **Thorn EMI Joint Shop Stewards Committee** in Manchester. Three of their stewards were threatened with dismissal and heavy fines after urging their workers to strike in support of an NHS demonstration. The management was forced to back down after a campaign organised by the stewards and supported amongst others by the VMDC. In their letter the shop stewards said: 'this victory came about because of the magnificent support from people like yourselves... If any time in the future we can be of assistance to you please do not hesitate to contact us.'

■ **Eddie Newman MEP**, a longstanding VMDC supporter, visited Viraj in sanctuary on 30 March to discuss how he could help the campaign in the current period. He told Viraj he is planning to invite the VMDC to the European Parliament in Brussels for a press conference with other European MEPs.

■ **Dr Maire O'Shea**, President of the Irish in Britain Representation Group, joined the regular VMDC Friday demonstration on 25 March. She was the guest speaker, alongside Viraj, at the rally which followed in the sanctuary.

■ During March, donations to the VMDC have included £50 from **Westminster NALGO**, £10 from **Birmingham UCATT** and £10 from **Stockport Constituency Labour Party**. After speaking at a meeting of over 500 NALGO staff working at the Northern Regional Headquarters of British Gas, the VMDC was sent £50 with a letter to Viraj expressing 'solidarity with your struggle to remain in the UK.'

SARAH RICCA

FIGHT DEPORTATION

NOTES

IMMIGRATION LAW MURDER

Since 1976, Shorif Uddin had repeatedly applied to join his family. In 1986 he was granted a temporary admission. Soon after his arrival from Bangladesh he entered hospital to receive psychiatric treatment. The Home Office was by then in possession of the results of a positive DNA fingerprint test. It nevertheless ruled that Shorif should return to Bangladesh and reapply for admission, otherwise 'it would be unfair to people already waiting in the queue.' On 12 November 1987 Shorif committed suicide. A Birmingham coroner attributed Shorif's psychotic condition to the stress caused by years of separation from his family.

HOME OFFICE CYNICISM

Jagtar Singh has fought for 12 years to prove that he is the son of his parents. Last month a DNA fingerprint test proved this to be the case. There is only one in three thousand trillion trillion chance that Jagtar is not related to his parents. Yet the Home Office is still insisting that he be deported to India.

LEOVE BONGAY MUST STAY

Leove Bongay came to Britain in 1985 for a marriage arranged by an agency. After three weeks her fiancé threw her out of the house even though she was pregnant with his child. She had given up her job, her home and her parents who now even refuse to answer her letters. She is now under threat of deportation, despite the fact that her child was born in Britain. British law gives no rights to Filipino women who arrive through 'marriage agencies' catering for wealthy British men.

The SAS bullets which ended the lives of Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Daniel McCann should also, finally, have put paid to any doubts about British strategy in Ireland. The calculated murder of the three unarmed IRA volunteers came as the culmination of three months which have seen: the rejection of the Birmingham 6 appeal, the murder of 5 Irish people by British forces; the permanence of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the decision not to prosecute any of the RUC involved in shoot-to-kill operations.

The last decision, coupled with the publication of Stalker's book, has ensured that during this period there has been almost continual debate about whether British forces have carried out a shoot-to-kill policy. In the light of this debate, the summary executions in broad daylight in Gibraltar, approved in advance by Margaret Thatcher and her Cabinet, show more clearly than ever the arrogance of a British government hell bent on physically wiping out Republican activists. **MAXINE WILLIAMS** examines the British murder machine.

THE OPPOSITION

The government reckons that it need not fear opposition to its murderous deeds either from the Dublin government or from domestic sources, such as Kinnock's Labour Party. And the response to the murders in Gibraltar showed this is a correct calculation. Having swallowed British disinformation about car bombs and a shoot out with armed IRA volunteers hook, line and sinker, the Gibraltar murders were greeted with overwhelming approval from the Labour Party and the media.

Only later, when the government itself admitted the truth - no car bomb in Gibraltar and no IRA guns -

'A smartly dressed couple were strolling in the direction of the Spanish border. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, there comes running a well built man with blond hair. He fired at the couple. The man in the white suit fired again at the couple on the ground. Four times he fired. The man who was doing the shooting came within four paces of them and fired four or five shots into their bodies. The man had been hit in the heart. Blood was pumping from him.'

Eyewitness Mrs Pepi Celecia on the Gibraltar murders.

'When challenged they made movements which led the military personnel to conclude that their own lives and the lives of others were under threat. In the light of this response they were shot dead. Those killed were subsequently found not to have been carrying arms. The parked car was subsequently dealt with by a military bomb disposal team. It has now been established that it did not contain an explosive device.'

Sir Geoffrey Howe on the Gibraltar murders

'I don't think anybody can afford to be squeamish given the evidence. These bombers don't display much squeamishness for their victims. A major tragedy was averted. We've got to be glad about that.'

George Robertson, Labour Party Spokesman on Foreign Affairs, on the Gibraltar murders.

did the familiar chorus begin. The chorus, timidly trotted out by the Labour Party and the less gung-ho sections of the media, after every British atrocity, goes 'Hang on a second, we want to see the IRA defeated as much as you and our admiration for the SAS is second to none but by killing these people haven't you played right into the hands of the IRA... created martyrs... stoked up Sinn Fein propaganda... well... just a suggestion'. Pretty strong stuff, eh? Bound to cause Thatcher and the military establishment to reverse their policy.

In fact, the government is far more worried about the Gibraltar Coroner and his inconvenient demand for the SAS men to attend the forthcoming inquest into the murders. So worried that they have set up a committee of ministers, including the Foreign Secretary, the Northern Ireland Secretary and the Home Secretary, to deal with possible problems from the inquest.

Thatcher is also furious with Amnesty International for launching an inquiry into the killings. Calling it 'utterly disgraceful' she said 'I hope Amnesty has some concern for the more than 2,000 people murdered by the IRA since 1969'. In fact of the 2,629 deaths since 1969, 1,065 have been related to IRA activities. Still, what are facts to a woman who ordered the murder of the Gibraltar three and a government intent on covering it up?

It was in Ireland that the SAS operation aroused a human response, causing popular fury and demonstrations of support for the Republican Movement not seen since the 1981 hunger strike. In the face of widespread RUC and British army intimidation, including an enormous RUC and army presence on the streets and outside the grieving families' homes, the hijacking of the hearses by the RUC and the shooting dead of another volunteer, Kevin McCracken, the families and the Republican Movement brought the bodies of three volunteers through Ireland and tried to bury them in peace and dignity.

LOYALIST AUXILIARY

Fearing an uncontrollable popular backlash the RUC reluctantly decided to stay away from the funeral itself. So they brought in their auxiliaries,

BRITISH RULE IN IRELAND MURDER MACHINE



Thousands of mourners follow the coffins of Mairead Farrell, Dan McCann and Sean Savage through Belfast

the unofficial terror of the loyalist paramilitaries. Armed with weapons which clearly link him to loyalist paramilitary groupings (one gun was also of a type used by the RUC) and with the knowledge that he would have a clear run both to and from the cemetery (information he could have got only from the RUC), the attacker managed to kill three of the young people who bravely pursued him out of the cemetery.

An RUC van was present throughout, as was a British helicopter which would have clearly seen the attacker as he dodged amongst the grave-stones to launch his attack. But the RUC only intervened when the loyalist was captured by the crowd and therefore in danger of his life.

It is against this background that the execution of the two British soldiers, who appeared to be attacking the funeral of one of the Milltown cemetery victims, must be seen. Eyewitnesses report that the soldiers' car ignored several Sinn Fein stewards' attempts to divert it from the path of the funeral cortege. Instead the car ploughed into the mourners with

lights on and horn blaring. One of the soldiers drew a gun and fired.

The people at the funeral, as well as journalists present (and according to Tom King, the British forces in the ubiquitous British Helicopter) thought the funeral was again under attack from loyalists. After the previous events at Milltown cemetery, the people knew that there was nobody to defend them but themselves and their Republican stewards. *That they acted to defend themselves is not only understandable but entirely justifiable.* It was nothing more than an expression of popular anger and indeed justice.

ONE LAW FOR THE IRISH, ANOTHER FOR THE BRITISH

It is sheer hypocrisy on the part of the British government, Labour Party and media to condemn these acts as 'brutal', 'subhuman', 'animalistic'. Why did they not choose to use such terms about the SAS murders in Gibraltar? The British state, with every means of surveillance, capture, trial and imprisonment at its disposal, chose to murder three unarmed

Republicans in Gibraltar. Although on active service they were unarmed and presented no immediate threat to British forces or anyone else at the time of their murder.

'It's no secret that the first impression was that it might have been a further bomb attack on the funeral'. Tom King on the first impressions of those in the helicopter viewing the two British soldiers' approach to the funeral cortege.

But the two British soldiers, whether they were foolhardy adventurers or whether they were, as Republican information indicates, part of an undercover operation, presented an immediate threat to the people they drove into and drew weapons on. Moreover, they were part of an army of occupation which for nineteen years has unleashed every conceivable form of terror, torture and murder on the Irish people.

Almost 50 Irish people have been murdered in British Army/RUC shoot-



LAND REV NE

ly released after serving a mere two and a half years of his sentence.

By whipping themselves into a lather of sentimental gush and vengeance about the killing of the two British soldiers the government, the Labour Party and the media have merely demonstrated, once again, that there is one law for the Irish and another for the British - the British can murder with impunity and the Irish must allow themselves to be murdered.

BRITISH STRATEGY

Given the recent spate of British actions against the nationalist community, some people have begun to ask whether the government wants to ditch the Anglo-Irish Agreement. After all, they don't seem to be making much effort to assuage the Dublin government. The question itself misunderstands the purpose of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

From the outset it was designed as the political side of a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand by having a link with Dublin to isolate revolutionary Republicanism and bolster constitutional nationalism, and on the other hand to militarily weaken the IRA through better targeting, extradition and, where the courts could not succeed, summary execution of IRA activists.

Despite all the strains it has caused, especially the problems with the Unionists, the Agreement has paid some dividends for imperialism. The IRA has indeed suffered serious setbacks over the past period, losing some of its experienced personnel and its arms dumps.

ALL QUID NO QUO

The quid pro quo for increased security cooperation with Dublin, in the form of tangible reforms, has been noticeably lacking. But the British government knows that Dublin will go to great lengths to avoid a serious breach. After weeks of posturing about the Stalker affair, the Haughey government jumped at the excuse offered by the killing of the two soldiers to have a meeting with King and between the gardai and the RUC. They are as keen as Britain is on weakening the IRA and stabilising the Six Counties.

Recently General James Glover, until six months ago Commander of the British Army in the Six Counties, said: 'In no way can or will the Provisional IRA be defeated militarily... they would go on 'as long as the PIRA

what carrots can be offered to the SDLP or the Unionists, how big do the carrots need to be, will a political initiative, some form of devolution, increase stability or decrease it?

Whatever scheme they come up with, if any, one thing is clear. As Gibraltar demonstrated, British imperialism has only ever and can only ever rule Ireland by force. The Six Counties remains a sectarian state based on discrimination and secured by terror. Since the beginning of the Anglo-Irish Agreement British and loyalist terror have continued unabated. 27 nationalists have been murdered by loyalist death squads, 74 have been injured in sectarian attacks, 1,102 families have been driven from their homes. As well as those murdered, 150 nationalists have been physically attacked by the British army or RUC and over 2,800 homes have been ransacked by British forces. This is the daily reality of British rule in Ireland which does not hit any headlines.



Volunteer Mairead Farrell

RESISTANCE

The spirit of the Irish people was demonstrated by the courage of the youth who chased the Milltown loyalist gunman, by the bravery of the stewards who risked their lives to protect people and by the fearless manner in which Republican leaders carried on conducting the funeral that day.

When she was released from prison Mairead Farrell said:

'I'm a socialist definitely and I'm a Republican. I believe in a united Ireland: a united socialist Ireland, definitely socialist. Capitalism provides no answer at all for our people, and I think that's the Brits' main interest in Ireland.'

That is what the people of Ireland have fought for throughout the years. They will not be defeated by military might or duped by imperialist political manoeuvres.

SOLIDARITY

The same cannot be said of the solidarity movement here. It is at its lowest ebb ever. Instead of uniting its forces and building support for the Birmingham 6 or the other campaigns that cry out for it, one group vies with another for sectarian victories. It is shameful that a march of 700 for the Birmingham 6 or a tiny vigil or picket for the Gibraltar three should be the most that is achieved. FRFI has consistently called for a united movement. Not a movement that is tied to any organisation, not a movement that trudges wearily behind the few progressive elements in the Labour Party, not a movement that sees hope only in bourgeois alliances, but a united movement of all who want to do something, whether from liberal or communist, humanitarian or political motives.

Will anything cause the British movement to act on this principle? Or have the ethics of bourgeois individualism bitten so deep that everyone ultimately wants their own organisation, no matter how piddling and ineffectual? Such a situation is an insult to the Irish people and a stigma on the British working class.

'UNOFFICIAL' TERROR

GARY CLAPTON

Using grenades and guns, Michael Stone, a loyalist assassin, claimed three lives and injured scores of people at the funeral of the Gibraltar three. Only the courage of those who captured him prevented a worse death toll. For the first time a vast TV audience saw the foul reality of loyalism and its methods. The RUC was quick to reject Gerry Adams' accusation of RUC collusion in the attack. Several questions however, remain unanswered:

□ How did Stone, armed with grenades and guns, get to the cemet-

ery, despite the fact that West Belfast was sealed off by the RUC and there were checkpoints near the cemetery?

□ Where did he get the .357 Magnum revolver, which is of a type used by the RUC, from which the serial number had been obliterated?

□ What was an RUC van doing outside the cemetery at the time of the attack and which sped off whilst the mourners were chasing Stone?

□ How did Stone know that there would be no RUC policing of the funeral?

□ When charged with the three murders and with three other sectarian killings, why did Stone answer, 'I read his file. He was a legitimate target'?

PRESS LIES

The response of the media to recent events in Ireland was the usual cocktail of lies and racism. Following the Gibraltar murders all the papers uncritically reported the British government's version of events.

The *Daily Telegraph* was typical:

'British soldiers... shot dead three high ranking IRA terrorists... in Gibraltar yesterday, shortly after the gang had planted a massive car bomb... shooting broke out when the three were challenged.'

Some papers even elaborated on these British lies:

'The gang... were shot dead when they tried to leave the Rock, leaving behind a 1000lb car bomb... Despite the MoD statement about the three terrorists not being armed, at least two of them were seen to have weapons'. (*Evening Standard*)

'A 500lb bomb was later defused... If it had exploded it would also have hit an old peoples' home and a school'. (*Guardian*)

Some papers printed articles praising British actions:

'When I heard on Sunday evening that three IRA terrorists had been shot in Gibraltar, I experienced warm feelings of satisfaction' (Hugo Young in *The Guardian*. Being a good British liberal, he went on to blame the IRA for making him have such unworthy feelings).

'It does not matter that they were unarmed or that there was no bomb in the car...'. (*The Sun*)

'These evil monsters got what they deserved' (*The Star*)

Much of the press then joined the 'hunt' for a mystery fourth IRA member who, inevitably, became the long-suffering Evelyn Glenholmes. 'Find evil Evelyn' they screamed.

Some of them were slightly worried when the 'no IRA bombs or guns' truth became known. But not worried enough to print front page stories saying 'everything we printed yesterday was fiction'. Instead they called on the Government to answer certain questions only, they emphasised, to prevent a 'propaganda victory' for the IRA. The *Daily Telegraph* pointed out: 'It is rare that we find ourselves less satisfied with the Government's account of events than the Labour front bench.'

The contrast with press coverage of

the killing of the two British soldiers could not be more stark. For the most part the press entirely ignored the funeral crowd's belief that they were again under attack. Instead the Irish people were presented as beasts, monsters and subhumans and virtually unanimous calls for harsh repression were made.

'The savagery... would shame the beasts of the jungle, let alone a civilised city.' (*Daily Mirror*)

Under the headlines 'Scum of the Earth' and 'String Em Up' *The Sun* called for the banning of Sinn Fein, heavy policing of funerals and:

'... the only final solution... incorporate Ulster fully into Britain... those Catholics who do not want to live under our flag... can... emigrate South.'

For the *Daily Mail*, Ireland became a 'God-besotted, God forsaken funeral plot... the stinking mess beyond rational solution'. 'Barbarism that knows no defence' said *The Guardian* (and it wasn't referring to Hugo Young). *The Sunday Times* led the others in identifying people from the photographs of the attack on the soldiers' car and paying for their blood. Miraculously, they did not manage to find Evelyn Glenholmes amongst them.

Following two weeks of violent incidents some sections of the press adopted a world weary, 'what can you do with the Irish' tone. Rather than look at what underlies the violence, *The Independent*, for example, said the Irish question is 'unanswerable' and those who claimed there was a solution were 'mendacious and malevolent'.

Despite all this, Thatcher and co are still worried that press coverage is too liberal and were enraged by timid calls for an inquiry into Gibraltar. When BBC and ITN initially refused to hand over to the police film of the attack on the two soldiers, Thatcher's rage knew no bounds: 'one is either on the side of justice or on the side of terrorism'. The film was handed over and the Government is putting further heavy pressure on the media for 'voluntary' restrictions on their coverage of Republican events. Thus even the mildest questioning of Government policy on Ireland, by the press and later by Amnesty, is being portrayed as support for 'terrorism'. All political opposition to the Thatcher government's policy on Ireland, even if it comes from liberal bourgeois sources, is being declared illegitimate.



kill operations since 1982. Some of these deaths were the subject of an inquiry which was stalled and obstructed at government level and which has resulted in not a single prosecution.



Car burns in West Belfast after the murders in Gibraltar

The first British soldier ever contacted of killing an Irish person in this phase of the struggle was recently

is diagram clearly gives the lie to the British story that the two soldiers had somehow 'got lost'. At least three sets of Sinn Fein stewards tried to divert the car away from the cortege but the car continued speeding towards the front of the cortege. The threatening nature of these events was redoubled when the men were seen to be armed and one fired a shot. Given that they were both from the Signals section of the British army, whose task is electronic surveillance, it is more than likely that they were on an undercover mission.

Jesse Jackson rallies the dispossessed



Jackson frightens Democratic leadership . . .

Jackson's electrifying oratory is directed at the victims of the Reagan years. Only they form a reliable basis from which to attack Republican power. The Jackson campaign has spent about one tenth as much money as Democratic rival Governor Mike Dukakis. With its emphasis on public meetings and joining striking workers' picket lines rather than advertising and stage management, Jackson's campaign goes out to and mobilises the people.

On 'Super Tuesday', 8 March, Jackson won five southern state primaries and caucuses and finished second in eleven others, almost doubling the number of delegates won in the same states in 1984. In Michigan, Jackson trounced Dukakis with 55 per cent of the vote. In state after state Jackson has tripled and quadrupled his share of the white vote. Even in Connecticut and Wisconsin, where he came second to Dukakis, Jackson won almost a quarter of the white vote. Noticeable is Jackson's success in the major industrial centres, where he has often won the majority of white working class voters.

THE REAGAN YEARS

Eight years of Reagan have seen an attempt to reverse the restrictions on

Reverend Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition campaign has brought anti-racist, anti-imperialist forces into the US presidential election race. Jackson himself is unreliable, but his campaign has created the space in which the black communities, the women's movement, the lesbian and gay movement, the peace movement, the ecology movement and much of the left can mobilise. Above all, it has been Jackson's appeal to the white industrial working class that has disturbed the political establishment: here is a coalition of the dispossessed whose strength and driving force is the black working class. **TREVOR RAYNE** examines the issues.

the US state imposed by Vietnam and Watergate, a massive military build-up, global counter-revolution, attacks on trade union rights, aggravation of racial divisions in the working class, attacks on women's rights, cuts in education, health and welfare spending, tax cuts for the rich, deregulation for monopoly capital, and the whole feast celebrated in an orgy of flag waving chauvinism. This is what Jackson's campaign is against. More and more black and white workers have experienced unemployment and growing uncertainty under Reagan. They are voting for Jackson.

EMERGING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Following Mondale's defeat Democratic leaders decided to end their characterisation as a 'special interests' party (woman, minorities, etc). They shifted to the right in an attempt to recapture middle and working class voters who had defected to Republicanism. They co-sponsored and voted for Reagan's reactionary bills: aid to the contras, tax cuts for the rich, etc. In awe of Reagan's 'popularity', they refused outright confrontation. With Irangate came their chance to present themselves as

a more reliable guardian of ruling class interests: one that will neither overturn the gains of the Reagan years, nor repeat its adventurous excesses. This perspective guided all the Democratic candidates. Except Jackson.

The Rainbow Coalition appeals to all those denied the fruits of US imperialism. As such, it represents those sections of society most politically and organisationally remote from ruling class control. Even though their demands are raised within the limitations of the Democratic Party, and confined to reform, they inevitably conflict with the needs of monopoly capital, and thus potentially threaten the two party system through which the US ruling class governs.

Jackson describes the Rainbow Coalition's move since 1984 from 'the racial battleground to the economic and moral common ground.' The battle is now 'the corporate Barracuda versus the little fish', against the 'merger maniacs', the global 'economic violence' of the transnationals. Jobs are lost in the US because transnationals hold foreign labour in slavery. Jackson calls for a 'Rainbow Workers Bill of Rights': the right to a job, to reinstate union

power, to a living wage, to affirmative action against discrimination, to democratic rights for overseas labour. He demands high taxes for the rich, cuts in military spending, and the restoration of social programmes. The hypocritical war on drugs must be made real. International law must be respected, aid to the counter-revolutionaries in Central America and southern Africa ended. He has marched in solidarity with the ANC, lesbians and gays; he has stuck his neck out, and it is still there.

By forcefully representing the dispossessed Jackson is confronting white working class racism and chauvinism, but he is no socialist. Jackson is part of a section of black society which has been drawn into the middle class and achieved positions in the political establishment. To retain legitimacy in the black communities they must voice popular demands. To strengthen their position in the political establishment they must legitimate capitalism and its political form, bourgeois democracy. Jackson's politics are riddled with opportunism. He attempted to play down the racist dimensions of the attack on black youths in Howard Beach where physical confrontation was likely; he demands the PLO negotiate with Israel on a basis of Israel's security: a concession to US Zionism; he criticises the Soviet Union's and Sandinista's record on human rights; his concern is for 'our boys' imperilled by bad policy in the Gulf; his anti-drugs policy supports US militarisation of the Gulf of Mexico. But such opportunism is not the primary feature of the campaign so far, precisely because Jackson has mobilised those outside mainstream US political life



. . . Dukakis is their man

against the most reactionary features of the Reagan years.

No sooner had he won on 'Super Tuesday' than the cry 'Jackson is unelectable' went up. Those who profess this view, including the 'liberal' *Guardian* newspaper, would rather make a concession to racism than confront it - 'you don't put niggers in the White House' - that is what is being conceded to. As Jackson's prospects of winning have grown, great consternation has gripped the Democratic Party's leadership: they are conspiring to block him, sighing with relief at Dukakis' win in Wisconsin.

In the 1979 and 1985 presidential elections as many people eligible did not bother to vote as did. They do not believe in it: 4 seconds of democracy every four years. Jackson and the Rainbow alliance are part of a movement that must emerge in the United States: a movement independent of the Democratic Party; that uses Jesse Jackson and the electoral system but is not confined by them; that is based on the dispossessed black and white working class. For millions of US people the Rainbow Coalition has illuminated the presidential campaign with the first rays of a rising working class consciousness. ■

Strategic battle for Panama

KEN HUGHES

'I am supporting the Torrigista Movement, the Torrigos/Carter treaties . . . Noriega is not what is at stake: what is important is Panama's independence, sovereignty and right over the canal . . . The Torrigista Movement is not a social or communist movement: it is a patriotic and nationalist movement. That is why we support it, regardless of Noriega.' President Fidel Castro. This is precisely why all progressives must oppose the US attempts to remove Manuel Noriega as the head of



Frantic pensioners try to get cheques cashed.

the Panamanian Defence Force (PDF). The US aims to keep Panama as a colony, a key military and surveillance stronghold in its 'backyard', and to maintain control of the canal and entire region for the transnational robbers.

Under the 1977 Torrigos-Carter treaties administrative control of the canal and canal zone passes into the hands of the Panamanian government in 1989. In 1999 Panama assumes absolute control and all US troops must be out of the country.

Carter signed the treaties in an attempt to quell the rising tide of nationalist opposition, and because he

was certain of being able to maintain imperialism's interests with US puppets at the head of the PDF. Soon after Reagan was installed as US president PDF leader General Omar Torrigos was killed in very mysterious circumstances in 1981, and he was replaced by Noriega.

The new incumbent enjoyed the favours of the US Congress and CIA, and offered to play host to the Nicaraguan contras. However, Noriega heeded the wishes of his troops, the civilian National Guard and the Torrigista Movement and stuck to the Torrigos-Carter treaties.

There are no economically viable alternatives to the Panama Canal to circumnavigate the continent of America. Sixty per cent of US imports and exports pass through the canal. The US monopolies have no intention of relinquishing control of this vital artery. Thus Reagan intends to scrap the treaties, increase the military occupation of Panama, and ensure control of the 'crossroads of the world.'

ACCUSATIONS, THREATS AND DESTABILISATION

In 1986 the US government accused Noriega of being a drugs trafficker, murderer and spy, and cut off \$26

million of aid. Panama is a major trans-shipment point for the South American cocaine trade: branches of the world's major transnational banks operate in Panama as money-launderettes for its profits. From Noriega to his US backed opponents, and the CIA, ruling class power in Panama is tainted with drug money. The accusation that Noriega is an international pusher is a convenient cover for the US's real intentions.

When it became clear that Noriega was not going to take his riches and flee to the US, other methods had to be tried. Further aid was cut off; Panama's share of the US sugar quota was suspended; now US banks have frozen some \$50 million of Panamanian government funds, and vital payments for canal usage have been withheld. The tactic is to strangle the country economically, divide the military, force Noriega out and Panama into submission.

The National Civic Crusade, tied to US capital and the most vocal section of the middle class, has held a series of demonstrations against Noriega. However, the situation became grave for him on 14 March when hunger and deprivation brought the working class onto the streets. Unrest is also growing in the army as their pay is no

longer guaranteed. At the end of March the US stepped up a direct military threat by drafting in additional troops for a month long military exercise.

A LATIN AMERICAN CRISIS

President Fidel Castro of Cuba, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, Alan Garcia of Peru and de la Madrid of Mexico have all spoken out against the US attack on Noriega. They recognise the US is intent on multiplying its military presence in Panama and see this as a threat to the sovereignty of all Latin America and the Caribbean.

'Faced with the Panamanian crisis Latin America must understand two basic truths. In the first place, if the US succeeds in militarising the Panama isthmus, it will have stuck knives into the throat of every Latin American country. Secondly, if the US succeeds in cutting off Panama from the solidarity of Latin America and forces a docile government of that country, it will have obtained full power to sink that knife, at will into the throats of everyone of our people. The Panamanian crisis is inextricably linked to the Latin American crisis.' (*Granma* 20 March 1988). ■

INTERNATIONAL

NOTES

ISRAEL - SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka was the biggest beneficiary in Asia of Israeli training programmes last year: 64 Sri Lankans on courses conducted in Israel, or 27.57% of all courses offered to Asians. Following Sri Lanka came the Philippines, Thailand and Nepal. India and Japan also sent nationals on the military programmes.

CHILE

'They burned me, Mum, they burned me', 24 year-old Jose Solis cried out to his mother as he was being transferred from a police station to hospital two days before his death. Jose's picture showing him taking part in an anti-Pinochet protest had appeared in Chilean magazines. Plain clothes police arrested him in the district where he lived. Jose was drenched in petrol and wax and set alight. His mother learned of his death on 1 March. Jose Solis follows Carmen Gloria Quintana and Rodrigo Rojas who were also burned alive for participating in popular protests.

KURDISTAN

Up to 15,000 Kurdish people were killed in Halabja and surrounding areas between 16 and 18 March as the Iraqi regime drenched them with poison gas, napalm and fragmentation bombs. Poisonous gas has been used by the Iraqi airforce against Kurdish people at least ten times since mid-April 1987. One question remains unanswered: where do the ingredients for Iraqi manufacture of poisonous gases come from?

USA

Within three days of the US forces' landing in Honduras 400 people had been arrested in confrontations with the US police. Government buildings were blockaded, streets occupied and traffic disrupted in cities across the country. Five thousand people took to the streets in solidarity with the Sandinistas in San Francisco.

MORDECHAI VANUNU

In Israel, Mordechai Vanunu, a nuclear scientist, was jailed for 18 years for exposing the country's secret nuclear industry in the British *Sunday Times*. Vanunu fled to Britain but was kidnapped by the Israeli secret service and returned to Israel. Vanunu's brother believes that British authorities were involved in the illegal kidnap conspiracy. Since his sentence Vanunu's prison conditions have deteriorated - he remains in isolation and his visiting times have been halved.

PHILIPPINES

The Communist Party of the Philippines and the New Peoples Army suffered a heavy blow on Tuesday 29 March. NPA commander, Romulo Kintanar and other senior CPP and NPA leaders were captured during an army raid in Manila. President Aquino and the military are full of self-congratulations, speaking of having 'turned the tide and winning the war against the insurgency'. However this is not the first time that the NPA has suffered such setbacks. They have always recovered.

Palestine - the struggle for power

Resistance to Israeli terror in the West Bank and Occupied Territories is growing. The Palestinian people are determined that they will not be crushed. EDDIE ABRAHAMS reports.

Comparing Zionist atrocities in the Occupied Territories to the Nazi holocaust, the March issue of *Civiltà Cattolica*, journal of the Italian Jesuits said:

'Faced with such a spectacle one cannot but think of more horrendous crimes, of those same crimes the Jewish people endured in the worst periods of persecution when they seemed destined to disappear, destined for the final solution.'

This is no rhetoric. The scale of repression is staggering. Since the uprising began on 9 December 1987 over 140 Palestinians have been killed, an average of one a day. In proportion to the British population, the dead would number 5,200. Over 3,500 have been arrested and detained in makeshift prison camps, including Palestinian schools closed by the Zionists. The British equivalent would be 140,000 interned, many indefinitely and without trial.

For the Zionists, Palestinian lives count for nothing. Following the killing of one 16 year old Israeli woman, hundreds of Palestinians were arrested and 15 homes were destroyed as a collective punishment in the village of Beita. The Israeli Justice Minister said that Beita should be destroyed like the Biblical town of Sodom and its population deported. The Religious Affairs Minister Zveulum Hammer called for 'cutting off the arms of these wild men and smashing the skulls of the vipers of death.' A leaked secret Israeli army report revealed that the woman had in fact been killed by a bullet fired by an Israeli soldier and not by Palestinian stone throwers. Not a single Israeli soldier or settler has been brought to court charged with the murder of dozens of Palestinian children.

Promising yet more brutal repression, fascist Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, speaking from a Zionist military fort on the West Bank, warned the risen Palestinian people: 'Anybody who wants to damage this fortress and other fortresses we are establishing will have his head smashed against the boulders and walls.'

With invective reminiscent of Hitler's racism, Shamir went on: 'We say to them from the heights of this mountain and from the perspective of thousands of years of history that they are like grasshoppers compared to us.'

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

It is the emergence of revolutionary people's power and the prospect of dual power in the Occupied Territories that is driving the Zionists to unprecedented levels of repression. The uprising has moved swiftly to challenge the very foundations of Zionist rule. The carefully constructed civil and municipal administration, staffed by Palestinian collaborators is collapsing. Guided by the Unified National Leadership for the Uprising and enforced by the shababs, the equivalent of the young South African 'comrades', the uprising is building, slowly and consciously, an alternative peoples administration.

On Sunday 6 March, 40 Arab employees of the Israeli income and property tax division in Gaza resigned en masse. On Tuesday 8 March, a second Palestinian collaborator was executed in the Aqabat Jabber refugee camp. Then on 15 March 500 of the 1000 Palestinian policemen serving in the Occupied Territories handed in their uniforms.

In its latest leaflets, the underground Palestine Liberation Organ-



isation (PLO) leadership has instructed all Palestinians employed in the Zionist 'civil' administration to resign. Leaflet No 12 warns that: 'Those who remain in office are liable for retaliation, both in person and against their properties. To those we say that the masses will crush them.'

In its battle to destroy the basis of Zionist rule, the leadership of the uprising is also organising a tax boycott, as well as a boycott of Israeli goods and banks. General strikes have been called for every Saturday and Sunday. In place of the collapsing Zionist administration, people's committees are being established to organise defence against the Zionists, to secure food and water distribution and other amenities.

ZIONIST ATTEMPT TO CRUSH PEOPLE'S POWER

Besides the continued killings and arrests, other measures are being introduced to terrorise, starve and defeat the uprising and destroy the birth of people's organisation and people's power.

To disrupt the incredibly efficient and ingenious underground organisation, Palestinians are being stopped from travelling to and from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Telephone links between the Occupied Territories and the outside world have also been curbed. The mass arrests have as their target anyone considered a supporter of the PLO, and in particular its left-wing - the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

In a futile attempt to drive a wedge between the masses and their leadership, the Zionists are resorting to 'collective punishment' and terror against the community. On 'security grounds' supplies of petrol, kerosene and diesel essential for cooking and heating have been halted. Money from the diaspora to sustain the poorest families has been blocked. Palestinians will only be given permits for import and export business if they can prove they have paid the taxes. Where collaborators have been attacked or killed, fruit and vegetable markets have been closed and villagers prevented from exporting their produce.

In the run-up to the annual Land Day celebrations on 30 March, the West Bank and Gaza Strip was declared a 'closed military zone' with Gaza under a total curfew and widespread restrictions in the West Bank. The Palestine Press Service was banned for three days and the Israeli Communist Party Arab language daily newspaper banned for a week.

None of these measures succeeded and mass demonstrations took place throughout the occupied territories and in Israel itself on Land Day and the following days.

In its latest leaflet, the underground leadership has urged a general strike, massive demonstration and protests when US Secretary of State, George Shultz, returns to the Middle East in the first week of April. His mission remains the same - to work out in conjunction with Israel and Arab reaction a 'formula' to halt the uprising and the revolutionary challenge this represents to imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction. It will not succeed. ■

Reagan despatches troops to Honduras

Ceasefire signed

ANDY PACEY

Honduras was invaded on 16 March. Not by soldiers of the neighbouring Sandinista government but by 3,200 US troops despatched by Reagan in a cynical attempt to undermine the current peace talks and demonstrate that the US has no intention of giving up its strategic interests in Central America.

With the removal of military aid to the Contras by the US Congress Reagan's policy of using a US-backed Contra guerilla force to avert the development of Nicaragua as a strong socialist nation has been severely weakened. The deployment of troops to Honduras is an attempt to reverse the process towards peace.

The Nicaraguans have made many concessions to demands made by local puppet regimes and Contra henchmen on behalf of the US. This is in stark contrast to the failure of the other four signatories and the US itself to abide by the agreement.

Although Reagan has remained resolutely against any agreement which leaves the Sandinistas with political power, other sections of the US establishment have seen the opening up of platforms for the Contras in Nicaragua as a step forward which could only be consolidated by stopping the war.

The Sandinistas took advantage of the removal of military aid to push the Contras into talks on a ceasefire. The recent move on the Contras' remaining strongholds was made after

much stalling by the Contras to avoid disarming themselves completely. The peace talks have created rifts amongst the Contras who were only brought together in the first place by the vast amounts of US aid. As this dries up the willingness of some, who see for themselves a role in the political establishment, to negotiate has grown. Others are only interested in the military campaign.

On 24 March Sandinistas and Contras agreed proposals for a temporary truce for 2 months. The Sandinistas in a final attempt to stop a war which has claimed 50,000 lives, made two important concessions on the timing of disarmament and the release of political prisoners.

This is an important step, but developments since 24 March suggest that the Contras' internal splits and pressure from the US are holding up a concrete agreement. The threat still remains for the Sandinistas while the Contras retain their bases in Honduras, and the US continue to use Honduras as a major military base in Central America. ■

The struggle for prisoners rights

This month ALAN COOKE, Long Lartin, responds to the debate on the struggle for prisoners rights. Alan calls for an independent grievance procedure. FRFI will continue to feature this discussion as long as contributions come in. This is a unique forum for prisoners. We urge all prisoners to take part.



dependent power of access to all Canadian penitentiaries; she may arrive unannounced to investigate any particular problem she deems necessary. The full cooperation of institutional directors and staff must be given to the investigator in carrying out her examination. In addition, all correspondence to and from the investigator is uncensored. This of course has no bearing on the immediate problem, but I mention it as a classic and comparative example of the injustice and manipulative power to which we are subjected in British jails.

At present an independent investigatory authority seems incredible taking into consideration that he would no doubt form part of the same

bigoted authority that imprisons us and that his limitations would make him useless to our cause. However, with a unique combination of 'independence, impartiality', accessibility and investigative power an authority with no limitations could undoubtedly constitute an important 'fail safe' ingredient within the prison grievance operation. This device could be used to enhance the total grievance machinery because its strengths could ultimately compensate for the weaknesses inherent in the present arrangements.

To conclude with my own personal views, I cannot place trust in any outside or inside authority apart from that of our own. Recently at Long Lartin, a prison debate discussed the mo-

tions for and against an independent prisoners' council. Various dignitaries were invited including members of the Prison Reform Trust, also a professor on Criminology (who was opposing the motion) and of course the Governor was present. A modest group of distinguished convicts forwarded the motion. The motion for prisoners' councils was carried to the embarrassment of the opposing party. The result of that debate is now in the hands of the prison authorities and no doubt that's where it will stay, but it is a cause which undoubtedly needs the full support of all other prisoners interested in forming an independent group for the solidarity of prisoners and a successful channel for prison grievance.

SAS attack

JAKE DEVINE, HMP ABERDEEN

Jake here with a bit of script, to let you know I'm recovering after the Peterhead protest last year, although I am now seven weeks on this, my second hungerstrike, fighting for my human rights ie. visits every day as I'm untried.

During the siege at Peterhead I was tortured and beaten up with coshes. A six man SAS unit was used to storm the loft. These scum were hooded up plus gas-masks. I received heavy injuries from the SAS and prison MUF-TI thugs in uniform. I was badly beaten about the head and body, had bruises from head to toe. My injuries were noted and photos taken under my solicitor's instructions. I had suffered three separate head wounds which required around twenty stitches. My legs, chest and hand were quite badly burned after the stun-grenades exploded in the loft area. My leg is now badly scarred, as the grenade burnt right through my trousers.

After this incident, I was taken to hospital at Peterhead. They tried to stitch my wounds without anaesthetic. Only after much shouting did they eventually give me anaesthetic, but it wasn't given enough time to freeze. I was treated like a pure animal, but they can do their worst; I shall overcome no matter how I'm treated.

I've been locked in solitary for over five months, 23 hours a day and I expect after our trial I will still be locked up. But why worry, eh? We shall overcome. The spirit of freedom is strong.

Keep up the good work. The paper is excellent. Sammy Ralston is still on hunger-strike in the cages. Support him. A bit of solidarity. Fight for your rights.

John Bowden attacked

TERRY O'HALLORAN

FRFI has received information about a serious attack on John Bowden.

On 23 March John was in another prisoner's cell having his hair cut. A third prisoner appeared armed with a large jug of boiling water which he threw at John. Both John and the second prisoner were scalded. The attack was entirely unprovoked.

It now transpires that the prisoner who carried out the attack had told prison officers beforehand of his intentions. He had asked for Rule 43 confinement for his own protection. He had been told that he could not have it. He had then said that he would scald John Bowden. The prison officers did nothing to prevent the attack.

The second prisoner, who was more badly hurt, is considering suing the Home Office for negligence.

Irish POW Noel Gibson is still in solitary confinement at Wakefield. He was falsely accused of planting an incendiary device in a library book. Neither the governor nor the police have any evidence. Nonetheless Noel Gibson has spent eight months in solitary. FRFI sends solidarity to Noel Gibson and urges readers to send messages of support to: Noel Gibson, 879225, HMP Wakefield, 5 Love Lane, West Yorkshire, WF2 9AG

The Dumbarton Scottish Prisoners Support Campaign has stressed crucial and imperative demands necessary to the current penal system.

We are all aware of the intensifying problem that confronts us within a thoroughly immoral institution. The blatant misuse of government borrowed power, manipulated by a mild gestapo, who feel their power permits them to demoralise and dehumanise men equal to themselves, men who have no power to obtain redress.

The ombudsman is presently under statutory requirement to investigate only grievances referred to him by members of parliament. Not surprisingly, parliament refers very few complaints relating to prisoners. Also statutory are the limitations, meaning he may only investigate matters of maladministration. A recent report on prisons by a committee of 'Justice' recommended that there should be a special ombudsman who should be independently free to examine grievances of prisoners however received, whether by cause of maladministration or any other nature of personal complaint.

Ideally, an official prison ombudsman to investigate prisoners' complaints informally and 'independently' places the prisoner on a footing comparable to that of an ordinary citizen in his dealings with Government.

This invitation to an 'independent and impartial' presence gives underpinning strength to the areas where the present grievance procedures are notably weak. The possibility of brutal and violent outbreaks could be considerably reduced by such independence.

Any investigating power within the British penal system is ultimately controlled and administered by the self-same penal system, resulting in few satisfactory conclusions and decisions inevitably culminating in the bitterness that is noticeably present within the prison system today.

In other countries, specifically Canada, they have introduced a more compassionate procedure of complaint. In 1973 they appointed a correctional investigator with full in-

Drugs

TERRY O'HALLORAN

In last month's FRFI we noted that the Prison Department had failed to publish the figures for distribution of drugs to prisoners claiming staffing problems as the explanation.

Some figures, for 25 prisons, did emerge in a parliamentary answer. They make revealing reading. The drugs in question are officially described as psychotropic (anti-depressants, sedatives and tranquillisers), hypnotic and other drugs acting on the central nervous system - the liquid cosh in short.

As usual Holloway tops the league table with 358 doses of behaviour modifying drugs per prisoner.

The top seven

Prison	Number of doses per prisoner
Holloway	358
Parkhurst	330
Grendon	205
Norwich	129
Maidstone	122
Winchester	119
Brixton	116

The figures show that the use of drugs in Grendon and Parkhurst has shot up. Both prisons house special units for 'difficult' prisoners. Grendon used to be run on therapeutic lines and avoided using mind-bending drugs. The sharp rise at Grendon and



Parkhurst indicates that use of the liquid cosh against 'difficult' prisoners - ie the ones who resist - is a central part of the regime in the new units.

Army camps

ALEXA BYRNE

At the end of March, Douglas Hurd announced that two military camps are to be opened in a desperate attempt to relieve prison overcrowding. The camps are Rolleston on Salisbury Plain and Alma Dettingen in Surrey and between them they will hold 700 prisoners. Military police will oversee the camps which will cost £1 million a month to run and will be in use by the end of May.

Alma Dettingen camp was built hurriedly before the war and is used 'occasionally to accommodate troops taking part in war games'. Despite so-called 'refurbishing' neither this camp nor Rolleston will be at all

suitable to keep men locked up with no proper facilities or chances for work or education. Although it is supposed to be a temporary measure Hurd has already set a date for April next year when supposedly an extra 4000 cells will be ready in newly-built jails.

Hurd has tried to blame overcrowding on the Prison Officers Association dispute. At Wormwood Scrubs and Pentonville jails in London, industrial action by the POA has stopped admissions of new prisoners to keep overcrowding down. This in turn has packed police cells up and down the country.

The POA will be none too pleased about army staff taking over their jobs. Neither are they happy about the imminent establishment of a new prison union, the Prison Governors Association, who, encouraged by Hurd, seek to put across the 'professional voice' of the prison service and don't support industrial action.

While the people of the Deep Cut Hamlet (near Alma Dettingen) are panicking that the presence of a prison camp will push house prices down, it is the prisoners, as always, whose rights are trampled over.

PRISONERS FUND



FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM! is the only newspaper which consistently covers the brutality and the fightback within the prisons. FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM! goes into nearly 40 prisons in Britain, Ireland and throughout the world. Every month new prisoners write in to ask for the paper to be sent to them.

Each month it costs £66 to send our newspaper into prisoners. A subscription for a prisoner costs £7.50 and prisoners cannot afford to pay this. We are appealing to our readers to take out a subscription for a prisoner, or better still make a regular monthly contribution to our Prisoners Fund (please send for a standing order form).

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McLaughlin's inside story

Inside an English Jail: the Prison Diary of the IRA Volunteer Raymond McLaughlin. Borderline Publications, 1987, 106 pp, £4.25

We are fortunate that on his release from prison in December 1983 and re-involvement in republican activity outside, Ray McLaughlin placed great value on writing an account of his nine years as a Special Category-A prisoner in England, which contains important lessons about the possibility of building a fighting alliance between the oppressed in Britain and Irish republicans.

Ray describes how solidarity between the PoWs and other sections of prisoners was forged in struggle against their common oppressor. Describing the Hull prison protest of 1976:

'This was the first time I had felt a deep empathy with my fellow prisoners. In the years I had spent in prison up to this date, I had encountered much hostility, many misunderstandings, and in some instances open hatred. There were, of course, notable exceptions to this treatment. These generally came from prisoners with some degree of political awareness. For example, the people who were convicted in the "Angry Brigade" trial were of immense help to us... this riot was a watershed in the relations between PoWs and the militant sections of the English prisoners.'

As the most organised group with the strongest tradition of struggle against British imperialism the PoWs found themselves giving a lead, unifying the prisoners beginning with those with the least prejudices. For example, Ray's account of Gaelic Football at Albany prison in 1981:

'At first there were only four of us kicking around but gradually the rest of the PoWs join-

ed us, then Nageeb Gasmí, the Libyan comrade and an Iranian, Spanish, Turkish and Italian prisoners joined us giving the game an international flavour!'

The furious reaction of the prison authorities to this says it all about their vicious racism and mortal fear of solidarity between organised Irish republicans and other sections of prisoners:

'I found myself on a cooler in Winchester. Roy Walsh, Noel Gibson and Ronnie McCart-



ney ended up on coolers in Canterbury, Wandsworth and Bristol respectively. So too did practically everybody who had participated in our games of Gaelic Football in Albany Prison during October and November 1981. One simply mustn't mix sport with politics, eh what old boy!'

Ray describes again and again how the 'cooler' system of dumping PoWs into the punishment blocks of local prisons combined with 'ghosting' - the shunting out of PoWs round a series of prisons in continuous succession was designed to demoralise and disorganise them. It is a testimony to their great political strength that from the Hull prison protest of 1976 to the Albany protest of 1983 they were able to withstand this.

The tragic death of Ray in September 1985 was a great loss to the anti-imperialist movement in Ireland and internationally. ■

PAUL MCKINLEY

Playwright destroys the spirit of Robeson

Robeson: Song of Freedom. Andy Rashleigh. Oxford Stage Company at The Young Vic, 28 March-9 April

Paul Robeson, the son of an escaped slave, led a life of struggle to improve the conditions of black people in the United States and all over the world. Not only did he believe in the unity of oppressed peoples across the world, the necessity of socialism to end racism; but most importantly he was a communist and sacrificed his career for the struggles which he supported. For Paul Robeson such sufferings were of little consequence compared with the sufferings of the majority of black people in the world.

Unfortunately the play *Robeson: Song of Freedom* does nothing to enhance or promote the reputation of Robeson, but actually destroys it. The play takes several episodes from his life, from parties with the English aristocracy to travelling through Nazi Germany in 1934, Moscow

in the same year, the Peekskill riots of 1949, to the final scene set in a Washington concert hall in 1958. The playwright, Andy Rashleigh, in choosing the different times freely admits he had little regard for the truth. In fact we find Robeson and a famous black communist, William Patterson, discussing the Spanish Civil War in 1934 two years before it actually began. The Peekskill riots, where white vigilantes tried to stop Robeson performing, are set in the deep south; Peekskill is 40 miles north of New York City. In the play there is an FBI agent protecting Robeson from the mob, in fact it was trade unionists who came out to defend Robeson.

Racist stereotypes in the play raised the most laughs. Furthermore it was unbelievable that almost the entire first half was dominated by the alleged affair between Paul Robeson and Edwina Mountbatten. The play elevated the importance of this aristocratic socialite to the detriment of Robeson's committed

black comrades, including his wife Essie. What the play fails to show is that Paul Robeson will not be remembered for his brief association with aristocrats, but for the immense inspiration that he and his songs gave the working class across Britain.

The thread that runs through these fictions is of Paul Robeson as a weak and idealistic person always on the defensive and constantly struggling to find the words to defend his ideas. We see him being out-argued by FBI men, English aristocrats, film producers, white liberals, and young black teenagers who consider communism to be a dirty word.

The play destroys the spirit of Paul Robeson. In treating his subject with this contempt, the playwright has merely copied those directors of the 1930s whom Robeson thought were making films with positive images of black people only to find himself used to promote the British empire.

Admirers of Paul Robeson

will unfortunately have to wait for a play that truly captures his spirit. That is a Robeson who sought to unite different people's of the world through folk songs; who constantly spoke out on the side of the oppressed and the socialist countries; who at the height of the Cold War in 1949, stated at the Paris Peace Conference that it

'is inconceivable that American Negroes would fight with those who have oppressed them for generations against the Soviet Union, which, in a generation, has raised them to the position of equality.'

In voicing such principled positions Robeson was systematically harassed and under constant surveillance. Work was refused and his passport withdrawn. The American state tried to destroy Robeson, but his ideas and values remain undefeated. ■

DALE EVANS

Undocumented lives

Undocumented lives: Britain's unauthorised migrant workers, Nony Ardill & Nigel Cross, Runnymede Trust, 1988, £2.95.

Little, if any, attention is paid by the anti-racist and socialist movement to the appalling conditions of the increasing numbers of unauthorised migrant workers in Britain's hotel and catering industry, contract cleaning and the garment trade. These industries rely heavily on cheap and super-exploited labour from the oppressed nations.

Driven from their homelands by poverty and repression, hundreds of thousands of workers from Latin America, Sri Lanka, the Seychelles, the Philippines, Turkey, West Africa and elsewhere are migrating to Britain (and elsewhere in Europe) in search of a livelihood. Many are

minimum wage set by the wages council for waiters and waitresses.

With no legal employment or other rights, black and undocumented workers are subjected to vicious exploitation. Working hours average anything between 40 and 76 hours for miserably low wages. Besides long hours and low wages, they enjoy no holidays or sick pay, and have no promotion or training prospects. They are the slaves of Thatcher's Britain living under permanent threat of detection, arrest and deportation back to poverty and repression.

The Home Office's Overstayers Tracing Intelligence Section (OTIS) is devoted exclusively to hunting overstayers - many are undocumented workers. Obtaining information from 'tip offs' and the machinery of the welfare state, joint police and immigration official raids on black communities and factories constantly end with arrests and deportations. In 1979, 544 people were deported as overstayers. This rose to 1533 in 1980. The annual average for such deportations between 1981 and 1985 was 1400. The new Immigration Bill will make conditions for unauthorised workers even worse. It will end the right of appeal against deportation for anyone who has lived in Britain for less than seven years and will also make overstaying a continuing criminal offence which can result in prosecution and subsequent deportation.

The Runnymede Trust has done a positive service to the British working class movement in highlighting the conditions faced by undocumented workers. As their pamphlet shows these workers are fighting back. Though only a small proportion, they are an integral part of the British working class. It is the duty of all anti-racists and socialists to fight for their full and equal rights and for an end to immigration controls which threaten to devastate their lives. ■

EDDIE ABRAHAMS



Robeson: slandered and gagged in 'Song of Freedom'

British role in Latin America exposed

The Thatcher Years, Britain and Latin America. Latin America Bureau, 88 pp, £3.50.

The Latin America Bureau (LAB) has performed a valuable service in exposing British collaboration with the crimes of the Yankee rulers. *The Thatcher Years* reveals how:

- The Tories have been involved up to their necks in the military and economic strangulation of Nicaragua, from the supply of Blowpipe missiles, the recruitment of mercenaries through the KMS agency, and the attempted shipment of war material to the Contras in Costa Rica by the coaster *Silver Sea*, to attempts to block EEC aid to Nicaragua.

- British imperialism has played a key role in selling the image of Duarte's death squad 'democracy' in El Salvador. The British official observers - the only European ones - at the 1982 elections openly declared that

'their brief excluded human rights considerations', which didn't stop them calling the elections free and fair. And in late 1984 it was announced that a Salvadorean army officer would begin training at Sandhurst.

- From day one, Thatcher has provided full support to the Pinochet regime in Chile, which intensified during the Malvinas war. Officially the Tories claim to be unwilling to provide equipment that can be used for internal repression; internal Foreign Office documents reveal that they're prepared to do just that (Centaur military vehicles are mentioned). After all, as Cecil Parkinson remarked in Santiago, the Chilean economic experience is very similar to what we are developing here.

But anyone hoping to find a Marxist analysis of imperialism in these pages has a hopeful nature. While the views of the eight authors are not identical, they seem to be generally agreed that British imperialism either does

not exist or has a progressive role to play, and is capable of coming into serious conflict with its Yankee senior partner. Belize and the Malvinas are even cited as examples.

According to James Ferguson, James Painter and Jenny Pearce, a withdrawal of British troops from Belize suits no one but Britain, because of the alleged Guatemalan invasion threat. The reasoning is not made easier to understand by being sandwiched between details of British troops allowing the Contras to use Belize as a staging post for arms shipments, and frequent rumours of co-operation on military intelligence between British and Guatemalan officers.

And Jimmy Burns claims that Argentina owes the demise of General Galtieri to Mrs Thatcher - although a few pages before, he acknowledges that the period from mid-1981 to early 1982 was characterised by growing internal political unrest, largely on

account of the junta's mismanagement of the economy.

The section on Grenada identifies (citing no evidence as none exists) the USSR as the key supporter of the Coardile military coup. Judith Hart credits Carter with a serious campaign about human rights in Latin America. She doesn't mention that Carter authorised a vast programme of economic pressure and the CIA-backed terror that ousted Manley from power in 1980.

The lack of understanding of imperialism is not peculiar to the contributors to the book: it is almost universal to the British left, and responsible for the lack of any real solidarity movement in Britain. The LAB nonetheless has produced a valuable exposure of the crimes of the British ruling class in Latin America. No supporter of the Central American revolution should be without this book. ■

MIKE WEBBER



unauthorised workers - 'in breach of conditions of stay', many classified as overstayers - having entered the country as students, tourists, refugees or fallen foul of the complex and draconian immigration laws which prevent them from gaining legal employment.

It is impossible to estimate accurately the number of such workers. A 1984 EEC survey reported that 45% of workers in London's garment trade were black. At least half are unregistered migrant workers. Wages in this sector average £95 per week, £60 short of the national average. The Runnymede Trust calculated the average wage of unregistered workers it interviewed to be £1.65 per hour, 21p less than the 1985/86 statutory

DEBATING THE SOVIET UNION

A turning point in Soviet foreign policy?

The first two articles by Patrick Newman on the USSR today are a valuable contribution to our understanding of the processes at work in the homeland of Lenin, but the third part represents a dangerous idealisation of the most conservative and demoralised elements of the Soviet leadership in foreign policy questions, carried out by rewriting large chunks of world history.

'No revolutionary movement has come to power since 1979.' (FRFI 76)

This will surprise quite a few people in Zimbabwe and Ghana.

'The world revolutionary movement is at such a low ebb.'

In the US and in imperialist Europe yes, but in El Salvador, Guatemala, the Philippines, South Africa? Honestly?

'Once a revolutionary movement has seized power... the USSR never refuses to give its military support.'

This belongs in the past tense. It is only necessary to recall Khrushchev's message to Kennedy during the Bay of Pigs invasion pledging to do



everything possible to defend Cuban sovereignty if Kennedy sent in the Marines, and compare it to Gorbachev's offer to heal the 'bleeding wound' of Afghanistan by withdrawing the Soviet internationalist combatants and urging the Afghan revolution to share power with the imperialist-backed feudal scum who are seeking overthrow. The contrast is the more striking as Afghanistan's geopolitical situation is totally favourable; that of Cuba could scarcely be less so.

As Trevor Rayne explains, 'Gorbachev clearly wants Soviet withdrawal to be a precedent for the peaceful solution of the "bleeding wounds" in Central America, Southern Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf and Kampuchea.' (FRFI 76). The consequences of this are positively horrendous for all revolutionary democracies and their worker and peasant base, especially in countries under attack by CIA-backed bandits. For what does 'national

reconstruction' mean? It's one of Gorbachev's favourite expressions lately, and it's been one of Reagan's for much longer. Reagan outlined it in his 24 October 1985 speech to the UN, demanding that the Afghan, Angolan, Ethiopian, Kampuchean, and Nicaraguan governments negotiate and share power with US-backed mercenary bandits. Well, 'the humane idea of reconciliation' (the words of Afghan President Najibullah) is now official government policy in both Afghanistan and Kampuchea (see articles by Najibullah and Heng Sanin, in *World Marxist Review*, January 1988).

The worst pressure is on Nicaragua, in the US 'backyard'. It is hardly a coincidence that on 5 November, just after a disappointing trip to the USSR, President Ortega announced ceasefire negotiations with the Contras. The Sandinistas cannot but feel that Gorbachev attaches greater importance to an arms-control agreement with the US - even though it's riddled with loopholes - than to the defence of his revolutionary democratic comrades. Although US aggression and the puppet states bear the basic responsibility for the demoralising situation where Ortega has been afraid to do anything to deepen or even defend the revolution, and prepared to make huge concessions in addition to his obligations under the accords (in case to do otherwise wrecks the peace process) the reduction of Soviet assistance had served to reinforce this tendency. Hopefully the recently launched offensive against Contra forces in the Atlantic Coast will serve to reverse it.

The constraints on the USSR

In this issue Mike Webber and Auriel French reply to the final article (see FRFI 76) in Patrick Newman's three part analysis of Mikhail Gorbachev's speech on the 70th anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

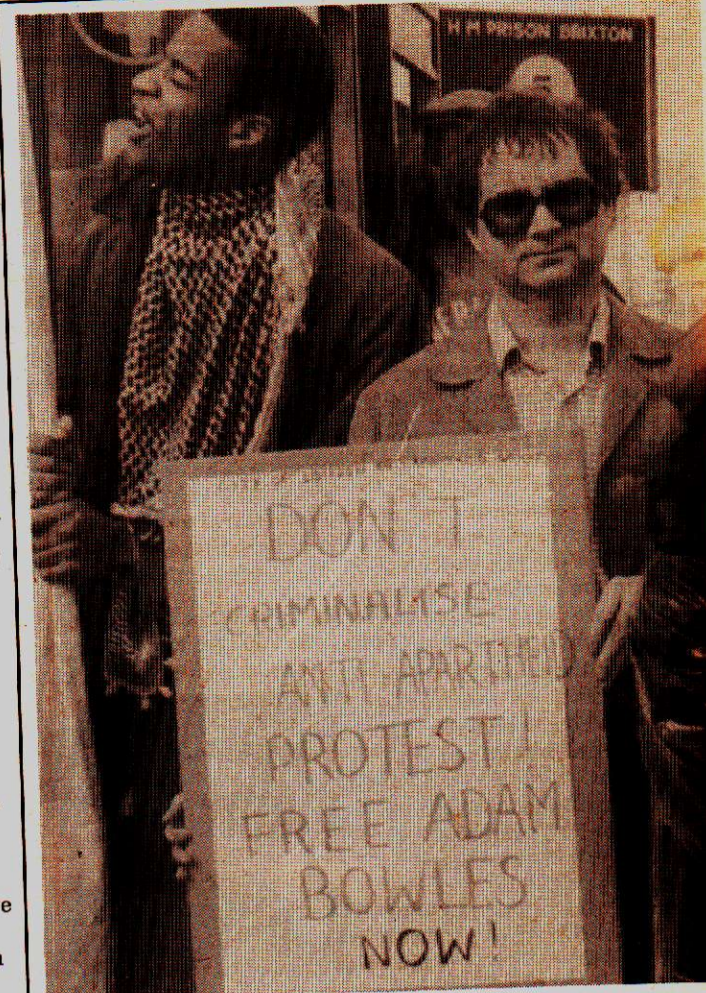
We once again invite readers to contribute to the debate on Patrick Newman's series of articles. We will however only consider replies that are signed and have a contact address.

Patrick Newman will be replying to the debate in a later issue.

are real - aid to Salvadorean and Guatemalan rebels is obviously out, for instance - but they cannot justify some of the concessions currently being made to imperialism. A reconciliation with China, as Patrick correctly points out, would do much to improve the USSR's international situation, and a willingness to make serious concessions on the border question could bring it about. At any rate, it would give the Peking clique the choice between a *rapprochement* with Moscow - or continued hostility, solely and explicitly on the basis of solidarity with US-backed terrorists in Afghanistan and Kampuchea.

It is scarcely credible that the leadership of the CPSU is monolithic on these issues. 'A realistic foreign policy to confront these problems,' as Patrick puts it, is understood by key sections of the CPSU as meaning an honourable reconciliation with China, firm defence of revolutionary democracies whenever needed, and the search for arms control agreements that actually control and hopefully reduce arms. It is unfortunate that Gorbachev - and FRFI - seem to attach some other meaning to it.

MIKE WEBBER



Picket of Brixton Prison in support of Adam Bowles

Diary of a prison visit

Wednesday 23 March: Adam Bowles, City of London Anti-Apartheid Group and RCG member goes to jail. He is charged, along with Irene and Liz Minczer, with causing £1300 worth of criminal damage to the South African Embassy - red paint - on 6 May 1987, the day of the whites-only General Election.

Their defence is that apartheid is a crime in international law. The Judge won't allow their defence. They are convicted and Adam is sentenced to 14 days in prison as a deterrent to others. The court, in uproar, is cleared, and Adam disappears without trace into the depths of Southwark Crown Court cells. He is now, apparently, unreachable; the property of HM Prisons.

Adam phoned me earlier in the day from the Court, the Judge had made it clear that he would go to prison if convicted. Would I phone his Mum if it happened? He didn't have a toothbrush with him. He didn't have any money. Don't worry I say, we'll make sure you get everything you need. The money is given to him at the court. I didn't know that such minimal provision as a toothbrush would be impossible.

Everyday, in British courts, men and women are removed from their friends and families at a stroke.

On the phone, the court says Adam might be in Brixton. No, they can't give us any information about visiting.

Press statements are issued. Surely the press will cover Adam's imprisonment: he is the first anti-apartheid protestor in Britain to go to jail as a convicted prisoner. In South Africa Alan Boesak is receiving death threats and the regime is

preparing to hang Michael Lucas, a young black man of about Adam's age.

Thursday 24 March: A press conference - without the press. Two appeals for bail are turned down. Adam doesn't know. He is being held in Brixton prison.

Friday 25 March: An early morning occupation of the Guardian foyer. The News Editor arrives some time later to tell that our press statement isn't a *real* press statement; that we can't determine what is printed in the newspaper; not even he can determine what is printed. We don't believe this, anyone than his avowal that no censorship operates against group. He promises to try to print a report on Monday about our prison picket, scheduled Saturday. We don't believe that either.

The third appeal to the High Court fails. I phone his solicitor to find out if she is visiting Adam. Impossible, she says solicitors have to book visits it takes at least a week. Better send a letter. Sometimes we can't see prisoners for months they get lost in the prison system. 'That's barbaric!' Adam's solicitor agrees.

A phone call from the probation officer at Brixton prison informs me that Adam has sent a visiting order, but there are no visits for convicted prisoners at weekends so I haven't received it yet, it will have to be Monday. Better phone the prison on Monday make sure he is still there. seem strange, but he might transferred just before his release. (It doesn't seem strange - they have been ghosting Irish prisoners for years). No, we can't take anything except money.

Concessions to imperialism

Patrick Newman's third article deals with the new-look Soviet foreign policy and ideology outlined by Mikhail Gorbachev in his 70th anniversary speech. It shows that because of the 'renewed offensive by imperialism' Gorbachev is proposing a 'policy of learning and mastering the art of long term "existence side by side" with capitalist countries.

I would like to look at the consequences of this ideology as they are unfolding daily here in Britain. Last week on Radio 4 there was a programme about the booming Welsh industry. Entrepreneurs have moved in and set up new light industries which are making great profits. One of the attractions has been the 'good relations' with the Welsh trade union movement. The head of the Welsh TGWU explained how this has happened. Two years ago the Welsh TUs saw the light, understood a 'new way' of thinking. In order to minimise the catastrophic effects of coal and steel industries' decimation, old style trade

unionism had no place in the modern world and it was not only crucial, but infinitely possible to get on with the businessmen. Socialism, he said, 'means profits', it means incentives and benefits for those workers who earn and strive for them. He was very happy about this arrangement.

But the real reason why the capitalists have moved in to Wales is that there is a cheap labour force to exploit, namely women workers, part-timers and the unskilled. When interviewed the women were not at all happy about their low wages and denied that things were idyllic - as the businessmen made out. Their husbands and sons face the future on the dole and they have been forced through necessity to take low-paid work to minimise the poverty facing them all.

So to 'peacefully co-exist' with the bosses in Wales, the TU leadership has, as usual, turned its back on the most oppressed workers. And we see, as we have always seen and understand, that for capitalism to survive and maintain its

profits, somebody, somewhere is suffering.

The question is, who is going to stand up alongside the most oppressed in the fight for their rights? Thatcherism's role in the 'renewed' imperialist offensive has been to strengthen the rich; to offer lavish material incentives to the bought off section of the working class. For this section, alongside the bourgeoisie, the highest morality is to acquire personal wealth and the greatest sin is to doubt or oppose the means of doing so. Even respectable Amnesty International got a kicking last week for daring to question the British government's murdering tactics.

What are socialists to do? Are we, like the petty bourgeois British left, the Labour Party and trade union leaderships to run for cover. No. We cannot turn our backs on the brutality of apartheid in South Africa; on live Palestinians being shovelled up in the rubble; on Reagan stomping through Central America; on unarmed Irish people shot dead; black people deported to their deaths; or political activists like Comrade Adam Bowles imprisoned for standing up against apartheid.

Is imperialism's offensive being renewed as Patrick Newman argues? Isn't its inevitable role simply unfolding before our eyes, its methods and tactics shaping up

to maintain power. And so, isn't it the responsibility of socialists worldwide to meet the threat to humanity. To build new anti-imperialist movements for human and democratic rights in the imperialist nations and to stand 100% in solidarity with the mass peoples' movements of the world. It is hard to understand why Mikhail Gorbachev argues that the 'time of the Communist International... of binding international conferences is over' and Patrick does not explain this. Surely the time is exactly right to build international solidarity with representatives of liberation movements, to discuss the problems and the possibilities. For months FRFI has printed inspiring and educative interviews with members of mass movements around the world.

One thing Comrade Newman hasn't accounted for in his article, is that the black people of South Africa, Angola, Mozambique; the people of Nicaragua, Ireland, Palestine, Philippines, the Tamils etc will never give up the struggle for their freedom. Socialists have to decide which side they are on and whether, to paraphrase Karl Marx, it is more important to make concessions to the fighting oppressed of the world than to the imperialists.

AURIEL FRENCH

LONDON

LONDON RCG SUPPORTERS GROUPS

meet fortnightly on Sunday, 6-9pm, Marchmont Centre, Marchmont Street, nearest tube Russell Square
Next meeting Sunday 1 May

SMASH CLAUSE 28

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

Saturday 30 April, London
Leaves Embankment tube 1 pm
For details of special chartered train from Manchester phone North West Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Equality, 061 234 3000

SPECIAL FUND

We have raised £4,000 towards our £10,000 target. This still leaves £6,000 to raise. A great effort is needed by all of our supporters to ensure that we can reach our target. Special thanks this month to comrades in Manchester RCG branch who raised £125, and Louise and Jacqueline Orchard. All money collected from fundraising events must be rushed down as soon as possible.

Your financial help is needed to help to build our organisation. Fill out the form below and send your donation to the Fund Drive.

★ I SUPPORT THE £10,000 FUND DRIVE ★

I enclose £ _____ donation

I pledge £ _____ monthly (Please send me a standing order form)

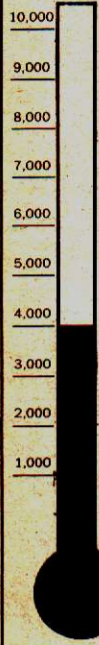
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I want to help organise fundraising events (delete where inapplicable)

Name _____ Phone _____

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The Friday City Group meeting is addressed by a visitor from AZAPO, recently banned along with 16 other organisations by the regime in South Africa. Michael Lucas was hanged at dawn.

Saturday 26 March: A 50-strong picket of Brixton prison, organised by RCG and City AA, coincides with visiting hours for remand prisoners (only). Lots of people stop. 'Are you from the Non-Stop Picket, we could hear you all the way up the road.' Anarchists are also there, giving out leaflets about prison conditions. We march to the back of the prison to be near the cell blocks. Sheets are hung through the cell bars: we sing: the prisoners shout 'More!' No *Guardian* reporter in sight. But we know that the news will get to Adam through the other prisoners and their visitors.

Monday 27 March: No report in *The Guardian*. The visiting order arrives. I spend 45 minutes on the phone to Brixton prison as recommended by the probation officer. It is engaged all the time. We race to the prison - Adam sent the VO last Wednesday! We can visit for 30 minutes between 1pm and 3pm... if he's there.

We hand the VO in through a half-open window in what is mistakenly called 'The Visitors Centre'. Two prison warders, one with a black eye, mark it with a number and hand it back. Where do we go? Through the door marked Social and Legal Visits.

We enter through two sets of electronic doors, into a small room full of people - other visitors queuing and a black, female prison warder who is helpful. Our personal belongings, apart from a packet of cigarettes and a lighter, are locked away. We go into what resembles a tunnel, through a metal detector (Lorna has to go through three times because of the metal zip on her anorak!) into a room, again full of people - especially children - and smoke. No natural light, no air.

Someone has misguidedly painted the walls pea-green and

picked out the paintwork in emerald - even the barred gate. The ceiling is nicotine and the Ladies toilet, door wide open, is tiled in pink. On the walls are large notices: no food, no drink, no sweets, no gum, no documents, no note-taking, no magazines, no newspapers... no life - only cigarettes. We take the hint, post the visiting order through a letter box in the middle of a blank wall, take our places on the wooden benches and light up.

Twenty-five minutes later the door opens: 'Visitor for Bowles'. We leap up and enter a room with long rows of wooden tables like double sided pews. All the warders are male and white. Adam grins. We embrace and he tells us about prison while he's trying to break the record for the number of cigarettes smoked in thirty minutes. He is locked up, like his fellow prisoners, for 23 hours a day. Three meals (appalling but consistent) are served in the space of six hours, the rest is boredom. Slopping out is a race to wash, brush your teeth and use the toilet in the space of a few minutes. Nothing unusual for a British prison.

Adam is lucky he has received lots of cards and messages from comrades and supporters all over the country. Adam is lucky he, unlike many of his fellow prisoners, will be out soon. We are lucky, we won't have to make any more visits to Brixton for a while. Tomorrow another group of visitors will trudge up Brixton Hill to be treated like criminals; the prisoners - mostly not bank robbers, City fraudsters or violent criminals... just poor - will still be rotting in prison, overcrowded, slopping out.

Today, the real criminals in South Africa murdered three women and a man in a raid into Botswana. In breach of international law; in defiance of humanity. There will be an outcry for a day or two, then this crime will join the long list of unpunished crimes committed by the apartheid regime.

No, Adam doesn't regret what he did. He did what was right. CAROL BRICKLEY

School pupils on the march

I am writing to tell you about our march and protest on Tuesday 29 March. Nearly 100 school students marched from Camden to County Hall, Waterloo, to protest against the cuts in teachers and school staff ordered by ILEA. At the same time we were protesting against Thatcher's abolition of ILEA. We made our own banner 'Keep our ILEA - We care for our education' and 'Cut the cuts'. Leaflets were spread about the schools.

As we came into County Hall we met other school children, our teachers and others: NALGO, NUPE and the NUT, but best of all nurses who gave their support.

Believe it or not we like our school and plan to take further action to keep standards high and improve them. Finally, I think your paper is great the way it speaks about the children in South Africa. SUSAN BROWN age 13 London

Spanish collaboration

Everyone here is absolutely scandalised by the Gibraltar incident, which hasn't done much for Britain's image of fairness, impartiality and justice. Hardly anyone believes that the car bomb found in Marbella is the equipment the Active Service Unit may have handled, but is rather a quiet set-up by Spanish police to ease the British Government's difficult situation. The fact that Spanish police have collaborated in the incident only infuriates people more. The common question is 'why didn't they arrest them?'

MARIA Spain

LETTERS

Hill End on strike

After 6 weeks on strike, 20 health workers at Hill End Hospital, St Albans, returned to work on 25 February. The strike followed the suspension and subsequent dismissal of two COHSE officials, Jane Barclay-Taylor and Doug Landman. Jane was sacked for describing, in a local radio interview, inadequate community care as 'tantamount to murder', and Doug was then fired for defending Jane against management harassment.

While the indefinite strike has ended, morale remains good and the workers know that only with widespread strike action and a broadening of the campaign will reinstatement for Jane and Doug be won. It is vital that management is not allowed to silence critics of NHS cuts.

TUC blocks action on health

In Leeds on a wet 14 March COHSE called a day of action in defence of the NHS. Nurses came out on strike from St James' University Hospital and emergency cover was provided for the wards. A demonstration of about 400 marched through Leeds that day but given the size of Leeds it was a small and demoralising event. About 95% of unions, including NUPE, did not take action.

The rally at the end of the demonstration heard Paul Jaeger secretary of the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional TUC, say that although he supported the day of action, the regional TUC did not formally support it. He also said that COHSE had not gone about calling the day of action in the right way and that the TUC had set aside four years

COHSE National Executive Committee has called for industrial action throughout North West Thames and Oxford Regional Health Authorities, and a regional campaign outfit is to be set up. A 24-hour strike has been called at Hill End by popular demand for 5 March, so workers can support the London demonstration for the NHS, and further strike action on the national issues will follow.

Jane and Doug have lodged appeals against dismissal, and still urgently need financial support: especially Jane who is a single parent and whose benefit has been cut by the DHSS.

Any donations to COHSE/NUPE Joint Action Committee, 14, Telford Road, London Colney, Herts. DEFEND THE NHS! REINSTATE JANE AND DOUG! DOUG LANDMAN

for the campaign on the NHS.

The message was clear - do not take action by yourself or else the TUC won't support you and we are going to use the NHS issue as a vehicle to elect Neil Kinnock at the next general election in four years' time. It was a message of demobilisation - don't rock the boat for we want middle class votes to elect Neil Kinnock. Accordingly, there were no announcements of further action or meetings that people could get involved in. The next COHSE branch meeting was four weeks later.

In search of a boost to my morale I went to the picket of St James' Hospital only to find no one there just a few wet placards and balloons. The whole day was a clear demonstration of the need to build a movement anew outside the confines of the Labour and trade union movement. GORDON TEAL Leeds

FRFI welcomes letters from readers. Please send them to: FRFI BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

The real intention of clause 28

It now seems definite that Haringey will be used as a test case for Clause 28 of the Local Government (no 2) Bill, which intends to outlaw all 'promotion' of homosexuality.

Reading Matters is a local community bookshop which stocks, amongst a wide range of publications reflecting the educational and cultural interests of a multi-racial, inner city community, books for lesbians and gay men and publications which present homosexual relationships as a valid lifestyle.

As a consequence of this Reading Matters has been singled out for a virulent and violent campaign to get it closed down. As one of the Tories, Malcolm Glynn, who opposes the bookshop has made clear, 'I just want the money to the shop stopped and the shop closed down.' An emergency motion has been put before the Council by the Tory minority group, which demands amongst other things that all reference to lesbians and gay men be removed from the Council's Equal Opportunity statement, made specific reference to Reading Matters and demanded all grant aid should cease. This motion exposes that the Tories' real intention is not to 'protect children' but to outlaw equal opportunities for lesbians and gay men and to censor books of which they don't approve.

Because Reading Matters has taken a consistent stand against prejudice, racism and sexism and insists on providing literature for all sections of the community, we have been isolated for particular attack. Articles in *The Sun*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* and *The Star* (28-29 February) were the first step in a process of attempted vilification of Reading Matters in order to stem the outcry when Tories attempt to close the only community bookshop in Haringey.

Since the articles appeared Reading Matters has been the subject of an orchestrated campaign of harassment. We have received continuous abusive phone calls threatening to 'Burn us, bomb us and kill us'. We have received vile hate-mail full of racist abuse, which expose our attackers as the true bigots they are.

It has been said by supporters of Clause 28 that it will not limit freedom or harm individuals. The arson attack on the *Gay Times* office during the first reading of the Clause, the increase in physical attacks on gay men and lesbians since, and now the malicious attack on Reading Matters for providing free access to literature prove to the contrary. As opponents of the Clause have predicted, it is already producing an atmosphere of censorship, prejudice and fear.

We ask all fair-minded people to join us in opposing this horrific Clause which is an end to freedom and echoes the book-burning and homophobia in Nazi Germany only 50 years ago.

READING MATTERS BOOKSHOP London

JOIN THE RCG

● Take the side of all those struggling against imperialism - **Join the RCG!**

● A movement must be built in Britain in solidarity with the struggling peoples of Ireland, South Africa, Palestine, Central America. Help us to do this - **Join the RCG!**

● A movement must be built here in Britain which stands with the oppressed fighting racism, repression and poverty. Help us build this movement - **Join the RCG!**

● A movement must be built which challenges and defeats the treachery of the opportunist leaders of Britain's Labour and trade union movement - **Join the RCG!**

I wish to join/receive more information about the RCG

Name _____

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Return to: FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

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A FIVE-PART DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

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OTHER TITLES AVAILABLE:
The Cause of Ireland (104 mins)
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THE SOVIET QUESTION

A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE

Saturday 7 May, 10am-4pm
International Community Centre, 61b Mansfield Road, Nottingham

Speakers:
David Reed (Revolutionary Communist Group): 'Lenin and Trotsky on the national democratic revolution as it relates to the Russian Revolution.'

Harry Powell (Revolutionary Internationalist Contingent) 'Soviet Foreign Policy.'

Mike Banda (Communist Study Group) 'Is Russia a socialist state?'

Organised by Soviet Conference Committee, c/o Box no. 7, 52 Call Lane, Leeds LS1 7DT

Admission: £2 waged/£1 unwaged

RCG COMMUNIST FORUMS ON SOUTH AFRICA

TOPIC - STEVE BIKO

Sunday 15 May, 5-8pm

Marchmont Centre, Marchmont Street, London

MANCHESTER IRISH SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

PUBLIC MEETING:

FREE THE BIRMINGHAM 6!
SMASH THE FRAME-UPS

Guest speaker: **Dr Maire O'Shea**

Tuesday 26 April

7.30pm Conference Hall, Manchester Town Hall, Lloyd Street entrance

MISC c/o Raven Press, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester

JAMES CONNOLLY COMMEMORATION

SATURDAY 7 MAY

Assemble 10.30am
King Stables Road, Edinburgh

Organised by Rising Phoenix Republican Flute Band

BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND! REPATRIATE PRISONERS OF WAR!

MARCH TO WAKEFIELD PRISON SATURDAY 30 APRIL

Organised by Ad Hoc Committee for British Withdrawal From Ireland

Transport details from FRFI

No home for the poor in Thatcher's Britain

TERRY O'HALLORAN

The Housing Bill aims to destroy all public housing provision. Unless serious opposition is organised there will be literally no home for the poor in Thatcher's Britain.

Already, in 1986, there were 103,000 homeless households: an 80% increase since Thatcher came to power in 1979. In the same period the amount local authorities are allowed to borrow to pay for housing programmes was cut from £4,849 million to £1,412 million: a cut of 70%.

London local authorities are spending over £100 million pa to keep families in death trap bed and breakfast hotels where profiteering landlords rake in millions of pounds.

The Housing Bill will make all this worse. Landlords will have the option to buy council property. Tenants will have a vote about transfer but all votes not cast will be counted as votes

in favour of transferring. So a tiny minority of tenants could force the majority out of the public sector.

The Bill will remove any effective rent controls. Rents will rise sharply in both the public and private sector. This combined with cuts in Housing Benefit will rule out the poor.

As the new rules will only apply to new tenancies there will be a renewed outbreak of Rachmanism as private landlords force out existing tenants.

As if all this were not enough the Bill will give the government power to take over council estates - without the agreement of local authorities or the tenants. Such estates will be called Housing Action Trusts. The government will then tart up the estates and sell them to private landlords. The Bill specifically rules out returning HATs to public ownership.

The actions of Westminster Council show what is in store. They aim to

sell off half of Westminster's council housing. This process repeated nationally will mean homelessness running into hundreds of thousands.

Resistance to this onslaught on the fundamental right to adequate housing cannot be dependent on the Labour Party which has yet to mount any serious opposition inside Parliament never mind outside. Local Labour councils are evicting squatters and setting one group of homeless against another.

These people betrayed the fight against rate-capping and are now betraying the homeless. Real opposition can only come from tenants and homeless people themselves who must organise to force Labour councils and trade unions to refuse to implement these new policies and defend housing rights. Such a campaign will have to fight the leadership of the Labour Party and trade unions. ■



SOUTHWARK COUNCIL TENANT

The threat of the Housing Bill has moved people into action. In Southwark tenants associations are meeting and discussing how to defend our estates.

People have begun to realise that their homes could literally be sold over their heads to property speculators. Even before the Bill is passed mysterious people have appeared on our estate with rulers, cameras and binoculars; measuring how much loot they can make, no doubt.

It was local Liberal MP Simon Hughes rather than the local Labour Party who organised a 150-strong meeting to discuss the Bill. He urged people to oppose the Bill. Aside from writing letters, however, he offered no ideas about how the Bill could be opposed.

While we should continue to fight against the passing of the Bill we must also organise now to prevent the sell-off of council housing. The Bill itself shows what must be done.

Unless 51% of the tenants on a given estate all actually vote against sell-offs, the estate will be sold. It is urg-

ent to make sure that every tenant knows what is happening and wants to stop it happening. We need strong tenants associations, information, discussion and participation. Forestalling attempts by greedy speculators to divide and dupe tenants also means building unity now.

If tenants organise and refuse to be divided - on any basis - they can defeat the men with binoculars. *FRFI* readers should be going to the public meetings, getting involved, contributing to, and learning from the struggle. ■

Thatcher's war against the poor

The Thatcher government has declared war on the poor. On Monday 11 April the Social Security Act came into effect. Hundreds of thousands of the poor have been made poorer still. Terry O'Halloran looks at the new law.



Supplementary Benefit becomes Income Support. The IS scheme hits directly at single childless people under 25. Their benefit falls from £31.35 (all figures for the old system assume a 3.2% uprating in line with inflation) to £26.05, a loss of £5.30. This affects at least 100,000 young people on 1987 figures.

The DHSS claims that an unemployed couple with two children under 11 would receive £79.10 per week IS as opposed to £72.45 SB: a gain of £6.65 per week.

However, according to the Child Poverty Action Group a true comparison with SB would include an amount for single payments (abolished under IS) and additional requirements such as heating and produce a real SB equivalent of £81.00, and deduct from IS amounts for water rates and 20% of rates giving a real figure of £76.30 (IS): a loss of £4.70 per week.

Similar duplicity is practised with Family Credit which replaces Family Income Supplement. It is true that most FIS claimants will get a higher weekly payment. But they will no longer get free school meals and all FC will be counted towards Housing Benefit.

The government says that an ele-

ment of £2.55 per week has been built into FC to cover school meals. This works out at 66p per day for a 40 week school year. Yet school meals can cost as much as 80p, requiring a weekly element of £3.08. This fact coupled with reduced Housing Benefit and the freezing of Child Benefit means that an estimated 100,000 families will be worse off.

The Act also 'reforms' State Earnings Related Pensions. According to the government's assumptions the value of the basic pension will fall by more than half in the next fifty years.

Changes in Housing Benefit means that all tenants will have to pay 20% of the average rates regardless of their income. Tenants in high rate areas, such as inner city London, will actually pay more than 20%. Ceilings will be applied and local authorities' power to apply 'top up' schemes is severely restricted. Fewer people will get less Housing Benefit.

IS abolishes single payments in favour of a Social Fund which will largely consist of loans. Each office will have a monthly quota for Social Fund grants. So whether you get a payment at all will depend on the time of the month and the area, and the poor will have to compete with each other for grants.

Maternity pay and allowance schemes have been replaced by Statutory Maternity Pay and State Maternity Allowance. According to the Social Security Consortium pamphlet *Of little benefit*, up to 94,000 mothers have lost their right to maternity allowance.

The abolition of free school meals for anyone not on IS will hit 500,000 children. This is to be followed by the abolition of free welfare milk to mothers and children on IS.

'The Social Security Act has nothing to do with simplification or helping those most in need. It is a declaration of war on the poor'

Social Security Minister Nicholas Scott said that the majority of pensioners, three fifths of single parents, 77% of couples with children and four fifths of sick and disabled people will be better off or no worse off. He subsequently had to admit to the Commons Social Services Committee that if the no worse off category is excluded more people lose than gain.



But even this is on the basis of the cooked figures exposed above. The government's own figures reveal what is really happening. The total extra spending on the new scheme is estimated at £440 million for the first year. The total savings are estimated at £1,053 million. In other words the government will save £613 million.

The Social Security Act 1986 has nothing to do with simplification or helping those most in need. It is a declaration of war on the poor. Nothing could be so obscene as the contrast between this Act and the 1988 Budget: £613 million snatched from the poor; £2 billion given to the rich. ■