

FIGHT RACISM!

FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

ANTI-IMPERIALIST PAPER OF THE
REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST GROUP
INCORPORATING HANDS OFF IRELAND!

ISSN 0143 5426

THE IRISH WAR

WHAT IS TO BE DONE IN BRITAIN

The hunger strike by Irish political prisoners ended on 18 December. It has become clear that the British Government secured the ending of the strike by making secret promises. Those promises have not been kept. The prisoners' struggle to achieve recognition as political prisoners continues and as long as it does, the duty of British Communists is to express full support for that struggle and total opposition to the British state's attempts to portray Irish freedom fighters as criminals.

The hunger strike aroused the world wide anger of democratic and working class forces against British imperialism. Only in Britain, where pressure could most effectively have been exerted, was there a minimal and ineffectual response. The hunger strike dramatically exposed the continuing stranglehold which a pro-imperialist leadership has on the British working class movement. It exposed the treachery of what passes for the British left – the CP, SWP, IMG. It also shows the enormous task facing the small forces of communism in Britain.

Working class silent

The organised working class movement, the Labour Party and trade unions were largely silent throughout the hunger strike – just as they have been silent during the past 13 years of the Irish people's liberation struggle. When the leadership of this movement has spoken – it has taken the side of British imperialism against the Irish people.

This lack of any significant movement of support for the Irish cause must be explained. Any working class movement that stands by whilst its Government, one of the strongest imperialist powers, turns its armed forces against the people of a small nation and slaughters, interns and tortures them – that movement must have imperialist poison deep within it.

The British working class is not only failing to defend the Irish people but increasingly, what were once held to be the strongest sections of the working class are proving impotent in the face of attacks from the reactionary Tory Government. Whilst 2½ million workers are unemployed, sections of steel workers accept management plans involving the destruction of 20,000 jobs. Whilst Leyland Management dances a jig on the grave of trade union rights, the workers return to work leaving their workmates and shopstewards outside the gates, sacked.

It is no coincidence that the British working class movement which has failed to produce significant support for the Irish struggle, whose leadership has actively opposed the Irish struggle, should now be showing weakness and perplexity as it confronts a capitalist class no longer content to grind the bones of oppressed

peoples but determined to grind the bones of British workers as well.

The imperialist Labour Party

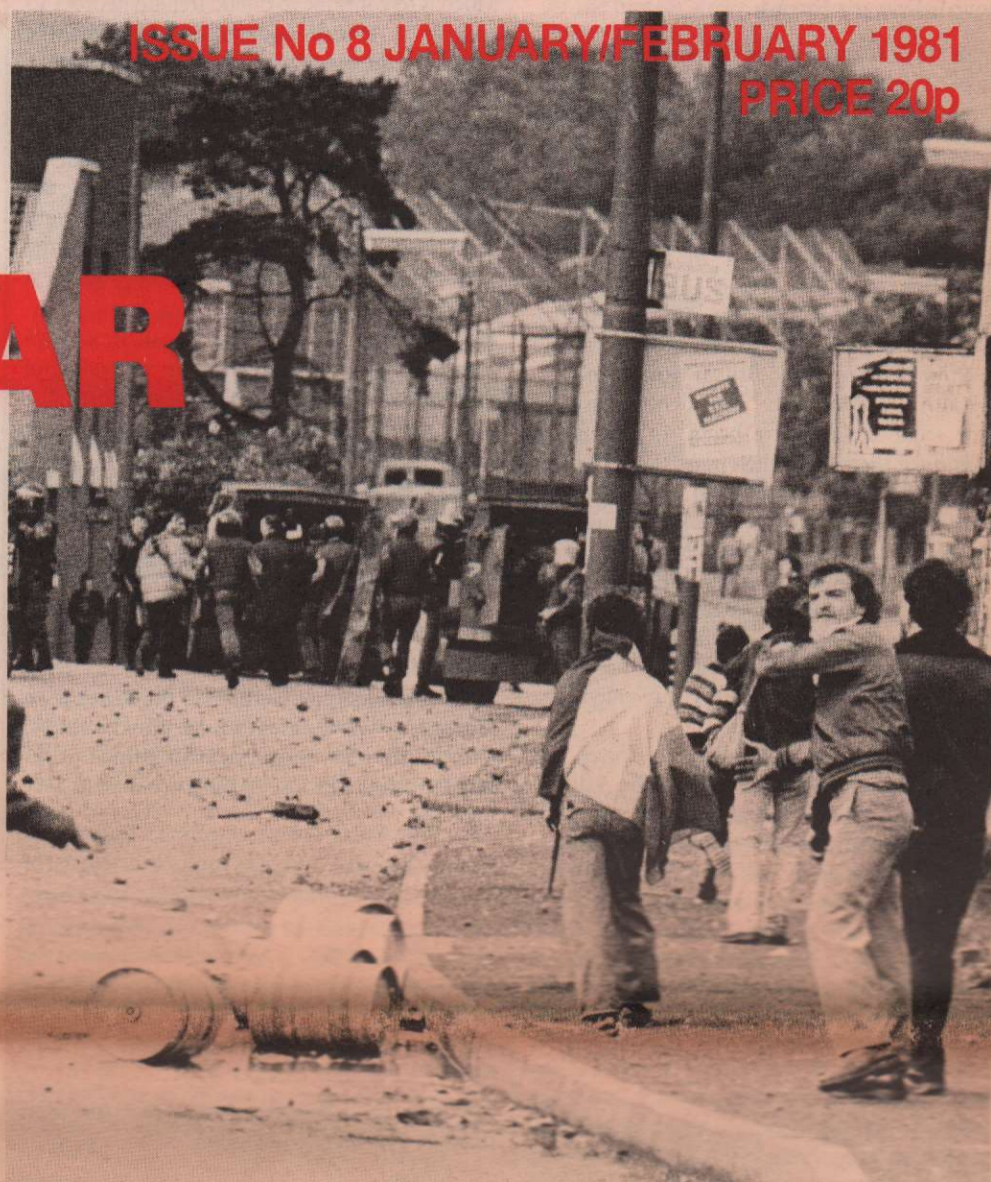
The connection between support for imperialism in Ireland and the working class's inability to defend itself is the continuing strength of British imperialism. That strength is based on the oppression of nations, which enables it to bribe a section of the British working class movement into the camp of British imperialism. By virtue of its security and its privileged and stable existence a labour aristocracy has come to dominate the organised British working class movement. What is commonly referred to as *the party of the working class*, the Labour Party, represents nothing but privileged workers and is a thoroughly pro-imperialist party. The Labour Party, the TUC, their MPs and officials are imperialist agents within the working class, working to defend that which grants them their privileges – British imperialism.

This leadership stands totally opposed to the peoples of oppressed nations because their struggle threatens imperialism and therefore its agents within the working class. It has also long since shown its contempt for the oppressed black and Irish workers in Britain; the unemployed, the poorly paid; the old-age workers; single parent families, the disabled. It cares only for the narrow self-interest of the privileged aristocracy of labour, only that this section should continue to get a share of the blood stained proceeds of imperialism.

This is why the Labour Party has been one of the most determined enemies of the Irish struggle. Labour introduced the troops into Ireland in 1969, the PTA in 1974, and it withdrew special category status in 1976 and created the H-Blocks of Long Kesh. Predictably the Labour Party during the hunger strike toed the imperialist line and was if anything more anxious than the Unionists to receive assurances that 'no concessions' had been made to the Irish prisoners.

What, some will ask, about the Labour lefts? The 'Left' Labour MPs kept silent for 7 weeks of the hunger strike and then as the eighth week began some of them issued a 'daring' statement: the British government should adopt

ISSUE No 8 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1981
PRICE 20p



a 'humanitarian' approach to Irish prisoners. Why? Because the death of prisoners would:

'...strengthen the hand of all those who favour force rather than democratic political campaigning.'

There summed up is the so-called 'breach' between Labour Left and Right. The Right presses on baying for Irish blood whilst the Left says: 'Hold on, won't this make the Irish even more determined to resist us and therefore even more dangerous for our Lord and Master, British imperialism?' The Left opposes imperialist violence *only* when it threatens to unleash a violent response from the oppressed.

Trade Union sectarianism

The official Trade Union leadership did and said nothing throughout the hunger strike. It should be remembered that British unions in the TUC also organise the majority of unionised

workers in the north of Ireland. That 'organisation' has long consisted of colluding in wholesale discrimination against Catholic workers and therefore support for Loyalist privilege and ascendancy. Yet periodically this 'leadership' will utter platitudes about the need for trade unions to 'bridge the sectarian divide' in the north by concentrating on 'bread and butter issues'. Such words are a reactionary farce when the British Government is killing and imprisoning Republican workers *and* moreover when the 'butter' has always gone to the Loyalist workers as payment for their servile support for the British occupation of Ireland! It is in fact British imperialism which created the 6 County statelet on the basis of sectarianism and divided the working class by buying off the Loyalist workers. As long as the artificial statelet exists, the working class will be divided into hostile camps. Not until Britain is driven out of Ireland *continued on page 2*

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MONTHLY PAPER!

**SELL FRFI!
SEND US
MONEY
SUPPORT
THE
STRUGGLE**

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THE IRISH WAR

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will there be any possibility of Loyalist workers seeing themselves as or acting as part of the working class. It is precisely for this precondition of working class unity—the defeat of British imperialism—that the Republican Movement is fighting and for which the British Labour Party and TUC constantly attacks them.

Revolutionary forces

The deadweight of the imperialist Labour Party is paralysing the working class. From where then, will the revolutionary movement come? It will be based on those who have no privilege—the most oppressed workers, the black, the Irish, the low paid and unemployed workers. Within their ranks can already be found signs of the spirit of revolutionary opposition to the British state and also an internationalism which will give rise to effective solidarity with the Irish peoples struggle and an effective defence of the British working class.

Today, Communists confidently turn to these sections and there begin to find fertile ground for the views which must shape the new revolutionary movement and also find the forces which will conduct a relentless struggle to destroy the Labour Party and create a working class movement worthy of the name.

We can be equally confident that the groups which today are known as the 'Left', the CP, IMG, SWP et al, not only will play no role in forging the new revolutionary movement but are an obstacle to doing so.

Whilst the new revolutionary forces are instinctively turning away from the Labour Party, the petit bourgeois socialists try to tie them to it by spreading the lie that the Labour Party can be turned 'left' and made to fight. Whilst the new forces have a healthy attitude to the necessity to use physical force when under attack, the petit bourgeois socialists spread pacifist illusions in the possibility of reforming and democratising the military and police apparatus of the British state.

We have seen all this in their attitude to the Irish struggle. Whilst the new revolutionary forces instinctively identify with the Republican Movement recognising in it a kindred spirit of rebellion, democracy and revolutionary determination the petit bourgeois socialists viciously attack Republicanism as 'petit bourgeois nationalist', 'anti-working class', 'elitist' and given to 'mindless violence'. In particular they reserve their venom for the armed struggle of the IRA and take any opportunity to 'advise' the IRA to dump its arms. During the hunger strike the CP and immediately after it the SWP, called on the IRA to end the armed struggle. These groups are not fit to bear the names communist or socialist.

Communists and the Irish war

Against the Labour Party and petit bourgeois socialism a new Communist party must be built in Britain. Central to this task will be work in support of the Irish struggle. Today in Britain it is Communists who are fighting for the revolutionary programme on the Irish question, around which will be mobilised the vanguard sections of the working class. The Communist programme fearlessly states:

- British imperialism is waging a reactionary war against the Irish people. The purpose of which is to continue to divide Ireland in order to oppress it. British imperialism can only rule Ireland by the use of torture, terror and murder.

- The Republican Movement is waging a revolutionary struggle for the right of national self-determination. In fighting to rid Ireland of imperialist oppression, it is acting in the interests of all Irish workers. Only when Britain is driven out can Ireland and the Irish working class be united—the precondition for a socialist Ireland.

- The British working class must, in its own interest, support the Republican struggle and work for the defeat of the British imperialist state. British workers must give unconditional support to the Republican Movement in its struggle against British imperialism and must defend the right of the Republican movement to pursue its struggle by whatever means it sees necessary. Those so-called 'socialists' who claim to support the Irish cause but attack the armed struggle are not socialists but traitors, both to the Irish people and to British workers.

- Recognising that victory for the Republican Movement will represent a huge blow to British imperialism and a huge gain for British workers, a movement must be built which calls for:

The immediate granting of political status to all Irish prisoners of war and the right of repatriation for Irish POWs held in England.

The immediate repeal of all anti-Irish legislation such as the PTA, whose sole purpose is to prevent Irish workers in Britain giving active support to the Irish struggle.

The immediate withdrawal of British troops from the north of Ireland

The right of self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.

The building of a movement on this programme is the most vital task which faces British Communists. In doing so we will both be giving the greatest possible assistance to the Irish revolution and advancing the British revolution. To support the liberation struggle in Ireland is at one and the same time to work to liberate the British working class from the choking grip of the imperialist Labour Party.

This is the *only* road to revolution in Britain. We call on all honest socialists to step with us onto this road.

OUR CAMPAIGN

The RCG and supporters of FRFI mounted a nationwide campaign in support of the hunger strikers under the slogan 'Victory to the Hunger Strikers! Political Status Now!' The aim was to take the campaign into the working class.

At the heart of this campaign were street meetings, estate rounds, leafletting and sales in working class areas. From London to Glasgow weekly street meetings took place.

Alongside the street meetings, a national series of public meetings was organised in Birmingham, Bradford, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, North and South London. All these meetings attracted support from workers. In a number of meetings Sinn Fein representatives spoke. In Leeds the international solidarity of the oppressed was underlined by messages of solidarity from the Union of Turkish progressives and the Iranian Students Society.

The RCG also participated on hunger strike committees all over the country, building for their local demonstrations and other events. Those fake friends of the Irish people who refused to support the prisoners were not allowed to escape exposure. On 8 December in London the petit bourgeois left ANL held an 'International' rally against fascism featuring Tony Benn. RCG members stood in front of Benn displaying a large banner saying *Victory to the Hunger Strikers! Political Status Now!* Heckled from the floor Benn refused to give support to the prisoners.

On 15 November 200 people marched behind the RCG *Victory to the Hunger Strikers* banner. By 7 December this had grown to around 300 including many more workers. Both marches

had 3000 people on them. So whilst the petit bourgeois left stood still, the revolutionary contingent grew. The final, overwhelming confirmation of growing support for an anti-imperialist campaign came in Glasgow.

On 20 December, two days after the ending of the hunger strike, 1000 workers marched through Glasgow in support of the prisoners and the Irish war of liberation. Far and away the largest local march, Glasgow proved that the workers were prepared to respond to a revolutionary appeal. The march, initiated by the Scottish Hunger Strike Action Committee and built by Sinn Fein and the RCG under the slogans *Victory to the Hunger Strikers! Political Status Now!*, was the first openly pro-Republican march through the city centre for years.

Not surprisingly this campaign attracted the venom of police, loyalists and fascists. In Leeds the police broke up two street meetings. In Edinburgh a mob of loyalists made a failed attempt to disrupt a public meeting and police arrested 8 people at a rally in support of the hunger strikers. In Clapham 50 fascists attacked an RCG public meeting. Thanks to effective stewarding however meetings went ahead despite fascist attacks.

The campaign showed the enormous potential that exists. Workers came out in support of a communist appeal for support for the prisoners and the war of liberation. This is the basis to build on.

SUPPORT ABROAD

Throughout the world support built up for the heroic hunger strikers. It is eloquent testimony to the corrupt character of the British press that this information has to be compiled from Irish and overseas papers.

USA

There was very wide support in the USA. A number of marches took place in New York, Chicago and other centres. 4000 marched on the UN to hand in protests and resolutions including resolutions from six State legislatures—New York, New Jersey, California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Connecticut. The Longshoremen's Union voted to boycott all British goods if any prisoner died. The California Labor Union sent a telegram

demanding that the TUC give support to the prisoners. Throughout the hunger strike British Consul offices in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Detroit were picketed. San Francisco city buses carried posters in support of the prisoners.

Trade unions internationally

Major trade union organisations throughout the world including the World Federation of Free Trade Unions, the CGT in France, the OUT in Portugal, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour in Canada and the Australian CTU gave support to the prisoners.

Demonstrations

In the USA, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, France, West Germany, Holland, Italy, Canada, Australia, Portugal and Greece marches, pickets and protests were organised. In Iran a massive anti-imperialist demonstration of a million people cheered banners calling for *Victory to the Irish Hunger Strikers*.

A measure of the massive pressure that was created is the fact that the Portuguese National Assembly, on 17 December, voted unanimously in support of a motion condemning British treatment of the prisoners and calling for political status.

The Soviet Union gave support to the hunger strikers describing them as 'freedom fighters' and reporting their struggle in *Pravda* and printing a letter from the prisoners to the Soviet people.

Explosive support

In Holland, militant supporters of Irish prisoners burnt down a factory owned by the honorary British consul. In Lyon, supporters petrol bombed the British Leyland Agent's offices, whilst Belgian supporters, protesting against the Queen's visit, battled with the police.

THE IRISH WAR PUBLIC MEETINGS

MANCHESTER

Thursday 22 January, 7.30 pm
Moss Side Peoples Centre
St Marys Road, Moss Side

LIVERPOOL

Tuesday 3 February, 7.30pm
AUEW Hall
Mount Pleasant

NORTH LONDON

Thursday 29 January, 7.30 pm
John Barnes Library
Camden Road/Dalmeny Avenue
London N7
Nearest Tube: Holloway Rd.
or Tufnell Park

BIRMINGHAM

Thursday 22 January, 7.30 pm
Black Horse Pub
Stratford Road
Sparkbrook

GLASGOW

Wednesday 21 January, 7.30 pm
Dixon Hall
650 Cathcart Road

EDINBURGH

Tuesday 20 January, 7.30pm
Edinburgh Trades Council
Picardy Place, off Leith Walk

SOUTH LONDON

Thursday 5 February, 7.30 pm
Lola Jones Small Hall
Greaves Place
Garret Lane
London SW17
Nearest Tube: Tooting Broadway

LEEDS

Friday 30 January at 7.30 pm
Leeds Trades Hall
Saville Mount
Leeds 7

BLOODY SUNDAY DEMONSTRATIONS

**Victory To The Prisoners!
Political Status Now!
National Demonstration**

in CARDIFF

Sunday 25 January
Assemble 1.30 pm
at Fitzallen Road

Organised Provisional Sinn Fein
(Britain)

**Victory to the H-Block Men
Victory to the Armagh Women
Political Status Now!**

Demonstrate Saturday 31 January
in

GLASGOW

Details from FRFI sellers
Organised by
Glasgow H-Block/Armagh
Action Committee

BRITISH OPPORTUNISTS & THE HUNGER STRIKE

The hunger strike by Irish political prisoners begun by 7 men in the H-Blocks on 27 October, ended on 18 December. By then 37 men and 3 women were on hunger strike for political status.

In our Editorial Statement to FRFI 7 we wrote that the hunger strike:

'...has become the central issue of the Irish people's war against British imperialism...winning political status will be a body blow to British imperialism in Ireland and a great step forward for the Irish people. British Communists do not hesitate to declare complete and uncompromising support for the hunger strikers. Their struggle demands the consistent mobilisation of revolutionary forces in Britain'

This mobilisation did not take place. In Ireland the revolutionary forces of the Irish working class came onto the streets in thousands and tens of thousands. Internationally support for the hunger strikers grew more rapidly than anyone could have expected. Only in Britain, the one country where massive pressure and force against the British government was desperately needed, was there no campaign of any significance.

The responsibility for this disgraceful state of affairs rests entirely upon the shoulders of British petit bourgeois socialism. In particular upon the CP, SWP and IMG who claim to be the largest and most influential of socialist organisations in Britain. The Communist Party at the beginning of the hunger strike demanded that the IRA cease the armed struggle and refused to participate in any campaign.

One would have expected that with the end of the hunger strike socialists in Britain would undertake a severe analysis and criticism of the campaign in Britain in order to be better prepared for any future struggle in the prisons. Yet only two weeks after the hunger strike, and in their very first statements, the SWP and IMG say not a word about the British 'campaign' and their role in it! Instead, they unashamedly blame the Irish movement for the fact that the British government has not yet granted political status to Irish political prisoners.

The SWP wrote:

'The four year long struggle for political status...has ended with what can only be described as a masterpiece of compromise...'

Hunger striking has a long established and honoured place in republican struggle. But like the armed campaign it is ultimately an elitist tactic.

'...a mass movement was built but its role was essentially supportive...a different thing from one that fights for self-liberation...'

The SWP like its bedfellow of the Communist Party, terrified of the revolutionary armed struggle of the oppressed, disgracefully exploits the end of the hunger strike to call on IRA to abandon the armed struggle. As it goes on to say

'There will be pressure on the IRA to adapt its tactics to the new situation. A return to isolated military acts will be hard to justify.'

The IMG, too cowardly to speak up itself, endorses a statement from its Irish 'co-thinkers', The People's Democracy:

'The ending of the hunger strike represents a limited victory for the prisoners...'

The British were able to hold out because the mass of the Irish people were held hostage by the SDLP and, in the South by the Fianna Fail government.

It must be said that the Smash H-Block/Armagh campaign did not have a central strategy of challenging the SDLP and Fianna Fail...'

Such vile and disgusting lies! A mass movement in Ireland was built in spite of the opposition from the SDLP and Fianna Fail. And in the face of this British petit-bourgeois socialism speaks of 'compromises' and 'limited victories' being the result of 'elitist tactics' and of failure to 'challenge' the SDLP and Fianna Fail. This is nothing more than a treacherous cover-up for

the betrayals of the SWP and IMG. They dare not state, that in Britain, it was the SWP and IMG which opposed, by any means possible, the campaign for a complete victory for the

Irish political prisoners hunger strike. They dare not say that it was they themselves who pleaded with the British government for a compromise. Charter 80, fully backed by the SWP and IMG, grovelled before Thatcher, begging her in a personal letter:

'The Northern Ireland Office has stated it will not compromise on this issue... We appeal to you to compromise and avoid the death of these Irish prisoners.'

It was none other than these cowardly middle class beggars who, in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Bradford and Scotland argued against and voted against hunger strike action committees mobilising on the basis of *Victory to The Hunger Strikers! Political Status Now!*. It

SCAB RECORD

The petit bourgeois socialists' treachery during the Irish prisoners' hunger strike was the culmination of their whole shameful history of betrayal of the Irish struggle. It was conclusively demonstrated during the hunger strike that the petit bourgeois socialists are in the camp of reactionary British imperialism and firmly tied to the imperialist Labour Party.

The shameless betrayals carried out by the CP, SWP, IMG during the hunger strike came as no surprise to revolutionaries. For years past they have shown the same vitriolic hatred of the Republican movement; the same willingness to abase themselves before Tony Benn and his like; the same thorough sectarianism whereby the SWP, IMG put their own skins, their own alliances and their own privileges way above the interests of both the Irish and British workers.

We have only to briefly sketch their record since the blanket protest began in 1976 to prove this.

1976 Whilst during the hunger strike the petit bourgeois socialists claimed that the slogan *Political Status Now!* would frighten away the 'broad forces', in 1976 they claimed that what frightened the broad forces at that time was the slogan *Troops Out Now*. The IMG and SWP were in those days trying to seduce the broad forces of the CPGB. So they dropped the principled slogan *Troops Out Now* and adopted instead *Britain must withdraw! No British involvement!* The CP remained unmoved, and more importantly, unexposed.

1977 By July (when the Irish prisoners had already been on the blanket for 10 months) the UTOM (ie SWP/IMG) decided that its major initiative should be an 'International Tribunal on Britain's crimes against the Irish people'. This they felt would mobilise, yes, those good old 'broad forces' so concerned with human rights. However when the broad forces did not arrive, the petit bourgeois socialists decided that the very name of the Tribunal was frightening them away. 'War crimes' was prejudging the issue they felt. So, the name was changed to the much more neutral, and broad 'International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland'. This farce was to keep the SWP, IMG etc occupied for two years. It finally sank in 1979 having attracted 70 people to its final hearing.

1978 The IMG, SWP, TOM, UTOM, CPGB—all refused to support Provisional Sinn Fein's Bloody Sunday Com-

memoration march. Instead they held a counter-demonstration at the same time, in another part of London. PSF had issued a clear call on the left to attend its march. The petit bourgeois socialists not only ignored this call but in holding a separate march, demonstrated their utter chauvinistic contempt for the Irish people and the PSF.

1978 also saw a determined and principled campaign by the Prisoners Aid Committee on the struggle for Political Status for Irish prisoners. Aided by the RCG, the PAC mobilised two of the biggest marches for years, and did so on an openly pro-Republican basis. No concessions were made to the petit bourgeois left and its 'broad forces' yet in July over 5,000 marched and in November between 6-7,000.

The petit bourgeois socialists' contribution to the large PAC demonstrations consisted of determined and conscious sabotage. The CP and SWP offices had to be picketed before they would state their views on the PAC march. The CP refused to support it, the SWP said it would and didn't. In the week before the July march, when they saw the unprecedented support for it, the SWP and IMG set up the 'Irish Political Prisoners Support Committee' (never heard of before or since) and tried to use publicity stunts to cash in on the work done by PAC and the RCG.

During the run-up to the November march the SWP launched a national speaking tour with Brendan Gallacher (father of H Block prisoner Willie Gallacher) and counterposed a 'free Willie Gallacher' campaign to the overall fight. The IMG organised a counter demonstration in Glasgow. When Glasgow PSF opposed the counter march *Socialist Challenge* called them 'saboteurs'.

1979 The petit bourgeois left enthusiastically supported the 12 August Young Liberals demonstration on Ireland. No wonder—the demonstration studiously avoided any mention of political status. Despite the appalling conditions of the H Block prisoners, the petit bourgeois socialists did virtually nothing else in 1979.

1980 Finally, forced to move on the issue of Irish prisoners, the SWP, IMG invented Charter 80—a campaign supposedly in support of the 5 demands for the Irish prisoners. Once again, as later during the hunger strike, they claimed that the call for political status would alienate 'broad forces'.

This brief sketch of their history shows two things: first, that the 'broad forces' do not exist, and are the excuse whereby the petit bourgeois socialists try and avoid confronting British imperialism. Secondly, the petit bourgeois socialists have, all along the line, tried to sabotage principled work on the Irish question in the British working class.

was none other than Messrs Fitzpatrick (SWP) and Bell (IMG) who attended a Troops Out Now Contingent meeting for the Campaign for Withdrawal from Ireland demonstration, with the sole purpose of reversing an RCG proposed decision that it march under the banner of *Victory to The Blanketmen! Political Status Now!* It was none other than Des Tierney of Scottish IMG who threatened to walk out of the Scottish Hunger Strike Committee, if it did not abandon its slogan *Victory to The Hunger Strikers*.

The IMG and SWP right from the beginning of the hunger strike were yearning for compromise. Is that not why they grovelled before Thatcher? Is that not why they did not once call upon British workers to mobilise behind the slogans 'Victory to the Hunger Strikers! Political Status Now!?' Not only did they seek compromise, but actively tried to prevent any campaign from developing in Britain. Fitzpatrick's and Bell's first step was to set up a Coordinating Committee, which they themselves decided would have no powers to issue statements, or leaflets, which had no powers to call meetings, pickets or demonstrations. They decided to divest themselves of all responsibility to organise and lead a campaign and in addition, at the meeting of 19 October, rejected an RCG proposal for a properly constituted committee. They threw their 'efforts' into mobilising the 'broad forces' of MPs, trade union leaders, bishops, professors and Soviet Dissidents on a humanitarian, liberal basis. They claimed to be building an open campaign. What was the result Nothing! Nothing but inactivity by these 'broad forces' and when the prisoners were near death, a statement, clearly instigated by Fitzpatrick, which savagely denounced the Provisional Republican Movement:

'But all that will result from the deaths of any of the hunger strikers is violence and misery now and fuel for violence far into the future. They will strengthen the hand of all those who favour force rather than democratic political campaigning.'

Did the SWP and IMG who have the gall to attack the mass Irish movement for elitism and failing to 'challenge' the opportunists, ever themselves challenge the Labour Party? No they did not. The very people who wanted to adapt the whole campaign to suit MPs, bishops and professors rejected proposals to force these elements into action. It was Fitzpatrick who at the London Committee argued and voted (with the IMG) against inviting Benn and the MPs who signed Charter 80 to attend a picket at the opening of Parliament. It was Bell of the IMG who argued and voted, after six weeks of Labour left inactivity, against an RCG motion to picket Benn's home.

This was the sum total of the SWP's and IMG's campaign. Of course there were meetings, pickets and other events. But none of these mobilised even a small proportion of their members, let alone supporters. The SWP and the IMG who now criticise the Irish movement failed to mobilise their own membership for the demonstrations on 15 November and 7 December. Lest there be any doubt as to why, let it be noted that at the London Committee of 10 December, with Irish political prisoners about to die they voted against an RCG proposal for a national demonstration in the event of any death.

The SWP and IMG who now so eagerly criticise the Irish movement are doing nothing more than blaming the Irish movement for crimes of British petit-bourgeois socialists. Between the 'elitism' of the hunger strikers, the IRA and the mass movement in Ireland and the elitism of petit bourgeois grovelling British socialism British communists do not hesitate to choose the former. The former is a mass revolutionary movement directed against British imperialism. Petit bourgeois socialism in Britain is nothing more than a vacillating and cowardly political trend, whose every step is directed at seeking compromises between imperialism and the revolutionary forces of the working class. At every step they attempt to block revolutionary mobilisation of British workers against British imperialism. This much has again been proved by their actions during the Irish hunger strike.

Eddie Abrahams

MURDERERS AQUITTED

The outrageous acquittal of six nazis and klansmen accused of killing five leading members of the Communist Workers Party in Greensboro, North Carolina on 3 November, 1979, has been closely followed by further events which highlight the violent features of the dangerous turn now being taken by US imperialism. This verdict is the domestic aspect of an international policy. The Greensboro verdict of 'not guilty' is a virtual 'license' to kill, the same unleashing of rightist paramilitary gangs that is occurring in El Salvador. These atrocities and the motives behind them fit closely with the global policies of the incoming Reagan administration in particular, with projects to increase the domestic use of the FBI and CIA, of NATO in western Europe and in confrontation with the socialist countries, and of hardline military repression throughout the third world.

On 17 November, 1980, the Greensboro jury, all-white with a foreman who was identified as a member of a CIA-run Cuban exile group called the 'May 20th Movement', decided on acquittal after 23 weeks of trial proceedings, the longest trial in the history of North Carolina. The six nazis and klansmen were judged not guilty of the five counts of first-degree murder, and the one count of felonious riot, on the basis that they allegedly acted in 'self-defense'. This judgment flew in the face of the outstanding evidence of the videotapes of the massacre, which clearly showed the nazis and klansmen attacking and shooting down demonstrators.

Nationwide reaction to the verdict was swift, angry and widespread. Close to a thousand marched in Greensboro itself, and thousands more marched and rallied in dozens of cities and campuses across the country. Special riot troops from the 82nd Airborne Division of the US Army were on duty close to Greensboro itself as authorities expected the worst.

Students at nearby Duke University, also in North Carolina, boycotted their classes and marched. Student rallies and protests also occurred immediately following the announcement of the verdict, in Madison, Wisconsin, California's Bay Area, and other traditional centres of the anti-war movement, as well as on Black campuses identified with previous civil rights and Black Power movements.

There was an important response from sections of the labor movement. In Chicago, United Auto Workers local 6, known for its anti-Klan activism, held a special meeting to protest the verdict. The President of United Steelworker local 65 sent a telegram of support. In Detroit, the UAW's Local 600's largest unit, the Dearborn Assembly Plant, endorsed a rally held in that city to protest the verdict. In New York City, Los Angeles, Minneapolis and dozens of other cities similar demonstrations and meetings were also held following the verdict.

The reaction from the Nazis and KKK was predictably vicious. Self-styled 'nazi commander' Harold Covington declared the verdict to be a 'great victory for white America'. Other nazi and KKK spokesmen declared that they would try to turn both North and South Carolina into all-white bastions of racism. One of the six acquitted killers stopped his strutting and ran for cover, however, when unidentified persons shot out his car-windows, narrowly missing him!

What has become very clear from the Greensboro verdict are the ties that bind the nazi and KKK and other rightwing gangs to the highest ruling-circles, ties that run directly through North Carolina State Senator Jesse Helms, with his close ties to ultra-right and intelligence agency circles, as well as to Reagan himself. Nazi 'commander' Harold Covington, who ran for Attorney General of North Carolina on the Republican Party ticket, made the connection with his statement that 'Reagan... has a lot of differences with us, but he is certainly closer to our point of view than the past few presidents... So obviously, the tide is turning in our direction.'

As though coordinated with the Greensboro verdict, the highest Federal courts are moving against busing for school integration, against the minimal affirmative action programs in housing and employment, and even against the 1965 Voting Rights Act which is considered the peak of gains by the civil rights movement. At the same time, new anti-labor legislation, laws aimed to institute a 'new McCarthyism', and at 'turning back the clock' on abortion and women's rights, are also in the works.

These political moves, and the climate of

racism and reaction that the capitalist media have been trying to cultivate, make clear whose interests are served by the Greensboro verdict. The presence of FBI 'informers' and agents like Dawson and Butkovich, who were involved in the Greensboro massacre intimately but were neither indicted nor called to testify, points to the specific links to the US government. All of these factors must be looked at in the context of recent history.

The public disclosures surrounding the Kennedy assassination, the Watergate Affair, as well as the government-run 'COINTELPRO' repression projects run by the FBI and other state agencies, all exposed a close relationship between military and intelligence circles in the US government, rightwing extremists, and organised crime. The same combinations that typified the Nixon regime now reappear in and around the Reagan administration. The fact that Reagan was elected by only 27 percent of the overall electorate, only half of that electorate voting at all, makes his initial factional base even narrower than Nixon's, and forces the imperialists to rely more and more upon 'extralegal' agencies and methods to enforce their will. This extralegal apparatus, generated by the combination of elements and factional interests, is the intended 'shock troops' of the larger 'New Right', itself heavily reliant upon the 'Moral Majority' and other religious fundamentalists, now openly anti-semitic and anti-scientific as never before.

Just as Nixon's unprecedented domestic repression only generated a more powerful mass movement, such that even major imperialist factions were forced to agree to dump Nixon, so Reagan and the unstable center-right forces around him are likewise laying the basis for their own downfall. By relying upon the extralegal apparatus, specifically the hated nazi and KKK murderers, Reagan and the factional combinations around him will only force larger and more challenging mass movements into the field against them. This process had already begun before the election itself, as the Miami and other Black rebellions indicated.

The emergence of the mass movements of the eighties is signalled by the new political formations like the National Black United Front, the Black Independent Party, founded at a gathering of 1,300 in Philadelphia, on the 22-23rd November weekend just following the Greensboro verdict. Other revolutionary and working class forces are also in motion, responding directly to the Greensboro verdict and the new tasks that it poses. The most important expression of this process was the Anti-Repression Conference held in Greensboro itself. On 5-6 December more than 300 organisers from twenty groups came to Greensboro to launch a new nationwide anti-fascist movement. Organisers from the CWP, from Anti-klan networks, Black and Jewish groups, and veterans of previous anti-racist struggles from around the country debated strategy and tactics, elected a leadership body, and joined with yet larger forces in calling for a national demonstration to be held in Washington, DC, on 20 January, the day of Reagan's inauguration. This important Greensboro conference came only four days after a new series of attacks against the CWP in Greensboro, in the form of the 1 December arrest of Willena Cannon, CWP supporter and Black community leader, together with six others on frameup charges of arson and conspiracy to commit arson.

American Correspondent

PUBLIC RALLY

Communist Workers Party
(USA)
5 Comrades murdered by
FBI/KKK/NAZIS

Tuesday 24 February
Conway Hall

Red Lion Square (Holborn Tube)
7.30pm

DEFEND THE CWP!
SMASH FBI/KKK/NAZI
RACISTS!

Film on CWP murders and fightback
SPEAKERS:

CWP (USA)

Dale Sampson (widow of Bill Sampson)

FRFI - Others invited

ATTEND THE RALLY!

Organised by
Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!



INTERVIEW WITH DALE SAMPSON

The following extracts are from an interview with Dale Sampson, widow of Bill Sampson, one of the CWP members murdered by the Ku Klux Klan on 3 November 1979. The interview took place before the trial of the Klan members was completed. As we now know, that trial ended in not guilty verdicts for these murderers. In the following extracts Dale Sampson explains why the CWP became the victim of a US state/Klan murder plan following their increasingly successful campaign against the Klan and in the textile plants in the South.

FRFI: Three of the murdered comrades were active or past labor organizers in the Cone Mills textile plants in and around Greensboro. Could you discuss the role of the Klan in the textile mills, and also Communist Workers Party organising?

DS: My husband, Bill Sampson, and Jim Waller, and Sandy Smith all victims of the Klan assassinations all worked in different Cone Mills plants. The Haw River and White Oak plants are both unionized under ACTWU. ACTWU has a very long history of do-nothing, sell-out. In White Oak, for example, where Bill worked, there were out of three thousand workers, only 25 workers in the union. Because of the history of the ACTWU just selling people out.

Our average wage was \$3.80 at the time I was working in the plant. Now it's up to \$4.00. Compare that with the steel mills, where people make sometimes \$16 dollars an hour. So we went into the textile industry to basically win people to communism. And in the course of doing that to strengthen the workers' organization.

Just to give you an example, my husband started working in the dye house, which is almost all black. One of the things that used to happen when we first worked there was the bosses trying to divide us up, black versus white. The supervisor used to come up at 6 o'clock in the morning and try to speed them up at the last hour, so the supervisor would look good when the big boss-man came in, the overseer.

And what Bill did was to get everybody together and lay out why it was important for them to fight as a whole, who they were fighting. They were able to see that only as a unit were they going to be able to back this boss-man down. One of the boss-men came up at six o'clock in the morning and said 'Speed up', and every single worker stopped, and walked over and formed a circle around him and said, 'We're slowing down right now'. So the boss-man knew he'd look twice as bad if the big supervisor came in and saw that, so he never bothered them again. One of the things that was very crucial in this was the ability to really unite black and white. Because you're really pitted against each other. They give the white workers 10c more, slip it into the paycheck. It was Bill's ability as a communist to draw that out, how that served the bosses and the capitalist class in a

larger sense, to pit us against each other. What good was it for the white worker to have two minutes extra break? The only person it was serving was the boss.

FRFI: Is there an open Klan presence in the plants?

DS: There's not in the area we were in. But there was a whole wave of strike work, beginning when Jim Waller led a strike at Haw River, which is one of the first strikes in a long time in the textile industry. And from that point on for a five month period there was strikes all over North Carolina that we were objectively leading, in different areas, not just textile, but mechanics strikes and things like that. During a strike, one of the things the capitalists do is bring out the Klan. So the Klan would ride by and say 'if you go out on strike you're only helping the blacks'. If there's a strike or union drive it's the Klan that come in and try to bust it up. So there's no love lost for the Klan. White workers and black workers alike are afraid of the Klan. That's one of the reasons that we were having the 'Death to the Klan' march to expose who the Klan was working for.

The work in the plants was very, very successful, Bill was running for president of the union at White Oak. Jim was leading a union drive at Revolution to bring the union in there. When I went back to the plant after Bill was killed, and I was talking to some older white workers and they said, 'Listen, honey' they said, 'you know we don't agree with the fact that Bill was a communist, but we know he was the only person who could lead us. That you had to fight the boss-man, knew how to fight the boss-man, and it was always clear where he stood. So, communist or not communist, we were for him.' That's the thing too, in terms of how revolution happens; it's not everybody's going to be won over to communism, what people are won over to is the necessity to fight for something better, because they can't live the way they've been living. And they look for who can provide the leadership to do that. On a smaller scale, that's what happened in the plants. It's still going on in the plants. There's a real strong core of people in all of those plants who are still working very hard, still working to build rank-and-file control. They're talking about independent red unions now, they want to totally get rid of ACTWU. They've had it.

Do-nothing Benn

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! has produced a complete dossier (running to no less than 14 pages) of police harassment of FRFI supporters and sellers. This was sent to Labour MPs asking them to take action on it. Some, such as Bob Cryer and Ron Brown have expressed concern. However, that champion of democracy, Tony Benn, responded by sending us a letter, the full text of which reads:

'Just a line to say thanks for your letter.

May I refer you to my foreword to the 1980 'State Research Book' published December 10th 1980

Best Wishes, Tony Benn

We have heard your fine words Mr Benn. Clearly they amount to precisely nothing when put to the test of *action* to defend democratic rights. Lenin when faced with the Bennis of his day, who like Benn wobbled about democracy whilst at the very same time attacking the Russian revolution which granted *full* democracy to the working class and *no* democracy to the exploiters, said:

'... the defenders of "pure democracy" prove to be defenders of an utterly foul and venal system that gives the rich control over the mass media'

Quite.

ANDERTON'S THUGS

In FRFI 7 we reported the arrest and racist interrogation of a 16 year old FRFI supporter, Sean O'Brien, by police in Manchester Moss Side Precinct. Since that time he has been harassed on no less than 3 occasions.

An official complaint was made about the first incident and two senior officers visited Sean's house to investigate it. They seemed particularly interested to hear that Sean regularly visited Moss Side Job Centre and *the very next day* he was picked up there by two plain clothes police obviously waiting for him. So much for the independent complaints procedure. The two accused him of drug pushing and threatened him with arrest, finally letting him go with a warning 'I don't want to see you in that precinct again'.

The harassment of Sean O'Brien is going hand in hand with increasing police harassment of FRFI's street sales and meetings. Police attempted to break up a joint FRFI/IRSP street meeting in Moss Side in support of the H-Block hunger strikers, while *ignoring* SWP supporters there distributing leaflets about the lack of democracy in Poland! The SWPers, having established that it was not Polish but merely British police attacking the street meeting were happy to stand by whilst the police broke up the meeting.

Manchester police are out to drive FRFI and its supporters off the streets. Small wonder. The Chief Constable of Manchester is none other than James Anderton. This arch reactionary said on TV that his *greatest* concern was:

'covert and ultimately overt attempts to overthrow democracy, to subvert the authority of the state and in fact to involve themselves in acts of sedition designed to destroy our parliamentary system and democratic government in this country.'

Now we know why FRFI is being singled out for attention by Manchester police. Anderton is protecting that peculiarly British form of democracy—racism, poverty, censorship and oppression.

So far however, the Manchester working class has not experienced the full range of powers that Anderton is prepared to use. It has recently been revealed that the Greater Manchester police has large supplies of submachine guns, ArmaLite rifles and laser sights. So determined is Anderton to defend 'democracy' that his force now has more firepower than, believe it or not, the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

GLASGOW 2: A POLITICAL TRIAL

On 19 December 1980 the Glasgow 2—Mike Duffield and Kirstin Crosbie, arrested on 9 August whilst selling Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! outside Celtic Football ground—were found guilty of 'conducting themselves in a disorderly manner' by shouting 'inflammatory slogans likely to occasion a breach of the peace'. Mike and Kirstin were fined £150 and £125 respectively.

Political charges under PTA

From the moment of their arrest and imprisonment under the racist PTA, right up to the pronouncement of the guilty verdict by Sheriff Stewart Bell, there was no doubt that the two were facing political charges aimed at suppressing their rights as communists to tell the truth about what the British state is doing in Ireland.

Whilst the rich and powerful British ruling class is able, simply by virtue of its huge resources, to monopolise every channel of the media, communists are to be denied the right even to stand on the streets and sell their newspapers to the British workers.

Political trial

The conduct of the trial by the state left not a shred of doubt as to its political nature. Mike Duffield was questioned on his views on free speech and on the police. Kirstin Crosbie was questioned on whether she felt 'outraged' at NF marches and on whether she thought there was support for the IRA in Britain. A witness was interrogated as to whether he supported the IRA, whether he had heard anyone openly soliciting for the IRA and whether he had ever contributed to Republican causes. Whilst the trial was supposedly held to establish whether an alleged breach of the peace had taken place, defendants and witnesses found that what was on trial was their political views and in

particular the anti-imperialist views of this newspaper, **Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!**

As for police 'evidence' at the trial: Chief Inspector James Lyons described how he and a mounted policeman became 'spontaneously apprehensive' when he allegedly heard Mike and Kirstin shouting 'Support Your IRA', 'Brits Out of Ireland' and 'Hands off Ireland'. Their evidence demonstrated conclusively who did the inflaming: all the police witnesses described how they were pelted with bottles and cans thrown by Celtic supporters shouting 'IRA All the Way' as the Glasgow 2 were arrested and dragged off.

Summing up, Sheriff Bell totally ignored the fact that not one of the police witnesses had attested to a breach of the peace. He found the Glasgow 2 guilty on the assumption that the police had been 'worried something might happen'! The Sheriff decided that Mike and Kirstin *had* shouted 'Support Your IRA' (despite their categorical denials that they had shouted this particular slogan) by pointing to the interview with an ex-IRA Volunteer in **Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!** which begins 'we are proud to publish ...' Concluding, the sheriff pointed out that there *are* limits to free speech, and that the Glasgow 2 had abused *their* 'rights' to put forward their views. It is quite clear what these limits are: they are the interests of the British imperialist state in censoring *any* opposition to its interests, particularly its interests in the 6 counties of Ireland.

A militant campaign has been fought to defend the Glasgow 2. As well as the 1654 who have signed petitions, 18 MPs and many other Labour movement organisations and individuals have signed statements demanding the dropping of all charges against the Glasgow 2. Scores of letters and telegrams were sent to the Procurator Fiscal calling on him to drop the charges. In the week before the trial Bob MacTaggart MP and Jack Ashton of the Scottish Executive of the CPGB headed a delegation to the Procurator Fiscal. A militant picket was held outside the Court.

EDINBURGH 8

Police in Edinburgh broke up an open air rally organised by FRFI in support of the hunger strikers on Saturday 29 November.

In the very short time when the meeting was allowed by the police a crowd of about thirty people gathered. It was the police who 'breached the peace' by disrupting a perfectly orderly event in their desperation to censor anti-imperialism off Britain's streets. The speaker was arrested, a supporter who photographed this event was told to 'fuck off' by Sergeant B11 then arrested, and then another person who merely enquired which police station they were being taken to was arrested. As many people as could be gathered followed them to Gayfield Square Police Station to protest until their release was obtained.

Within 5 minutes of our arrival, nervous and hysterically angry police officers rushed out to arrest the whole picket if they would not go away. Five people were charged as a result of refusing to leave, including one Labour Party member and a supporter of Provisional Sinn Fein who had come to support the rally.

All eight appeared in court on Wednesday 3 December charged variously with breach of the peace, obstruction and illegal use of a megaphone. At the particular spot where we held our meeting, evangelists, mormons etc, regularly address the public on weekdays and at weekends. Yet Labour controlled Lothian Region Council have yet to take a stand in our favour. The case goes to court in March—meanwhile the Edinburgh 8 Defence Campaign is seeking the support of trade unionists and labour movement organisations in the city to combat police censorship and call for the charges to be dropped.

Two weeks later 5 other people were arrested in Edinburgh for distributing leaflets in support of the hunger strikers—bringing the total to 13 arrested whilst doing hunger strike support work.

Further information is available from the address below.

Please send messages of support and donations to:

Edinburgh 8 Defence Campaign
Box 40, 1st of May Bookshop
Edinburgh

PC gets lesson in tact and diplomacy

The Edinburgh 8 arrests came only 3 weeks after FRFI supporters in Edinburgh received a letter from the Deputy Chief Constable referring to an earlier incident of harassment. In it he said:

'the constable allowed himself to enter into a verbal exchange of views which went beyond our normal standards of tact and diplomacy.

While I am satisfied that the officer acted in good faith and without malice... I deplore any drop, however temporary, in the standards expected of our officers. Accordingly, the opportunity has been taken to counsel this officer on the need for tact and diplomacy in such circumstances.

Now we know what this 'tact and diplomacy' amounts to.

The RCG has mounted such a widespread campaign not simply to defend the Glasgow 2. We know that far greater oppression and harassment faces Irish people and black people than that which FRFI supporters are suffering. Our purpose, all along, has been to defend the right to distribute communist, socialist and anti-imperialist propaganda to the working class. The working class, as it enters the enormous political battles which lie ahead will need to be able to produce, distribute and sell its own newspapers.

We still need your help in the struggle to defend the right of communists to sell their newspapers free from harassment by the police and courts. The Glasgow 2 are appealing against the guilty verdict and the campaign has already cost hundreds of pounds.

How you can aid the fight—

● Raise a motion in your TU branch or organisation protesting against the verdict.
● Send us letters of support telling us what you can do to help.

● Send us money. The fines total £275 and the Glasgow 2 need money to appeal against this verdict.

Rush donations to the
Glasgow 2 Defence Campaign
49 Railton Road London SE24 0LN

VICTORY FOR HOLLOWAY 4

On 19 November an important victory was won over Holloway Police. **Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!** has won the right to sell communist literature, and organise street meetings in Holloway, North London.

Four local communists were on trial, charged with obstruction of the police, obstruction of the highway, and taking an illegal collection. Both charges of obstruction were dismissed. They were found guilty of taking an illegal collection and fined £20 each.

The police case was torn to shreds by the Holloway 4 and their witnesses. The police even with six months of preparation, even with the racist magistrates who staff Highbury Corner Court could not convict the 4.

Inspector Gilbertson was forced to watch his case fall apart. Miserable and dejected he turned to reading a confiscated copy of **FRFI**. No doubt to be better prepared for our next meeting!

This victory was won because of a militant campaign, which mobilised local support, trade unions and other organisations. The police and court were picketed, the street meetings continued to expose the racist attacks by the police and courts.

Send contributions to FRFI/HOI Defence Committee c/o 49 Railton Road, London SE24 0LN.

Postscript The Law (for the Rich) Society

Two of the Holloway 4 have now been refused legal aid for their appeal. The Law Society, which decides whether to grant legal aid, gave as its grounds for refusal 'that the appeal was unlikely to succeed'.

Here we see what British democracy and its legal 'safeguards' are worth. If you are working class then this mysterious body, the Law Society, determines whether or not you may challenge a frame-up or a blatant injustice. For those without financial means to appeal then the Law Society has become an alternative Appeal Court. And the Law Society has the advantage that its decision to refuse legal aid is not discussed in public nor can it be appealed against.

What is the Law Society? Who is in it? Who decides? Nobody knows. Yet this Law Society has made it impossible for the Holloway 4 to appeal. We suggest it is renamed the 'Law (for the Rich) Society'.

The interview below was given to us by Thozamile Botha whilst on a speaking tour in Britain, organised by the Anti Apartheid Movement and the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

Thozamile Botha is a black South African working class leader who played a leading role in the famous strike at Fords in Port Elizabeth. The history of this strike is recorded in the interview, and particular emphasis placed on the unity between the striking Ford workers and the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation. From the interview we obtain a very clear and stirring picture of the unity that exists between all aspects of the revolutionary struggle in South Africa. It is noteworthy that the racist apartheid regime is now attempting to break up this unity. It is preparing legislation which makes it illegal for any black trade union to have links or association with black community organisations. What fools to believe that this unity can be broken by a piece of legislation. Throughout the whole of last year the black masses of South Africa faced the apartheid regime's mass murder, torture and imprisonment. Their unity did not break. When there is a mass revolutionary movement led by the ANC no legislation, however many are the guns which back it up, can break the spirit of the black working class. This legislation reveals only the fears of the apartheid regime.

Besides giving a very clear picture of the revolutionary working class movement in South Africa, Thozamile Botha shows very forcefully why the working class in South Africa and in Britain have a common interest in fighting for the complete isolation of the South African regime. His comments on the struggles of the workers at British Leyland and his plea for a united struggle is a true reflection of international working class solidarity.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! is proud to publish this interview and calls upon all communists and revolutionaries to exert every possible effort to ensure that a mass revolutionary movement is built in this country which is powerful enough to break all British links with the racist apartheid regime in South Africa.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!: Last year in South Africa we saw workers' strikes involving up to 50,000 people at any particular time: we saw the school students strikes; we saw the battles in Cape Town in June 1980; we saw the Free Mandela Campaign; the rent strike in Soweto and the intensification of the ANC's military campaign highlighted by the attack at Sasolburg. This unification of the economic, social, political and military struggle seems to be a new development in South Africa. Would you like to comment on this.

Thozamile Botha: Yes, well the struggle of the black people is intensifying inside the country. The political consciousness of the people is rising and now they are up in arms against the employer, the capitalist who is exploiting the working class. The workers see their role as part and parcel of the total liberation struggle. They see the need to liberate themselves as a class against exploitation. But one thing that is important is that they cannot be, or they cannot be seen as a class of workers whilst they are under a racist system. That is why today workers are closely aligned with the vanguard of the struggle for South Africa, the ANC and with SACTU, the workers' union. The workers today are no longer making only economic

INTERVIEW



THOZAMILE BOTHA

demands, they are also making political demands. Demands like the total scrapping of job reservation within the plant and equal payment for equal work; integration of training facilities; technical schools, and so forth. These are long-term demands made by the workers today. They are not only fighting for the improvement of their wages. There is now a coordination between the student organisations, the civic organisations and the workers' organisations because all these forces are fighting for one common goal: the total liberation of the oppressed masses.

FRFI: The Ford strike of October 1979 to January 1980 seemed to be a milestone in the current wave of struggle. It was not only a strike over the dismissal of yourself but soon involved the whole community in struggle. Could you tell us something about the dispute and your role in it?

TB: The Fords Strike has a great significance. I think it was one good example of a strike which involved the community. The Ford strikers did not see themselves as separate from the community. Their problems emanate from work. They have problems of rent increases or bus-fare increases, they could not afford to take their children to school, they could not afford to buy groceries and clothing for themselves because they are underpaid at work. And these problems reflect into the community where they live, where the rate of crime increases because people do not have money while they are working. So that is why Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (Pebco) fully backed the whole strike even in trying to raise funds to assist the workers, while the trade union, the United Auto Workers Union, was refusing to assist the workers on strike, saying that the strike was political. Pebco felt that it was necessary that workers associate themselves fully with the civil organisations because from time to time when workers go on strike if they are in close relation with the civil organisations – they can even appeal to the civic organisations to organise a boycott of certain products of plants who have laid workers off, to pressurise managements to re-employ. So this unity between workers and community is very very necessary. And of course this strike was a good example throughout the country to places like Cape Town where, when the meat workers went on strike, they appealed to the community to boycott that meat. And it was done successfully even by the businessmen. They stopped selling that meat.

FRFI: What were you actually sacked for at the time of the Ford Strike. Why did they dismiss you?

TB: I was dismissed because of my involvement with Pebco. I mean I was in the vanguard of Pebco and the Ford management became dis-

satisfied with my involvement with Pebco and gave me an ultimatum to choose between Pebco and Ford. I decided to choose Pebco.

FRFI: And then they dismissed you?

TB: Correct

FRFI: And what happened?

TB: The following day after I had left more than 700 workers walked out and demanded that I should be brought back to the plant to address them on the reasons for my dismissal. The management refused to meet these demands and the workers remained outside. In the morning of this particular day when they made this demand, they distributed leaflets giving the management an ultimatum that on that day I should either be there at 12 noon or else they would walk out. By 12 the management had not met their demands and the workers walked out. They remained outside until the management called me into the plant two days later. We held a meeting to discuss this with the management. They agreed that I should address the workers a day later. I then addressed the workers and the management agreed to reinstate the workers and myself unconditionally with pay for three days.

FRFI: What happened after that?

TB: After that we continued to work for one week but then the white workers within the plant walked out – in fact they did not walk out – they held a meeting outside in the evening and demanded to be paid double for the three days that we were paid and went on further to make statements that their lives were in danger among anti-government elements. They demanded the separation of training and eating facilities. And they also made inflammatory statements that blacks were smelly and that blacks could not behave themselves in the cafeteria. Because I was reinstated they also demanded a reinstatement of a white foreman who was made redundant a month earlier. Immediately that was done the black workers boycotted the cafeteria and demanded that the whites should retract the statement. The management dissociated itself from this and that led to another walk-out by black workers.

The workers now refused to work overtime; they refused to work any unpaid short-time. Though these companies claim that they are paying workers say, in Ford R1.35 an hour, it is R1.40 now – and they regard themselves as a well-paying company – in reality this is far lower than those that are getting even lower rates. This is because these are workers who work only three or four hours a day for about three or four months a year. This means when they work this short time they only get two or three days pay a week in spite of the rate increase. The workers also drew up a list of grievances: total stopping of job reservation,

promotion of blacks to senior positions and also integration of the training of blacks and whites within the plant. Those were the demands that were made and the workers gave the management 14 days ultimatum after which, when the management refused to meet the demands, they walked out.

FRFI: And how long did that last?

TB: That lasted about two and a half months until Pebco resolved that if Ford was not reinstating the workers they would organise a national boycott of Ford plants, a boycott of liquor outlets that are owned by the government and there would be a day of solidarity when all workers in the Eastern Cape of South Africa would not go to work for one day. There was going to be a peaceful demonstration – in fact this was going to be against the removal of the Walmer Township – and also the students announced in that meeting that they had taken a resolution not to go to school for a week in solidarity with the Ford workers. A day later Ford agreed to reinstate all the workers unconditionally.

FRFI: So in effect that kind of solidarity was, in embryo, what was going to happen throughout the whole country over the next period.

TB: Correct.

FRFI: What happened to you? When were you arrested?

TB: I was kept in detention for 48 days. I was kept at the Sanlam Building the Police Security Offices in Port Elizabeth for 5 days without sleep – 5 days and nights without sleeping – being interrogated right through. And the security police were working shifts on me. I was kept after that about 90 kilometres away from Port Elizabeth. Then, during that time nothing happened until I was released and on release I was banned. Banning means naturally that I could not work in any factory; I could not go to school; I could not be involved in politics; I could not leave home on public holidays and weekends. I had to remain indoors from 6pm to 6am, I could not be visited by friends in the house and I could not meet with more than one person at a time in the street.

FRFI: So you couldn't earn your livelihood at all.

TB: No. So I had to leave the country.

FRFI: You mentioned the United Auto Workers Union – their refusal to support the strike because it was political. Could you say something about that union?

TB: Well, UAW is one of the unions in Ford and the leadership of the UAW did not like Pebco's involvement in the strike. But of course the strike was in fact about Pebco from the beginning because I was expelled from Fords for my role in Pebco. So they said that the strike was political because Pebco was involved. That is why they refused to even negotiate on behalf of the workers. And then the only time when they eventually did agree to go and negotiate on our behalf they came back to persuade us to be re-employed when we were refusing to be re-employed. By the time we left the plant Ford made it clear that we had lost our jobs. The strike spread to other companies. When we went out at Ford, General Tyre Workers (about 1200 workers) walked out. At SA Adamas papermill about 600 workers walked out. At Ford Engine Plant about 500 workers walked out the same day. And 25 workers walked out at Red Lion Hotel on the same day that we walked out. All these pledged solidarity with the Ford workers while having their own basic demands.

FRFI: Could you give British workers some idea of what actually it actually means for Black workers in South Africa to go out on strike because British workers might not fully appreciate the significance of this solidarity action.

TB: Yes. Well to start with in South Africa there is a large rate of unemployment so the employers know that when workers go on strike they won't last for more than two days – that's what they maintain because they will starve. They know, there are blacks in the townships who are unemployed and when they call upon them, they will come. For instance immediately we left the plant, Ford recruited workers outside but not a single person from the black

community went to seek work from Fords.

In other words, to go on strike, means sacrifice and to sacrifice to go on strike means you remain outside even if you and your family are starving. For instance in Johannesburg in the Municipality strike more than 2000 workers were sent to the Bantustans because they were migrant labourers. And some of these Bantustan puppet leaders made statements that they have a pool of labour so if the workers on the mines or in the municipality are giving problems they should send them back to the Bantustans and they will give them more workers. So unity of the workers is necessary nationally and also internationally, because those workers who remained on strike for a couple of months were really starving. For instance, by the time that we went back to Ford there were about 100 to 250 workers who had already gone back to work in January because they were starving and there was nothing for them in terms of finance. And nobody was prepared to help at that stage.

When we talk about solidarity, we appeal also to trade unions in Britain and throughout the world, that when we in South Africa go on strike we need their assistance. Not only financially – and we need their financial assistance – but also to put pressure on transnational mother companies outside South Africa so that if these corporations do not reinstate workers in South Africa they will go on strike in their own country in support of the workers in South Africa. Workers should stop production, for example in Britain because they know that if production stops in South Africa, production continues somewhere because these transnational corporations are organised in a very sophisticated way. For instance Leyland in Britain now has threatened that if workers go on strike they will close down. This they can do because they know very well that they have a subsidiary in South Africa and can open it full-scale. So if business goes badly in Britain or the workers are giving problems they will go and open business in South Africa in the cheap labour system. Now if South African workers are going to take their jobs then it means they are working to the disadvantage of the workers in Britain and that is why this co-ordination is very very necessary.

FRFI: In the face of the massive struggles on all levels; economic, social and political, the ruling class in South Africa has begun to argue – and I quote Mr Dennis Etheredge, who is the chairman of the Vaal Reefs Exploration and Mining Company – ‘Blacks must be involved in the private enterprise system or they will choose socialism’. What efforts are the ruling class in South Africa making to try and draw black workers into the private enterprise system, and what success are they having, if any at all?

TB: There are a lot of attempts being made. You see, when you talk about these transnational corporations we are really talking about nothing else but the government. These transnational corporations are the government. The government's foreign policy is determined by these foreign companies. So when they want to implement something the government has no option but to implement it. For instance Anglo American, whilst owning the mines, are also directly involved in the building of arms and they have shares in Armscor. Now in 1976 they introduced what is called the Urban Foundation. The aim of this body was to build first, middleclass houses, to build community halls and sporting grounds. Now they said in their policy that they are improving the quality of life of the urban blacks. But to them to improve the quality of life means to build community halls, to build schools. In the past they used to build schools from ash bricks; today they build schools from red brick and they have floors and ceilings now; they are adequately electrified. In the past there was no electricity in schools; there were no floors – they had cement floors and no ceilings. Instead of changing the Bantu Education system which we want to be changed – this inferior racist education – they are changing the face of the classrooms in the hope that the students will feel that there is change instead of boycotting the schools.

They are opening opportunities now for blacks to participate, to be bank managers, to manage even white shops in town. These blacks are now with the system, they have to protect the white business. Meanwhile, this is not benefiting the blacks. In fact some people are

confused in saying that now opportunities are open to blacks. Far from opening opportunities to blacks, this is benefiting the employer, because instead of paying the blacks the salary that would be paid to a white man doing a similar job, they pay him a quarter of that. If a white man was going to get R1000 a month in a job, a black man would get R250 or R300. In fact this is not an improvement at all. It is exploitation at a very high degree. So the sucking of some of the blacks into the system – part of P W Botha's Total Strategy – is aimed at winning a certain section of our people to the side of the system so as to protect the system. They say that there are changes whereas in fact they are only cosmetic changes and reforms.

FRFI: So what success is it having? Or can it have success?

TB: Certainly it has not had success. For instance when he introduced the Community Councils he thought that people would accept this and people rejected this thing in total. Now he introduced the President's Council: nobody wanted to take part in that because it is nothing else than a stooge vote where some blacks are hoping to participate in an advisory capacity. And where there are things that are non-negotiable. For instance the scrapping of the racist laws are not negotiable. They won't be changed. They will remain intact. They can discuss any other things: the building of houses of the blacks where they live. There is no talk about integration of blacks or people who live in South Africa.

ANC FREEDOM FIGHTERS SENTENCED TO DEATH

On 26 November 1980, three members of the ANC, Ncimbithi Lubisi, Petrus Mashigo and Naphtali Manana, were sentenced to death by the racist Supreme Court in Pretoria, South Africa. They have been condemned to die for their part in the attack on a bastion of the murderous apartheid regime – the Soekmekaar police station, in January 1980.

Along with six other ANC comrades, they were charged with high treason, murder, robbery and taking part in 'terrorist' (ie armed struggle) activities and tried in what has become known as the Silverton Siege Trial. In January 1980 attacks took place not only against the police station but also against the Silverton branch of the Volkskas bank. These blows struck against institutions which hoard the wealth robbed from black workers and against the force that protects this plunder led to the nine being found guilty of high treason (ie the freedom struggle against the racist apartheid regime).

Three of these freedom fighters now languish in jail awaiting death. The African National Congress has launched a campaign to save the lives of these comrades. They are asking that protests be sent immediately to the racist regime and are asking all supporters of the freedom war in South Africa to demand that captured guerrilla fighters be treated as prisoners of war. FRFI fully supports this campaign and calls on readers and supporters to send protests to

The South African Embassy, Trafalgar Square and PW Botha, Pretoria, South Africa

FRFI: So what you are saying is that the racist system in South Africa depends on the poverty and the oppression of blacks – the black working class, and there is no fundamental way out of that as long as this racist system exists.

TB: As long as the racist system exists: as long as the people do not have a share in the wealth of the land: as long as the people do not have a share in the land itself our problems will exist. For instance today, blacks who number between 21-23 million are concentrated on 13% of the barren pieces of land that are scattered all over the country, along the borders of the neighbouring states, whilst 4-5 million whites enjoy 87 per cent of the total land – highly industrialised areas – all the big cities. All the industrial areas and all the farmland, the rich farms – this is owned by whites. No black has the right even to buy a plot in the urban areas to build a house. If one buys, he buys the walls, not the plot. The plot belongs to the government, but all other groups can buy. So this is a very good example that they don't want change in South Africa. Even these corporations who are talking about a change, for instance Ford, has built a training institution for blacks only and a training institution for whites. For blacks to go and train in a white institution, they have got to go and obtain a permit, a special permit. This means there can be no training of blacks to senior technicians while the system remains.

FRFI: We have talked a lot about the economic and political struggles of the black working class so far. The attack on Sasol by the ANC had a massive impact worldwide. Could you say something about the ANC's role in South Africa and how the military campaign fits in with the other campaigns that we have talked about so far. How significant is the military campaign? How necessary is the military campaign?

TB: Certainly the military campaign is very very necessary. The ANC is waging attacks on key government installations like the Sasol attack. Because if one attacks these key government installations like oil, this cripples the economy of the country. In Sasol they lost about R6m – which was a set-back for the economy of the country. The ANC's military attack is aimed at crippling the economy of the country and also aims to mobilise the masses of our people for there is no way we can talk about peaceful change in South Africa these days. There can be no peaceful change when the government is killing people today who are protesting against and rejecting the government-imposed bodies.

FRFI: To what extent is there support for the ANC in South Africa?

TB: Well the demands that are made by the workers today – equal pay for equal work and the scrapping of job reservation, the treatment of all workers on an equal basis – those are incorporated in the Freedom Charter. Housing and security, the sharing of the land and the redistribution of the wealth of the country.

cultural – in every way whatsoever. What have you to say to British workers, like steel workers, for example, tens of thousands of whom are unemployed with some of them accepting jobs in South Africa because ISCOR has come to this country to recruit them. What would you say to these workers?

TB: This is very dangerous. I remember that a number of British workers were recruited by the South African Government to go and work in South Africa. Today South Africa is still short of skilled workers. Yet blacks are denied the opportunity to train. Today there is not a single black technician in South Africa. They cannot be trained as technicians. Yet they know that the South African Government will go outside and recruit workers from other countries to take those positions. We are making a sincere appeal to the workers of the world not to go to South Africa to take jobs that would have been given to blacks.

We are calling for the total isolation of South Africa in every respect. The whole economy in South Africa relies and depends to a very large extent on foreign expertise. Today, for instance, in computer production, 40% of components have come from the United States of America and a large number of people who are working in these computer industries come particularly from Britain and the US. Today South Africa depends to a very large extent on the more than 2,000 transnational corporations that have invested in South Africa. About 1,200 British corporations and about 400 US corporations, then West Germany, France and Canada. So we are calling for the complete isolation of South Africa and appealing to workers to refrain from going to South Africa to take jobs which otherwise blacks would have to be trained for.

FRFI: You are also asking the British workers to stop cultural links with South Africa. Why is this important?

TB: For instance, let us take sport. Recently the British Lions went to play rugby there despite a protest by the South African blacks that they must not go. They were totally boycotted in South Africa because sport and cultural activities in South Africa play a very major role in politics. They say there are changes in South Africa. The government say they are changing, that blacks can play with whites when really blacks can only play at international level. No blacks can play at team level. At school, no white school can play with a black school. No black team can play with a white team at local level. They can only play at international level. And that is no change. It is just a window-dressing to confuse the outside world that there are changes in South Africa. So they are playing a very major role in the reforms that are brought about by the South African ruling party. They are playing into the hands of the South African regime when they go there to play games or sport when in fact the blacks in South Africa are denied these opportunities.

FRFI: And you are also saying it is in the interests of British workers to totally isolate South Africa because, as you said earlier, South Africa is being used as, if you like, a second front, against the workers in Britain.

TB: Certainly. For instance, the threat that is made by Leyland is a threat to British workers that they should not make their demands. If they make their demands, we will close down. That is what they are saying. They will close down and they know that they have got a straight run. They will go and extend business in South Africa. So British workers must try by all means to stop companies closing down in Britain and going to South Africa to open business. All this they can do by campaigning for sanctions against South Africa. British workers must understand that in the motor industry there is not a single car that is produced in South Africa today that has no foreign parts. And these parts are built here in Britain, in the US, in Germany, in France and Israel. Workers have got to put pressure on their governments to stop any links with South Africa. And the workers have got that power – to impose sanctions on South Africa, to stop bank loans to South Africa and to withdraw their funds that are invested in banks and in links with South Africa. These are some of the methods that can be applied.

THE COMMUNIST TRADITION ON IRELAND

PART TWO

IRISH LABOUR CONFRONTS BRITISH IMPERIALISM

The period from the end of the First International to the founding Conference of the Third (Communist) International was a decisive one for the working class movement world-wide. In this period a fundamental change in the nature of the capitalist system took place. Capitalism entered its imperialist phase.

Imperialism and the working class

Capitalism in its relentless drive for profits has grown into a world-wide system of colonial oppression and financial domination of the overwhelming majority of the world by a small number of imperialist countries. This domination has divided the world into oppressor and oppressed nations. A handful of the imperialist countries obtain high monopoly profits out of the brutal exploitation of oppressed peoples world-wide. Out of these 'super-profits' imperialism is able to create and sustain a small privileged and influential layer of the working class in the imperialist countries whose conditions of life isolate it from the suffering, misery and temper of the broad mass of the working class. This privileged layer has a material interest in the continuation of imperialism, for it is the source of its economic and political privileges. These workers, a labour aristocracy, constitute

the social base of opportunism in the working class. Politically this current represents the interests of the ruling class in the working class movement. To protect its own minority interests this layer sacrifices the fundamental interests of the working class for an alliance with the ruling class – an alliance directed against the interests of the mass of the working class. Imperialism therefore not only divides the world into oppressor and oppressed nations, but also in the imperialist countries creates a split in the working class movement between a small influential opportunist layer and the broad mass of the working class. The split was to have major implications in the international working class movement.

These developments in the working class movement occurred in the major imperialist countries at the turn of the century. However, in Britain they took place a lot earlier. In the nineteenth century the British bourgeoisie man-

aged to split the British working class movement.

In the middle of the nineteenth century British capitalism enjoyed almost a complete monopoly in the world market. Because of this monopoly the profits of British capital were very high. These 'super-profits' allowed a relatively privileged standard of life for an aristocracy of labour – for a minority of skilled well-paid workers. These workers were organised in narrow, self-interested craft unions and they isolated themselves from the mass of the working class. They looked down on the unskilled worker. Politically this labour aristocracy supported the Liberals, who they looked to for the political and economic reforms thought necessary to guarantee their continued advancement and to secure their privileged existence. They were contemptuous of socialism, regarding it as 'utopian'. It is indicative of the political influence of this layer that Lenin could remark, with justification even in 1913, that 'nowhere in the world are there so many liberals among the advanced workers as in Britain'.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century things began to change. Britain's monopoly power was being challenged by American, German and French capitalism. The economic basis of the narrow petit bourgeois trade-unionism and liberalism among the British workers was being undermined. The previously tolerable conditions of life gave way to extreme want as the cost of living rose and real wages fell. The class struggle intensified and this period saw the emergence and development of socialist organisations. The unskilled workers, encouraged and aided by the socialists, were

organised in the wave of the New Unionism which swept Britain at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1889 the Gas Workers Union and the Dockers Union were founded under the leadership of Will Thorne, Tom Mann and Ben Tillett. Over the next 25 years we were to see the inevitable conflict between the mass of the working class and the Liberal-Labour leadership which dominated the political and trade-union organisations of the labour movement.

Imperialism and colonial policy

As Britain's economic superiority was being challenged, the opportunism of the leaders of the British labour movement necessarily took on the form of national chauvinism – a defence of the 'nation'. To retain their privileged position they needed to maintain their alliance with the bourgeoisie. This opportunist leadership of the labour movement therefore supported, in one form or another, the colonial policy of their 'nation'. Lenin pointed out the importance of this development in 1907, in an article on the Congress of the Second International held at Stuttgart that year.

'The British bourgeoisie, ... derives more profit from the many millions of the population of India and other colonies than from the British workers. ... (This) provides the material and economic basis for infecting the proletariat with colonial chauvinism. Of course, this may be only a temporary phenomenon, but the evil must nonetheless be clearly realised and its causes understood in order to be able to rally the proletariat of all countries for the struggle against such opportunism.'

At Stuttgart a major difference emerged in the Second International on the question of colonial policy. While all parties to the dispute, of course, rejected the present methods of capitalist colonial policy, a resolution was placed before the Congress which departed significantly from previous positions. It stated in its opening paragraph that

'The Congress notes that the benefits and necessity of the colonies are grossly exaggerated, especially for the working class. However, the Congress does not, in principle and for all times, reject all colonial policy, which, under a socialist regime, may have a civilising effect.'

The dispute centred around this part of the resolution and the Congress almost split on the issue. 128 rejected this part of the resolution and with it the possibility of any so-called 'socialist' colonial policy. 107 voted for it and there were 10 abstentions. The English delegation split, 14 votes being given in favour of 'socialist' colonial policy including that of Ramsey MacDonald (Independent Labour Party), who spoke in favour, and 6 were against including the Social Democratic Federation – an indication of the division in the British movement yet to come. All the Russian delegation voted against, a pointer to the revolutionary stand to be made by the Russian movement in the future.

At this Congress what was later to be called the Social-Democratic (evolutionary-socialist) trend in the international movement – a trend which encompassed the Fabians, the British Labour Party and most of the ILP – emerged as a significant force. Bernstein, a member of the German Social Democratic Party, expressed their opportunist stand with its clear racist overtones when he said

'There can be no question of defending the capitalist colonial policy. All of us are its opponents, the question is merely how we give expression to this opposition ...'

'We must not assume a purely negative standpoint ... on the question of colonial policy, but instead must pursue a positive socialist colonial policy. (Bravo!) We must get away from the utopian idea that aims at simply leaving the colonies. The final consequence of that view would be to return the United States to the Red Indians. (disturbance in meeting) The colonies are there. We must put up with this fact. A certain guardianship of cultured peoples over non-cultured peoples is a necessity, which should also be recognised by socialists.' ...

'... A great part of our economic system is

Great trades union meeting September 1913 in Dublin



Jim Lark

based on which this real socialist

While there was ment. The parties of Imperialist class movement opposition right of imperialism (Communist)

Ireland:

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James Larkin addressing a huge Labour meeting in Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin

the exploitation of resources from the colonies the natives would not know what to do with. For this reason, we must adopt the majority resolution (on colonial policy).'

The Congress narrowly defeated Bernstein's position and a fundamental split in the international movement was finally consolidated when the main body of the Second International supported the First International. The revolutionary trend in the working class movement was to carry through its consistent opposition to all colonial policy and its support for the nations to self-determination, to an opposition to imperialist war. This trend eventually founded the Third (Communist) International in 1919.

In this context that the issue of Ireland again is of decisive importance for the British working class. The ability of the working class to break from its own conservative leadership and so move in a revolutionary direction was to be measured by its support for the Irish Republic.

Home Rule and the Land Question

The defeat of the Fenian uprising in 1867, the consolidation of British rule in Ireland mainly came through the Land League and Parnell's leadership of the Irish (Fenian) Party in the British House of Commons. The 1870s of the 1870s saw bad harvests in Ireland and the peasantry organised in Parnell's Land League resisted evictions and seized the land from the landlords – the land war had begun. They were supported by the Irish Republican Brotherhood and secretly reorganised in 1873. Parnell became the leader of the Land League, so reinforcing his political campaign and 'obstruction' tactics in the House of Commons with the implied threat of a resort to force if efforts to obtain Home Rule should fail. The Land League also held the balance of power between the Liberal and Conservative Parties, so the Irish question was pushed aside.

Gladstone's response to this was typical of the British ruling class – coercion mixed with partial reform. Exactly the policy the British ruling class were to adopt in our own period in the early 1970s when faced with a resurgence of revolutionary nationalism in Ireland. It was designed to crush the revolutionary wing of the movement and bring closer to British policy the reformist wing.

In August 1881 a conciliatory Land Act was passed giving some fixity of tenure to the Irish peasantry and creating Land Courts for establishing fair rents but falling far short of the demands of the Land League. In October 1881 the Land League was proclaimed illegal, meetings were broken up by the police, *habeas corpus* was suspended and over 1,000 people were imprisoned including Davitt and Parnell.

In 1882 a deal was concluded between Gladstone and Parnell for a 'peaceful' settlement of the land question through improvements to the Act and a repeal of the Coercion Act then in force. The political prisoners were released. Soon after, the new Chief Secretary and the Under-Secretary for Ireland were assassinated in Phoenix Park, Dublin. The Crimes Act 1882 was passed which more or less introduced martial law again in Ireland – this was the fifty-seventh Special Act dealing with Irish resistance to British rule since the Act of Union in 1801. And so it went on.

In 1886 Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill was introduced into parliament offering the Irish limited self-government. It was defeated by an alliance of Liberal Unionists and the Conservative Party, backed by the promised use of violent resistance to Home Rule by the Orange Lodges of Belfast. The latter were given great encouragement by none other than Lord Randolph Churchill of the Conservative Party. New elections saw the Conservative Party come to power.

The activities of the Land League continued and a perpetual Coercion Act – the Crimes Act 1887 – was introduced. Five thousand people were charged under the Act in 3 years. Parnell died in 1891. A new Home Rule Bill was introduced by Gladstone in 1893 but was defeated by the veto of the House of Lords. Gladstone retired in 1894 and

the issue of Home Rule in the British Parliament retreated into the background.

The Land Act 1903 offered a Government loan to tenant-farmers to buy their land and to repay the government over a period of, in the main, less than 70 years. As Lenin pointed out, the Liberals' 'system of land-purchase at a "fair" price' means that the tenant-farmer will continue to pay for many years 'millions and millions to the British landlords as a reward for their having robbed him for centuries and reduced him to a state of chronic starvation'. As a result of the Land Acts the land question ceased to be the dominant issue. It became one component among others in the struggle which was to build up over the next 15 years – that of a fight for an Irish Republic. In this period a new force – the Irish working class – was to take up the struggle.

Irish Labour faces British opportunism

The debates in the First International had already shown that many of the leaders of the English trade-unions were not prepared to criticise Gladstone and the Liberals for their policy on Ireland. (see article in **FRFI7**) In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the trade-union and labour leaders drew even closer to the Liberals standing as Liberal candidates and supporting Liberal policy. Even in 1906, 25 out of 29 constituencies won by the newly formed Labour Party were won with the help of the Liberals.

The end of the nineteenth century saw the rise of the new Unions of unskilled workers. They had been founded and promoted by Socialists in conditions when faith in the capitalist system was being severely shaken. They began to challenge the domination over the labour movement of the Liberal-Labour leadership of the old aristocratic unions. The next 20 years would see this struggle take place. *The Irish question decisively influenced its outcome.*

At the Paris Congress of the Second International (1900) Connolly's **Irish Socialist Republican Party** (founded in 1896) achieved separate representation for Ireland in the face of opposition from the British delegates. The latter argued that Ireland was not an independent country, but part of Great Britain. At the Congress the Irish delegation gave the British a further lesson in revolutionary socialism by being one of the two delegations totally opposed to socialists entering bourgeois governments. Connolly, unable to attend the Congress, fully supported the Irish delegation's stand. The ISRP unfortunately had little influence at that time in Ireland but it began the struggle to unite the cause of Irish Labour with national independence.

The Irish TUC (1894) was formed at a time when British unions were still predominant in organising Irish workers and British parties like the Independent Labour Party and the Fabians had a few branches in Ireland, especially in Dublin and Belfast. However, from 1907 onwards the process of Irish workers joining the British amalgamated unions began to receive a succession of major jolts as 'New Unionism' raised its head in Ireland. James Larkin was at the centre of this process.

Larkin was born in Liverpool of Irish parents in 1876. He had to earn his living at the age of 11. By 16 he was a member of the Independent Labour Party and a socialist. During the Boer War he was arrested and fined several times for his street-corner denunciations of the War as a 'jingo-imperialist venture'. In 1901 he joined the National Union of Dock Workers and soon after leading a strike in 1905 he was elected to be the Union's general organiser. It was in that capacity that Larkin first went to Ireland in 1907 on an organisation drive for his Union.

Larkin very soon after arriving in Ireland set about organising the dock workers in Belfast (1907), Dublin (1908) and Cork (1909) in the Union. In Belfast in 1907 he led a bitter and violent strike when fifty English dockers imported through the Shipping Federation to Belfast were being used to smash the Union. During the strike troops fired on workers in the Catholic Falls Road area killing three and injuring many others. The employers and the authorities tried to sow divisions between the Catholic and Protestant workers, using the fact that Larkin was a Catholic, but due to Larkin's efforts, they

did not succeed. The strike eventually went to arbitration with the dockers, although organised, having to go back on not very satisfactory terms. Nevertheless in managing to unite Protestant and Catholic workers in organising the docks in Belfast, Larkin's achievement, while not to be durable in the long run, was remarkable.

John Maclean, the Scottish revolutionary socialist, who on the invitation of Larkin had been in Belfast for a few days during the strike, on his return to Scotland, wrote articles defending the strikers and accusing the Liberal Government of murder. He was attacked by Philip Snowden, that vile reactionary Labour MP, who had defended the Government's 'employment of the military to quell disorder'. The **Socialist**, the paper of the Socialist Labour Party – a left-wing split from the Social Democratic Federation – also took up the defence of the strikers, and in particular attacked the Labour MPs in parliament. 'Beyond asking a couple of questions, they did nothing... From Shackleton to Will Thorne they have become accomplices of capitalist murder' (Sept 1907). Just like the Labour MPs on Ireland today. Already the divide in the British labour movement on Ireland was becoming clear.

Larkin now concentrated his energies in organising the dockers in Dublin. In 1908 he was involved in another series of bitter strikes, with the employers again attempting to smash the Union. During this period Larkin increasingly clashed with Union Headquarters. On one occasion, the Union leadership in England settled a dispute over his head. Sexton, General Secretary of the Union, was bitterly opposed to Larkin's activities and, particularly, the sympathetic strike. The dispute soon came to a head. In 1908 Larkin appealed for assistance. Sexton sent a postcard saying 'Stew in your own juice'. When Larkin warned the Executive who were intent on holding his work back that 'there was a movement on foot for organising the whole of unskilled labour in Ireland', Sexton's reply was to notify Larkin and all the Union branches of his suspension from the Union on 7 December 1908. Larkin's reply was to form the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) decisively separating from the reactionary leadership of Sexton and Co.

The ITGWU, in its rule book, announced an end to the 'policy of grafting ourselves on the English Trade Union Movement'. The Union was unique in many respects. It embodied a political programme which included nationalisation of all means of transport, the legal eight-hours-day, provision of work for all unemployed and 'the land of Ireland for the people of Ireland'. It declared its dedication to the organisation into one union of all workers – skilled and unskilled – in an industry. It argued for the use of boycotts and sympathetic strike action (a revolutionary position for trade-unions) to achieve its ends. In 1911 James Connolly, having returned from America, became the Belfast Secretary of the ITGWU. So an Irish union, having broken with the English trade-union traditions, born out of bitter struggles against the capitalist class in Ireland was now led by two revolutionary socialists – James Larkin and James Connolly.

The revolutionary potential of the British trade-union and labour movement was now to be gauged by its attitude and support for the ITGWU.

The Dublin Lock Out

By 1911, the ITGWU had established such an organisation amongst unskilled workers in Dublin that the employers had set up their own federation to combat it. In August 1913, William Martin Murphy, owner of the Dublin United Tramways Company and the Irish Independent Group of Newspapers, took the initiative in the effort of the Dublin employers to smash the ITGWU. He told the workers in the dispatch department of his newspaper company that they must resign from the Union and sign an assurance they would not strike or they would be dismissed from the company. The Union put pickets on retailers selling Murphy's paper the *Irish Independent*. The ITGWU members were locked out on 26 August. 700 workers from Murphy's Tramways Company walked off their trams leaving them wherever

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IRISH LABOUR CONFRONTS BRITISH IMPERIALISM

continued from page 9

of the Dublin Employers Federation and on 3 September, 400 employers agreed to lock out all their workers. By 22 September, 25,000 workers had been locked out, involving, with their families, one third of the population of Dublin. If the same proportion of workers were locked out in London today, there would be about three quarters of a million locked out.

A meeting in support of the locked out men and the strikers was called for Sunday, 31 August in O'Connell Street. It was to be addressed by Larkin. Rumours suggested that the meeting would be banned. On the Thursday, 28 August, Larkin and other ITGWU officials were arrested for seditious libel and seditious conspiracy. They were released on bail on the understanding they would not break the law while awaiting trial. On the Friday the meeting was banned by proclamation. That evening Larkin burnt the 'Proclamation of the King' in front of a crowd of 10,000 people at Beresford Place. Announcing that 'People make Kings and people can unmake them' he said that 'we will meet in O'Connell Street, and if the police and soldiers stop the meeting let them take the responsibility'. Another warrant was put out for Larkin's arrest. Larkin, however, turned up in disguise on the balcony of a hotel (owned by Murphy) in O'Connell Street at the time of the meeting. After he started to speak to the crowd he was immediately arrested. Soon after, the police indiscriminately baton charged the crowd and the result was yet another Bloody Sunday in Ireland's history. Two men were killed over the weekend of Bloody Sunday and hundreds were injured.

Connolly was also arrested with Larkin. Connolly refused to recognise the court and was sentenced to three months. He was released after a week's hunger strike. Larkin was released on bail on 12 September and decided to leave for England and Scotland to appeal for support.

The support of the British trade-union movement for the strike was to be critical. At its 1 September Congress the British TUC could not avoid discussing the Dublin events. In the debate James Sexton called for support, 'however black James Larkin might be, or James Connolly too'. Very useful! The Congress did not vote support for the strike. It simply condemned the conduct of the Dublin police and decided to send a delegation to investigate the situation there. A motion demanding the release of Larkin and Connolly and calling for finance for the strikers was not put to the vote. 'Revolutionary speeches' were made by Ben Tillett and Robert Smillie, but this couldn't help the strikers.

While the TUC delegation was in Dublin it spent a great part of its time trying to patch up a dirty compromise with the employers. But the employers refused to comply, no doubt confident in the knowledge that if the TUC hadn't acted at the beginning of the strike they had little to fear. In contrast, the strength of the Dublin workers was demonstrated on 3 September when 50,000 workers marched behind the coffin of James Nolan, one of the workers murdered by the police. The funeral procession was guarded by ITGWU squads bearing makeshift arms - an embryo of the Irish Citizen Army formed the following month as an armed workers defence force against the attacks of police and scab workers. The Dublin police kept out of sight.

Soon the number of workers on strike or locked out grew. The British TUC began to send money and foodstuffs to Dublin. The Miners Federation voted to give £1,000 a week and various Labour newspapers opened subscription lists. But the bulk of this aid did not come until late September. Although the money and foodstuffs were vital to workers whom the employers were trying to starve back to work, they could not take the place of solidarity action.

While the British TUC was as afraid of the ITGWU as the Dublin employers, the rank and file responded quickly to the example of the Dublin workers. The Liverpool railwaymen went out on strike on 9 September and began real solidarity action, which the Executive of

the National Union of Railwaymen and the British TUC did their best to destroy. 3,000 in Liverpool came out one day, followed by 4,000 in Birmingham the next day. Transport strikes took place in London, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Manchester. NUR officials led by J H Thomas were trying everything they could to get the workers back. (Eventually, they did succeed.) The strike spread to other parts of the



O'Connell Street on Bloody Sunday, 31st August, 1913, during the police baton charges.

country. The rank and file wanted a national strike. The British TUC responded by announcing a fund and the first of the foodships for the strikers. The revolutionary socialist Sylvia Pankhurst's comments were well placed when she said:

'In the long-drawn out misery of the Dublin lock-out its victims pleaded vainly for sympathetic action by British transport workers, and received instead a "food ship" from the Trade Union Congress - a mere handful of crumbs in the vast desert of their need'

On 27 October, Larkin's trial was held and he was sentenced to seven months in jail. On the following Sunday a gigantic meeting took place in the Albert Hall in London to protest against Larkin's sentence. Sylvia Pankhurst defied arrest to speak at this meeting in support of Larkin. Connolly called on everyone to work and vote against the Liberal Government until Larkin was free. Public opinion and the by-election results soon had the desired effect as the Liberals lost votes. Larkin was freed after only 17 days in jail.

Larkin then launched his 'fiery cross' campaign of public meetings in England, Scotland and Wales. 5,000 heard him speak in the Manchester Free Trade Hall with 20,000 waiting outside. The workers called for national strike action. A few days later, mid-November, the British TUC decided to call a special Congress on the Dublin lock-out for 9 December in order to head off the pressure of the rank-and-file workers for national strike action. Larkin addressed a massive meeting in the Albert Hall the next evening - 10,000 inside and 15,000 waiting outside. George Lansbury, Editor of the Daily Herald, and other socialists denounced the Labour Party and the reactionary trade union officials for their inaction.

A few days later Larkin decided to go over the heads of the trade-union leaders and appeal to the rank-and-file. He told them through a manifesto printed in the *Daily Herald* to tell their leaders 'for the future they must stand for Trade Unionism' and 'that they are not there as apologists for the shortcomings of the capitalist system'. Larkin had issued a revolutionary appeal to the British workers to split from their treacherous leaders and unite with the Dublin workers. Attacks on Larkin now began. J H Wilson, head of the National Seamen's and Firemen's Union, issued a manifesto denouncing Larkin and the methods of the Transport

Union in Dublin. Larkin was soon to reply. He told a massive meeting in London in referring to J H Wilson and Philip Snowden that 'I am not going to allow these serpents to raise their foul heads and spit out their poison any longer'. He denounced the union leaders and the Labour Party for failing to support the strike. J H Thomas was particularly singled out for forcing rank and file railwaymen back to work.

The 9 December British TUC Congress took place. Connolly presented the Irish case for holding out. Then to everyone's amazement, Ben Tillett moved a resolution condemning Larkin's unfair attacks on British trade union officials. He was then considered one of the most militant trade unionists in Britain and had only a few weeks earlier stood on platforms with Larkin calling for armed worker squads. He went on to ask the Congress to affirm its confidence in the ability of these officials to negotiate an honourable settlement. Armed squads were one thing. Attacking the leadership of the Trade Union movement quite another. Larkin confronted Tillett with a choice: stand with the masses, with Larkin and against his fellow trade union leaders, or desert the workers and go over to the other side. Tillett went over. When the First Imperialist war broke out 9 months later Tillett became a recruiting sergeant for imperialism.

Speaker after speaker got up and condemned Larkin. He was finally called on to reply. He began, 'Mr Chairman and human beings', and amidst continual uproar he denounced those leaders who had betrayed the strike. He told them the Dublin workers would struggle on to the end. The Congress offered nothing. After all it had only been called to stave off the pressure of the rank-and-file.

The strike was eventually lost. Without British TUC support it could not be won. It revealed, as events in Britain were later to show and Ben Tillett's sell-out conclusively proved, that the revolutionary trends in the British working class were not strong enough to defeat the opportunist leadership of the British labour movement. Opportunism had triumphed.

The opportunist leaders of the British labour movement and the employers of Dublin certainly were in agreement on one vital thing. As William Martin Murphy so clearly said about his stand:

'It is not a question of an attack on trade unionism at all. I have been in business for nearly fifty years, and I have never before known anything like Larkinism. It is not trade unionism in the ordinary sense at all.'

The Secretary of the Engineering Employers' Federation made the same point.

'A victory for the syndicalist leaders there would be disastrous for the employers not only in Dublin, but throughout the United Kingdom.'

The revolutionary unionism of the Dublin working class had shown the way. Larkin instinctively followed what Lenin was later to call 'the essence of Marxist tactics'. He went deeper and lower into the masses. The ITGWU represented the organisation of the unskilled Irish workers and exposed to the world their revolutionary strength and courage. The democracy of the ITGWU was firmly based on the masses, its organising principle proletarian solidarity. It created the first armed workers' militia - the Irish Citizen Army. It later opposed the imperialist war. It spurned 'respectability', 'compromise' and 'moderation'. The ITGWU had only one measure for its actions: the needs of the working masses. Little wonder that British imperialism, the Dublin employers and the British trade union leaders hated it.

In the years just before the lock-out the British working class had demonstrated its ability to fight in a series of bitter strikes - the transport strikes of 1911 and 1912, and the miners' strikes of 1912. But in 1913 it could not rise to the challenge of Dublin's revolutionary lead. The British working class had proved unable to prevent its leaders selling out the revolutionary Irish. As a result those same leaders were able to draw the British working class into support for the imperialist war and so lead it to political defeat. The same leaders were to betray the struggles of the British working class right up to the defeat of the General Strike.

The defeat of the Dublin workers had established one essential point. The Irish working class could only free itself as part of a revolutionary national struggle to separate Ireland from Britain. Behind the Dublin capitalists lay British imperialism and its agents in the British working class.

The lock-out had, however, also exposed the fundamentally reactionary character of the Irish (Home-Rule) Party. During the lock-out the Redmondite Nationalist Newspaper *Freeman's Journal* had sided with the employers, most of whom anyway were members and supporters of the Home-Rule Party. William Martin Murphy was in fact a millionaire former Nationalist MP.

The bourgeois character of Arthur Griffith's *Sinn Fein* was also exposed. Griffiths had always attacked Larkin as an 'English trade unionist'. He defended the Dublin employers.

'Not the capitalist but the policy of Larkin had raised the price of food until the poorest in Dublin are in a state of semi-famine.'

During the lock-out the attitude of the British TUC in substituting food-ships for solidarity action played straight into Griffith's hand. He rightly regarded the food-ships as an insult and was able to tell his supporters 'whether the English call themselves Liberal or Tories, Imperialists or Socialists - they are always the English'.

The revolutionary wing of the Republican movement, however, stood by the workers. During the lock-out *Irish Freedom* said, in attacking the employers,

'The cause of Irish liberty is more the cause of the people than the plutocrats and the new Ireland we work for will not be governed by money-bags.'

In the lock-out the alliance of the working class and the revolutionary wing of Republicanism came into existence. The strike was lost, but the ITGWU and the loyalty of the workers to trade unionism still remained. Further, the Irish workers possessed the Irish Citizen Army which in March 1914 proclaimed

'that the first and last principle of the Irish Citizen Army is the avowal that the ownership of Ireland, moral and material, is vested of right in the people of Ireland.'

And that one of the principle objects of the Irish Citizen Army was 'to arm and train all Irishmen capable of bearing arms to enforce and defend its first principle.' The Irish Citizen Army was to join with the Irish Republican Brotherhood in the next stage of the struggle - that for an Irish Republic. This alliance led by Connolly and Pearsé was to carry out the Easter Rising.

to be continued

David Reed
January 1981

POLICE FILE

The British Police Force are notorious for being able to cover up their acts of brutality and corruption.

Death of a healthy man

Pratrap Sisodia, aged 27, was found dead in his cell after only three days in Esher police station in Southall. On entering the police station he was given a medical check-up which proved that he was perfectly healthy, yet the post mortem, carried out by the Home Office, said that he died of pneumonia.

James Kelly – K division praised

After the inquest into the death of James Kelly, in which members of Liverpool's K-division were involved, five police officers who helped to organise the inquest, were praised by the Chief Constable for their 'patience, forbearance, dignity and administrative ability', obviously referring to their ability to absolve the police of blame in cases of brutality – a verdict of misadventure was recorded.

K division convicted

K division were also responsible for arresting 36 year old John Lannon, and as witnesses have testified, he was dragged around, kicked and punched. He was not taken to court the next morning, but kept hidden for 30 hours to hide his injuries. Seventeen months later he died of a heart attack, probably as a result of the internal injuries he received at the hands of the police. But, in some cases, they are less able to cover their tracks; four members of K division have been charged with perjury, attempting to pervert the course of justice and damage to clothes. The charges were made following a raid on a pub in Huyton, where they charged one man with assault, another with being drunk and disorderly: obviously their normal tactics failed this time.

A1 blue films – M1 bribes

An inquiry into the disappearance of £2,000 worth of pornographic books from Doncaster police station also uncovered nine A1 patrolmen using the station rest room to show pornographic films when they were on duty. While sixteen of their colleagues patrolling the M1 were receiving bribes from garage owners so that the patrolmen would inform those garages of crashes and breakdowns on the motorway.

Corruption case moved

Detective Sergeant John Symonds, on trial for three charges of corruption, has his case moved from London to either Wales or the north of England because 'there has been a substantial amount of publicity about the difficulties which have existed within the Metropolitan Police' the judge said. Obviously the cover up system is not working too well in London.

Police insanity – charges dropped

Three charges of corruption against Detective Sergeant Mervyn Matthews were dropped by the Director of Public Prosecutions because, according to two psychiatrists, one of the essential qualifications for becoming a policeman rendered Detective Sergeant Matthews unfit to stand trial. The psychiatrists considered him to be mentally sick and that he would commit suicide if he was tried, so, the charges were withdrawn.

THE MURDER MACHINE

On 16 December 1980 a senior screw at Winson Green prison, Melvin Jackson of Stourport-on-Severn, Worcestershire, was charged with the murder of a prisoner, Barry Prosser. The magistrate at the hearing not only shielded the screw from having his address read out in court – he also granted him bail! While screws, servants of the ruling class, are afforded such protection by the courts, Barry Prosser, accused merely of causing criminal damage to his father-in-law's front door, was on remand in Winson Green for medical reports. On 19 August he was murdered in the prison's 'hospital' wing. Screws at Winson Green are renowned for their thuggery – and getting away with it. In 1974 14 of them beat up 14 Irish POWs in 2 separate incidents. 2 years later they were brought to trial and acquitted. We wait to see what further lengths in the way of lies and rigged evidence the prison authorities will go to protect the perpetrator of this latest murder.

A single MP – as shown by Irish and Communist MPs in the past – can totally obstruct parliamentary business if they are determined to raise an issue but we see no such protests when working class, black and Irish prisoners are maimed or killed.

Where was the outcry when Steven Smith was found hanging in a cell? Steven Smith had brain-damage as a result of an accident. He had the mentality of a child. Yet screws in Wormwood Scrubs would stand in a circle laughing at him. One day he was goaded into putting his fists up, whereupon he was beaten up by 4 screws and carried down the wing shouting 'Don't hit me'. He was spreadeagled, abused, punched, and put into the segregation unit. Two hours later he was found hanging. Fellow prisoners, in fact, anyone that knew Steven Smith, knew that with his uncoordinated hand movements he would have found it impossible to twist the strong canvas sheet with which he supposedly hung himself. A Nigerian prisoner who offered to give evidence was rapidly removed to the segregation unit at Wandsworth prison – it was a year before prison rights' workers were able to trace him. Yet where were the journalists, MPs and lawyers protesting against this outrageous cover-up by the prison authorities? They were silent.

There can be no doubt that the British prison system now constitutes a sophisticated and deliberate murder machine of which Barry Prosser is the latest victim. In 1979 73 people died in prison – more than at any time in the last 10 years. And of these an increasing number were recorded as 'suicides'. 21 prisoners are registered as 'committing suicide' in 1979 – making the prison suicide rate *more than six times higher* than that for the general population. And, at the same time, the *average* age of prisoners dying from 'natural causes' has fallen from 49 years in 1977 to a staggering 43 years in 1979.

HULL POWs PERSECUTED

In October last year the story of the 'Hull Helicopter Escape Plot' appeared in the British press. A story so stupid and obviously false that only British journalists could be made to swallow it.

It was Hull Governor, 'Chopper' Lewis, who 'foiled' this 'plot' alerted by 'rumours' and the kind act of the 'conspirators' in making two practice flights low over the prison – in case 'Chopper' Lewis had not heard the 'rumours'.

This rubbish, good enough for the British press, was good enough to justify putting all Irish POWs in Hull into the punishment block – where they have been ever since. Irish POWs transferred to Hull after the 'escape plot' have also been put straight into the punishment block. Four months in the punishment block! This is the treatment of Irish POWs by British imperialism. We urge all readers to immediately protest to the Governor and the Home Office demanding the immediate release of all the prisoners from the punishment block.

Send letters to: The Governor, HM Prison Hedon Road Hull

How is the British state's murder machine, with its open and unashamed lies, perjuries, suppression of evidence, rigged 'enquiries', allowed to carry on beating, torturing, drugging and murdering prisoners for years on end, without any public outcry? The responsibility rests with all those – the Labour MPs, journalists, doctors, church leaders, civil liberties bodies – who bleat continuously about 'human rights' (especially in the USSR), about 'free speech' (especially in the USSR), but who have done *precisely nothing* to expose or put a stop to the murder machine inside British prisons. Why do they not speak out? Persistent questions in Parliament, delegations to visit prisoners, exposure of Home Office lies in the press and on TV – all this would have an enormous impact and is within their power. Yet they have consciously chosen not to use this power. Why? Because what is really at stake for these people is the protection of their own skins, their own careers and privileged middle-class lives. These privileges depend on British imperialism. Hence they will do *nothing* to offend the British ruling class.

The covering up, the silence by all those who are in a position to speak is nowhere more murderous and cowardly than in the case of the prison medical system. The Home Office refuses point blank to disclose any information on the prison medical service – on the barely qualified butchers (usually ex-army) and the largely unqualified hospital screws who are responsible for outright murder. There is no question that the rapidly rising 'suicide' rate in British prisons is the result of long-term torture through beatings, solitary confinement and illegal administration of drugs for the purposes of 'control', all of which is supervised by these butchers.

The British Medical Association and various psychiatric bodies, so agitated about the alleged use of drugs in prisons in the Soviet Union, can

hardly bring themselves to mention *forcible* injection of prisoners with tranquilising drugs in British prisons or the dosing of prisoners with 10 times the normal dose of Largactyl, as came to light in the case of Gartree Prison (*Prison Secrets*, p72). At present, the Home Office refuses to allow any prisoner to consult with an outside doctor. Thus prisoners are condemned to years of suffering and premature death at the hands of these quacks who have been known to prescribe aspirin to cancer victims.

Matthew O'Hara, a diabetic, was found dead shortly after completing a 7 day sentence in Pentonville prison, during which he had been denied insulin and kicked in the stomach. He began to vomit blood continuously as a result. The Home Office has stated that he was 'immediately' moved to hospital and yet the evidence from his GP and a Royal Northern Hospital doctor was that, on the contrary, it was 2 days before he was taken into the intensive care unit. Once again the Home Office routinely lies to cover up the murder of prisoners by denial of medical treatment. Only a fight for the complete abolition of the prison medical service and for the right of prisoners to choose their own GPs will begin to challenge this official state neglect and murder of prisoners.

There is no doubt that the murder-machine inside British prisons is being prepared for working class rebellion – just as in the Six Counties of Ireland. It is no accident therefore that the nearly 100 Irish POWs in British gaols have received constant beatings, solitary confinement for years on end, and constant harassment through 'ghosting'. 5 out of the 100 have died – a staggering proportion – murdered by British imperialism.

Thus whilst the attacks escalate on the working class and oppressed in British gaols, the petit bourgeoisie is remaining silent. All those who, it is often said, are the protectors of 'democracy' – the journalists, the lawyers, the MPs, the trade union leaders stand exposed as nothing but a cog in the MURDER MACHINE. Against the murder machine and its guardians communists must begin to mobilise working class opposition. Only those who care nothing about their status, their careers or libel laws will take a stand with the prisoners against the British state. Those powerful and influential people who could raise a voice remain silent, fearful of offending their paymaster, British imperialism. Communists have no such fear and will therefore not only fight to destroy the murder machine but also those who are its guardians.

Olivia Adamson

STATE BRIBES ITS LACKEYS

The Government's latest pay survey will be of great interest to readers of FRFI! The Earnings League table for non-manual occupations is as follows.

- Medical practitioners – £242 per week
- finance, insurance and tax specialists – £209
- university academics – £205
- police inspectors and fire officers – £196
- prison officers – £191
- personnel managers – £185
- marketing and sales managers – £183
- company secretaries – £178
- ships officers – £178
- security supervisors – £172

So, prison officers and police inspectors now earn even more than managers! The capitalist class knows quite well who it must buy off in order to ensure their complete reliability. It has always paid its managers well. It has always paid its ideologues, its lie-machine academics highly for their services. Now however, as it

prepares its state apparatus to repress working class unrest by force, it is its army, police and prison apparatus that has to be bribed into 100% reliability. It accords well with the values of capitalist society that those whose job is to beat up, frame and imprison working class people – particularly black people – that they should be paid three or four times what hospital workers earn.

Although the pay survey only goes to prove that the British imperialist state is *consciously* strengthening its armed and repressive wing, one fact will have perhaps sounded a note of caution in the capitalists minds. Journalists have slipped out of the top ten. Dear, dear, how can journalists be expected to produce the reams of lies and anti-working class, racist drivel which is their stock in trade unless they are bribed in the manner to which they have become accustomed? Some of them may be tempted to write the odd truthful word and then where would the capitalists be?

FIGHT RACISM

FREE THE ST PAULS 16

The trial of the St Pauls 16 moved a step nearer with the preliminary hearing on 18 December. Officials at the entrance to the Guildhall informed people that no public were being allowed into the hearing. For those who were undeterred, the path was blocked when they tried to go into the courtroom. The public doors were locked, and an usher claimed that this was on the instructions of the judge. However, as soon as the hearing began, Rudi Narayan asked the judge to state whether or not it was to be a public hearing and the judge said it was! Supporters of the St Pauls 16 are now used to such state harassment. At the Magistrates Court names and addresses had to be given to the police. At the Guildhall lies were told to keep supporters away.

The judge announced the date of the trial as 3 February – much earlier than the defence had expected. Protests were made by defence lawyers that they needed more time to prepare their case. But the judge insisted that the case must be over as fast as possible. This date meant it would all be over by Easter. Also in the interests of 'speed' the judge pressed for many of the witnesses to be cut out. 12 of the defendants are charged with being 'joined in common cause' to

cause a riot. The witnesses' statements can be important for establishing whether or not there was a riot.

When the question of the jury selection came up, Rudi Narayan asked that 50% be selected from areas of Bristol where black people live. This request was refused and the selection will be made from all areas of Bristol. It was agreed that if the prosecution intended to make enquiries into the jury they would immediately give details to the defence lawyers.

With heavy sentences hanging over the heads of the defendants, they need all the support possible. The state hopes to use this trial to frighten off any further uprising against racist oppression. The St Pauls 16 have support throughout the country.

That solidarity must be turned into physical support inside and outside the Bristol courtroom on 3 February. When asked what people could do to support them, Sidney Clarke, one of the defendants said: 'Come along and see what's going on. Come to the court and see what treatment we're getting.' Protests in every area will expose the racist political farce that the state is carrying out. The isolation of the St Pauls 16 must be prevented by massive support.

**NO CASE TO ANSWER!
FREE THE ST PAULS 16!**

Sheila Marston

ALGERIAN WORKERS ATTACKED

Immigrants in France, particularly those from North Africa, suffer the same racist attacks as in Britain. Imperialism is necessarily racist. The French imperialist State has a similar history to the British: pillaging the colonies, then after the war welcoming the oppressed peoples into its lowest paid employment. Now in time of crisis it has launched a full-scale campaign to drive the Algerian workers in particular out of France. As Chirac said 'There is no unemployment problem in a country where there are 2 million immigrants and 1 million unemployed.'

Until 1972 unofficial immigration accounted for 80% of all immigrants. These men and women without the necessary residence and work permits were tolerated by the State because the economy was expanding. They were needed to fill the jobs. Once the economic crisis got underway this changed. Every foreign worker needed a work permit stating his address and the name of his employer. This permit was signed by the employer and without it no residence permit was issued. This meant the worker was directly at the mercy of his employer. If he lost his job he forfeited his residence permit and could be deported. A simple way of disposing of militant workers!

In 1974 all immigration was ended, including

that of families. The following year they announced that work permits would only be issued for a limited length of time. In 1976 a decree ruled that any immigrant worker unemployed for more than 6 months could be deported. The same year a scheme of 'assisted' deportations was started. The immigrant was 'helped' to his country of origin but at the expense of all the benefits he has subscribed towards – eg pensions, sickness pay etc.

In spite of all these measures, and the daily harassment by police and government bureaucracy, there are still too many immigrant workers in the State's opinion. In September the French and Algerian governments signed an agreement which aimed at sending back 35,000 Algerian workers per year.

To encourage them to leave the Government offers money and training. This is blown up by the bourgeois press to look highly attractive. In fact the maximum anyone would receive is £1,000 – and they are going back to a country plundered by French imperialism and ravaged by the world crisis. The Government can well afford a few cheques of £1,000 when it is saving on all the future pensions and benefits paid for by the workers.

For those who ignore the carrot, there is the usual stick. 6 months unemployment means possible deportation. With 42,000 Algerian workers registered on the dole (and how many others desperately hoping to find work before being caught?) this threat is only too real.

The French bourgeoisie has picked on the Algerian section of the working class first, but the threat to all nationalities is there. As one bourgeois paper put it, why stop with the Algerians? 'It is true that France has 800,000 Algerians, but it also has 100,000 Polish, 500,000 Italians, 165,000 Tunisians, 300,000 Moroccans and 800,000 Portuguese' (*Les Echos*). Just as in Britain, they try to divide the working class along race lines in order to crush one section after another.

Sheila Marston

STOP THE DEPORTATIONS OF PHILIPPINO WORKERS!

On 23 November supporters of Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! attended a demonstration of approximately 300 people to protest against the attempted deportation of 234 Philippino workers from this country. These workers, offered the worst jobs with the lowest wages are now told by the racist British state that they are no longer needed and that they are illegal immigrants.

What is the excuse of the racist British state this time? That when these workers (mainly women) entered Britain they did not declare that they were married, or that they had dependent children in their own country. But the fact is that when they entered this country, they were not told of this 'rule'! And now, at the hands of the British state these workers face deportation! As unemployment rises the racist British state uses every trick in the book to deny these workers a job.

How did the Labour Party and trade unions show their 'concern' for these workers? The trade union movement, represented by Alan Fisher (NUPE) couldn't mobilise more than 30 of its members on the march. This was all the more noticeable given that the overwhelming majority of those on the march were Philippinos.

These workers have come to Britain from an oppressed nation to do the worst jobs with the lowest wages. The racist imperialist British state has only one concern – profits – and it is the racist state that is the root cause of racism in Britain. The only way that a struggle can be fought against these deportations and against all forms of racial oppression is by building a movement that is both anti-racist and anti-imperialist.

**NO DEPORTATIONS!
Smash Immigration Controls!**

Robert Tanner

SECTION 72: ANOTHER WEAPON

When the brutality of the prison regime fails to break the will of prisoners, the prison authorities can turn to the Home Office for help. Section 72 of the Mental Health Act (1959) allows the Home Secretary to send prisoners to a mental hospital if, in his opinion, it is 'expedient' or 'in the interests of the public'. The prisoner cannot be released or transferred without the consent of the Home Secretary. In effect, the Act is being used to cancel the remission earned by prisoners if they refuse to be broken by the prison regime.

Adrian Delapena, an Irish prisoner, faces three years in Rampton mental hospital after being transferred from Parkhurst prison one year before he was due to be released on parole. The reason for this transfer is quite clear, as his sister-in-law has said:

'He was in a lot of different prisons because he won't settle down. He won't conform or knuckle under to authority... he won't say "yes sir – no sir".'

After the Gartree riots in 1978, a black prisoner,

Steve Thompson, was transferred to Rampton. The prison authorities suddenly decided that his locks contravened prison rules, so they cut them off while he was under sedation. Because Steve protested at this attempt to demoralise him, he was sent to Rampton, which is now publicly known for its vile and brutal regime. While Steve was in Rampton, he was drugged and put into solitary confinement. The Steve Thompson Defence Committee succeeded in their campaign to get him transferred from Rampton back to Gartree.

Steve was due to be released from Gartree on 19 December 1980. A few days before this, he was again transferred to Rampton under Section 72. The 'insanity' label is increasingly being used to keep black prisoners, especially rastas, behind bars when they cannot be broken by the prison screws.

When Steve's family and friends realised he had been transferred, they immediately took action. Fifty people occupied a CRC meeting in Birmingham, demanding Steve's immediate release. On 19 December, one hundred people demonstrated outside Rampton. As a result, local MP Dennis Howell has been forced to take up the case with the Home Office.

FIGHTBACK IN BIRMINGHAM

Because of the complete refusal by Labour controlled Birmingham Council to provide recreational facilities for the black community, local youths held their own fund raising events to buy recreational equipment. This they did by holding a party from Christmas Eve to January 5th at a private house in Ladywood.

The party was continually harassed by police.

People attending were stopped and threatened by constant police patrols. On Friday morning police rushed the door of the house. The landlord was beaten to the ground and dragged to a police car. One youth was set upon by dogs and received severe bites along most of the left side of his body. This racist attack was met by fierce resistance. The police were driven out, many injured, and taught the lesson that black people will not humbly submit to the racist British police.

FRENCH CP THUGGERY AGAINST BLACK WORKERS

Christmas Eve of 1980 witnessed the obvious outcome of the utterly racist chauvinist policy of supporting immigration controls, whatever form they take, in an imperialist country.

Three hundred African workers had been evicted from an uninhabitable hostel in St Maur, Paris, and were to be rehoused in a new hostel in nearby Vitry. The Mayor of Vitry, Paul Mercieca, a member of the French Communist Party, outraged at having more immigrants in his area, led an assault on the hostel. The hostel was broken into, the gas, electricity and water supplies cut off, the steps leading to the door bulldozed and exits blocked off by bulldozers. The leadership of the French CP last month issued the following statement:

'We support the concrete measures taken by Communist Mayors who reject the pressure from prefects...pursuing a housing and hostel-building policy that aggravates the concentration of immigrants.'

Outright racist attacks on black workers such as that at Vitry, stem directly from the racist demand of the French Communist Party to end all immigration. Communist Party leader Georges Marchais said on 15 December;

'We demand a halt to immigration because if it goes on, more French workers and immigrants as well will be thrown out of their jobs.'

The sister party of the French CP, the CPGB, whose chauvinism and racism is at present restricted to demanding import controls and 'non racist' immigration controls, reported this racist attack in the *Morning Star*, but did so without comment. Perhaps the CPGB was unable to comment because the racist programme of the French CP is only a step away from the chauvinism of the CPGB.

NOTES & COMMENTS

As the economic crisis deepens, unemployment increases and wages fall, the ruling class is on the one hand strengthening the machinery of state repression and concocting new methods of defeating revolutionary struggle, while on the other hand its agents in the working class movement are at pains to ensure that opposition to this attack does not become revolutionary, anti-capitalist opposition.

Tony Benn and 'the monster'

This well-known renegade, for example is aware of the vanguard role of black people in British politics, and knows that black people see the Labour Party for the racist, anti-working class and pro-imperialist organisation that it is, and he is attempting to seduce sections of the black community back into the Labour Party with certain fine phrases.

Speaking at a meeting of black organisations in London recently, Benn urged them to affiliate to the Labour Party. As carrots he promised the repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act, repeal of the sus law, and a civil rights bill. These words were offered by a man who voted for the racist 1968 Immigration Act and was in the cabinet of a government which launched a vicious attack on blacks. When asked if he regretted his support for the 1968 Act Benn said, 'Well... I do'. Regrets were all Benn had to offer, and for his audience regrets were not enough. His party was called a 'monster', the Labour Party castigated as racist by speaker after speaker. Benn was told 'We are black and British, and we are going to stay here. For God's sake Benn wake up and take note.'

Benn is in a dilemma. A staunch supporter of British imperialism who is trying to win the support of the working class, and its most advanced section — black people. How can this be done except through the deception of fine words and false promises.

Frightened TUC

Meanwhile in Wales the TUC Nationalised Industry Committee have met to consider the consequences of massive unemployment in the region and to warn the government of the terrible consequences of militant working class protest. Their report said,

'The Committee warns Parliament of the risks of serious social disorder if chronic levels of unemployment endure.'

How thoughtful of the Committee. The Welsh TUC is also worried that,

'People will not accept change at the rate being forced upon them at the present time without protest, and if we have protests *en masse* regularly without effect, then it will go beyond the bounds of protest and into other areas. We do not cure these problems by employing more police, or thinking of using the army.'

Thus the problem is identified as working class unrest! The TUC is concerned that Thatcher is going too far and too fast in her attack on the working class for them to contain opposition. The TUC is only opposed to poverty and oppression when it threatens to unleash revolutionary working class protest.

Liverpool fightback? SWP dream!

The Labour Party and its petit bourgeois fan club would have us believe that the recent massive Labour Party demonstration in Liverpool against unemployment heralded the beginning of a new fightback by the Labour Party.

Socialist Worker told us:

It was a splendid demonstration. The Labour Party is entitled to full credit

for its first big-scale effort to take politics beyond the Westminster talking shop for many years.

What dangerous fairy stories the SWP dreams up! The Labour Party hammered the working class over the 5 years it was in Government. Now, as the Tories intensify that attack, forcing up unemployment and cutting wages and social services, we see the Labour Party step in not 'to take politics outside Westminster' but to prevent working class anger from becoming anti-capitalist and revolutionary. This is the role of Labour 'lefts' like Benn.

The 150,000 who marched in Liverpool show the forces which can be mobilised. The Labour Party and trade union leadership will parade those forces periodically but ultimately fears them. That is why in the face of 2½ million unemployed and rapidly falling living standards, the leadership of the Labour Party and the trade unions have *all along* prevented any effective fightback.

If we look at reality and not at the SWP's fairy stories then one thing is clear: only a *rejection* of the rotten pro-imperialist, anti-working class Labour Party will open the road for the 150,000 and the countless other thousands to start the real battle — to defend the working class and to destroy British imperialism along with all its filthy servants.

Strike-breaking Brigadier

Brigadier Bishop is not concerned with the finer points of political chicanery. His job is to co-ordinate the army and the police to be used against the working class if the first lines of defence — our friends Tony Benn and the TUC — are breached. The Brigadier is the Secretary of the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU), a secret committee to organise strike-breaking and the maintenance of communications and supply to state forces in the event of any crisis or uprising.

A report in *The Times* about this man showed the remarkable state of readiness and advanced planning of the state in order to smash working class revolt. From the Brigadier's operations centre, the reports said,

'safe lines enable Mr William Whitelaw, Home Secretary and Chairman of the CCU, to speak directly and simultaneously with all the Chief Constables and the leading generals commanding the military districts up and down the country if trouble erupts.'

Judges rule — OK?

Lord Denning, Master of the Rolls, is a pillar of the repressive British judicial system. He presides over rigged courts handing out massive sentences, he makes restrictive laws and administers censorship by 'contempt of court'. It was this very Lord Denning who refused the right of appeal to the 6 Irishmen convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings on the basis of beaten confessions and discredited forensic evidence, yet he said in a BBC lecture that judges are 'vigilant in guarding our freedoms' and 'Someone must be trusted, let it be the judges'. Lord Denning has been very vigilant in guarding *his* freedom and the freedom of his class to oppress and exploit the working class. The man is so pompous and convinced of his god-given right to rule that he has called for a written constitution to be written and administered by — the judges.

These reactionaries would rule the world — and by all accounts they do. And just in case anyone should be tempted to show disapproval of this, Denning regards criticism of himself and his colleagues in the newspapers as 'an abuse of power'. The judges, it seems, are not to be judged.

HOLLOWAY POLICE: MORE RACIST TERROR

In July 1980 there was an off-licence robbery in the Holloway area in which £50 worth of liquor was taken. On the basis of this the police arrested no less than 7 black youths and at the same time a further 13 youths were picked up and are still detained at Ashford Remand Centre.

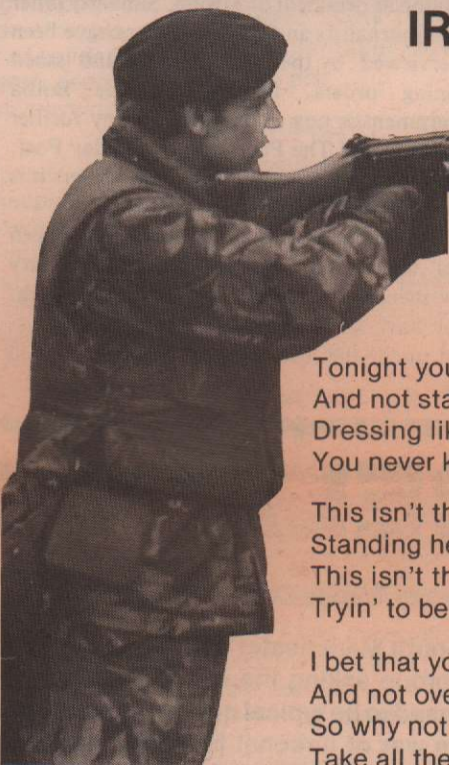
These 20 arrests were carried out in a commando-style raid in the early hours of 15 and 17 December. The charge sheets of some of those arrested have crimes dating back to June 1979 and it appears that as with the Hornsey 70+ the police are simply clearing their books of past crimes. One youth alone has been charged with over 40 counts of street robbery!

Within the various police stations the youths have shown great courage in resisting beatings and deprivation of food and drink. Their sleep is constantly disrupted, the lights are left on in the cells for 24 hours and the young prisoners shaken awake every 20 minutes throughout the

night. In conditions like these many of them have signed 'confessions' often only after being repeatedly dragged in front of a magistrate.

Bail has been refused for all but 4 of the 20 youths and these are on curfew. In many cases the police have confiscated property that has nothing to do with the cases as 'evidence'. Clothes, shoes and personal belongings, sometimes brought as Christmas presents, are still in the possession of the police even where receipts have been produced for them.

Holloway police, led by well-known racist Sergeant Day, wants to show the Black Community that it is they who control the area and that they will continue to choose the time and the place to intimidate and harass the Black population. In this latest demonstration of their power they have carefully selected 20 youths who are over 16 which means that they can be held on remand for long periods. In this they are getting full support from the racist Highbury Magistrates Court and servile scum called Duty solicitors.



IRELAND: British soldier go home

by Colleen Diffley, age 17

With rifle in hand and beret lopsided
A soldier boy stands all alone.
He thinks he is grand, he thinks he is brave,
Oh, soldier boy please go back home.

Tonight you should be with your friends down the club,
And not standing here on the street,
Dressing like that and trying to look tough,
You never know who you will meet!

This isn't the place for a young boy to be,
Standing here out in the cold,
This isn't the way for a young boy to act
Tryin' to be oh, so bold.

I bet that you wish you were back home with mum
And not over here feeling blue
So why not go home, and while you're at it
Take all the others back too!!

BRITISH DEMOCRACY

Danger! British democracy at work!

The imperialists tell us that the British army is in Ireland to 'protect' the 'democratic' rights of the Loyalists, specifically their 'right' to 'choose' to be part of the United Kingdom. Yet when the imperialists discuss the matter in private — they have a different tale to tell.

Recently released Cabinet papers for 1948 make the real attitude of British imperialism very clear:

'So far as can be foreseen it will never be to Great Britain's advantage that Northern Ireland should become part of a territory outside His Majesty's jurisdiction. Indeed, it seems unlikely that Great Britain would ever be able to agree to this even if the people of Northern Ireland desired it.'

This is only an echo of Lloyd George's assurance to Carson (leader of the Loyalists) in 1916:

'We must make it clear... Ulster does not, whether she wills it or not, merge in the rest of Ireland.'

This is the truth: imperialism tramples democracy underfoot then hypocritically claims 'democratic' justification for its barbarism. The private admissions of imperialism show that it is Ireland's freedom fighters who are really fighting for democracy.

HANDS OFF IRELAND Back issues

Issues 1, 5-10 20p plus 15p p&p
Any 5 from the above £1 post free

COMPLETE SET
Issues 1-10 £6.00 post free
from 49 Railton Road, London SE24 0LN

GERRY MACLOCHLAINN CASE

The state persecution of Gerry MacLochlainn continues.

On 28 November 1980 Gerry was committed for trial at St Albans Crown Court. No date was set for the trial but it is not expected to take place before March.

Gerry MacLochlainn was first arrested, along with Jim Reilly, in March 1980. Both were leading political figures in Sinn Fein Britain. It was obvious from the first that the charge — conspiracy to cause explosions — was nonsense designed to silence Jim and Gerry.

So far imperialist 'justice' and the police have succeeded in killing Jim Reilly whilst Gerry faces a life sentence if found guilty. We urge all readers of FRFI to demand the dropping of all charges against Gerry MacLochlainn.

SOUTH AFRICA: MEDIA WORKERS STRIKE

An eight-week strike by black journalists in South Africa ended in the last week of December 1980. The strike involving 130 black journalists (virtually the entire body of black journalists in South Africa) began as a solidarity action in support of 25 journalists on the Argus-owned Cape Herald. The supposedly 'liberal' Argus had rejected their demand for pay parity with black journalists on The Post and The Sunday Post – also owned by Argus.

Very rapidly, the strike turned into a confrontation between the black Media Workers Association of South Africa (Mwasa) and the Argus and South African Associated Newspapers groups. Mwasa – whose president Zwelakhe Sisulu is the son of ANC Leader Walter Sisulu serving a life sentence on Robben Island – demanded immediate improvement in salaries, wages and conditions, payment for the period on strike and recognition of Mwasa. These demands were made on behalf of all black media workers – journalists, cleaners, messengers and other non-editorial workers. The Argus management tried to break this unity, it offered the Cape Herald *journalists* a higher wage than they had demanded! But the journalists refused to return to work. The strike soon resulted in the stoppage of the Cape Herald, the Sowetan, The Post and The Sunday Post – all read by the black community. Whilst 9 other newspapers and a newsagency were affected.

The strike, like many recent black workers strikes, received enthusiastic support from the black community. When Mwasa issued an appeal to black people to boycott Argus papers this was supported by civic and other organisations such as the Grassy Park/Lotus Residents Association and the Western Cape Trades Association. And no wonder given the revolutionary stand Mwasa took. Not only did it fight for all media workers, but it has a clear policy that the first duty of black journalists is to serve black people in the 'struggle against white

oppression'. As Zwelakhe Sisulu stated:

'...in our situation the question is not whether one is a propagandist or not but whether one becomes a collaborationist propagandist or a revolutionary propagandist.'

When the strike ended, it was a partial victory. Mwasa won recognition and the right to organise all black media workers. It is thus in a position to pursue its struggle to improve the conditions of black media workers and the struggle against the racist apartheid state.

However this is something which the racist regime is doing its utmost to prevent. Since the ending of the strike, in an attempt to smash Mwasa, Zwelakhe Sisulu has been put under house arrest under a banning order. This not only means that he will lose his job as Editor of the Post, but also that he will not be able to function as president of Mwasa. Similarly other black journalists and Mwasa leaders have been 'interviewed' by the security police and issued banning orders. In addition the Botha government is now trying to stop any further publication of The Post and the Sunday Post. Using the registration laws for newspapers it is surreptitiously trying to ban these papers.

These methods, and more violent have been tried and tested against the revolutionary movement of the black masses in South Africa. They have all failed. The struggle continues. And under the leadership of the ANC it will win.

METAL BOX PROFITS

With the deepening crisis of capitalism and the collapse of profitability in Britain, more and more imperialist firms are investing abroad. Not anywhere abroad, but specifically in oppressed nations and in states such as South Africa where the working class deprived of all trade union and political rights is paid starvation wages and subjected to vicious exploitation. Imperialist investments in such states not only assure these firms extremely high rates of profit, but are a vital means of preventing their complete bankruptcy and collapse.

One such firm is Metal Box, the largest can manufacturer in Britain. In November 1980 it announced that its half year profits had dropped to 30% of the 1979 figure, with its operations in Britain making a loss of £4.5m. As a result it is planning to close down two factories in Britain and will throw 1 in 18 of its workers into unemployment and poverty.

In South Africa the picture of profits is different. Metal Box's half year profits there were up to £7.4m. No wonder. Metal Box pays

its black workers wages as low as £26 per week and uses all the racist anti-working class laws and the armed apparatus of the apartheid regime to crush any resistance from its black workers. These profits in South Africa, sucked from the sweat and blood of black workers saved the company from virtual collapse.

We have many times stated that it is in the direct interest of British workers to unite with the revolutionary movement in South Africa led by the ANC to stop all foreign and particularly British investment in South Africa. What better demonstration of the correctness of this than Metal Box's profit figures! Whilst closing down factories in Britain and sacking thousands of workers its South African investments bail it out of trouble and are used to blackmail British workers into accepting further redundancies on threat of completely winding up operations in Britain. British firms are now, in order to restore profitability, attempting to impose on British workers the same conditions as those suffered by the working class in South Africa. By uniting with the ANC in South Africa not only will British workers help smash the racist apartheid regime, but will also take a step forward in smashing the whole British imperialist system.

NAMIBIA: THE FACTS

Available from International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 104 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7AP. Price £1.50.

This pamphlet has a useful role to play in counteracting the virtual silence of the British bourgeois press on the liberation struggle against racism and imperialism in Namibia. It

contains a wealth of information and statistics exposing the way Britain, America, France and Germany have co-operated with and financed South Africa's brutal repression of the Namibian people and the exploitation of Namibia's vast natural resources.

The mineral-rich land of Namibia was divided up between Britain and Germany in 1890; the imperialists then proceeded to drive the Namibian people from the fertile land into the barren areas, massacre those who resisted, forcing the Namibians into wage labour. They then introduced laws similar to present day apartheid in order to ensure the colossal profits gained from the exploitation of Namibia and its people.

As a result of the 1st World War, in 1915 Britain ordered South African troops to take over the German controlled areas of Namibia, where they remained to the present day. Resistance to this occupation has always been strong, culminating in the formation of South West Africa People's Organization in 1961 and its armed wing People's Liberation Army of Namibia which in 1966 launched the armed struggle against imperialist plunder of Namibia and the occupying South African forces.

In 1966 the UN General Assembly terminated South Africa's mandate and placed Namibia under direct UN control; the only countries to vote against the termination were Portugal and South Africa, Britain and France abstained. In 1969 the UN Security Council ordered South Africa to withdraw its troops and administration from Namibia, again, Britain and France abstained; and South Africa has totally ignored these resolutions. In 1976, a draft resolution to the Security Council sought to impose a mandatory arms embargo on South Africa and condemn all attempts by South Africa to evade the demand of the UN for free elections in Namibia; this resolution was vetoed by Britain, the USA and France.

The pamphlet also clearly reveals the reasons why the UN is totally impotent in weakening the stranglehold of imperialism over Namibia. The mining industry in Namibia provides 50% of the Gross Domestic Product. 90% of the mining industry is controlled by Anglo American Corporation and American Metal Climax Inc. Namibia also has the largest open cast uranium mine in the world which is 60% owned by Rio Tinto Zinc of Great Britain – uranium is essential for nuclear development.

A victory for SWAPO will not only be a massive blow to imperialism, particularly British imperialism, but with the strengthening of the ANC(SA) by such a victory, the lifeline of imperialism may well be on the verge of collapse.

Marie Jay

SWP & IRELAND

Review of SWP pamphlet 'Why we say Troops Out of Ireland'

This pamphlet was written by members of South Manchester and North London districts of the SWP. Presumably with one group asking the questions and the other answering them. The pamphlet is supposed to be typical questions asked by those who do not support the Irish people's war of national liberation and the answers from people who claim that they do, so an SWP division of labour is obviously possible in the production of such a pamphlet.

The pamphlet starts with the statement:

'There is a widespread belief that (the troops) went (into Ireland) to prevent violence between Catholic and Protestant sections of the community...'

And therein is the lie. The SWP fails to tell the reader that in 1969 the SWP was in the forefront of those welcoming the 'Troops In' decision. Then it wrote that:

'The intervention of the British troops... allows a temporary breathing space in which the defences of the Catholic community can be strengthened.'

The SWP has since changed this position. Why? According to this new pamphlet, not because it opposes British troops in Ireland as such, but because the British state and its troops 'chose' repressive rather than 'reforming' measures:

'...faced with a choice between commitment to "reform" and defending the institutions that guaranteed privilege, (the British troops) sided with the latter.'

This suggests British imperialism could be different. A petit bourgeois fantasy. However a fantasy with a purpose. Because the SWP opposes the violence of British imperialism in Ireland precisely because it brings forth the violence of the oppressed which terrifies them even more. After all:

'The IRA barely existed before the present "troubles" began in 1969, and emerged from the remnants of the old Republican movement.'

Throughout the pamphlet the main theme is a

vicious attack on the Republican movement and in a mere 16 pages the SWP attempt to do what the British state uses all its media power to do, that is to deny the legitimacy of, and the mass support for, the Republican struggle.

It begins as we have come to expect:

'As socialists we give full support to all those who fight oppression... This applies equally to the Provisionals.'

But then:

'Unlike socialists... the republicans aim for the emancipation of the Irish nation from British rule.'

Indeed:

'They tend to see themselves acting on behalf of the people of Ireland, rather than organising mass action by the people themselves.'

And finally:

'The politics of the Republican movement are rooted in the nationalist tradition of the late 18th century... Some of the tactics used by the Provisionals stem from this nationalist tradition and act as a barrier to the organisation of workers.'

The SWP has in mind the armed struggle which they say has 'appeared directed against British workers rather than at the British state'. Such 'full support' we would not wish on our greatest enemies. It can only turn British workers against the Republican movement and its armed struggle against British imperialism. Besides it is a pack of lies

Socialists do aim for the emancipation of the

Irish nation from British rule. They recognise that the Irish working class cannot free itself without freeing Ireland from British rule.

The IRA do act on behalf of the people of Ireland. They are its revolutionary vanguard and the Irish masses do see them as such. Even the British Government in its secret document 37 acknowledges what the SWP denies.

The tactics of the Republican movement are determined by the realities of British oppression. The politics of the Republican movement are not only rooted in the nationalist traditions of the 18th century, but also flow from the alliance of revolutionary nationalism and the urban working class achieved in 1916 during the Easter Rising and which has recently been seen on the streets of Derry and Belfast.

Finally that gross imperialist slander that the armed struggle of the Republican movement is directed against British workers has been spread by none other than the SWP. In 1974 it wrote about the Provisionals:

'The cause of the Irish people is not helped by the indiscriminate killing of working people in Britain... We have repeatedly condemned the bombings.'

This landslide of abuse is continued to the last section entitled 'What we can do', where we are told to join the SWP, as:

'The struggle for socialism in this country will greatly assist the struggle for self-determination in Ireland...'

Marx in fact rejected this position:

'For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working class ascendancy... Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything until it has got rid of Ireland.'

The SWP obviously fails to see that there will never be a revolutionary movement in Britain strong enough to take on the ruling class at home, until we fully side with the oppressed in Ireland and join with them in the fight against British imperialism.

Steven Pearce

LETTERS

FRFI welcomes your letters. They should be sent to the Editor, 49 Railton Road London SE24 0LN. We may, on occasions, cut letters for reasons of space.

Dear Editor,
I wish to subscribe to your paper. I enclose £3.00 for ten issues.

I would just briefly like to say that I read your paper for the first time (issue No. 7) and found it a fine paper throughout. So much of communist literature goes way over the head of a lot of the very people it is supposed to inform ie the working class.

Yours truly
WR
Dundalk

Dear Comrade,
The Maze Hunger Strike has now reached a very critical situation and the joining of the brave women in Armagh prison has greatly heightened the tension. Over here the support for the Hunger Strikers has increased greatly. At a rally in Dublin on the 6th December, 30,000 people took part and the Sunday before that 20,000 took part in Belfast. As well as these major rallies, numerous torchlight processions, rosary recitations etc are taking place throughout the province locally. I enclose a page from the 'Irish News' which is read by 90% of the Catholic (Nationalist) population daily. You will see notices in the paper pledging solidarity with the Hunger Strikers. These appear every day and give us assurance of the mass support that the

strikers deserve.

Here in Coleraine it is an 80% Loyalist town and the Catholics here live in fear of intimidation and beatings from the thugs. There are no H-Block committees within at least a 15 mile radius and to attend a march it involves quite a bit of travel, but it is worth it.

I am delighted that *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* has put its back into the protest and I hope that you obtain mass support from the British working class people.

I was wondering if you could send me some H-Block leaflets so I can distribute them around.

VICTORY TO THE HUNGER-STRIKERS!
POLITICAL STATUS NOW!
DONT LET THEM DIE!

In solidarity
BC Co Derry

Supporter's letter

Comrades,
Having read all issues to date of **FRFI** and several **Hand off Irelands** as well as the editorial of **Revolutionary Communist** No9, I am about to make the leap (and it is a 'qualitative leap') from my association with 'left politics' to what I now consider to be the revolutionary alternative to it. I cannot quote endlessly from the 'Transitional Programme' but I can see which organisation best defends and advances the cause of those engaged in the anti-imperialist struggles which are today the major threat – together with the existence of the socialist countries – to the rule of capital.

'The veiled slavery of the wage

worker in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery bare and simple in the new world'. This relationship, although modified, is essentially as concrete today as when Marx pointed it out and concluded that, 'Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where the black is branded'. The national liberation movements are kicking that pedestal from under the wage slave system; imperialism is in retreat (Iran, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe being only the latest examples) and capitalism is in crisis. The defeat of imperialism is of the utmost importance for the British working class, and **FRFI** will prove to be of immense value in propagandising this fact. That's why I intend to sell it. **Venceremos!**

J.P. Liverpool

This letter was written by a woman in her seventies who suffers poor health. Despite this she sacrificed £5 from her meagre income to help the cause of building support for the Irish liberation struggle. That is the spirit of solidarity which is desperately needed in the working class movement.

Dear Comrades,
Thanks for your paper, although I have not been keeping too well to read it all. I have now got angina, but have not forgot about our working class heroes both sisters and brothers who must be suffering in these rotten jails. Please accept this £5 donation. I only hope it helps the world to know the truth.
Yours sincerely
Mrs Janet O'Neill

FRFI SUPPORTER GROUPS

NORTH LONDON

Meets every fortnight on Tuesday at Caxton House, St Johns Way, (nearest Tube Archway). Next meeting on Tuesday January 27 at 7.30 pm.

SOUTH LONDON

Meets every fortnight on Tuesday at Buckmaster House, Stockwell Park (nearest Tube Brixton). Next meeting on Tuesday January 27 at 7.30 pm.

BIRMINGHAM

Meets every fortnight at Mount Pleasant Centre, Balsall Heath Road, Balsall Heath (buses 8, 48 & 50). Next meeting Monday January 26 at 7.30 pm.

LEEDS

Meets every fortnight at Leeds Trades Hall, Saville Mount, Leeds 7. Ask FRFI sellers for details and time of next meeting. The paper is sold every Saturday morning between 11.00 and 1.00 outside Grandways Supermarket, Roundhay Road.

EDINBURGH

Meets every fortnight on Thursday at 1st of May Bookshop, Candlemaker Row. Next meeting on Thursday January 22 at 7.30 pm.

GLASGOW

Meets every fortnight on Sunday at Trades Council Club, Carlton Place. Next meeting on Sunday February 1 at 7.30 pm.

LIVERPOOL

Meets every fortnight on a Friday at Stanley House, Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool 8. Next meeting on Friday January 30 at 7.30 pm.

MANCHESTER

January 29th and fortnightly thereafter at Moss Side People's Centre, St Marys Street, 7.30 pm.

FUND DRIVE

A MONTHLY FRFI DEPENDS ON YOU! 100 EXTRA SELLERS NEEDED! AN EXTRA £250 NEEDED EACH MONTH

We have achieved a tremendous milestone with the November/December issue – a print of 10,000 and we have once again sold out! With sales increasing by over 1,000 with each issue, only two barriers exist to the next milestone – achieving a monthly paper:

1. We need extra sellers
2. We need more money

100 NEW SUPPORTERS COMMITTED TO SELLING 20 COPIES OF EACH ISSUE OF FRFI would enable us immediately to launch FRFI on a monthly basis. We ask the 10,000 people who read the last issue and the countless others who have read FRFI: consider our proposition seriously. Make this small commitment to sell 20 copies in your street, on your estate, in your neighbourhood and at work or the dole queue. Our need is people prepared to sell FRFI in working class areas all over Britain. Sales of the paper have met with tremendous and enthusiastic response. So why not order 20 copies of each issue and make your contribution to building the revolutionary movement in Britain. £500 per month collected by our supporters would secure the financial future of a monthly FRFI. This is not a lot to expect. Yet we are still little more than halfway to this target.

In November/December we raised £540 towards the £1000 target for that period.

Send all donations to: 49 Railton Road, London SE24 0LN

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THE JACK WODDIS MEMORIAL AWARD FOR NATIONAL CHAUVINIST HYPOCRISY

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! has spared no expense in commissioning specially designed insignia (below) for the Jack Woddiss Memorial Award. The paper welcomes alternative designs to commemorate British chauvinist hypocrisy – we'll print them in the paper. Nominations for the award are also welcome.

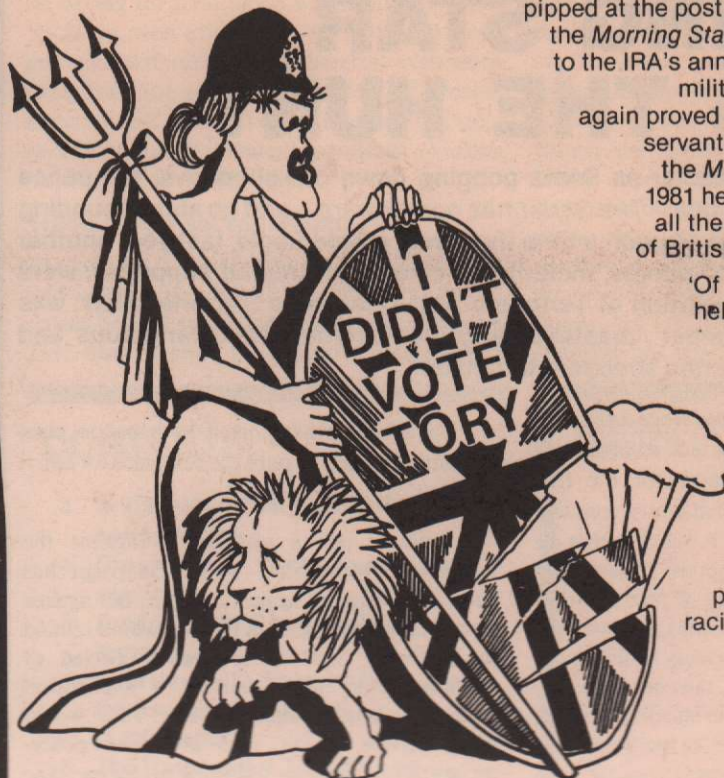
THIS MONTH'S ESPECIALLY DESERVED AWARD

Observers of the Jack Woddiss Award for National Chauvinist Hypocrisy have, we know been predicting a close contest between Jerry Fitzpatrick (SWP) and Geoff

Bell (IMG) for their betrayals during the hunger strike. However both were pipped at the post by **Tony Chater**, editor of the *Morning Star*. In a panicked response to the IRA's announcement of a renewed military offensive, Chater has again proved a willing and obsequious servant of British imperialism. In the *Morning Star* of 10 January 1981 he blames all the barbarity, all the repression and bestiality of British imperialism on the IRA:

'Of all the things which have helped British Governments to maintain repression (the IRA) has been the key.'

The IRA are described as 'fools' and its 12 year freedom war slandered as 'insane bombings and petty posturings'. Such is the poisonous chauvinism and racism of the anti-communist Chater and the *Morning Star*.



HANDS OFF IRELAND!

MASS SUPPORT IN IRELAND

The mass support for the hunger strikers which was demonstrated by the march in Belfast on the eve of the hunger strike grew throughout the 7½ weeks of the strike itself.

Militant protests – marches, torchlight processions, road blocks, occupation of shops, banks and government offices, and pickets on RUC and British army barracks – took place daily throughout the 6 Counties. The effectiveness of such action can be seen from the fact that Derry businessmen complained that their trade had been reduced by 40% by the protests.

Industrial action also was taken on several occasions by groups of workers in support of the hunger strikers. The lead was given by 400 dock workers in Belfast, all members of the ITGWU, who walked out on 11 November and marched to the Northern headquarters of the ICTU to protest at the inaction of the ICTU on the H-Blocks issue. The following afternoon workers from all over Derry walked out in solidarity with the hunger strikers and converged on the city centre where a crowd of about 10,000 listened to speeches in support of the hunger strikers.

On 27 November workers stopped work in Dungannon, Coalisland, Omagh and Cookstown in Co Tyrone. The most widespread action took place on 10 December in response to a call for a National Day of Action. Thousands of workers from all over the 6 Counties defied the ICTU leaders and stopped work in support of the hunger strikers. In Belfast the walkout was followed by a rally in Dunville Park where trade union speakers attacked the ICTU leadership for refusing to support the Day of Action.

In the 26 Counties there were numerous marches and meetings but the most significant events were the two mass marches in Dublin.

On 22 November 30,000 marched to the parliament buildings at Leinster House bringing the centre of Dublin to a standstill. On 6 December an even larger march converged on the British Embassy. The marchers showed their hatred of the British government – burning Union Jacks and effigies of Margaret Thatcher and Humphrey Atkins – and Charles Haughey and the 'Free State' government – chanting 'Who's a Brit? Gerry Fitt! Who else? Haughey!' and 'Brits Out! North and South!' directed at the massive force of gardai around the embassy.

If the British ruling class thought that support would slacken as the strike continued – they were proved wrong. On the contrary the protests became more militant as the strike progressed. As the condition of the hunger strikers, particularly Sean McKenna, deteriorated in December fierce and prolonged rioting broke out in Derry. This was a clear sign to the British ruling class of what it would undoubtedly have faced throughout the 6 Counties had any of the prisoners died.

Irish correspondent

TUITE: MORNING STAR LEADS THE HUNT

Every Christmas, as regular as Santa popping down our chimneys, the police concoct their own fairy tale – *The Christmas bomb-scare* – and go about rounding up political activists. Once upon a time there was a Bald Eagle, last year another tall story and dozens of people, including a Hands Off Ireland supporter, were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. This year's 'Terrorist Alert' was Gerry Tuite, 'master bomber', 'master of disguise', 'dedicated and dangerous' and 'holding London Christmas shoppers to ransom'.

Imaginative liars are the Home Office, police and British press. The Tuite scare was an attempt to dissipate working class support for the Irish liberation movement, which had grown considerably during the hunger strike. It was clear that the police had no great wish to capture Tuite for this would have cooled the climate of fear that they had cooked up. A taxi driver who informed the police that he had driven Tuite away from Brixton prison was ignored for 5 days, then held for questioning for 17 hours and left in shock. However, apart from this small spanner in the works, the police had plentiful support from the gutter press who gave their all, not least the gutter 'communists' who write the *Morning Star*, paper of the CPGB.

These crawling dogs, who throughout the hunger strike had done their master's bidding and demanded that the IRA lay down their arms and leave the Irish people at the mercy of British imperialism, said of Gerry Tuite,

'There is no doubt that if he is not to plant bombs in shops or pubs the best place for him is in jail'.

Not only is this a vile slander against the Republican Movement, whose campaign has never been directed against civilians, but against Tuite himself for the man has (we would remind the *Morning Star*) never been convicted of anything! Even the *Guardian*, a hypocritical bourgeois daily, complained that Tuite would never receive a fair trial after the police-orchestrated campaign following his escape. The *Morning Star* is not only firmly in the camp of the racist British state, but to the right of the *Guardian*. Such scum, who would see all enemies of British imperialism locked in jail, without trial if necessary, should be hounded from the British working class movement once and for all. They have no more right to call themselves Communist than any foul-mouthed Tory.

THE LIE MACHINE

The cowardice and dishonesty of the British bourgeois press was never so clearly exposed as in its coverage of the hunger strike. Censorship, distortion, lies, cowardice, racism and imperialist propaganda – this was offered to British workers as 'reporting' of the hunger strike.

It was as though the British press had decided to prove the correctness of Lenin's remarks on the 'free press':

'An incredible number of lies are being spread... due to the so-called freedom of the press, which consists in the most important organs of the press... being bought up by the capitalists, and being filled 99 per cent with articles by mercenary hacks. That is what they call freedom of the press, due to which there is no limit to the lies that are being spread.'

Every word of this indictment was confirmed during the hunger strike. What was the first duty of the 'free' press? To explain the causes of the hunger strike. This they refused to do.

What caused the hunger strike?

The press agreed: falling popular support for the IRA.

'The Belfast Provisionals were seeking a cause to obscure the falling-off of their terrorist campaign' (*Daily Telegraph* 24 November 1980)

'...The Provisionals are well aware that their campaign... does not have the widespread public backing they would like.' (*Guardian* 21 June 1980)

At no stage were the demands of the prisoners explained or related in any clear way to the ten year war in Ireland. The image was created of prisoners out for special treatment. Yet the prisoners repeatedly made clear that they were demanding political status as captured freedom fighters. This was not allowed to affect the 'reports' written by the press. For the 'liberal' *Guardian* the explanation was Irish 'fanaticism' in an article called 'The Roots of a Hunger Strike'. The *Guardian* received a letter from the prisoners which it did not publish. The press were determined not to allow any explanation to slip through.

Who supported it?

The massive support in the Six Counties was impossible to deny so it was reported but explained away as 'emotionalism'. International support, however, was an area where something could be done.

The *Irish Times* of 9 December 1980 carried a report on support in the USA. State assemblies in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, California, Pennsylvania and Connecticut had voted support for the prisoners. 4000 marched on the UN demanding action on the hunger strike. British Consul Offices in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Detroit were all picketed. A reader of the British press might have learned of one or two of the above facts but no British paper reported on the extent of support in the USA – not to mention France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Australia and so on. Even the burning down of

the British Consul office in Aarhus, Denmark could only manage one sentence in the *Guardian*!

In the 26 Counties massive support built up. On 22 November more than 30,000 people marched through Dublin in the largest pro-Republican demonstration since 1972. This was reported in the *Daily Telegraph* under the headline 'Dublin Demo for Hunger Strikers Backfires on IRA'. The report stated that 11,000 had marched and that 8 out of every 10 had come from the Six Counties, according to 'independent estimates' (this is a euphemism for lies thought up by reporters). They could not simply ignore the demonstration so they invented this tale of imported supporters. The fact that more than ½ of all local councils in the 26 Counties voted to support the prisoners demands was not allowed to affect the 'reporting' of our free press. So really the only support came from emotional fanatics in the Six Counties.

Enter the IRA 'savages'

Towards the end of the hunger strike, despite the efforts of the Fleet Street Hired Liars, the truth of the prisoners demands and their support was getting through as more and more people were lining up for or against the prisoners. What was to be done? The press fell back on their old favourite: The 'Savage IRA'.

The press began to fill with reports of impending bombing campaigns in Britain directed against civilian targets. The climax came on 16 December when the *Sun* ran a front page article 'Christmas Bloodbath'. This article 'reported' that RUC 'intelligence sources' (an obvious lie, whoever heard of sources of intelligence in the RUC?) had discovered an IRA plan.

'IRA terrorists are planning a Christmas bloodbath if one of the hunger strikers dies... They aim to hit "soft" targets in which the greatest number of innocent people will be maimed and killed'

Inside they ran 'biographies' of the seven original hunger strikers under the headline 'The Savage Seven'. The purpose of this racist drivel was clear: distract attention from the growing support for the hunger strike.

This was the British press 'reporting' of the hunger strike: vicious, cowardly and racist. The press acted as an arm of the ruling class throughout. Yet these 'reports' these 'analyses' and 'discoveries of bombing campaigns' were produced by members of the National Union of Journalists. The NUJ has official policy against censorship of the war in Ireland. What happened to this policy? Will the NUJ act to throw the Hired Liars out of its ranks? Will honest journalists speak up? Or will the British press remain the most cowardly in the world?

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