

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 86 April/May 1989

(unwaged 20p) 40p

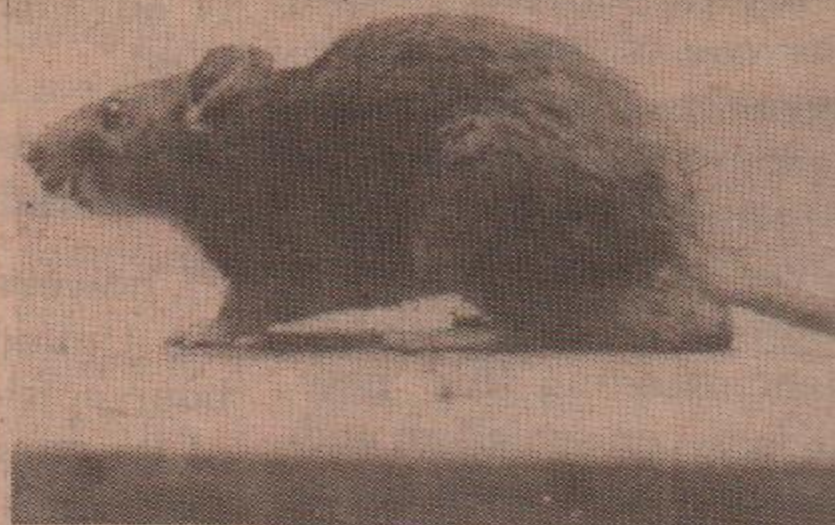
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GORBACHEV IN HAVANA AND LONDON

SOCIALISM AND IMPERIALISM

Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Cuba and Britain, immediately following on from Margaret Thatcher's tour of a number of African countries gives us another opportunity to examine some aspects of the relation between socialism and imperialism.

Gorbachev has made it clear that he believes the fundamental relations between socialism and imperialism have changed in an interdependent, contemporary world that has to come to terms with human survival in a nuclear age. He has put forward the possibility of a non-militaristic, non-predatory imperialism coming into existence, forced to compete peacefully with the imperialist countries. The apparently very friendly relations and mutual regard between Gorbachev and one of imperialism's most aggressive anti-communists, Margaret Thatcher, has to be seen in this context.

However at the very time when Gorbachev and Thatcher were demonstrating this 'new relation' between socialism and imperialism, a very deep shadow was being cast over the whole affair. SWAPO fighters were being butchered mercilessly by imperialism's agents in Namibia. South African paramilitary police, including the brutal Koevoet counter-insurgency unit, had been given the go-ahead to hunt down SWAPO fighters personally by Margaret Thatcher with United Nations authorisation. Not surprisingly this issue was barely touched upon during the Anglo-Soviet talks.

The dominant pressure behind this reshaping of Soviet foreign policy comes from the paramount need to rebuild the crisis ridden Soviet economy. Foreign policy has to 'contribute ever more to releasing the country's resources for peaceful reconstruction, for perestroika.' It is necessary to add also that the backward, anti-Soviet and generally reactionary character of the working class movement and the socialist left in the imperialist countries adds to the pressure on the socialist countries to take a more conciliatory stance in relation to imperialism. Neither the British working class movement, the British socialist left nor the British anti-apartheid movement after all has seriously attempted to pose a challenge to Margaret Thatcher's foreign policy of sustaining the apartheid regime economically and politically.

Inevitably the political and economic pressures, both internal and external, on the socialist countries have allowed the emergence of forces in those countries which are concerned to reconcile socialism and imperialism. In a recent issue of *Pravda International* (March 1989), Andrei V. Kozyrev, deputy chief of the International Organisations in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, gave expression to this trend in an article entitled a 'Brave new world view'. The following extracts from the article show that while the need to restructure the Soviet economy is the major factor determining the new thinking, the absence of real class politics in the workers movement in the imperialist countries is also important in explaining the development of this conciliatory point of view.

On the issue of proletarian internationalism Kozyrev had the following to say:

'By pursuing the logic of anti-imperialist struggle we allowed ourselves - contrary to the in-

terests of our fatherland - to be drawn into the arms race and helped to introduce the 'enemy image' and to set up technological and cultural barriers between the Soviet Union and the United States . . .

'Our direct and indirect involvement in regional conflicts leads to colossal losses by increasing general tension, justifying the arms race and hindering the establishment of mutually advantageous ties with the West.'

On the non-predatory character of imperialism he wrote:

'If, however, one takes a look at the United States' monopolist bourgeoisie as a whole, very few of its groups, and none of the main ones, are connected with militarism. There is no longer any need to talk, for instance, about a military struggle for markets or raw materials, or for the division and redivision of the world.'

On the class relations between socialism and imperialism:

'It is all the more strange to talk about the irreconcilable interests of states with different social systems now that even the class conflict within the capitalist countries largely take place

through the achievement of compromise within a mutually accepted legal framework rather than in the form of harsh confrontation. It follows that the Soviet workers' solidarity with their class brothers in the West far from justifies the thesis of global class confrontation . . .'

And on the relation between the socialist countries and developing countries:

'The myth that the class interests of socialist and developing countries coincide in resisting imperialism does not hold up to criticism at all. The majority of developing countries already adhere to or tend toward the Western model of development and they suffer not so much from capitalism as from a lack of it. They are interested not in struggle against former metropolises but in co-operating to defend their own international stability, which is what our cooperation with the "Third World" must be aimed at'.

Kozyrev has given voice to what appears to be the dominant trend in Soviet foreign policy. Nevertheless, within the communist movement there are those who oppose this dominant view, and imperialism's recent

response to the Soviet Union's international initiatives will inevitably force communists to challenge the conciliationist view of imperialism.

During his visit to Cuba, Gorbachev stated in a speech to the Cuban National Assembly, and in line with the 'new thinking', that the Soviet Union is 'resolutely opposed to any theories and doctrines that justify the export of revolution or counter-revolution' and that the Soviet Union has no military ambitions on the continent. However confronted with the reality of imperialism in Central America, Gorbachev refused to end Soviet military aid to the Sandinista government, attacked the US 'non-lethal' aid to the contras and made it clear that the Soviet Union would only stop sending arms to Nicaragua if the US did likewise throughout Latin America. The Cuban position was expressed by Raul Rao, the Cuban Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs. He said that 'Cuba would continue to claim the right to support revolution in Central America as long as the United States claimed the right to support counter-revolution'. In practice the reality of US imperialism's role in Central America ensured that the Soviet and

Cuban position shared much in common.

The Soviet Union has been forced to withdraw its army from Afghanistan. It called on imperialism to reciprocate and help to find a negotiated settlement to the present war. Imperialism's response has been to prolong the war by continuing to send arms and give support to the reactionary Mojahedin. The 'new relation' between Thatcher and Gorbachev did not for one moment cause British imperialism to change its policy of calling for the defeat of the Afghanistan government. The Soviet Union continues to arm and finance the Afghan government.

The current Soviet leadership's theoretical view that it is possible to negotiate with imperialism and achieve a nuclear free world in no way corresponds to Thatcher's and US imperialism's unbending strategy to modernise Nato's nuclear armoury. Neither does it correspond to Nato's doctrine that nuclear weapons have maintained peace in Europe (and imperialism's domination over the oppressed nations) for 40 years.

Finally the vital test of the current Soviet foreign policy thinking is taking place in Southern Africa. Already in 1987 Soviet

speakers were preparing the ground for a change of Soviet policy. A leading Soviet theoretician Gleb Starushenko argued for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Southern Africa and advocated far reaching compromises - 'no broad nationalisation of capitalist property', comprehensive guarantees to the white minority - to make it easier for the white minority to abandon apartheid and reduce racial conflict. Another academic Dr Victor Goncharov said that the Soviet Union would like to see more 'flexibility' and 'objectivity' from the ANC and he castigated those who took the view that now is the time to struggle not just for national liberation but also socialism. He believed that socialism would not be achieved in South Africa for 100 years.

More recently, in March this year at a conference in Moscow on Southern Africa, the official Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesperson Gennady Gerasimov when asked about Soviet support for the armed struggle answered 'what armed struggle? . . . How can we support something which doesn't exist?' At the same conference Yuri Yukalov, head of the Foreign Ministry's Africa department, said: 'We don't emphasise the need to enhance the armed struggle' and after speaking of trade and other sanctions said that their policy 'does not mean that the South African regime should be talked to using the language of threats and by banging one's fist on the table.'

This view has become the dominant one although not without its critics. At the same conference Vasily Solodovnikov, who was Soviet ambassador to Zambia at the height of the Zimbabwean liberation war, compared the apartheid regime to the Nazis and said it had to be fought with arms. He called for the isolation of the apartheid regime and said talks between it and Soviet officials were unacceptable (reported in *The Guardian* 18 March 1989). As the Cuban Communist Party has stated it took the defeat of the South African army at Cuito Cuanavale to force them to negotiate over Namibia. At a recent Italian Communist Party Congress in Rome Jorge Risquet, head of the international department of the Cuban Communist Party, said 'the South Africans would never have negotiated without our military pressure.' The brutal murders of SWAPO fighters in Namibia confirm how dangerous it is to put any trust in agreements made with the South Africans.

Imperialism is determined to protect its interests in South Africa and that means supporting the white minority regime. Even after the recent negotiations to withdraw Cuban troops from Angola and the agreement on independence for Namibia, US imperialism continues to arm the UNITA bandits fighting to destroy the Angolan regime. Margaret Thatcher not only did not hesitate in condemning SWAPO for the recent fighting in Namibia but immediately approved the use of South African paramilitary police to butcher the SWAPO fighters.

Imperialism has not and cannot change its character. It has to be militaristic and predatory in order to survive. The victory of socialism and the survival of the human race requires the defeat of imperialism. ■

Elections in the Soviet Union

BOB SHEPPARD

The election results in the Soviet Union have underlined the problems facing the CPSU and Mikhail Gorbachev in their attempts to push forward with the policies of perestroika and glasnost. The promised benefits of these new policies have yet to become a reality for the mass of the people, and this disenchantment with the progress of perestroika was shown in the election results.

The 89 per cent vote for Boris Yeltsin in Moscow, against a candidate supported by the Moscow Communist Party leadership, is a reflection of a wider distrust of the capabilities and sincerity of the party bureaucracy. Out of 157 regional party leaders, 34 have failed to be elected. In Leningrad, Yuri Solovyov, the regional party secretary and alternate political bureau member failed to be elected. Standing unopposed he had his name crossed off the ballot paper by more than 130,000 people! With only 110,000 voting for him he failed to reach the 50% of votes needed for election.

The immediate lesson drawn by Gorbachev from the results at a meeting of media executives, is that the people support the party's policy of perestroika and want its implementation to be speeded up. It was no accident, he said, that in those areas where perestroika was moving faster, the people had given the party overwhelming support, but in those areas where the implementation of perestroika was being blocked or was slow, the people had shown by the way it



Boris Yeltsin casts his vote.

had voted that it was not prepared to put up with party leaders 'inattention, mismanagement and attempts to keep their bureaucratic offices as impregnable as castles.' Those candidates who were carrying out the policies of perestroika too slowly, and were not widening their links with the working people, were the ones that lost in the elections, he said.

The immediate problem facing Gorbachev is the crisis in agriculture. If the food problem isn't solved the entire perestroika programme could fail and

lead to serious destabilisation of society, Gorbachev warned at the same media meeting. The remedy to this dangerous problem, with its growing food shortages, is being put forward as what is termed lease-farming. This is nothing more nor less than a return to small-scale private farming with all the dangers inherent in that development.

The reliance of Gorbachev on market forces to boost the process and development of perestroika will give strength to those forces opposed to social-

ism. It will encourage that section of Soviet society which is dreaming of the restoration of capitalism so they can benefit at the expense of the vast majority. It will encourage the forces at work now, who are trying to break up the USSR by fomenting national unrest. The election victories for the so-called 'popular fronts' in the Baltic states on openly nationalist programmes show the growing dangers for the Soviet Union. Dangers which the encouragement of private landholding and market forces will only strengthen.

The election results show that the mass of the Soviet working class remain loyal to the CPSU but they distrust the motives of a section of the bureaucracy, and showed that in the way they voted. The calls by some sections within the USSR for a multi-party system is a dangerous expression of the small but significant growth of class forces opposed to socialism within the USSR. The fact that these calls were echoed by the major Trotskyist groups in Britain, exposed once again their middle class hostility to socialism. So-called multi-party democracy in Britain doesn't mean we have real democracy, socialism, for the working class. We have the two sides to the face of British imperialism, Thatcher and Kinlock, leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. As Gorbachev put it, 'democratisation is not defined by the number of parties but by what role the people play in society.'

The role of the working class in the USSR over the coming period will be crucial to the defence of socialism. ■

ROBERT CLOUGH

Historically, the cleanliness of the water supply and the effectiveness of sewage disposal have proved crucial factors for the health and longevity of the working class. Until the middle of the last century, both were in private hands, until the endemic nature of both cholera and typhoid, costing annually some 50,000 lives, forced successive governments to bring them into public control. Since such epidemics tended to pay little regard to class distinction once they had taken root, municipalisation of the sewage works first, and, towards the end of the century, of the water works, proved a popular platform of the Liberal Party. Even in 1903, shortly after the widespread takeover of the water supply, infant mortality in Britain stood at some 145 per 1,000, equivalent to rates in the oppressed countries of today; of these, 15% were solely attributable to water-borne disease, whilst a larger percentage were due to its combination with malnutrition.

Up to 1973, water and sewage was controlled by some 1,000 Water Boards, administering assets owned by local authorities. Re-organisation led to the establishment of 10 regional Water Authorities, who control 75% of the water supply, the remainder accounted for by 29 private statutory companies. These have since been subjected to tighter central control: in 1981 the Government placed severe limits on their borrowing capacity, instructing them to finance capital expenditure out of income. The immediate impact was a 10% increase in water bills; in the longer term, it severely impaired any chance of carrying out widespread renovation of Victorian water mains or sewers. In 1983 directly political restrictions were enforced: local authority representation on Water Authority boards was terminated, and they were allowed to hold their regular meetings in private.

We are now experiencing the consequences of the financial constraint: our filthy beaches, the rising level of river pollution, collapsing sewers, sewer rat epidemics, and the overall deterioration of water quality. Examples abound:

- In July last year 20,000 people in Cornwall were poisoned when a tanker dumped 20 tons of aluminium waste into the wrong sluice at Camelford sewage works. Many suffered fits of vomiting and mouth blisters; others had their hair turn green. Even more seriously, some are suffering from long-term memory disorders. In fact, higher concentrations of aluminium salts in drinking water are associated with a higher incidence of Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Some Water Authorities are using aluminium as a purification agent. At Camelford, having separate keys for each sluice and restricting their issue had been deemed too expensive since it would require someone on site. Hence there was one key to operate everything and the inevitable consequence followed. Of course, the immediate response of the Water Authority was to announce that the water was perfectly drinkable. Only five weeks later did the facts of what had happened emerge; under the 1983

THE POLITICS OF

water

The Tory Government's Water Bill is now approaching its final stages in the House of Commons. Although some of its environmental and public health implications are increasingly understood, the extent to which it is a vicious attack on the living conditions of the poor and oppressed can only be appreciated by a close study of its provisions.



Rats are now a common site in inner cities - the collapsing sewers have brought us a plague of rats

regulations, the Water Authority had been able to keep them under wraps.

- Collapsing sewers have led to an explosion in the surface sewer rat population. The Institution of Environmental Health Officers has stated that the rates now constitute a serious risk to health. This is backed up by an increase in the reported incidence of Weil's disease, a rat-borne infection which has killed several people in the London area.

- When the government was instructed in 1985 by the EC to report on the condition of British beaches, it used far less stringent standards than those demanded, to minimise the cost of any clean-up. Hence it 'found' only 27 to be sub-standard. Further pressure from the EC led to the 'discovery' of another 350, implying that a third of British beaches breach EC standards. This is hardly surprising; in Wales, for instance, 65% of all sewage outfalls have no treatment of any kind, turning the Bristol Channel into one huge open flush lavatory.

The Government hopes to reap some £6-7bn from the sale of the Water Authorities, which will be in the form of 25-year operating licences. To comply with standard EC regulations, the Government estimates that £300m will need to be spent cleaning up beaches, and £1bn to repair the sewers. However, since an internal estimate by the North West Water Authority is that it alone needs to spend £5bn over 25 years to bring just its sewers up to scratch, the Tory figures are just hopeless underestimates. In fact, the true costs of protecting and improving the quality of the water supply, given the long-term effect of pesticides and other modern agricultural pollution reaching the water table, are quite unknown.

The government has sought to allay fears within the City by engaging in a running battle with the EC over compliance

with regulations. Its main aim has been to get the EC to agree to relaxation of those standards to minimise the initial investment private operators will have to make. In this, the Government has the enthusiastic support of the capitalists who now populate the boards of the Water Authorities. Severn Water Authority, second largest in Britain, owns 683 sewage works, of which 90 are deemed to fail the Pollution Inspectorate standards, and another 160 deemed to be 'at risk'. For all of these, the authority is seeking time-limited relaxations, except for 39 for which it wants permanent termination of any control. The consequence of their operations is that the quality of Midland rivers has fallen for four years in succession. This is no exception. Last November, the DoE invited the Water Authorities to apply for such standards to be relaxed so that the new owners could escape criminal liability for pollution. One in five sewage works regularly breaks the laws governing river discharge. It is thought that 2,300 sewage works would be eligible for such relaxation. There are 6,400 in all.

However, the City will not buy the Water Authorities for the noble end of providing an essential service to the general population. No, what interests them is the very attractive portfolio of 500,000 acres of land that comes with the Authorities, some 1% of the British land surface. The Chairman of the Thames Water

Authority, largest and richest of the lot, is quite clear about what privatisation is about. Interviewed on TV, he stated that water and sewage would form only a minor part of the operations of the privatised companies, since their main concern would be in property development. Already, Thames was seeking to finalise deals worth some £100 million. The North West Water Authority, with major holdings in the Peaks and Lake Districts, is a very attractive proposition, with many highly lucrative possibilities in its prime holdings. It also has much land leased to farmers at peppercorn rent; these now face eviction so that the land they work can be turned to far more profitable uses, such as conifer afforestation or grouse shooting.

But what makes this all the more attractive is the control these companies will have over planning applications. A vital element of any such application anywhere at present is Water Authority advice on water and sewage supply. This role will be passed to the new companies. Hence they will be able to favour their own or their shareholders' plans at the expense of any competition - and it will all be legal!

The financial burden for the working class will be considerable. Arthur Collins & Co, a company of financial advisers on water matters, estimate that the immediate extra cost will be £843m, or over 25%, mostly made up by £400m in dividends, and £350m in corporation tax.

No in Household	Average Water Consumption (cu metres)	RV-Based Billing			Test Tariff
		RV £33	RV £125	RV £225	
1	50	38.59	97.12	165.12	36.00
2	90	38.59	97.12	165.12	66.40
3	140	38.59	97.12	165.12	117.96
4	150	38.59	97.12	165.12	130.08
5	170	38.59	97.12	165.12	154.32
6	180	38.59	97.12	165.12	166.44

Assumptions for deriving Test Tariff: Standing Charge £36; first 50 cu metres water free, 51-110 cu metres at 76p/cu metre, thereafter at £1.21 per cu metre. All costings based on those currently in force in Yorkshire Water Authority.

This will of course be passed straight to the consumer. Currently, the water bill for a household is tied to its rateable value: the poorer the area, the lower the rateable value and hence the water bill. Post-privatisation, the bill will be linked to consumption, either estimated according to the number living in the household, or directly metered. In other words, it will be exactly as the poll tax is to the rates. The implications of this have been revealed during the course of a metering study in Wakefield, which showed how the poor or those in large or extended families, would be penalised (see table).

This is what the current rates applied by one Authority mean to working class families. It of course excludes the 25% extra that will anyway be a result of privatisation. It also excludes the sums needed to be raised to comply with EC standards, which this year caused the 29 private water companies to raise their rates by an average of 22%.

If metering is introduced on a widespread basis, costs will rise even further. It will not just be a consequence of having to install, maintain and read meters, but also then deciding how the 25% loss of water through mains leakage will be paid for. Metering brings with it its own traumas, of self-imposed 'water starvation', where the old, as they do with electricity and gas, under-use it to save money. They would be forced to cut back on essential hygiene, either bodily or household, or in food preparation or in any laundering. The health risks are obvious, particularly when one remembers that incontinence is a common affliction in the aged. Not that the effects would be confined to the old: those with dirty jobs, overwhelmingly the poor, would also be subjected to the same trials, especially if they had a family.

Whether metering is introduced or not, the financial burden will remain the same. All the more so since the April 1988 Social Security changes abolished any provision for meeting the cost of the water rates. It is quite likely that direct water deductions will be introduced alongside those for gas and electricity, to minimise the numbers being disconnected with the attendant adverse publicity. Slow, grinding mental and physical deterioration is politically a far more preferable lot for the poor as far as the government is concerned than anything dramatic and newsworthy. A family on social security or low wages can therefore look forward to a lifetime of direct deductions - for gas, electricity, water, Poll Tax, social fund loans and the rest. If it then finds enough to buy food with, why, that will be just a bonus.

In short, the Water Bill is as awful a prospect for the working class as the Poll Tax; in fact, it is 'worse', since the Poll Tax at least can't lead to physical poisoning or environmental destruction. There has been talk of the government making concessions, such as the establishment of a National River Authority (only to comply in form with the EC) or introducing environmental safeguards (always couched in the loosest of formulations), or maybe selling only a 51% stake. What it will not concede is fundamental: that in today's deepening crisis, it is the poor who will pay. ■

News comment

Scandals

- The release of *Scandal*, the film about the late 1950s 'Profumo Affair' made a few establishment skeletons rattle with fear that the publicity might lead to more revelations about the sexual peccadilloes of the ruling class. While the film turns on the issue of Profumo's and Ward's relative 'guilt' - the real story of MI5 involvement, let alone the 'headless waiter' et al, is barely touched on. Nevertheless someone ensured the film makers were unable to tell the story on BBC, ITV and Channel 4 as originally planned.

- While the film plays to full houses, more contemporary scandals are filling newspaper columns - as opposed to news, that is. Pamela Bordes (the double 'l' is probably important) claims to be able to bring down the government if pushed (if only it were true!). Her claim was a timely evocation of Mandy Rice Davies' threat to render a similar service if she was forced to spend another night in Holloway - she was released. The Bordes scandal first emerged when she was issued with a Research Assistant's pass for the House of Commons, sponsored by a variety of Tory MPs. Apart from an unspecified number of backbenchers (mod cons at her Westminster flat reputedly include a Division Bell), Pamela has also been escorted to Sports Minister Colin Moynihan, Donald Treford, editor of the *Observer* and Andrew Neil, editor of the *Sunday Times*. Treford was especially cross that while his own involvement with Bordes was given 'Dirty Don' treatment by the *Sun*, Murdoch-editor Neil escaped attention. 'Is the media biased?' he asked. The plot thickened like pea soup when it was 'revealed' that Pamela (apparently tireless) also consorted with Colonel Gaddafi's cousin, reminding us all Keeler's real crime was that she slept with a Russian. *Private Eye*, however, issued a timely reminder that last year they reported the end of the Bordes/Neil affair when Pamela, they say, cut the armpits and crotches out of Neil's wardrobe - she's human after all!



Bordes - human after all

- Talking of old scandals, (Sir) Leon Brittan, who was paid off for services to the PM when he was appointed European Commissioner on a fat salary, decided finally to speak some of the truth about the Westland take-over by Sikorsky. Yes, Bernard Ingham and Charles Powell, Thatcher's closest advisers, did authorise the leak of the Secretary General's letter which led to the resignation of Heseltine. Three years too late, Mrs Thatcher can easily ride the ripple that the press and the Labour Opposition mistake for a storm.

- Thanks to a Manchester comrade for some real news. Gloucester police embarked on a car chase, ran over a pedestrian's foot and then smashed into the stolen car they were pursuing, accidentally wrecking it. All par for the course, you say. The hapless police duo then released their dogs to pursue the thief. Deciding to chase the real criminals, the dogs did a U turn and savaged their owners, who were forced to abandon their duties, in favour of hospital treatment. Well done, Rover.

No confidence in the British economy

DAVID REED

The Budget was not a momentous event. The parliamentary correspondent of *The Guardian* admitted that he nodded off during Lawson's budget speech and missed nothing. The City called the budget 'cautious' and 'prudent'. Shares rose and sterling advanced. There was relief that at least for the time being Lawson had been prevented from inflicting any further serious damage on the British economy.

Lawson, as we argued last month, had little room for manoeuvre. It was the small shopkeeper mentality which prevailed. With little political or economic purpose, we were informed that the £14bn budget surplus is to be used up repaying part of the national debt – the largest repayment ever. It will not be spent either on a new round of tax cuts or on increased public spending on Britain's crumbling infrastructure of roads, railways, sewers, houses, schools, and hospitals. Month after month of appalling trade figures, and the desperate need to slow down the consumer boom he fuelled with last year's mass-

ive tax cuts for the well off, had seen to that. So Lawson fell back on the well tried and tested tack of fighting the 'disease' of inflation – and monetary policy is his only cure.

The £1.9bn of net cuts in tax and national insurance contributions for 1989-90 were well below expectations and were of little significance to the low paid. Income tax allowances only increased with inflation. In the case of national insurance contributions a new measure was introduced aimed, so we were told, at removing low paid workers from the 'poverty trap':

a two per cent rate on the first £43 a week earnings and 9 per cent on remaining earnings up to £325 a week.

As always it is the low paid who benefit least. The 15 million people earning more than £115 a week will save £3.01 a week. The four million who earn below this but above £43, will save between £1.01 and £1.51 a week. In fact once all tax cuts and benefit changes are taken into account a study by the London School of Economics shows that fewer than one in five low-paid workers will be removed from the 'poverty trap'. The with-

drawal of state benefits as income rises means that the poorest fifth of the population gains a negligible amount (between 0.3 and 0.6 per cent) and some 635,000 people will continue to lose 70 per cent of every extra £1 they earn. The Low Pay Unit has estimated that income tax allowances would have had to increase by 16 per cent to compensate for the increase in the burden of taxation on the lower paid since 1979.

The new measure will only be introduced in October to stave off any increase in demand and therefore any increase in inflation during the summer months. The fear of fuelling inflation any further is so great that the government broke with normal budget practice and did not increase the taxes on alcohol and tobacco in line with price rises.

There were some measures to help the well off improve their finances and their health. The amount of investment available for tax concessions in personal equity schemes has been raised from £3000 to £4800. Well off pensioners will be even better off with certain changes in pension regulations and tax relief will be given to pensioners taking out private health insurance.

It was just over a week after budget day that it became clear

what Lawson was so worried about. The annual rate of inflation for February was announced. It reached 7.8 per cent and was the highest rate since August 1982. In March it rose to 7.9 per cent and it will rise further as a series of price rises are imposed which include an expected 10 per cent rise in local authority rates and an estimated 11 per cent increase in water authority charges. Inflation will go well over 8 per cent and another plank of the Tory government policy will be in tatters.

A week after this bad news the February trade figures were announced. The trade deficit was the third largest on record at £2.2bn and the current account deficit was £1.7bn. Ominously for the first time since May 1980 there was a deficit on the oil trade of £18m. With the current account deficit running at an annual rate of £20bn, already well above the Treasury's Budget forecast, it cannot be long before there is a new increase in interest rates or a major run on the pound.

The government maintains that there is no need to worry about the large current account deficit as foreigners have confidence in the underlying strength of the British economy and are prepared to finance the

deficit. This is nonsense. The money coming into Britain is mainly 'hot money' seeking high rates of interest. It will disappear as soon as speculators believe that the government is no longer able to defend the present value of the pound. The government knows this and the Bank of England has been massively intervening in the currency markets to prop up the pound. This is shown by the \$1,23bn fall in Britain's gold and currency reserves in March, the biggest fall for more than ten years.

It is not only foreigners who have little confidence in the British economy – neither do British capitalists. UK companies spent four times as much on cross border takeovers last year as their counterparts in any other country. They spent \$44.53bn (£25.92bn) on 884 international acquisitions in 1988. For every £3 invested in Britain in fixed assets UK companies invested £1 overseas. As a proportion of total investment that is higher than any of the other large spending countries. The ratio for France is 15.8 to 1; in the US 76.5 to 1 and in Japan 78.8 to 1. With high interest rates throwing the so-called revival of British manufacturing investment into reverse – it has still not reached the 1979 peak – the situation can only get worse.

Actions speak louder than words. Neither British capitalists nor foreign ones have confidence in the British economy. It is only a matter of time before this harsh reality is driven home. ■



Phew... what a stink! Lawson and his box of tricks

Diaries of the young homeless

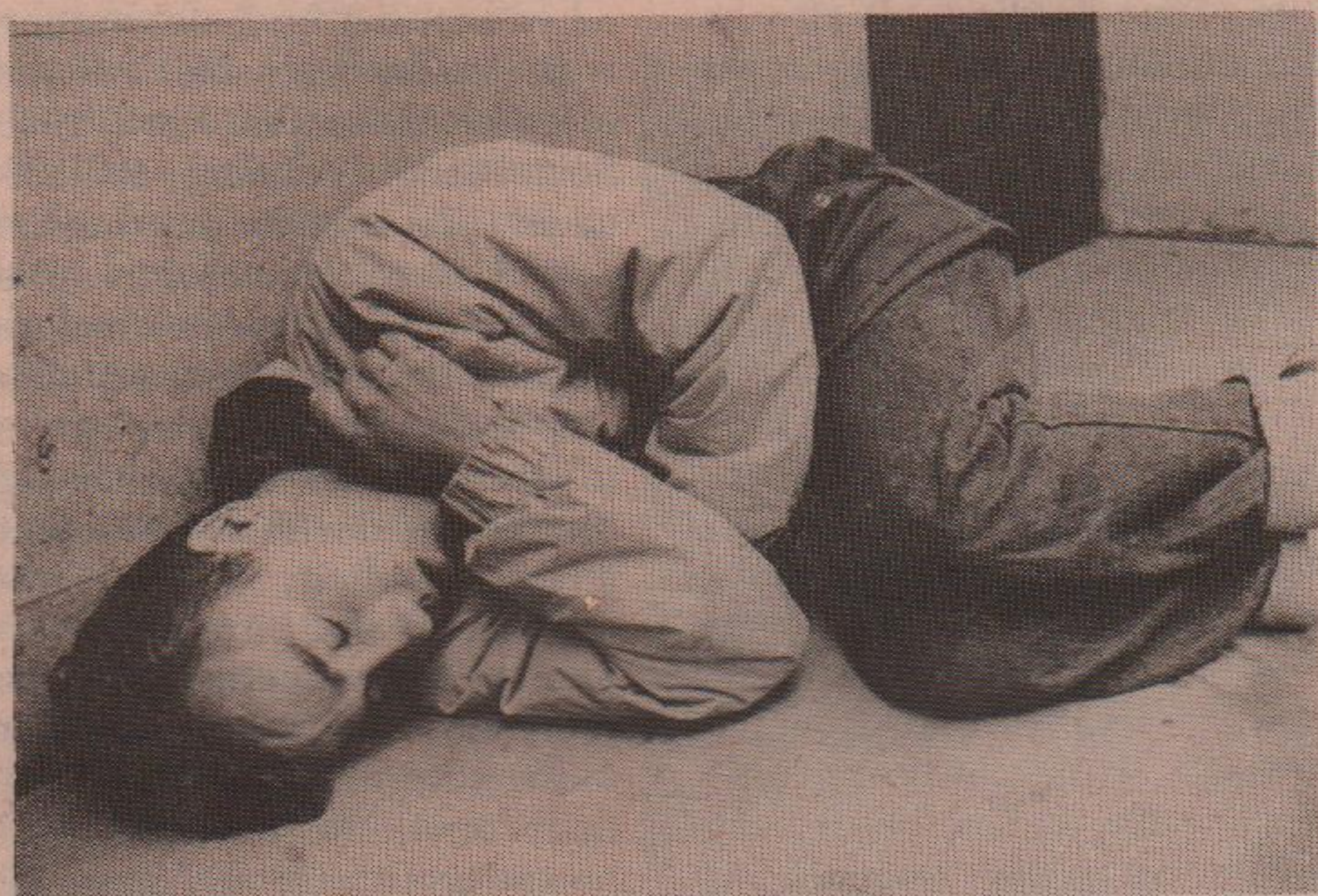
ZOE GOODMAN

On 29 March Shelter, the national campaign for the homeless, published a report on young homeless people, based on diaries describing their day by day experiences. Shelter was criticised for being politically motivated following an article appearing in the *Sunday Times* describing some of the diary extracts as 'completed hurriedly' and 'obviously concocted'. It was even attacked for offering £5 for completed diaries.

This is the ruling class's response to the plight of the 150,000 people aged between 16 and 19 who experience homelessness each year. None of these were included in the 122,730 accepted as homeless by local authorities in England last year. The social affairs correspondent of the *Sunday Times* refused to believe diary entries such as:

'F--- Maggie Thatcher and her system. I can't claim so I have to beg in the station instead... YTS slave labour... What do the government think we live on – fresh air? I am a human being, if only they knew that.'

In Thatcher's era of Victorian values, young people are blamed for their own homelessness, and told to return to their parents. This is not an option for many young people: those who leave local authority care every



Young and homeless in Britain means sleeping in shop doorways

year and have no parents to go back to; lesbians and gay men who are forced to leave when they disclose their sexuality; victims of physical or sexual abuse; those whose parents have separated and have new partners who are unwilling to support them; and those whose parents are unable to support them. As the report says:

'The real problem is not that young people leave their parents' homes, but that there is nowhere for them to go when they do.'

'They face an endless round of moving from hostel to squat, from bed and breakfast hotel to a friend's room, and from one park to another, dependent on begging, charity and crime for support, and vulnerable to the dangers of drink, drug abuse and prostitution, unable to find

work because they do not have a permanent home, and unable to find a home because they are unemployed.'

Britain has the fastest-growing youth homelessness problem in Western Europe – caused by new government housing and social security legislation.

- Young people have had their benefit payments cut so they receive less money than older people – over 25s get £33.40 Income Support a week, 18-25 year-olds get £26.05 and under 18s £19.40.

- Benefits are now paid in arrears – keeping claimants in constant debt.

- 16 and 17 year olds are forced to join YTS schemes to get any benefit payments, which many young homeless are unable to do and others who have registered

are still waiting for a place.

- Hostels are being forced to put limits on how long young homeless people can stay and to turn many away. Hostel bed-spaces in London alone have reduced from 14,000 in 1981 to 3,500 in 1987.

- Grants to move into bed and breakfast accommodation can no longer be paid. Discretionary loans are usually refused. Rent payments are now paid in arrears.

- Young homeless people have no money for advance rent payments, furniture and deposits for permanent accommodation.

On 10 April 1989, young homeless people living in bed and breakfast hotels will no longer be able to claim extra Income Support to pay for their accommodation. They will have to claim housing benefit to pay for the rental element of their charges. The charges for meals, fuel, cleaning, laundry and running costs will have to be met from Income Support. Most young homeless people will be unable to afford this and will once again be thrown out onto the streets. As a 20-year-old woman wrote in her diary:

'I wonder if people like the Prime Minister have ever been hungry, without a roof over their heads, or disowned by their parents like us homeless people have been. I doubt it. They don't know what it's like to live on £38 a week when they've got everything.' ■

VIRAJ MENDIS DEFENCE CAMPAIGN



Sonia Hughes – targeted by the police

Police frame-up fails

On Tuesday 21 March, Manchester magistrates court dismissed all charges against leading VMDC activists Sonia and Adrian. Arrested on 29 October 1988, while waiting for a bus, they were charged with four counts of police assault, three of police obstruction and an additional offence under the Public Order Law.

The police case was outrageous from beginning to end. They claimed that while arresting Adrian and Sonia, Adrian punched his arresting officer 'full in the face' and then kicked Inspector Harper 'continually in the lower thigh and abdomen'. Sonia then allegedly intervened to free Adrian by grabbing a police woman round the throat and pulling her back by her hair. She then turned on the Inspector head-butting, spitting at and

punching him, before returning to elbow the WPC in the head.

Since Viraj was deported, the Manchester police have been determined to criminalise leading VMDC activists. They failed. They failed because the campaign organised against their frame-up: they produced petitions, organised marches to the court, picketed the court hearings and packed the public gallery.

Sonia and Adrian were thus saved from a prison sentence. However, Sonia, a black comrade, has been especially targeted by the police. In March she was convicted on another assault charge and sentenced to 28 days in prison. She is out on bail pending her appeal. She needs your support.

Send messages of solidarity and donations to VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Manchester M15. ■

Sri Lanka – Liberation Tigers fight on

TREVOR RAYNE

Sri Lankan President Premadasa's week-long ceasefire, timed to coincide with the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year celebrations on 12 April, was only hours old when Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas ambushed an Indian Army convoy killing thirteen soldiers. Later, reports were broadcast around the world that a car bomb had killed over 40 people in Trincomalee: automatically the Sri Lankan government and Indian Army blamed the LTTE. The Tigers denied responsibility. Then on 14 April the LTTE ambushed and killed 21 Sri Lankan soldiers. In the space of three weeks from the end of March the LTTE killed over 60 Indian and Sri Lankan military personnel.

The heavy casualties inflicted on government forces by the LTTE in Tamil Eelam and the JVP in the south forced Premadasa to reconsider his tactics.

Premadasa's ceasefire was on-



ly the opening move in an astonishing turnaround. The LTTE had rejected the ceasefire and instead invited the Government to negotiate. Premadasa refused. The LTTE resumed its vastly effective military attacks forcing the President to recognise that, despite the presence of Indian troops, the LTTE could not be militarily defeated. Premadasa was forced to agree to unconditional negotiations, hoping to win through discussion what he

failed to obtain on the battlefield. He also hopes that by reaching agreement with the LTTE he can reduce the number of Indian troops in Sri Lanka and thereby pull the rug from under the feet of the JVP in the south.

In preparing for the negotiations, the LTTE has made it clear that it will not surrender its arms and that negotiations between it and the Sri Lankan government will have no pre-conditions.

Pressure on Premadasa to ne-

gotiate with the LTTE has been mounting for a considerable period. In the 15 February parliamentary elections an independent group associated with the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS) won eight out of eleven seats in Jaffna to become the third largest parliamentary grouping. EROS has close ties with LTTE, and its members ran on a platform of opposition to the 'opportunistic' TULF. Its success is seen as an indication of popular support for the Tigers who boycotted the elections. The new MPs are refusing to take their seats, and demand that the Indian Army declare a ceasefire and negotiate with the LTTE.

The JVP in the south also rejected the ceasefire. Over 700 JVP suspects were rounded up in the first three months of the year. On 20 March three Sri Lankan police were ambushed and killed. Hours later the bodies of seventeen 'suspected subversives' were discovered in the vicinity. Local Sinhalese said they were innocent civilians. The murders were claimed

by the 'Black Cats': a police and military death squad. Whole villages have been rounded up in the government's counter-insurgency strategy: in just 2 days in March 106 Sinhalese were reported killed, the public facade of this strategy of ceasefire declarations. In April Defence Minister Wijeratne announced that changes in the Prevention of Terrorism Act would allow him to detain any person who is a 'danger to national security' for 18 months in 'any place' determined by him. The detention can then be indefinitely extended, three months at a time. The death penalty is to be extended from crimes against 'specified persons' (MPs, judges, etc) to 'any persons'. Strikes will be redefined as 'subversive acts', the press, leaflets and posters will all be subjected to harsher laws. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* demands an end to all British economic and military aid to the Sri Lankan government, an end to the Indian Army occupation, and victory to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

News Notes

GEORGIA/USSR

Reports indicate that on 9 April up to 30 people were killed in Tbilisi, capital of Soviet Georgia, following clashes between nationalist demonstrators and soldiers. As in other Soviet Republics petit-bourgeois nationalists in Georgia too are exploiting *glasnost* for their own reactionary ends. These nationalists have opposed socialist and Soviet power since 1917. While demanding Georgian independence from socialist USSR, they actively oppose the right of the Abkhazian minority in Georgia to form their own republic. The nationalist leadership yearns for a return to the days of bourgeois rule in Georgia and openly calls for the elimination of the Georgian Communist Party.

Unfortunately the Georgian communist leadership appears at the moment incapable of defeating the nationalists through ideological and political combat. In this context, the use of even legitimate force against reactionaries will only incite the latter to greater outrages.

GOVERNMENT ATTACKS DOCKERS

The Government has long wanted to scrap the National Dock Labour Scheme but has chosen to do so now for particular reasons. They hope that a strike will draw attention away from the growing economic crisis and boost Tory fortunes in the May elections. Britain's 9000 registered dockers are determined to defend rights gained over past years of struggle. But the Labour Party has distanced itself from them knowing that any strike will be deemed 'political' and attacked with full government force. The trade union leaders too are terrified of a large-scale confrontation with Thatcher. Ron Todd is making efforts to avert a strike by negotiating with the port employers. Although the British left is saying 'The Dockers Can Win' they seem to be ignoring the reality of a labour movement weakened by political opportunism and whose muscles have atrophied through disuse.

LOW PAY IN-ACTION

The average weekly earnings in Britain are £254. But in Scotland there are 950,000 workers earning less than the European 'decency threshold' of £3.80 an hour. There are 100,000 more low paid workers than in 1980 and 600,000 women workers are low paid, on the European definition.

BANG TO RIGHTS

At last the Thatcher-machine is directing its attention to the law and the judges are getting hot under the wig. Judges threatened a meeting in court-time to discuss the threat to barristers' monopoly but the Labour Party fired a volley of accusations of uncharacteristic vehemence that this was an illegal strike and would interfere with the course of justice. Unused to being described as law-breaking Bolsheviks the judges quickly backed down.

3rd world debt – desperation mixed with expectation

VIRMAN MAN

The announcement by US Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady on 10 March of a new 'plan' to resolve the Third World debt crisis received little enthusiasm from creditor and debtor nations alike.

Out of a total Third World debt of \$1,200bn, \$450bn is owed by Latin American countries, five of whom hold elections this year. Popular unrest in Venezuela in February showed deep resentment to austerity measures imposed to deal with the country's debt. Argentina's Economy and Treasury Ministers have now resigned – less than six weeks before the elections on 14 May. It was therefore vital to imperialist interests, and particularly to the US, to produce a well thought-out strategy. Nothing of the sort emerged, prompting one leading British banker to remark that 'no one is

over the moon about this'.

Brady emphasises debt reduction rather than new loans. Chiefly, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank are to prop-up the commercial banks in writing-off some of their presently insecure loans in exchange for smaller and safer amounts. A closer look, however, reveals that Brady's formulation lacks substance.

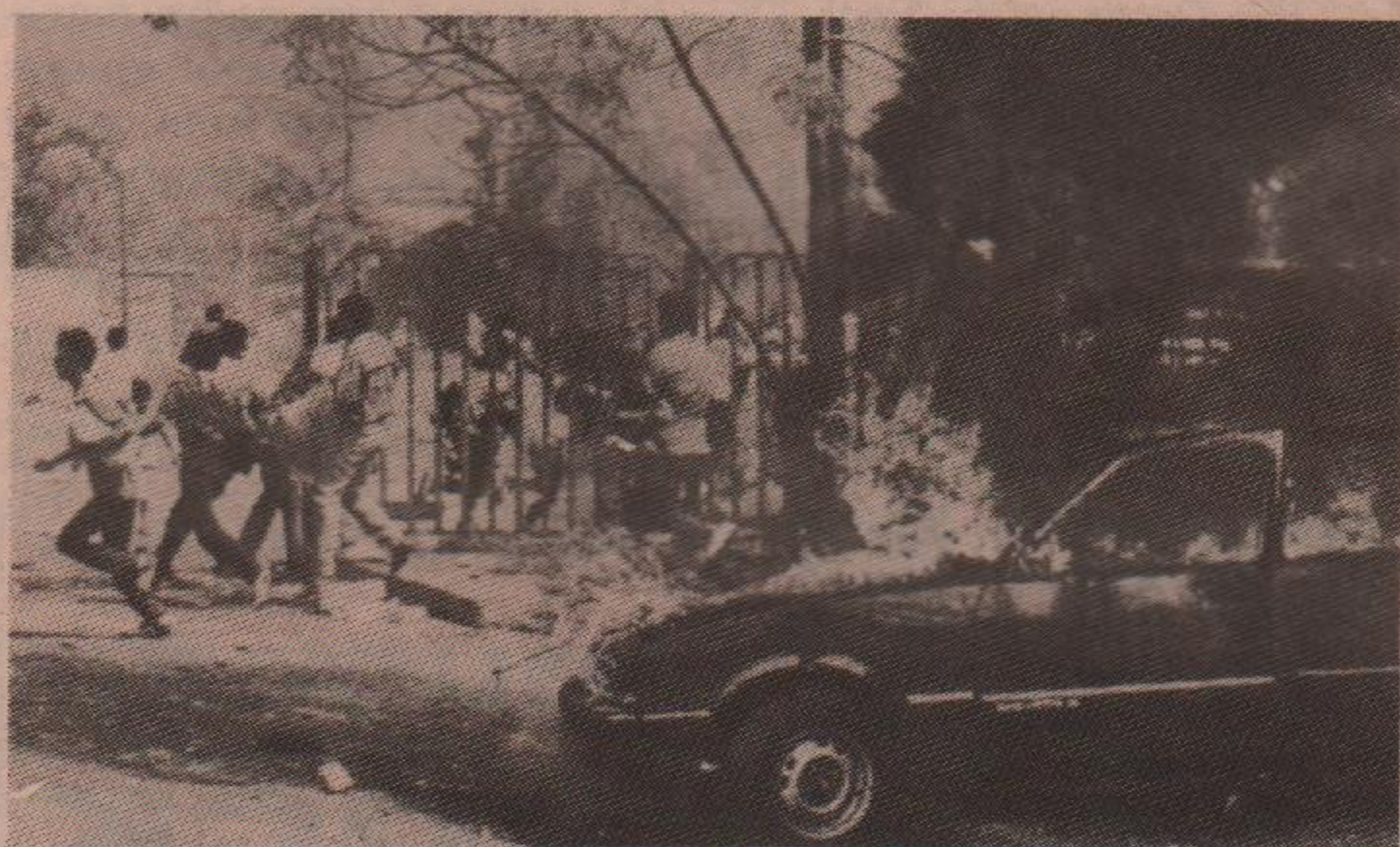
Even if Brady's projections are believed, only \$70bn of the total debt could be waived over the next three years – a mere drop in the ocean. Contributions by creditor governments to the IMF and World Bank would need to increase by 50 per cent to achieve even this. Each dollar of debt reduction would in any case bring just 10 cents of relief on interest payments – the main cause of the crisis. The commercial banks are unlikely to surrender claims to outstanding debt without a definite profitable return, and fear that a general waiver would lead to a

free-for-all among banks trying to get the best possible deal.

The Group of Seven, the main industrialised countries, meeting in Washington on 2 April indicated a strong opposition to the transfer of debt from the commercial banks to the public sector and to the multilateral institutions. Nobody, it seems, is prepared to back Brady with hard cash.

Brady ignores the flight of capital (private citizens in Venezuela hold \$30bn offshore, equivalent to about 90 per cent of the national debt) and optimistically presumes that commercial banks will agree new loans with the debtor nations. Loans will not be made without World Bank-type structural economic adjustment programmes to encourage private investment and reduce state intervention. The prospects for the poor are more austerity and greater suffering.

So vague and unstructured were Brady's proposals that it



In Venezuela the masses protested against IMF-imposed austerity

took four days for the White House to give its far-from-rapturous approval, given the budget deficit of the US – \$32bn in the last quarter alone of 1988. Last November and December a record \$15bn net was withdrawn from US savings and loans institutions – American banks may not easily withstand any default by debtors.

Eight Latin American nations, signatories to the Rio de Janeiro

agreement in December, declared that they will continue their own plan – debt reduction without conditions as well as guaranteed new financing. They will confront EC finance ministers in Granada on 14 April. 'If I were a Brazilian, I wouldn't pay' – said the deputy president of the Industrial Bank of Japan. The oppressed people, not the imperialists, will decide the outcome of the debt problem.

Yugoslavia – Serbs threaten federation

VIRMAN MAN

At least 29 people were killed, scores injured and hundreds arrested during six days of repression at the end of March as special police and army units confronted ethnic Albanian demonstrators protesting at constitutional changes which abolished any remaining vestiges of self-rule for the province of Kosovo.

At Pristina, Kosovo's capital, university students were beaten with batons when police charged into them. Urosevac, with a population of 50,000 was the scene of a 20,000-strong demonstration which was met by tear-gas and stun grenades as protesters overturned cars and

erected barricades to prevent entry by armoured vehicles. Women and children planning to march on Pristina were dispersed by riot police. Urosevac was subsequently sealed off from foreign journalists and a curfew imposed on the whole of Kosovo. Meetings in public of more than three people have been banned, and the schools and universities have been closed.

The imposition of an undemocratic constitution on Kosovo – the poorest part of Yugoslavia, where ethnic Albanians comprise 90% of the population – was the outcome of months of anti-Albanian chauvinism whipped up by Slobodan Milosevic, leader of the neighbouring and larger republic of Serbia. Milosevic's aim is, by evoking the

legend of a once-powerful Serbia, to extend Serbian influence over the whole of the Yugoslav federation and the construction of a bureaucratic leadership under a single dictator.

The 1974 constitution established by President Tito which guaranteed political, educational and cultural rights for Kosovo has been overridden, and complete control of Kosovo's police, judiciary and civil defence now rests completely with Serbia. Whilst the people of Kosovo buried their dead, Serbian reactionaries danced in the streets and put on fireworks displays to celebrate their victory.

The constitutional changes represent not only a defeat for democracy in Kosovo, but also a defeat for socialism in Yugo-

slavia as a whole. Following the overthrow by carefully-orchestrated popular action of the governments of the Vojvodina province last October and of the Montenegrin republic in January, the authority of the central government and the League of Communists have been severely undermined. Serbia now acts as a law unto itself, with Milosevic sympathisers installed in Vojvodina and Montenegro. The federal unity of Yugoslavia, based upon equality for the nationalities, is threatened by the abandonment of class politics for national consolidation heralded by Milosevic's accession to unbridled power in Serbia.

The strength of feeling in Kosovo had been demonstrated in February when 1,300 zinc

and lead miners began a hunger strike and an underground occupation of their pits at Trepca. Kosovo was brought to a standstill as a general strike took hold – only the electricians were frog-marched back to work. School students went on strike or staged silent protests. The hunger strike came to an end after eight days with nearly 200 hospitalised when three pro-Serbian officials were compelled to resign.

Despite the level of repression, the continuing resistance by the Albanian working class in Kosovo demonstrated that the new constitution can only be upheld by force. If Yugoslavia is to survive, Serbian hegemony will have to be supplanted by a return to socialist politics.

News

Gibraltar: new evidence of terror

MAXINE WILLIAMS

Over a year after the murder of the Gibraltar 3 and just when the government hoped that the issue was forgotten, further revelations from Spain have again exposed Britain's lies at the inquest.

Central to the British case for shooting the three was the story that surveillance on them by Spanish police had failed and that they had been lost in Malaga and not seen again until they parked their car in Gibraltar itself. This was a crucial lie because had it been proved that Spanish police tailed the three to the border then the whole British case for shooting the three – that the British did not know they were coming and did not know that they were unarmed and minus a bomb – would have collapsed like a pack of cards. Thatcher and Co. went to considerable lengths to bolster this fabrication and it is thought that these efforts included pressurising the Spanish government to prevent Spanish police appearing at the inquest.

It has been an open secret since the murders that Spanish police had the three under continuous surveillance up to the border on the day they were killed. Spanish officials have repeatedly unofficially confirmed this to journalists and Spanish police re-enacted the surveil-

ance operation for the programme *Death on the Rock*.

Now however Spain has honoured twenty two of the officers involved in the surveillance operation, hardly something they would have done if they had bungled the operation by losing the three. Moreover senior Spanish police sources have stated that that three were followed to the border, that the British were informed of their movements and told that they had no arms or explosives with them. Miguel Martin, President of the Spanish Policemen's Union said:

'When the IRA crossed into Gibraltar, the Spanish police were able to tell the British who they were, when they had entered the Rock and what their target was.'

He went on to say:

'It's too risky for me to say whether or not I think that the SAS executed the IRA or not. But there's no doubt that the Spanish police would have liked it to end differently.'

There have been two further blows to the government cover-up. The *Death on the Rock* TV programme, target of sustained government attack for raising awkward questions, has won a British Academy of Film and Television Arts Award and an award from the Broadcasting Press Guild. The programme has

now been vindicated both by ex-Tory Minister Lord Windlesham's inquiry and by its media peers. But the government has refused to answer its pointed questions with anything other than abuse. Additionally, on 6 April the National Council for Civil Liberties, in its report into the Gibraltar killings, concluded that the inquest was 'flawed' and called for a full judicial inquiry.

Murder will out. Despite strenuous government efforts to prevent the truth emerging it is slowly trickling out. Unfortunately it will take more than a few leaks to force this issue into the open. It will take serious and sustained pressure from large sections of British public opinion. Even in the Spanish parliament members are putting awkward questions and are being supported by national newspapers. Here in Britain, however, all is silence. Yet it remains the case that if sufficient pressure were built up, the murders of Mairead Farrell, Danny McCann and Sean Savage, could be the Rock on which Thatcher is wrecked. The British left and progressive movement, which at present appears impotent on every front, could do worse than to concentrate its efforts on this issue. The British government should be made to face justice for its murderous actions. ■

MURDER ON THE ROCK

HOW THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT GOT AWAY WITH MURDER
BY MAXINE WILLIAMS

An in-depth FRFI investigation, the first by the left, into the Gibraltar murders will be published in May. It shows that the Gibraltar Three were the victims of a deliberate shoot-to-kill operation masterminded by the British government.

Essential reading for all people who are interested in the Irish struggle and who oppose the systematic attack on democratic rights in Ireland and Britain.

Special offer Advance Order price – £1.95. Any order received before 17 May will get the pamphlet at a reduced price of £1.95. Orders for 10 copies – £15.

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PUBLIC MEETING
TO LAUNCH

MURDER ON THE ROCK

HOW THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT GOT AWAY WITH MURDER

THURSDAY
18 MAY 7.30PM

SPEAKERS

MAXINE WILLIAMS
(author of the pamphlet)

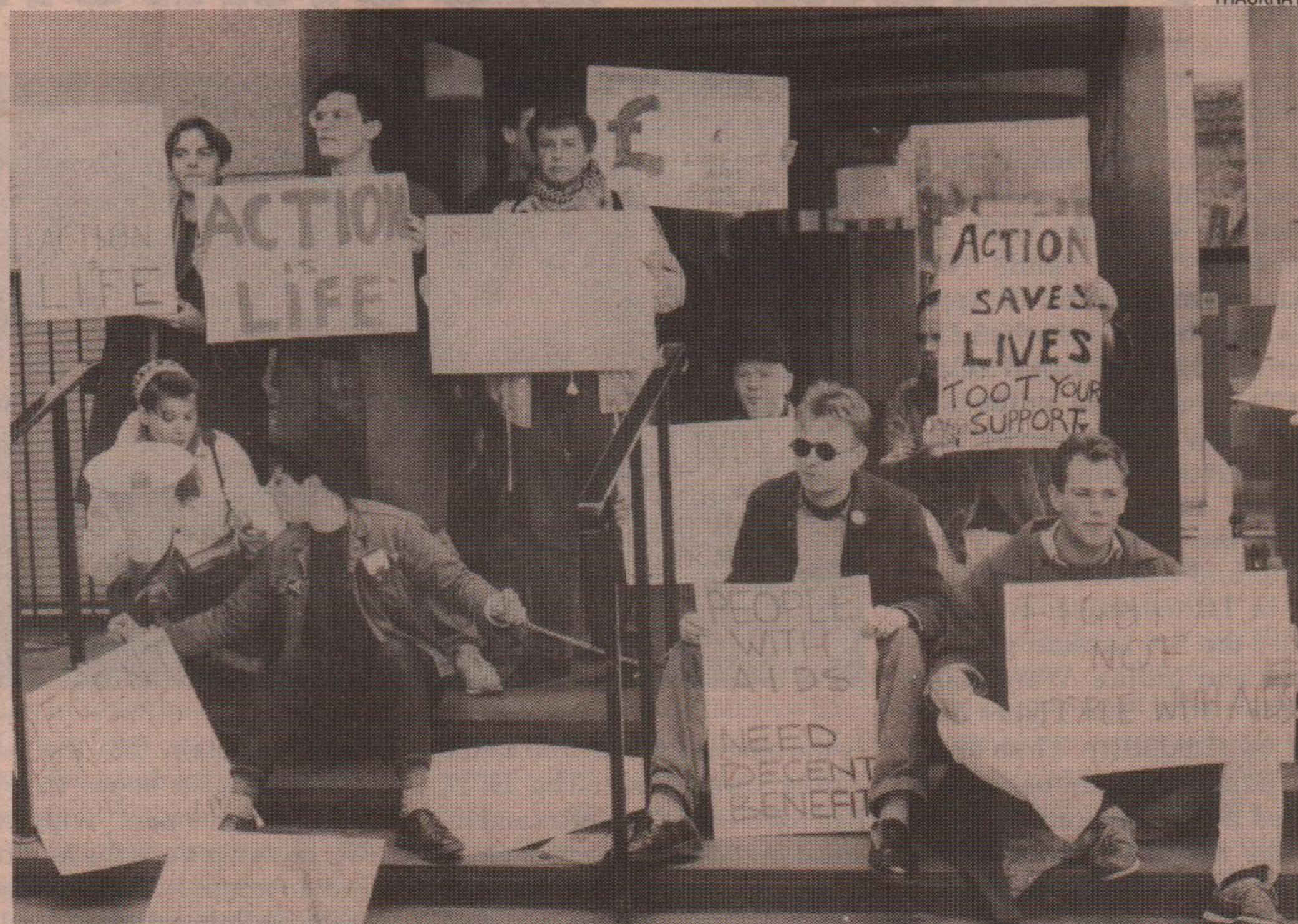
MICHAEL MANSFIELD
(barrister)

DAVID REED
(editor of Fight Racism!
Fight Imperialism!)

FRIENDS MEETING
HOUSE
ST MARTINS LANE
LONDON WC2

Action saves lives

THACKRAY



On Wednesday 12 April at 9am a hundred-strong crack-squad from ACT-UP picketed the DSS head office in the Elephant and Castle in protest at drastic cuts in benefits for people living with AIDS. Jimi Somerville was amongst a group that blocked off traffic on the main roundabout for about 20 minutes causing massive tailbacks. Police broke up this direct action eventually, with no arrests as they refused to touch any demonstrators, so we handcuffed ourselves to the main entrance of the building. Actions will grow and intensify as more and more people lose their fear of arrest. More news as it's made. (See letters p15)

Loyalist sectarian murders

Alongside this terror has gone continued loyalist sectarian murder. On 10 March a loyalist death squad attacked a public house in West Belfast, killing Jim McCartney and seriously wounding another man. On 17 March 42-year-old civil servant, Niall Davis was shot dead in front of his wife and child. On 19 March 63-year-old David Braniff was shot to death as he prayed in his home. The gunmen fired more than 40 bullets. In the following four days there were three more attempted murders. In one of them, the brother-in-law of recently murdered Sinn Fein councillor John Davey, narrowly escaped death when a booby-trap device exploded on his farm.

Sinn Fein councillor Gerard McGuigan said that the killings were 'part of a campaign of genocide against nationalists in this area. It is deliberately misleading and dishonest to describe the killings of innocent Catholics as tit-for-tat retaliation. There is no correlation between IRA operations and the sectarian terror campaign being waged by pro-British forces'.



David Braniff

He was clearly referring to the way in which the British government and RUC have responded to recent IRA operations against known loyalist paramilitaries. On 7 March the IRA shot and killed a local UVF commander in Coagh. They were also after two UDR men also involved in sectarian UVF attacks. However during the attack the two UDR men dived for cover and two civilians were killed. Tom King called the Coagh killings an 'atrocious' and used the killings to appeal to both nationalist and loyalist communities to help to

find the 'sectarian killers'. This is as great a piece of cynicism as could be found. Random assassination of Catholics is a strategy for the loyalist organisations. It is a strategy that is claiming Catholic lives virtually every week. Not only does Tom King find nothing to say about this carnage but he presides over the very forces, the army and RUC, which collude with the attacks and shield the attackers. The IRA does not engage in random killings but targets known loyalist sectarian killers. There is no comparison. And if King wants to find many of the loyalist killers he does not have to issue an appeal: he need merely look at the UDR, many of whose members perform attacks both on and off duty.

The British press also sought to exploit a statement by Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams which said that 'Sinn Fein does not condone the deaths of people who are non-combatants.' Seeking to clarify the issue *An Phoblacht/Republican News* said 'The issue is not the motivation for the attack but its mode of operation'. ■

British raids continue

MAXINE WILLIAMS

Large scale raids by the British army and RUC have continued in the Six Counties. During the last weekend in February three hundred nationalist homes in Derry were raided and estates placed under virtual martial law.

The estates were sealed off by hundreds of soldiers and RUC men who then went, ten at a time, into the homes. Some raids lasted three hours and certain homes were raided twice.

Homes were extensively damaged, furniture destroyed and household goods smashed.

Thomas McGlinchey, who lost both his legs in a loyalist bombing, was lifted from his bed and forced to sit in the cold whilst his home was ransacked.

After the raids, ammunition was found in the garden of Danny McDaid's home. Residents believe it was planted there by the army/RUC, in order to set McDaid up.

On 13 March the homes of forty elderly people in West Belfast were raided by one hundred soldiers/RUC. Several streets were sealed off and pedestrians and motorists were searched. If residents were out then the raiders used sledgehammers to enter the house.

On 20 March further large scale raiding took place in West Belfast. Some of the raids lasted for ten hours and floorboards and even concrete floors were removed. Stairs were damaged, holes drilled into cupboards and furnishings were smashed. Eight people were arrested under the PTA and held in Castle-reagh for up to 48 hours. The next day the raiding parties returned to Ardoyne and did further damage.

Raiding on this scale has now been going on for several months and has involved thousands of nationalist homes and families. ■

RUC loses top brass in Armagh

The IRA's answer to continuing British terror came in a daring operation in which two of the RUC's most senior and experienced officers were killed in South Armagh on 20 March.

The two had been at a liaison meeting with the Garda in the Twenty Six Counties. They were driving back when the attack was launched. The British government and media reacted to the deaths with its usual hypocritical outrage. It cheers when its forces stalk and murder the IRA but suddenly becomes pacifist when its own side gets hit.

Much was made of the fact that the two officers were unarmed. In fact both of these men's hands were drenched in blood. Chief Superintendent Breen, the most senior police officer to be killed for twenty years, had 1,200 men under his command and had played a major role in RUC operations in the border area including the murder of eight IRA men in Loughgall. Superintendent Buchanan was centrally involved in cross-border contacts with the Garda. Between them these two were responsible for co-ordinating RUC/Army actions in South

Armagh.

RUC morale has been dealt a serious blow. An additional humiliation is that secret RUC intelligence documents were found in the RUC men's car and are now in IRA hands. The IRA operation in South Armagh came less than two weeks after Home Secretary Douglas Hurd had called for the IRA to be 'extirpated'. This was a clear call for the continuation of Britain's shoot-to-kill policy. The IRA has given its answer to Hurd. The struggle to drive British imperialism out of Ireland will continue. ■

FORWARD TO A

FREE AZANIA



SIMON CLERK

In the first two weeks of April Comrade Waters Toboti, a leading member of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), visited Britain. Comrade Toboti is the PAC's Acting Director of Publicity and an assistant in its Department of Foreign Affairs. He has also been the movement's Chief Representative in Zimbabwe. Before being forced into exile, he spent time in 12 South African jails, including Robben Island.

The RCG had the great pleasure of meeting and interviewing Comrade Toboti and also hearing him speak at a number of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group meetings.

Comrade Toboti said of the PAC cadre: 'We are the ambassadors and messengers of the aspirations of our own people'. *FRFI* is, as always, pleased to give a platform to these aspirations as expressed by a significant trend in the South African liberation movement.

Namibia, Mozambique, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia, much though they might be willing to have a dynamic socialist programme, are unable to put those programmes into effect as long as Azania is not free. That is my firm belief. We have got to defeat apartheid.

From liberation to socialism

At the present moment we are not rushing to write a post-apartheid constitution. As an individual I can state, that it is not a secret that the PAC is a socialist movement.

We are going to interfere with the administration of the multinationals. They are exploiting our people. That is point number one.

Point number two, in true socialism, primary industries belong to the people. You cannot allow an institution to continue to exploit the people, it has to come under the control of the government. Primary industries in the hands of private individuals are very dangerous. We cannot allow the capitalists to do what they like to the people who have been fighting for liberation.

We want to liberate our people from economic exploitation. I do not think that the PAC will ever change its socialist programme. This is the choice of the people, it is not just the choice of PAC leaders.

There is a very powerful trade union movement inside the country, both NACTU and COSATU, and they say that socialism is the liberation of the worker. They also say that anybody who doesn't want to be a socialist has got to move out of the labour movement. We support this position.

Granted that we are involved in a national democratic struggle, but nevertheless we of the PAC say we are

not going to establish a bourgeois democratic republic, we want a socialist state. Elements of our socialist programme must manifest themselves now. We have to have a programme of ideological training on the fundamentals of socialism.

On slanders that the PAC is a racist organisation opposed to all whites.

The PAC does not oppose whites as whites. Indeed we believe that whites can be Africans. We ourselves do not use the term black. We do understand why others use it and we don't blame them for that. We feel that it has a racial meaning.

As far back as 1959 we defined what an African is - we said an African is anybody who pays his only loyalty to Africa - irrespective of colour. You become an African by commitment not by the pigmentation of your skin.

The PAC said in its 1959 document that we are all brothers and sisters irrespective of colour. We believe in the existence of one race, the human race. People who are committed to the culture, traditions and political development of the African people, despite the fact that they are white, are Africans. We are teaching our people to understand this maxim.

Our country will not be occupied by people who have a black skin alone, everybody else has to be accommodated in our new system.

On the relationship between the black masses and white liberals and white workers.

Whites, be they liberal elements or workers, benefit from the racial system. There are of course disputes between the liberal elements and the Botha regime. You remember the

time when about 300 lecturers and Denis Worrall, once Ambassador to Britain resigned from the Nationalist Party because they thought Botha was not moving fast enough in reforming apartheid.

During that time I was the Chief Representative in Zimbabwe government officials said to me that Botha is in trouble. Some of our own brothers said that the liberal element was going to take over power in South Africa. Comrade, I said, Botha is going to come out the victor in the election with an overwhelming majority. The people who are quarrelling with Botha are not the common people in the street, are not the white workers. Botha's power does not rest on these liberal elements.

Some of the bourgeois elements in the system say apartheid must go. They demand equal salaries for equal work. These demands do not affect a professor at the university of Stellenbosch. The liberal bourgeois element does not have to brush with the African workers, there is no contest from the black side. They are safe. But when you come to the ordinary white workers in the factories it is a different question. They feel threatened by the African people, because some of the African workers who are sweepers in the factories have matriculated. They have 'A' levels and diplomas. If you take away the racial barriers, it means the white workers will be relegated and the educated African people in the factories and firms will take over the management of business.

Anybody who wants to win white workers has to address this situation. The Conservative Party these days is gaining momentum as white workers feel that it is protecting their privileges. A white worker in Johan-

nesburg thinks he is much better than an African doctor. They feel they can run the government better. As long as the white parties, and that includes the white liberals too, fail to convince white workers, they will never rule the country. Botha or the National Party is still going to be there. If the National Party goes, it will be the Conservative Party which takes over, not the New Democrats.

By and large white workers do not accept they are workers. They want black workers in their own kitchen. We might have white workers who are prepared to struggle with us, but they are very few. They are being drowned by the concrete reality of their own situation.

On recent developments in the Soviet Union, in particular on trends in its foreign policy related to Southern Africa.

The PAC and other Africans are very worried about the tone of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. They might be good for the workers of the Soviet Union, we do not know. But what is perturbing us is when *perestroika* means going up and down the world trying to convince us that the revolution does not work. For instance in Cuba Gorbachev was trying to convince Castro that the Cubans must forget about revolution and concern themselves with negotiations and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Our question is why are these people so worried about what is happening in the world before they have settled their own problems. We are being told by them that they're in a crisis in their own country, and before they are able to cure this, they are jumping borders to tell fighting forces that they must co-exist with imperialism.

We are being told that in Southern Africa, we have got to negotiate with Botha. In fact the Soviet Union is trying to bring pressure to bear on the ANC to lay down arms and negotiate.

The Boers have always said that the African people are not struggling for independence and freedom, but are only being misled by the Soviet Union. It is the communists who incite us to violence they claimed. Now that the Soviet Union says stop fighting, are we supposed to stop? They are making a big miscalculation. The oppressed people inside occupied Azania will not stop.

Castro knows what he is doing. Castro knows the maxims of liberation. We are very happy about that because it would be a calamity if every progressive was following the Soviet Union.

There is a man called Professor Staruchenko who went as far as saying that to talk about armed struggle is to be reactionary. He mentioned the PAC - he said we must act non-violently because the situation inside Southern Africa is radical. It is, he said, the reactionary forces which preach armed struggle and which are going to benefit from the situation. He said we are reactionary because we preach armed struggle. He went further to say that the Bantustans are relevant and that Gatsha Buthelezei must be drawn in. Meanwhile the people of Azania, despite their different political affiliations, are agreed that the Bantustans are a drawback to our struggle.

We must make clear that we have no argument with the Soviet people. We all know that there are some forces in the Soviet Union who do not support what Gorbachev is doing. They would like to see revolution. We pray to the God of Africa that those elements gain the upper hand one day. Those are the people who can be allies of the PAC.

*Otilie Abrahams. She is a member of the Namibian National Independence Party and made this statement at a City AA meeting.

On Mrs Thatcher's visit to Southern Africa and British intervention in Mozambique.

I am not very clear about Mrs Thatcher's intentions. There is a lot of negotiation going on with Thatcher going to Namibia and elsewhere in Africa. We can say, however, that we will never be liberated by Margaret Thatcher. The people must be their own liberators.

Thatcher is concerned about the struggle in Southern Africa, especially in occupied Azania. She might be trying to defuse the revolutionary struggle in our own country. Whatever she is doing it is not for the benefit of the progressive elements in our country. She does it for the benefit of the bourgeoisie - internationally as well. Apartheid is the custodian of capitalist interests in Southern Africa. That is why the British government is trying to build a strong alliance with the regime.

Nevertheless I believe that as long as the suppression and exploitation of our own people is not resolved, no amount of monkey tricks and chicanery will divert our people from the real issues.

[In relation to Mozambique] I don't trust the British administration especially when they are smiling. It is a known fact that in the past the British and the Americans were very sympathetic to Renamo. But because of Zimbabwe's position, I suspect that they did not want to totally commit themselves to Renamo. Today they would like to contribute to the development of Mozambique. But my fear is that after helping Mozambique, they will take their own time in withdrawing [their troops]. There is also another danger - the presence in Mozambique of South African forces who are allegedly guarding the Cabora Bassa Dam. We are not happy about that situation.

On the relation between the liberation of South Africa and the struggle for socialism in Southern Africa as a whole.

I want to support the comrade from Namibia*. She said 'as long as Azania is not liberated, the neighbouring countries cannot achieve socialism.' I fully support that statement. I want to take it further. There will never be any stability in the continent of Africa as long as Azania is not free.

If we take it on an international plane, it will be very difficult even for the workers of the imperialist world to make a proper and effective revolution as long as their governments still exploit Azania.

The massive wealth of our country is going to the masters of imperialism. Once Azania is free, these people will have less economic power in their hands, and as they get weaker, the workers of those countries will have the upper hand. That is why we are demanding sanctions.

On sanctions, socialism and the struggle against imperialism.

We know that sanctions cannot liberate occupied Azania, but they can make the ruling class weaker. Once the ruling class is weak the forces of revolution and liberation have the upper hand.

We always say that apartheid is nothing other than the outpost of imperialism and capitalism. According to 1983 UN statistics the British had 1,200 enterprises in my country, and the Americans had about 375, West Germany about 350. So you find that what is called South Africa is nothing but the base of the economic development of the imperialist countries. Additionally, it is militarily stronger than all the Front Line states put together. It has a standing army of 250,000 and in all-out war can mobilise 500,000 soldiers.

South Africa's future—capitalism or socialism?

Did the world really turn upside down at the beginning of April? Did Margaret Thatcher, once acknowledged arch-friend of the apartheid regime in South Africa, arch-enemy of sanctions and black majority rule, really win the hearts and minds of Black Africans and place herself at centre stage to lead negotiations for a post-apartheid capitalist South Africa? Did this Big Tour really change her spots? CAROL BRICKLEY examines the implications of Thatcher's tour.

In a word, no. What has changed in Southern Africa is the balance of political forces, not Mrs Thatcher or the British government.

Like all political tours by world leaders, and even those who aspire to be world leaders, this tour was carefully prepared and stage-managed before Mrs Thatcher set foot on African soil. *The Independent* and *N* commissioned an opinion poll amongst 'black South Africans'. Did they want sanctions? Boycotts? The end of apartheid? Did they believe violence could be used to defeat apartheid? Did overseas-owned companies help hinder the end of apartheid? The results were favourable to Mrs Thatcher. The majority of the 550 people questioned did not want sanctions, or boycotts, or violence, and they cared more about jobs than votes. Most thought that overseas companies were helpful in reforming apartheid. Before we continue, we must rid ourselves of the poll. 550 is not a very good sample out of more than 25 million. How they were chosen is a mystery. Leaving aside the fact that most people would prefer peace to violence if given the choice, and historically black South Africans have had no choice in the face of a regime armed to the teeth, calling for boycotts and sanctions in South Africa is against the law under State of Emergency regulations.

Nevertheless, the poll was conducted for a purpose. The central question which faces progressive movements in Southern Africa is how to get rid of apartheid. Mrs Thatcher's mission in Southern Africa was intended to lighten their darkness and provide the answer.

The Independent's poll was conducted in order to provide statistical back-up and their editorial provided the answer: 'Use Capitalism to beat apartheid'; 'Capitalism is colour-blind'. Criticising Mrs Thatcher only for her lack of inventiveness, it concluded that she is right about sanctions.

The stage had been carefully set. In fact, if the press in Britain are to be believed, dubbing her 'African Queen' (second only to Queen of England), the only person to disagree with Thatcher during her whistle-stop tour of Morocco, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Namibia was Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. Everywhere she received an ecstatic welcome.

Such events give communists cause for thought. How is it that this enemy of progress, vicious opponent of the British working class and militant imperialist who has bombed and butchered in the interests of her class half-way round the world, seemingly managed to fool most of the people, most of the time?

Two factors have changed in the South African context which give Mrs Thatcher room to manoeuvre.

In 1986 Mrs Thatcher was isolated, even in the imperialist camp, in her stand against sanctions. The Reagan administration had to go along with some sanctions due to pressure from the black movement in the USA. The uprising in the black townships in South Africa was at its height and pressure was being exerted internationally to take action against the regime. The apartheid regime's first

task was to suppress the uprising, and in this Thatcher aided and abetted them by her stand on sanctions.

In 1989, times have changed. The facts about the repression, press cen-



Thatcher in Zimbabwe — an ecstatic welcome?

sorship, detentions, torture and murder which have been used to suppress black people's struggle can be swept under the carpet in Britain. With Reagan gone, and Bush new to the job, Thatcher can now pose as the architect of change in Southern Africa in the absence of an immediate threat to bourgeois rule.

The second factor which has changed is the Soviet Union's foreign policy, demonstrated by the agreement on Namibian independence. This, and the consequent loss of ANC bases in Angola, has raised the issue of whether the ANC's moves towards negotiation will be taken further. The question for Mrs Thatcher, and the key to her Grand Plan for South Africa, is whether the liberation movements, and the ANC in particular, will accept the condition she has placed on their participation in a negotiated-end to apartheid — will they renounce the armed struggle? If they do not, then Mrs Thatcher's plans for a Constitutional Conference will be killed at birth.

Thatcher's arguments are very clear. Having never lifted a finger against the apartheid regime, she has carefully placed her government at a slight distance from apartheid. She is now practised at faint criticism of apartheid and calling for the release of Nelson Mandela. In reality representatives of imperialism, which she certainly is, have lost a little of their patience with apartheid, not because of racism and injustice, but because unbridled apartheid is a threat to the continued existence of capitalism in South Africa. It calls

forth resistance from black people, and 'black radicalism', as was shown during the period of militant uprising, is a clear threat to continued super-profits. Having allowed the regime to deal with the black working class, she is ready for the next stage of the argument — that the choice in South Africa is between capitalism and revolution — and like *The Independent* she wants to convince black people that capitalism can rid them of apartheid, whereas revolution will not work; that the new-found detente with the Soviet Union shows that these issues will not be resolved by confrontation but by negotiation. Furthermore, if post-apartheid South Africa is to be capitalist, then she has to ensure that the economy is not damaged by sanctions.

This leaves the British Labour Party and the AAM with no argument.

They have never argued that sanctions should be used in support of revolution. In 1986 Kinnock, sponsored by the AAM, argued that sanctions were necessary to preserve the interests of capitalism in South Africa. If Britain stood against sanctions then its reputation amongst black South Africans would be damaged and the result might be 'bloody revolution'. In 1989 Thatcher's tour of Southern Africa (which was much more successful than Kinnock's) has proved that standing against sanctions has done her reputation no harm whatsoever, and she is certainly an opponent of revolution. Thatcher has out-paced Kinnock as leading proponent of 'progressive' capitalism.

Thatcher is correct. The real choice now is between capitalism and revolution. The only basis on which the argument can be won is by arguing for sanctions in solidarity with the revolutionary struggle of black people in South Africa for freedom and self-determination in direct opposition to Thatcher's post-apartheid capitalism. Kinnock and the AAM oppose such a prospect. The black working class in South Africa, however, do not.

Beyond the manipulative sphere of the imperialists, the real world lives and thinks. Sections of the black working class in South Africa have a deeper understanding of apartheid than Mrs Thatcher suspects. Far from believing that apartheid and capitalism are separate, they are only too aware that apartheid is the barbaric form which capitalism has taken in their country. Ultimately this is the problem for the imperialists and their apartheid henchmen.

Thatcher has another problem. The last day of her tour, the visit to Namibia, was intended to highlight the jewel in her crown — Namibian independence achieved through negotiation (in which she played no part). How close the crown is to slipping off soon became apparent. In the response to SWAPO combatants' 'incursion' into their own country, Thatcher quickly supported bloody aggression by the occupying South African forces and their right to hunt down and murder Namibians. The notion that either racist South Africa or Thatcher can play a progressive peaceful role in the region was exposed as a fallacy in the days that followed.

Massacre

Responsibility for the genocide of over 250 Namibian civilians alike within days of the 1 April ceasefire lies squarely with the South African government and its puppet powers, in particular Mrs Thatcher and her South African allies. The 'independence' plan was used to sanction the death squads as they hunted down Namibians who had achieved independence. ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM assesses

The ceasefire agreed by SWAPO and South Africa commenced at 6am Saturday 1 April. At midday Koevoet, a heavily armoured killer squad accepted by the UN as a 'police authority', attacked. It was a bloody massacre. Jekonia Ngenokesho, a civilian eyewitness said:

'I saw a group of people I identified as SWAPO guerrillas, about 60 others. They told me they were not there to fight. They were, they said, regrouping themselves in order to hand themselves in to UNTAG and they were asking me if I had seen any United Nations in the area... we heard Casspirs and they told us to run, the South Africans were coming. The South Africans started shooting first and I was shot in the leg.'

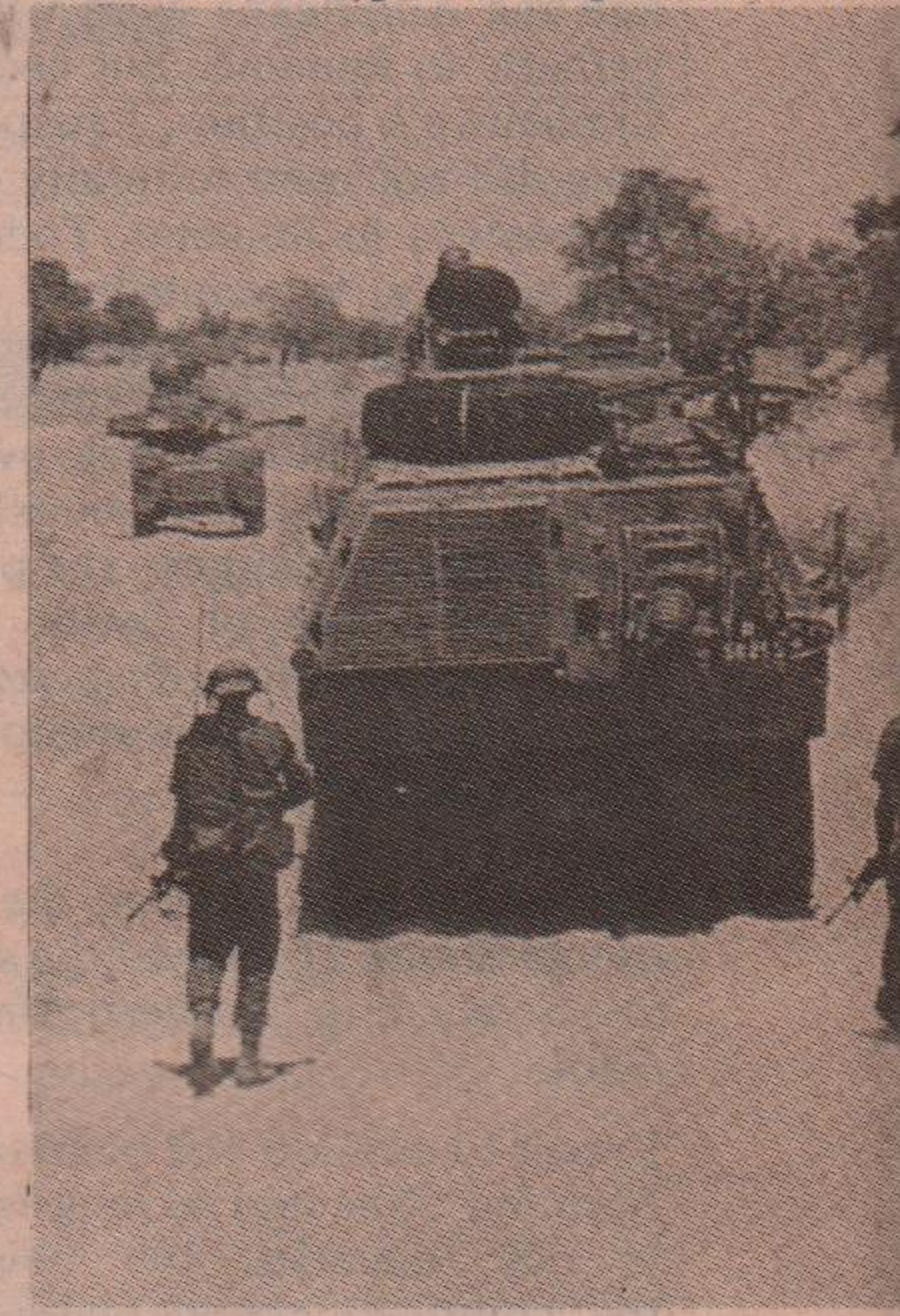
A church delegation to the scene counted 33 bodies and 14 huts destroyed.

Hours later in Windhoek, Pik Botha met Margaret Thatcher on the last leg of her Africa tour.

In carrying out the massacre, South African forces had precise aims. In the wake of its crushing military defeat at the hands of the Cubans and Angolans at Cuito Cuanavale South Africa had to negotiate a peace settlement. South Africa knows that a genuinely independent Namibia would be both a threat and an inspiration to the masses in Azania, so it has to cripple the nation before it is born. In par-

ticular it has to break the army of SWAPO and prevent a government coming to power in Namibia able to withstand South African aggression. Lastly, through being seen to cooperate in the UN plan Pretoria aims to open up the doors to end its own international isolation.

Before continuing its massacres the South Africans needed UN approval, to avoid international isolation. Under Thatcher's guidance Botha negotiated a deal with Martti Ahtisaari the UN Special Representative



South African troops hunting down SWAPO guerrillas

Socialism—the

FRFI has consistently warned against the sectarian position of the Anti-Apartheid Movement of only supporting selected liberation movements in Southern Africa. In the case of Namibia the AAM recognises SWAPO alone as the sole authentic representative of the Namibian people. It has now argued that in the run up to the elections in Namibia to offer solidarity to any other organisation as well as SWAPO will play into the imperialist hands.

It is even argued that the other patriotic Namibian forces that have decided to stand in the elections are undermining SWAPO by preventing it reaching the 2/3 majority in the proposed Constituent Assembly required to agree a constitution. But this sectarian position denies the political reality that there are other organisations who have contributed to the national liberation struggle who hold to different political positions to their comrades in SWAPO. It is up to the oppressed Namibian people to decide who will form their government, not the British AAM or any other foreign organisation.

The Namibia National Front has been re-formed to put its programme before the Namibian people in the election campaign. The NNF includes the South West Africa National Union (SWANU), the Namibia Independence Party (NIP) and other organisations. If support for the democratic right of self determination means anything at all, it

means recognising their right to stand for election by the Namibian people. Both SWANU and the NIP have a record of resistance against the racist occupation. Their record includes co-operation with SWAPO inside Namibia in many struggles. The NNF emphasises that the source of any differences between it and SWAPO do not come from the people struggling alongside each other on the ground, but from outside the country.

It is in this context that FRFI met Hitjevi Veli, the Vice-President of SWANU, a founding member of the liberation movement and a former prisoner on Robben Island, and Otille Abrahams of the Namibia Independence Party who has been active in the struggle for 37 years to hear their analysis of the situation.

The NNF stands for a multi-party democracy. A central plank of its election programme is national unity. Apartheid's occupation has divided the country through a series of second tier of bantustan like 'governments'. Comrade Abrahams explains, 'People in Namibia are regarded as not being people but belonging to ethnic groups. Once the country is free it should not be split into ethnic areas but it should be one united Namibia.'

GIVE THE LAND BACK TO THE PEOPLE

The basis for the United Nations independence process, Resolution 435,

★ NAMIBIA — FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM

e in Namibia

s, SWAPO guerrillas and rarely with the imperialist allies. The United Nations South African controlled have fought for decades to es the situation.

which authorised the deployment of 5,500 more South African troops. Thatcher's deal had let the racists off the leash and the killing resumed. Helicopter gunships bombed and burnt down kraals and villages. Eight youths were killed in a cuca shop by gunfire from helicopters. By Sunday evening the South Africans claimed they had killed 120 SWAPO supporters with 20 of its own forces dead. Very few SWAPO prisoners were brought back to base. The South Africans were shooting their prisoners.



Namibia

Johannes Kutumbu a SWAPO platoon commander who survived capture told the UN monitoring forces that he had been beaten and tortured by the South Africans.

SWAPO actually had no wish to engage in a military confrontation and called on the UN to stop the fighting. The UN admitted that SWAPO had 'no hostile intent' but did not confine the South African forces. On Monday 3 April another convoy of 70-100 military vehicles left their base in Walvis Bay heading north to the scene of the fighting. By Friday Impala jets (ie Mirage jets supplied by France) were bombing 'SWAPO targets'. The population from which SWAPO draws its support thereby became the target. Hundreds fled their kraals and congregated at churches seeking protection from the onslaught.

The imperialists moved fast to defend their South African agents. Thatcher led the attack on SWAPO. Claiming that it had infiltrated its soldiers into Namibia, she told the House of Commons:

'This is a most serious challenge to the authority of the United Nations and the internationally agreed arrangements for Namibian independence... I certainly condemn it (SWAPO) totally.'

The British propaganda machine was well primed. BBC Radio had 'No doubt that SWAPO breached the agreement', *The Independent* lectured against 'SWAPO's ill-judged surprise', *The Guardian* decried 'SWAPO's still inexplicable breach of the peace deal', and BBC and ITN television news carried unchallenged interviews with Pik Botha asserting that he could prove that SWAPO had broken agreements.

At this point a direct intervention to challenge Thatcher at home was vital. It never came. The Anti-Apart-

heid Movement held no public demonstrations. Yet tens of thousands would have been ready to rally in solidarity with SWAPO. This criminal failing of the AAM to mobilise the forces to fight Thatcher is entirely consistent with its overall approach - the AAM wishes to end apartheid without threatening imperialism. It cannot be done.

RCG member Carol Brickley pointed out in a letter to *The Guardian*, 'SWAPO and other Namibian organisations were excluded from the Namibian agreement. While Mrs. Thatcher is free to enter and leave, Namibian political exiles who should have the right to participate and vote in the elections are kept out. Britain has been quick to condemn SWAPO but very slow to condemn the South African government.'

What is the agreement supposedly breached by SWAPO? Five days after the first massacre David Beresford reported in *The Guardian* an accord 'signed under UN mediation by Angola, Cuba and South Africa in Geneva on 5 August last year which states that 'Angola and Cuba shall use their good offices so that, once the total withdrawal of South African troops from Angola is completed, and within the context also of the cessation of hostilities in Namibia, SWAPO's forces will be deployed north of the 16th Parallel.' SWAPO was not a signatory to this accord. Its leader Sam Nujoma had written to the UN Secretary-General:

'In this context (of the accord) SWAPO has agreed to comply with the commencement of the cessation of all hostile acts which started as of August 10, 1988, in Angola. By the same token SWAPO will be ready to continue to abide by this agreement until the formal ceasefire, under resolution 435, is signed between SWAPO and South Africa, thereby triggering the im-

plementation process.' SWAPO has not broken one word of this undertaking. It did not agree to confine its guerrillas to bases beyond the 16th Parallel 200km north of the border once the ceasefire concerning Namibia came into effect.

Thatcher found a second justification for the slaughter in her assertion that UN resolution 435 'makes no provision for SWAPO bases inside Namibia'. That too is a lie. 435 stipulates that SWAPO guerrillas operating in the country at the time of the ceasefire be 'restricted to base at designated locations inside Namibia to be specified by the Special Representative after necessary consultation'.

On 3 April the UN Secretary General reported to a special meeting of the Security Council which includes as permanent members the USA, Britain, the Soviet Union, China and France. Their concern was to prevent the agreement collapsing.

Chester Crocker, the USA's architect of a pro-imperialist solution in Angola and Namibia, and the USSR's Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoli Adamshin held talks with South African, Cuban and Angolan representatives at the Mount Etjo safari lodge in Namibia on 8 and 9 April. Pik Botha chaired this meeting of the Joint Monitoring Commission. All parties agreed to a revamped UN plan to implement a ceasefire which demanded of SWAPO that its guerrillas hand in their guns and be escorted to bases north of the 16th parallel in Angola. This leaves the various South African terrorist forces and the UN contingent as the only ones carrying arms.

The attempt to achieve a negotiated settlement in Namibia has revealed a divergence of short-term interests between the socialist countries and SWAPO. The socialist countries wish to see South Africa's occupation of Namibia ended as rapidly as possible and see the current arrangements as the only means of doing so. SWAPO, after decades of struggle, however, obviously knows what are the most favourable conditions in which it can assure victory. SWAPO, not surprisingly, wants its guerrillas in the country to increase morale and to defend the people against apartheid intimidation and violence during the

run up to the election. As communists we support the right of SWAPO to pursue whatever tactics or strategy it chooses in its struggle to eject the South African occupiers.

Forced to retreat, Nujoma announced on Saturday 8 April,

'SWAPO and the Namibian people have nothing to gain by further loss of lives and the collapse of the UN independence plan'

and called on SWAPO guerrillas to withdraw to bases in Angola.

The SWAPO guerrillas faced an unenviable choice. If they handed in their arms they could not trust the UN to defend them. If they kept their arms they could once again be hunted down by the South Africans. The Administrator General spoke of 'interrogating' SWAPO combatants before their ejection and the South Africans set up ambush positions around the UN collecting points. The UNTAG officers on the spot complained, and South Africa had to issue a 'clarification' that interrogation only meant questioning SWAPO members about arms and troop numbers left in Namibia. Sam Nujoma announced that the guerrillas would withdraw without ever falling into enemy South African hands.

The issue remains and is potentially explosive. Indeed, since the second ceasefire, by their own admission, the South Africans have killed 13 SWAPO guerrillas, but as yet they have failed to explain the circumstances.

To be born a nation Namibia has had to pass through the killing fields of Botha and Thatcher. The apartheid regime is intent on fooling the world about Namibian independence between now and November, and its chief ally will be Mrs Thatcher. Communists in Britain condemn Thatcher's imperialism and pledge our unconditional support for SWAPO and all Namibians fighting to liberate their country. Democracy for Namibia will not come from the imperialist powers operating through the UN or under any other flag of convenience.

The right of the Namibian people to self determination will increasingly rely on the struggle of the Namibian masses and their allies. ■

e first solution

not only legalises the South African military occupation by handing power to Pretoria's Administrator General (AG) during the transition period, it further legalises the social base of that occupation, the colonial robbery of the land and natural resources.

Veii: 'Our policy is that the natural resources of the country should be owned by the people themselves. The land belongs to the people, not to individuals. The NNF's motto is 'Give the land back to the people'.

Comrade Abrahams told a meeting of City AA that the land question will be a vital one in the forthcoming elections. SWAPO has promised the whites security of land ownership except in the case of absentee landlords. Abrahams: 'It is hard to see how the basic needs of the people will be met on this basis'.

CONTENDING PARTIES

The British press project the election as a contest between SWAPO and the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA). The DTA was formed on South Africa's initiative to promote an 'internal settlement' in opposition to UN Resolution 435 when it was first passed by the UN in 1978. It is the fulcrum of efforts to create a corrupted layer in black society with a stake in capitalist rule. Its leaders have got new Mercedes cars, meanwhile they have cut pensions and

other benefits for the poor. The DTA is funded by South Africa and sources in Germany.

Amongst the patriotic Namibian forces with which the NNF seeks an alliance, the major party is SWAPO which has considerable support. SWAPO has been granted a loan of R12 million by the African states. The NNF has no such external backers but believes it can win substantial victories: 'We believe that independence just doesn't mean to have a black President or to put your cross on the ballot. It means the transformation of the whole of Namibian society'.

INDEPENDENT NAMIBIA: A NEO-COLONY?

But there is a very big problem. Can people's power succeed? The annexation of Walvis Bay would give South Africa control of 99% of all Namibian exports and imports, allowing it to mount a complete trade blockade at any time it chooses.

Abrahams: 'All these years when Namibia has been a colony of South Africa, South Africa made sure that the whole economic set up is 120% dependent on it. Because of our colonial heritage, no matter who comes into power, in the short run it will be absolutely impossible to break the ties with South Africa. Everyone knows that Namibia will be a neo-colony.'

The NNF are very clear that while welcome, political independence



SWANU demonstrators in London

will not mark the end, but the beginning of a new phase in the struggle against imperialism.

Veii: 'That is why we need principled organisations to take over the government... The struggle ahead will be more difficult than the strug-

gle before independence. We believe that we are the best qualified people and the people with the best policies to pull Namibia through this. We need a government that will work very hard to get rid of this dependency. The Western countries deliberately placed South Africa in that position to have access to our mineral wealth and to exploit us even further after independence. A principled government, in fact a socialist government, will be the first solution to the Namibian problem.'

DANGERS OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD

As we argued in *FRFI* 85 the very mechanics of the UN's proposed transition to independence weight the deck against the liberation movement.

Comrade Veii explains the UN plan: 'The elections (due in November 89) will be held on proportional representation. We are going to have one man and one woman, one vote. We are going to elect members to a Constituent Assembly where we are going to write the constitution... After the constitution is agreed by a two thirds majority of the Assembly it is not clear whether it is brought back to the people for certification or we are going to have another election to elect the government because that is when 435 ends.'

'The problem is the whole context of 435. It legalises the South African presence in Namibia. The (South African appointed) AG will draw up the electoral legislation and control it. The AG is also in charge of the police force, keeping law and order

The AG will also be the Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly, so he will be in charge until independence day. Then it will be the Namibians versus South Africa - the referee has gone now. During that period any well prepared group can stage a coup'.

Who will defend democracy and the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly? Under 435, SWAPO must leave its arms outside the country. In essence the United Nations plan relies on the good will of the South Africans.

Hitsevi Veii emphasises the difficulties that lie ahead: 'They've still got this law the Riotous Assemblies Act which they are trying to invoke to stop demonstrations. People believed that after 1 April it would be a free for all show. They thought that the UN would be in charge and that South Africa wouldn't have any power. But the South Africans were never, ever in favour of granting independence.'

PRINCIPLED SOLIDARITY

Ottile Abrahams challenged the audacity of international organisations to decide who represents the Namibians: 'We have been fighting for political independence. I agree with Mao Ze Dong that we should let a 100 flowers bloom. Namibians will decide how we use our votes. I am not going to have anyone, anyone from outside the country telling me how to vote. I will use my vote how I decide in the best interests of the Namibian people!'

Namibia National Front, PO Box 3370, Windhoek, Namibia 9000. ■

Gaza-West Bank State?

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The Declaration of Independence was one of the main results of the Palestine National Council (PNC – the Palestinian Parliament) held in November 1988. After a bitter struggle a substantial majority also voted to accept UN Resolution 242. Previously rejected by all trends inside the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), UN242 recognises the Israeli state and its security needs, but refers to the Palestinian question as a refugee problem.

These decisions raised fundamental questions about the future of the anti-imperialist struggle in the Middle East. The Palestinian movement is caught in a terrible dilemma. The uprising remains isolated from the Arab masses in the Middle East and has no support from the working class in the imperialist countries. There is thus enormous pressure on the PLO leadership to accept a 'compromise' solution: the PLO recognises Israel while the imperialists and Zionists help create a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza.

The right-wing of the PLO leadership led by Yassir Arafat believes this to be the only realistic option facing the Palestinian people. They believe that the PLO's adoption of its new 'moderate' position will persuade the imperialists to force a seemingly invincible Israel to the negotiating table.

The left-wing on the other hand, led by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), rejects these views. They refuse to recognise Israel and remain committed to the total destruction of the Zionist state. They place no faith in any imperialist power and see the Declaration of Independence as a transitional stage in the struggle for complete liberation and socialism.

In a future issue of *FRFI* we will present our own views on this question. In this issue, we are reprinting extracts from a speech, an interview and an article by Dr George Habash, General Secretary of the PFLP.

The material presented below is extracted from *Democratic Palestine*, the English-language journal of the PFLP.

Comrade George Habash speaks:

'In my capacity as General Secretary, it is my obligation to announce... that the PFLP will remain true to its political line. The main point in this line is the PFLP's understanding of the Zionist entity, considering its major feature to be colonialism...'

'"Israel" (is) a spearhead in the offensive against all the forces of peace, progress and socialism in the world... "Israel" and Zionism are playing an active counter-revolutionary role in Africa, Asia, and Latin America... They are at the service of the imperialist plan globally, while world imperialism is ready to serve the regional objectives of the Zionist project...'

'We will fight year after year, generation after generation, until we rid all Palestinian and Arab land of it.'

The PFLP supported the Declaration of Independence not in order to create a bargaining counter with imperialism and Zionism, but as a political move necessitated by the very uprising itself.

'The slogan of freedom and independence was raised by our people in



Palestine before the uprising. Moreover, in July (1988),... the Jordanian regime announced the severing of ties between the Hashemite Kingdom and the Palestinian land (the West Bank in particular). Regardless of why this decision was taken, it posed major questions: who then is responsible for this land? For whom is this land?... Our masses on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip want an end to the occupation. They want the Israeli soldiers to leave the land they occupied in 1967. What is the obligation of the PLO now? It is to say that this land is ours, to announce the establishment of the independent Palestinian state...'

'Some understood that the Declaration of Independence means the complete and final recognition of UN resolution 181 and thus of the partition of Palestine...'

The PFLP rejects the view that by supporting the Declaration of Independence the movement was limiting its struggle to the liberation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip alone. The formation of a state in the territories occupied in 1967 is according to the PFLP but one stage of the continuing struggle to liberate all of Palestine.

'As for the independence declaration, we consider this a big victory for the Palestinian people... On this land (the West Bank and Gaza Strip) we will establish a Palestinian state, on the way to fulfilling the historical rights of the Palestinian people.'

'The Declaration of Independence is part of the interim programme of the PLO, the programme of repatriation, self-determination and an independent state... Hence our support for it and our adoption and

defence of it as being the programme of the Palestinian national consensus... The success of the Palestinian people in restoring their legitimate rights to repatriation and building their independent state will pave more than half of the way to the liquidation of the Zionist-imperialist project in our homeland, and to the realisation of the ultimate goals of our people.'

'We have to complete our process of return, self-determination and establishing an independent Palestinian state through continuous and persistent struggle, without losing the compass that points towards our right to restore the whole of our homeland, and the ultimate goals of our people.'

The PFLP as a Marxist organisation explains the class basis of those



political trends which see a short-term tactical necessity – a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip alone – as a final solution to the Palestinian question.

'There is a pragmatic tendency expressing the national bourgeoisie's limitations and incapacity to shoulder the burdens of continuing the struggle. Their confidence in the possibility of obtaining the ultimate goals and rights of our people has been shaken. That is why the representatives of this tendency have often behaved impatiently and put the current tactics above the ultimate long-term strategy. We also notice that some of them have shown an inclination to relinquish the long-term goals under the pressure of existing circumstances. In the chaos of our daily struggle, while exercising political tactics, the most serious setback we may face is forgetting our strategic goal and consequently losing the compass which directs our progress and shows our people the way forward.'

The PFLP supports calling an international conference, in which the Palestinian people are represented by the PLO. It sees such an event 'as a weapon' to forced Israel to recognise the PLO. But it also knows that the imperialist powers who also argue for an international conference categorically refuse to accept the slogan of an independent Palestinian state. The struggle can therefore only go forward by revolutionary means, and through an alliance between the PLO and revolutionary forces internationally.

'Serious, comprehensive confrontation against the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary alliance is impossible without Palestinian, Arab and international agreement.'

'Based on the fact that the PFLP constitutes a major organisation in the United National Leadership of the Uprising, we announce to our Arab masses that the PFLP will work to continue the uprising, to deepen, escalate and expand it. We will work towards achieving its political slogans on the Palestinian, Arab and international levels until the uprising, through the masses' struggle and sacrifices, succeeds in achieving freedom and independence.'

'What do we mean by spreading the uprising? We mean spreading it to include our masses in the territories occupied since 1948... Despite the great value of international pressure, internal pressure must be increased, because 'Israel' and the fascist forces don't care about international public opinion. How do we force it (Zionism) to agree to an international conference? The only way is increasing its economic and other losses as much as possible by preserving the mass character of the uprising. In Lebanon there are 15,000 armed Palestinians; their responsibility is to pressurise "Israel" so that it submits to the demand of freedom and independence and even to the international conference.'

'Will the international conference give us all our natural and national rights? No. It will give us the rights that the international legitimacy agrees to. This is something positive and to our benefit, because the establishment of a Palestinian state on part of the Palestinian land means the beginning of the deterioration of the Zionist project.'

EL SALVADOR'S PHONEY ELECTIONS

Arena: US fascist allies

TREVOR RAYNE

Less than half of those eligible voted on 19 March. The ARENA party won with 54 per cent of the poll or the support of approximately one in five of those eligible to vote in the presidential elections.

The real victors in this ugly farce were the FMLN liberation fighters whose call for an election boycott effectively paralysed the country from 16 to 19 March. At least 24 of the country's 262 municipalities refused to hold elections, in support of the boycott. The FMLN control over a quarter of the land area in liberated zones where real people's democracy holds power. In San Salvador, a city of one million people, just seven polling stations were opened: thereby ensuring a concentration of the regime's military forces and sufficient queues to impress visiting camera crews. FMLN guerrillas took the war into twenty cities and towns: roads were empty but for army convoys in response to the FMLN's call for a transport halt; electricity and water supplies were cut and the Presidential Palace itself was attacked on 15 March.

Some 75,000 Salvadoreans have now been killed in ten years, in a war directed by 200 US agents based in El Salvador, financed to the tune of now nearly \$1.5 million a day provided by the US government.

While the facade of 'democracy' was being exhibited on US television, over 260 people were arrested during protests in eight US cities against US policy in El Salvador. These protests, however welcome, are still too small, too few and not sufficiently militant to stop the US terror or prevent President Bush from allying with the ARENA fascists.

ARENA - US MADE

When the US-educated millionaire Alfredo Cristiani takes over the presidency on 1 June, ARENA will control all three branches of El Salvador's legislature: the judiciary, the national assembly and the presidency. 'Fredy' Cristiani is the 'acceptable face' of ARENA, whose 'supreme



FMLN guerrillas continue their struggle after their successful campaign against the elections.

chief' is its founder Major Roberto D'Aubuisson. D'Aubuisson is protected by parliamentary privilege from criminal proceedings; he is the man named as organiser of the 1980 murder of Archbishop Romero; the man branded a 'pathological killer' by President Carter's ambassador to El Salvador; the orchestrator of the military death squads; a graduate of the International Police Academy in Washington known as 'Blowtorch Bob'. Cristiani's own 'decency' is less than skin deep: despite the constant slaughter conducted by the military, he complained that they were held back by 'a human rights psychosis' and when asked for a model for El Salvador's future he replied 'Chile'.

The US, while grooming President Duarte and his Christian Democrats, has continued to back its other horse, ARENA, as well. The death squads were founded by the US State Department and the CIA. Their origins are to be found in the Kennedy administration's restructuring of El Salvador's security apparatus in 1963. Kennedy had announced that 'Communism is the chief obstacle to economic development in the Central American region'. 'Plausibly deniable' units within the military were supplied with electronic, photographic

and other personal surveillance equipment. D'Aubuisson himself passed through US training schools. In 1980 D'Aubuisson returned to Washington. He was given files on trade unionists, peasant leaders and clergy, whom he then denounced as communists and guerrilla collaborators on El Salvador television. These broadcasts launched ARENA. Many of those named were subsequently killed. US officials trained El Salvador's soldiers in torture techniques. The CIA funded ARENA.

With the failure of the US counter-insurgency strategy and the gathering power of the FMLN and popular mobilisations, the land-owning oligarchy and middle classes voted for ARENA's crude anti-communist and nationalist rhetoric.

TOWARDS REVOLUTION

Since September the FMLN have combined their most sustained military offensive since 1983 with political and diplomatic moves to isolate the regime and, if possible, force the US to accept negotiations.

On 24 January the FMLN offered to take part in the presidential elections if they were delayed for six months. Duarte dithered. The El Salvador military high command issued a threat that any suspension would result in a coup. Cristiani rejected the FMLN proposal out of hand. Trade unionists and community organisations mounted massive demonstrations in support of the FMLN's proposals and against the regime's terror. It was over a month before the US ambassador drafted Duarte's counter-proposal that the elections be put off until the end of April. This was a US acceptance that ARENA would win, and that they would back an ARENA government. The FMLN denounced the move, and organised the boycott.

Thus far the military, ARENA, the ruling oligarchy, the banks and the US are intent on war. Last year political killings by the army increased by 28 per cent death squad assassinations rose 135 per cent. Since ARENA's victory dozens of community activists have disappeared, been arrested and tortured. The community-based Movement for Bread, Land, Work and Liberty explained:

'The government's objective is to create a climate of terror, especially in the cities where discontent is growing... but our people will respond with even more massive forms of revolutionary struggle to depose this terrorist regime and gain peace for El Salvador'.



were killed in 1976-77, 900 in the 1980 election year.

Bush gave free rein to the secret police of Chile, Israel, South Korea, Philippines, Iran, South Africa and Taiwan to target political opponents residing in the USA.

Bush doctored figures on Soviet military spending in order to lay the basis for the huge increase in armaments carried out by Reagan. These are only some of the crimes committed by President George Bush. ■

George Bush CIA

TREVOR RAYNE

George Bush is the first US president to have been a CIA chief. Bush became CIA Director in 1976 and under his control the CIA suppressed crucial evidence linking the Chilean secret police to the murder of Orlando Letelier, Allende's ambassador to the US, and his aide Ronnie Moffit. Bush received reports on the planned assassination several weeks before the event. He did nothing, and did not pass on information he had on the killing to the FBI.

Bush ignored the Clark Amendment barring CIA intervention in Angola and continued supplying weapons to UNITA with the aim of overthrowing the MPLA government.

Bush invited right-wing Cuban exiles into an organisation, CORU, which planted a bomb on a Cubana commercial airline killing 73 people.

Bush launched the destabilisation campaign against the Manley government in Jamaica. Agents and weapons were supplied. Some 300 people

Pressure still on Nicaragua

TREVOR RAYNE

When the US Congressional Democrats, on 24 March, endorsed the Bush administration's plan to supply \$45 million of 'humanitarian' aid to the contras over the next eleven months, the US ruling class again signalled its determination to destroy the Nicaraguan revolution.

The decision was a contemptuous dismissal of the 14 February agreement reached by five Central American heads of state to remove the contras from Honduras in 90 days in return for the Sandinistas holding elections on 25 February and giving opposition parties freedoms to broadcast and publish. A US Under Secretary of State was dispatched to Honduras to inform the local government that dismantling the contra camps would not be a good idea.



Soldiers of Nicaragua's army carry a banner of Sandino.

The contras are a defeated military force. Reagan's strategy of combining military offensive with economic and diplomatic strangulation has been adjusted by Bush. The emphasis now is to use the economic destruction wrought by the war and trade sanctions to force the revolution into retreat and to foment a capitalist opposition within the Nicaraguan political system.

Above all, the Sandinistas must forsake the struggle for socialism. 'Our policy calls for the application of incentives and disincentives' explained US Secretary of State James Baker. If the contras and continuing trade sanctions are the stick, then the prospect of infusions of US capital and normalised trade relations must be the carrot.

Significantly, before President Gorbachev left for Cuba, Bush, citing 'new thinking' and the 'agreements' reached over Afghanistan and Namibia, called for the Soviet Union to end its material support for Nicaragua. This amounts to approximately \$1 billion a year and is vital. Were it to be reduced or withheld the Sandinistas would be at the mercy of the US extortionists.

From 1979 to 1982 Nicaragua achieved the fastest economic growth in Central America. Reagan's CIA chief William Casey vowed to 'make the economy scream'. Since 1982 the value of exports has been halved from over \$400 million to barely \$200 million today. The contra war has cost 57,000 killed or seriously wounded and an estimated \$12.3 billion. Over 60 per cent of government spending has been devoted to defence. Sandinista commitments to

health and education required credits. Last year's inflation rate was 31,000 per cent! October's Hurricane Joan brought damage put at \$848 million. The Nicaraguan people desire peace and reconstruction.

In this context the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie is demanding free trade and an end to land expropriations and nationalisation. On 30 January President Ortega stated that the combination of international and domestic conditions compelled the state to strengthen the mixed economy; the alternative was 'a war economy' with total state control. He announced that land expropriations would stop (only six properties were confiscated in 1988). The 60,000 peasant families without land would be able to join existing co-operatives or occupy land vacated during the war. Cattle ranches would be able to export produce

directly; previously they had sold to the state at set prices, and the state used export revenues to purchase necessary imports. In March the government released almost 1,900 former Somoza Guardsmen and allowed the Catholic radio station to recommence broadcasting.

While these moves are concessions to the domestic and international bourgeoisie, and reflect the failure of the progressive movement worldwide, and in the US in particular, to defend the Nicaraguan revolution, they do not amount to a surrender of workers' and peasants' power in Nicaragua.

The 30 January initiatives were accompanied by an announcement that the government would reduce expenditure by 44 per cent in the coming year. The effect will be about 35,000 redundancies, with the Ministry of Defence facing a 29 per cent cut, and the Ministry of the Interior a 40 per cent cut in their budgets.

It is likely that the coming period will witness an intensification of class struggle over the direction of the revolution. The US's successful isolation of the revolution and destruction of the economy has forced delay in the construction of socialism. The war against the contras formed a rallying point for the Nicaraguan people and their Sandinista leadership. Today, Marxist-Leninist and the revolutionary workers' and peasants' organisations will mobilise to ensure that Bush cannot buy what Reagan could not take - the Revolution. ■

(Thanks to Mike Webber for help with the material.)

Long Lartin forum sham

On 1 March Long Lartin prison hosted an 'open' forum on the subject of prison reform. Present at the forum were 60 prisoners, governor Joe Whitty, members of the POA and 75 'outsiders' including Board of Visitors members and guest speakers: Steven Shaw (Prison Reform Trust), Joe Sim (lecturer in Sociology at Liverpool Poly), Kate Akester (solicitor) and Jimmy Boyle (ex-prisoner). NICKI JAMESON examines what was said – and what wasn't said.

Not present were FRFI and radical pressure groups, PROP and RAP, whose invitations were vetoed by Whitty. Not present was prisoner John Bowden who initiated the whole event and who was conveniently transferred out of Long Lartin on a 'lay-down'.

The forum was filmed by *Bandung* and shown on 22 March on *Dispatches* on Channel 4, entitled 'Voices from Long Lartin'.

The TV programme was politically 'safe' but tinged with sensationalism. The opening voice-over announced, 'Murderers, robbers and rapists discuss the problems behind bars with invited speakers, Prison visitors and the governor,' and asked, 'How do prisoners cope with long sentences? Why do so many re-offend? Do they feel any remorse?' The remorse angle was recurrent. There was, predictably, no mention of prison as a weapon against the working class, no attempt to set the prison system in any, even reformist, social context whatsoever.

However, the documentary makers did give space to two small demonstrations which Joe Whitty obviously did not want shown. In separate incidents, placards were raised declaring the innocence of Alan Byrne (sentenced to life in 1985 for the alleged murder of a security guard), and Tom Curtis (also sentenced to life for murder in 1985).

There was also an interview with Patrick Callaghan and John Walker of the Birmingham 6. The two men were calm, and reaffirmed their innocence. They belied entirely the voice-over which cited among major stress factors in prison the 'mix of... murderers, robbers, rapists, terrorists,' and the 'bitterness of those who insist on their innocence'.

In the debate the issues of wages, 10/74, parole and Rule 43 were knowledgeably and eloquently raised by prisoners who were provided with no remotely satisfactory answers from any quarter.

Steven Shaw and Joe Sim appeared to do their best under the circumstances, conscious of the dubious framework in which they were speaking. Steven Shaw told me later that it was 'as open a debate as ever possible in prison.' Kate Akester was completely cut from the TV programme. *Bandung* Productions say this was done purely because of time and not for any political motive.

The fourth guest speaker was Jimmy Boyle who described how the Barlinnie Special Unit had changed him from mad, violent tearaway to rational, loving human being. His contribution was obviously inspiring to some prisoners but ultimately he sold out his own fight against the system by placing the potential for all problem-solving in the prisoner's ability to 'look within' and change, stop violence towards other prisoners and

POs, enter into dialogue: in short to reform.

The system is only forced to create a safety-valve like the Barlinnie Unit in a moment of extreme crisis. Resistance was high; a hard core of prisoners had been subjected to every form of brutality and punishment and still refused to 'conform'; POs were leaving the service. The trust-based 'community' at Barlinnie was a desperate compromise to avert a full-scale explosion in Scottish prisons. It was both a victory for the prisoners who had fought long and hard for better treatment and simultaneously yet another insidious form of control. No amount of good publicity for the Unit will persuade the Prison Department to reproduce it on a large scale. In fact its success has now become part of a policy supported by the SPOA (and by Joe Sim in the debate) for a 'range of units'. Thus Barlinnie Special Unit is used to justify the continued use of the barbaric Inverness cages.

Prisoner Martin Easterbrook who has been given no release date showed up the inadequacy of Boyle's 'Make the time work for you' advice and stated simply, 'The system is there to alienate you.'

Other prisoners echoed this sentiment and they asked Joe Whitty to prove his seriousness by meeting with them regularly, formally or informally, to discuss grievances. Whitty refused politely, saying that when he had to say 'no' to a demand, it would cause 'serious problems of control'.

Whitty effectively emerged as the 'star' of the show. At the start of the programme he said, 'Prison is my world and their world', blamed the 1987 Gartree escape and drugs for unpopular security measures in Long Lartin and claimed his willingness to 'negotiate' with prisoners (which he refused to their faces.) At the end he talked of 'living together' and combining a 'high level of security with a high level of humanity'.

On John Bowden's absence Whitty had this to say: 'More than anybody else probably in this prison I wanted John Bowden to be here today but at the end of the day... I have to make decisions for the good of the institution and that was the decision that I made... It was made solely and personally by me. I decided enough was enough and he had to go.'

Dispatches cited John Bowden as the prisoner who had initiated the debate. They showed a mugshot newspaper photo of him along with a sensational article. In the debate prisoners raised over and again John's transfer. PO Arthur Sutherland was asked why he had called John for classes and then put him in a body-belt and 'shanghaied' him out. Sutherland's replies were self-incriminatory; he talked of 'loss of control' over John Bowden, which was quickly jumped on by prisoners in a debate where everyone was pointedly discussing 'trust' not 'control'. So where was John Bowden?

Between 21 February and 6 March John Bowden was on a 'lay-down' at Winson Green prison, Birmingham. On arrival he was severely beaten and had a rib broken. He is taking legal action against the Home Office over his treatment. Having taken advice from his solicitor we do not intend at this stage to publish the full account of what happened to John at Winson Green but will do so without hesitation when the case is heard in court.

Long Lartin, where prisoners are televised 'openly' debating with governor, POs and prison reformers and Winson Green where the prisoner who initiated that debate was beaten and Barry Prosser was killed, are part of the same system. 'Control' is the operative word not 'trust'. There is no genuine interest from the Prison Department in reforming or rehabilitating. 'Carrot and stick' alternation between 'leniency' and brutality is a tried and tested method of control.

'prevent further fatalities' include more cell lighting, setting up a suicide prevention management group and training staff in suicide prevention techniques.

In Risley Remand, 'a comparable institution', the above are supposedly in operation. Yet on 27 March a young woman, Lisa Kewly, aged 19, hanged herself in her cell there. A Home Office report into conditions at Risley last year showed that Prison Officers were not implementing the suicide prevention techniques and that 'at risk' prisoners were being put on normal location. (See *FRFI* 80).

It will be no different at Armley. The Deputy Head of the prison has had the nerve to blame media coverage for the increase in suicides in his jail. Derek England, head of custody, insists it's nothing to do with the prison, saying that many young prisoners after hearing of press reports would see attempting suicide as 'a good way to get bail'.

But the mother of Charles Greechan, the fourth young man to be driven to his death, knows the truth. She said of the Home Office report, 'How can you say that Armley is a good prison, when all I have left of my son is a death certificate. The investigation was a big cover-up, a complete whitewash... I believe the prison authority was to blame... and if it takes the rest of my life, someone is going to take responsibility for Charles' death.'

The Armley Prison Campaign can be contacted at Harehills and Chapel-town Law Centre, Roundhay Road, Leeds

Armley Hell-Hole



AURIEL FERMO & GORDON TEAL

The Home Office's official report into conditions in Armley jail in early March concluded that bar a few minor 'technical' alterations, all was well in the jail. The suicides of five teenagers in the space of nine months on remand at the prison, according to Douglas Hurd, Home Secretary, '... appear not to have been the result either of the way... prisoners were treated or of conditions on the wing, which are at least as good as

those at comparable institutions.'

To prove the point, three top Prison Officials, including Home Office Minister for prisons, Douglas Hogg, posed outside Armley's gates, grinning for the cameras, and the Duchess of Kent went round the jail on 8 March. Her tour carefully avoided a visit to the youth wing.

Reality, however, cannot be smothered by a Home Office cover-up. Their own figures show that from May 1988 to March this year there were 43 recorded suicide attempts at Armley.

On 21 March, between 11pm and

midnight, (2 weeks after the report), three young men tried to kill themselves. Two, aged 20, tried to hang themselves and another, aged 19, attempted to slash his wrists.

On 15 March an 18-year-old, Andrew Taylor, was saved from death by his two cell-mates. They woke in the night to find Andrew trying to hang himself. He had been on remand for four months accused of theft and burglary. He had twice queried the delay and complained of difficulties contacting his family. After pressure from his solicitor in court, Andrew was given bail conditions.

On the morning of 30 March, Martin O'Connor (aged 22) also tried to kill himself. FRFI comrades met his family whilst petitioning for Armley to be closed down the following Saturday. They said Martin had been in Armley for seven weeks and 'was very, very nervous compared to five weeks ago'. Despite the stress on the whole family they were only allowed a 15 minute visit with Martin in the hospital wing.

Armley is the oldest and most overcrowded jail in Britain. Visitors told us of relatives and friends sharing cells with four and five other men, and three men to a cell is the norm. There are no toilets in the cells, no recreational facilities, and abuse and brutality from prison officers is rife.

Home Office recommendations to

Hypocrite Whitty

Whitty, the governor of Long Lartin, loves to go on TV saying he likes prisoners with minds of their own and who question his decisions. However, as long as you only *whisper* complaints he doesn't mind! Anyone who *openly* complains – even in a peaceful manner – is soon moved out of his 'liberal' jail. Whitty was extremely worried about how John (Bowden) was organising the Forum, when he saw it was not going to be a Home Office/Whitty exercise. John was doing the Forum for prisoners' interests in all prisons and not just 'Joe's Jail'.

The Lincoln Control Unit article (*FRFI* 84, John Bowden) was done well I thought. It seems the organisations MIND, in conjunction with the Howard League are playing their part in the cover-up over control units. In the Howard League magazine of November 1988, William Bingley of MIND writes that the units are for 'mentally disturbed' prisoners and says: 'the prison service is at least aware of the problem!' The strokes they pull to pacify the public about control units. You can imagine what the public thinks about people in units, 'poor chaps are off their heads'. John was 100% right when he wrote that more has to be done *outside* to stop the units. As the adage goes, 'Me today, you tomorrow.'

I look forward to next month's *FRFI*, best wishes and solidarity,
John McGranaghan
HM Prison Full Sutton

Winston Silcott

FRFI thanks those who responded to the Stop Press news last month that Winston Silcott, framed for the death of PC Blakelock, is being denied his basic rights at HMP Albany.

As a Category A prisoner Winston is entitled to a choice of work, but this was refused. In protest he went on hunger strike and was sent to F2 wing at Parkhurst C. Law, the A Wing governor at Albany, states that he was sent for 'medical tests' but it is well known as a psychiatric unit where prisoners are 'nuttled off' or registered insane.

Winston ended his hunger strike because it was directed only to his rights at Albany and on being returned to that prison he was put in solitary where he remains because, in the words of the governor, 'he refuses to conform to the rules and regulations of the prison.'

We urge all readers to continue to write to the Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, SW1 to demand justice for Winston. HMP Albany can be phoned on 0983 524055 ex215 or 284 or write to the prison: HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS. Winston's number is B4053.

POW BIRTHDAYS

Shaun McShane (B75898): HMP Maidstone, County Road, Kent ME14 1UZ **13 April**

Martina Anderson (D25134): HMP Durham, Old Elvet, Durham DH1 3HU **16 April**

Eddie Butler (338637): HMP

Frankland, Finchdale Avenue, Brasside, Durham DH1 5YD **17 April**

Patrick Hackett (342603): HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX **20 April**

Patrick McLaughlin (LB83694): HMP Parkhurst **2 May**

Joe O'Connell (338635): HMP Gartree, Leicester Road, Market Harborough, Leics LE16 7RP **15 May**



In 1848 democratic revolutions against feudalism and absolutism shook the foundations of Europe. The February Revolution in France toppled King Louis Philippe. In Germany there were popular insurrections in Cologne, Vienna and Berlin. In Italy, Hungary and Poland liberation movements raised the banner of national unity and independence. These revolutions were in essence bourgeois-democratic and not socialist. Marx and Engels nevertheless worked energetically for their victory.

Returning from exile, they based themselves in Cologne. Through the newspaper *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, of which Marx was the editor, they became the representatives of the revolutionary wing of the democratic movement. Their writings form a handbook of the principles and tactics communists adopt in the national democratic revolution.

The victory of democracy, even of bourgeois democracy, by gaining for the working class the right to politically organise, was an essential step towards socialism. Therefore, as Engels wrote in 1847:

'As long as democracy has not been achieved, thus long do Communists and democrats fight side by side, thus long are the interests of the democrats at the same time those of the Communists.'

Indeed in the *Communist Manifesto* itself they wrote that Communists 'would fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way' against the old order.

But Marx and Engels had no illusions in the bourgeoisie of 1848 and subjected it to remorseless criticism. Explaining why it played such a cowardly role Marx wrote:

'The German bourgeoisie had developed so languidly, so timidly, so slowly that when it began to constitute a danger to feudalism and absolutism, it already found itself opposed on the other hand by the proletariat and all those strata of the city population the interests and ideas of which were identical with those of the proletariat...'

The bourgeoisie, therefore, was:

'inclined from the very start to betray the people and to make compromises with the crowned representatives of the old society...'

Terrified by the mass movement whose final aim was not just democracy but the overthrow of all exploitation, the bourgeoisie reconstituted alliances with the monarchists and feudalists to defeat the 1848 revolutions. In France, where the working class was the most advanced, the bourgeoisie took part in the infamous massacre of workers in June 1848.

In 1848 the working class was socially and politically too weak to play the leading role in the revolution. But Marx and Engels drew essential lessons for the communist movement: in the age of capitalist ascendancy the bourgeoisie is incapable of playing a consistently democratic, let alone revolutionary, role. It is too terrified of the working class. Henceforth, the democratic revolution could achieve complete victory only if the working class has a leading role in the alliance of all the democratic forces. From its leadership of such an alliance, the working class, if it was strong enough, could then pass on to the socialist stage of the revolution.

These lessons were set out in the famous March 1850 Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League and in a series of brilliant pamphlets such as *The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850*, *The Eight-*

eenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*.

DECADE OF REACTION AND CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

The defeat of 1848 was followed by a period of political reaction. Marx and Engels, who had sought refuge in Britain, worked to reconstitute the Communist League. However, one of their

1848 Revolutions and the Paris Commune

emissaries was captured by Prussian authorities, who obtained a list of League sympathisers and organised the famous trial of Cologne Communists. Many of them were sentenced to long-term imprisonment. The Communist League was formally disbanded in 1852.

However, the future did belong to the working class and communism. This was ensured by the very development of European capitalism which in the 20 years after 1848 underwent massive expansion and development. This in turn, inevitably, produced a growing working class which began to fight for its own class interests.

Marx and Engels knew that the working class would only make progress if it had its own ideology and political organisation. In the decade of reaction which followed 1848, they worked to elaborate and strengthen the theoretical and ideological foundations for an independent working class organisation.

This work found its most enduring expression in Marx's *Capital*, a scientific and revolutionary critique of bourgeois political economy. *Volume One* was published in 1867. It laid bare the laws of motion of capitalist society and showed that capitalism was riven by irreconcilable contradictions and contained within it the material conditions for the transition to a higher, socialist form of society, one free of class exploitation.

With *Capital* the working class's struggle for socialism was placed on a firm and irrefutable scientific foundation. It contains the ideological and theoretical standpoint on which any independent working class organisation must be based. It is the working class's weapon against all bourgeois and opportunist detractors of the communist movement and proletarian revolution - yesterday and today.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

By 1857 the revolutionary movement had experienced a revival. This time it was primarily a working class movement. The economic crisis of 1857 had precipitated a new movement by English and French trade unionists and socialists which led to



London demonstration in support of the Paris Commune.

the formation, on 28 September 1864, of the first international working class organisation.

Though Marx had little to do with the organisational work to set up the First International, he was asked to join its leading committee. His writings and political work had earned him enormous credit in the working class movement. He eagerly took up the offer and even wrote the constitution of the new organisation.

Marx and Engels joined the First International immediately. They knew that the working class movement in 1864 was, from the standpoint of class consciousness, far behind that of 1848. Communism was not the prevalent ideology of the movement and opportunism was beginning to develop. The First International was by no means a revolutionary, communist movement. It combined many different working class and socialist trends and was full of contradictions and weaknesses. Marx and Engels also understood that the working class, which had grown by leaps and bounds, urgently needed an independent political organisation capable of advancing its own interests. Without this it would achieve nothing and remain the object of political manipulation by the bourgeoisie, the petit-bourgeoisie and the developing opportunists. In the First International Marx and Engels conducted a systematic ideological and political battle against petit-bourgeois opportunist trends. To firmly establish the principle that the working class required political organisation as an essential condition for its struggle, Marx and Engels had to wage bitter fights against the Anarchists in the International led by Proudhon and Bakunin.

Whilst fighting the Anarchists on the left, Marx and Engels also had to fight the English opportunists for an internationalist standpoint on Ireland. They worked hard and eventually succeeded in getting the International not only to support the Irish liberation struggle, but also to actively organise against British imperialism in England itself. It was during this period, in 1869, that they organised the biggest-ever demonstration in Britain in support of Irish political

prisoners. Through this battle Marx and Engels established the fundamental communist principles of working class support for national liberation movements in the fight against imperialism.

THE PARIS COMMUNE OF 1870

The most outstanding and historic development during the period of the First International was the Paris Commune of 1871. Following the French bourgeoisie's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, the working class - communists, anarchists and other socialists - followed by the revolutionary petit bourgeoisie seized power in a popular insurrection. They formed the first-ever proletarian, working class state in history.

This was a momentous episode in the history of the working class. The French revolution of 1789 had brought the bourgeoisie to power. The Paris Commune brought to power the working class, spawned by capital, degraded, humiliated, starved and exploited. It was the first example in history of the majority, the exploited and oppressed, becoming the ruling class. It was the first example of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Marx and Engels both warned against this seizure of power. They assessed that the working class was not yet strong enough to seize power and hold it. Yet, when the Parisian workers did take power, Marx and Engels set all their misgivings aside and pushed the First International to organise solidarity for the workers.

The French workers were showing the entire working class what real, proletarian democracy was. The ruling class's standing army was eliminated and replaced by the armed people. The Commune became an executive and legislative body at the same time and the functions of the police and the law passed directly to the people.

The bourgeoisie in France, in Germany and in Britain were aghast with terror and began to organise the counter-revolution. The Germans, who had just defeated the French ruling class, along with the British, extended credits to the French army.

When the Commune fell in May 1871 the ruling class revenge was bloody - 24,000 workers were butchered. In his *The Civil War in France*, Marx however concluded:

'Working men's Paris, with its commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them.'

Marx and Engels drew from the Paris Commune one fundamental lesson. Having formed its own independent organisations, the working class could not build socialism by merely taking over the existing bourgeois state. It could seize power only by smashing the bourgeois state apparatus and replacing it with the dictatorship of the proletariat: the majority of the people constituting itself as the ruling class and suppressing the old exploiting minority.

THE LAST DECADES

With the defeat of the Paris Commune, the First International was severely weakened. It formally ceased to exist in 1876.

After 1873 Marx spent most of his remaining years continuing his prodigious work on *Capital*. He died on 14 March 1883. Shortly before Marx's death Engels had written his seminal work - *Anti-Duhring* (1878) - a critique of a petit-bourgeois professor who was gaining influence in the German Social Democratic Party. Hated by modern opportunists it remains one of the finest expositions of Marxism.

Lenin wrote that after Marx's death 'Engels continued alone as a counsellor and leader of the European socialists.' He wrote and published his famous *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1888) and numerous other pamphlets and articles on socialism, politics, philosophy and science. He played an important role, in collaboration with Marx's daughter Eleanor, in trying to create, through the Democratic Federation, a Marxist trend in the British socialist movement. He also played an important role in the formation of the Second International in 1889. Before his death on 5 August 1895 Engels also managed to edit and publish *Volumes two and three of Marx's Capital*.

Today, with socialism in retreat an array of opportunists are brazenly attacking the principles of Marxism. To successfully resist this reactionary onslaught demands a thorough study and grasp of the ideological heritage that Marx and Engels created for the working class.

A fighting movement against apartheid

City AA's first major rally in 1988 commemorating the Sharpeville massacre was a historic one. It was the first time after 28 years that a section of the anti-apartheid movement in Britain had commemorated Sharpeville side by side with a leader of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, the organisation that led the 'positive action' campaign on 21 March 1960 against South Africa's racist pass laws.

LORNA REID & RICHARD ROQUES

This year the tradition continued and Comrade Waters Toboti of the PAC shared a platform with City AA, the RCG, WRP, Delysia Forbes of the Capetown 16 Campaign and other representatives of the liberation movements of Southern Africa: the BCMA and SWANU. Interviews with representatives of the PAC and SWANU are carried in this issue. Andrina Forbes, the mother of Ashley Forbes, imprisoned ANC unit commander, did not speak.

While in South Africa Andrina Forbes and Ivy Kriel (who had also been invited), the mother of Ashley Kriel shot dead by the South African security forces, had been told that the Capetown 16 Defence Campaign had been formed without consultation with the ANC and the AAM. This was not true; the campaign had contacted the ANC and held meetings with the AAM. Andrina Forbes was flown over by City AA and the Defence Campaign to speak at the rally. After four days of pressure from the AAM and Ashley's organisation, the ANC, she withdrew. City AA's platform representing all trends within the liberation movement had been sabotaged.

David Reed, speaking for the RCG, said:

'There are people in the AAM in Britain who appear to spend most of their time opposing City AA and attempting to sabotage City AA's events rather than fighting Thatcher's unrelenting backing for the apartheid regime.'

He condemned the AAM's sectarianism towards the liberation movement in southern Africa: 'It is a fundamen-

tally racist standpoint to refuse to support all sections of the movement in southern Africa... We in Britain have no right to elect a government of South Africa or Namibia in advance of the black people of those countries.'

He went on to explain that the sectarianism of the AAM seriously weakens the effectiveness of the solidarity movement here in Britain: 'They oppose any initiative in the solidarity movement outside their control which extends solidarity to any other trend of the movement than the ANC and SWAPO... They do not care how successful these campaigns are in building solidarity for the fighting people of South Africa... Thatcher has not been shifted by the movement that has to have total control of all anti-apartheid activities.'

Comrade Mouchapari of the BCMA thanked City AA and the RCG for our non-sectarian position, a point reiterated by Comrade Waters who confirmed damage was being done by the AAM's sectarianism.

The RCG has fought within the solidarity movement for a non-sectarian position and defended all initiatives against apartheid from the wrecking behaviour of the AAM's leadership. We have argued that sectarianism in the movement must be confronted, exposed and fought. The solidarity movement will remain weak and ineffectual for as long as the AAM is allowed to proscribe certain activities against apartheid. A real fighting movement against apartheid can only be built on non-sectarian support for all sections of the liberation movements in Southern Africa and for all initiatives within the movement here. This is what the RCG is fighting for. ■

JOURNAL OF AFRICAN MARXISTS

As a gesture of solidarity the *Journal of African Marxists* is offering four free copies of each of its back copies (except no.1) to interested prisoners in British jails. FRFI has been asked to publicise this offer. Interested prisoners should contact us at FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX and we will forward your orders. Further back copies are available at a concessionary rate of £1.

THE WINCHESTER THREE CAMPAIGN can be contacted c/o Grass Roots, 1 Newton St, Manchester 1 Tel: 061-236 3112.

REMEMBER 23 APRIL

MARCH FOR BLAIR PEACH - he marched for us Memorial march and meeting celebrating ten years of struggle against racism. Sunday 23 April, assemble 1pm Southall Park, Uxbridge Road. Meeting 3pm Fenner Brockway Centre, South Road, Southall. Organised by Blair Peach 10th Anniversary Committee.

Public meeting in solidarity with the peoples of Iran, Iraq and Turkey.

Saturday 22 April, 7pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1.

Organised by the Committee against the massacres in Iran, Iraq and Turkey



DEFEATING THE SECTARIANS

DAVID REED

A motion to the London Magazine Branch of the NUJ calling for it to drop its support for the Friends of Moses Mayekiso campaign was defeated last month. The motion instructed the branch to change its policy of supporting the campaign by withdrawing a motion (actually an addendum to another motion) put to the Annual Delegate Meeting of the NUJ.

The motion stated:

'This branch resolves to change branch policy from one of specific support for individual, personalised campaigns such as the Free Moses Mayekiso Campaign, to support for mainstream campaigns approved by the ANC, COSATU, and the Anti-Apartheid Movement of GB. To that end, the branch mandates the delegation to do all it can to withdraw or amend its previous ADM addendum on the Free Moses Mayekiso Campaign'.

The NUJ at its ADM last year became the first national trade union to adopt a principled non-sectarian position of support for all forces in the liberation struggle in South Africa and Namibia and for all anti-apartheid campaigns in Britain. Our late comrade and NUJ activist Terry O'Halloran played a central role in fighting for this position. Leading members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement of GB in the NUJ had tried to prevent this non-sectarian position being adopted but were resoundingly defeated (see FRFI 78). The motion before Magazine Branch can only be seen as another attempt to force the NUJ to take a sectarian line - this time through the back door.

Although the motion was put by a member of Magazine branch, two outside speakers were invited to put the case for and against supporting the campaign. Zola Zembe (SACTU) supported the motion and Mike Graham from the Friends of Moses Mayekiso Campaign spoke against.

Zola Zembe told us that we should not talk about individuals only about organisations. That we had to take guidance from representatives of the people of South Africa. To support the Moses Mayekiso Campaign was in fact telling black people what to do. Why support him and not Oscar Mpetha or four railway workers at present on death row in South Africa? Moses Mayekiso anyway was not in danger as he was out on bail.

Against this Mike Graham said that the Friends of Moses Mayekiso Campaign had the support of the representatives of the people of South Africa and in particular NUMSA and COSATU supported the campaign. He told us that a meeting had taken place between representatives of NUMSA, ANC/SACTU, the AAM and the Friends of Moses Mayekiso Campaign. An agreement had been made at that meeting that while the

ANC/SACTU and the British AAM would not support the campaign, they would also not oppose it. Zola Zembe denied that such an agreement had been made although minutes from that meeting were read out during the debate.

Moses Mayekiso was part of the Alexandra 5, a group of leaders from the Alexandra township who had been on trial accused of treason etc. Moses Mayekiso was a founder member of COSATU as well as a community leader. They had been picked out for trial precisely because they had linked the workers' struggle in the trade unions to that in the townships. They were out on bail precisely because of the success of the international campaign including that in Britain. The trial was about to restart and it was imperative that the campaign continued. At the time of the branch meeting Khola Mayekiso was speaking at meetings throughout the country on a TUC sponsored tour.



Khola Mayekiso, who recently visited Britain for a TUC-sponsored tour of meetings

Speakers from the branch contributed to the debate. An RCG member pointed out that it was the supporters of the motion that were adopting a policy of telling black people what to do. Our task in Britain was to support all those fighting apartheid in Southern Africa. It was for the black people of South Africa to choose their leaders not the British Anti-Apartheid Movement. It was wrong to only support one trend in the movement and doing this severely undermined the solidarity movement in Britain. Highlighting individuals was not the issue as this was an accepted way of bringing attention to broader political campaigns. The branch had to choose between a non-sectarian and a sectarian policy.

The motion was defeated. The branch chose to continue its support for the Friends of Moses Mayekiso Campaign. It once again rejected a position that Mathado Tsedo, Deputy President of the media workers union MWASA, described at last year's NUJ ADM as a 'leftover from British imperialist mentality'. ■

FRFI Readers and Supporters Groups.

London:

Afghanistan

South London 18 April, 7.30pm, Station Hotel, 296a Camberwell New Road, SE5.

North London 19 April, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1N

Remember the Hunger Strikers Irish Prisoners in British Jails

2 May, 7.30pm, Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, WC1 (nearest tube Russell Square)

Manchester:

All meetings start at 7.30pm at Gullivers, Oldham Street (off Piccadilly), Manchester City Centre. 24 April - **Namibia: Thatcher Backs Apartheid**

23 May - **Fidel Castro: In defence of socialism**

PUBLIC MEETING

Organised by RCG & Hands Off Ireland. Speaker John Mitchell 8 May 7.30pm

The Millstone, Thomas St **RCG PUBLIC MEETING Ten Years of Thatcher**

31 May, 7.30pm, Mechanics Institute, Princess St, Manchester M1

Bradford:

Whose Earth? Pollution and the Fight Back

Wednesday 26 April, 7.30pm, Bradford Central Library

Birmingham:

Action Against the Poll Tax

Thursday 27 April, 7.30pm, St. Paul's School Hall, Clifton Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham

For details of meetings in your area please contact FRFI, BCM Box, 5909, London WC1N 3XX

Communist Forum on South Africa - Black Workers Fight Back

Sunday 23 April, 6.30pm, Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1.

Commemorations:

Remember the Hunger Strikers

In 1981 10 Irish political prisoners died on hunger strike for political status in the notorious H-Blocks - Britain's concentration camp. FRFI remembers the hunger strikers and salutes all Irish political prisoners in jails in Britain, Ireland and abroad.

Bobby Sands 5 May 1981

Francis Hughes 12 May 1981

Raymond McCreesh 21 May 1981

Patsy O'Hara (INLA) 21 May 1981

Joe McDonnell 8 July 1981

Martin Hurson 13 July 1981

Kevin Lynch (INLA) 1 August 1981

Kieran Doherty 2 August 1981

Thomas McElwee 8 August 1981

Mickey Devine (INLA) 20 August 1981

Remember the Loughgall Martyrs Eight IRA volunteers murdered by the SAS on 8 May 1987

From the French revolution of 1789 to the Paris commune of 1871.

Dayschools on this topic are being held in London on 30 April and Manchester on 14 May. Contact FRFI for details of time and venue.

Join the action join the RCG

- Take the side of all those struggling against imperialism - **Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built in Britain in solidarity with the struggling peoples of Ireland, South Africa, Palestine, Central America. Help us to do this - **Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built here in Britain which stands with the oppressed fighting racism, repression and poverty. Help us build this movement - **Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built which challenges and defeats the treachery of the opportunist leaders of Britain's Labour and trade union movement - **Join the RCG!**

I wish to join/receive more information about the RCG.

Name _____

Address _____

Tel _____

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

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The revolutionary road to communism in Britain (Manifesto of the Revolutionary Communist Group) 175pp, £1.50 plus 40p p&p

Ireland: the key to the British Revolution by David Reed. 450pp, £3.95 plus 75p p&p

Miners Strike 1984-85 People versus State by David Reed and Olivia Adamson. 144pp, special offer £1 plus 40p p&p

South Africa: Britain out of Apartheid! Apartheid out of Britain! by Carol Brickley, Terry O'Halloran and David Reed. 64pp, 95p plus 30p p&p

Viraj Mendis Life or Death? Edited by Eddie Abrahams and Viraj Mendis. 48pp, £1.50 plus 30p p&p

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LETTERS



Hunger strike in German Prisons

I am writing on behalf of the hunger strike of the political prisoners from the RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion) and the Resistance Groups in West German prisons. On 1 February 1989 47 political prisoners from the RAF and from anti-imperialist resistance groups went on hunger strike demanding to be able to freely associate and communicate and the release of prisoners who are seriously ill. Several 'social' prisoners went on a solidarity hunger strike. On 14 February all but two hunger strikers interrupted their fast; every two weeks the hunger strike will be rejoined by two prisoners. So far the State Prosecutor has reacted by charging the hunger strikers and their lawyers with 'membership of a terrorist association' because they had been able to coordinate the strike.

Christa Eckes and Karl-Heinz Dellwo have been on hunger strike for over two months and their lives are in danger. There are now 11 prisoners on strike and the other prisoners (40 or more, there has been great solidarity also from so-called social prisoners) will go on strike.

Until now the government and Generalbundesanwalt (the highest prosecutor of the state) Rebmann are not willing to fulfil even partly the demands of the

prisoners whom they call terrorists and blackmailers. The hunger striking prisoners are prepared to negotiate but there is no sign at the moment that the government is willing to avoid at least one or two dead prisoners.

The support from outside the prisons is stronger than it has ever been before in a similar situation (it's the 10th hunger strike), even members of the Green Party and the Social Democrats are beginning to criticise the isolation. The international solidarity is also strong; it is known by now that also people from Kurdistan (16) and two IRA activists (Gerry Hanratty and Gerry McGeough) are held on remand in West German prisons under the same conditions (isolation) as the hunger strikers, not to speak of countless persons on remand because of 'terrorist activities' which includes all forms of more or less militant resistance.

Could you please send solidarity messages which could be published here. The address for solidarity messages is: GNN-Verlag, Guntherstr. 6a, 2000 Hamburg 76 (they publish a weekly 'hunger strike' bulletin). For further information contact: Hungerstreik-Info-Buro, Bartelsstr. 30, 2000 Hamburg 6, Tel. 140/4395416 (1-9pm). The struggle will go on. In solidarity,
Andrea Glas
Konstanz, W. Germany



Act Up

ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) is a mainly Lesbian & Gay organisation formed in January this year in response to the AIDS crisis/panic and the way it is treated in the press (if at all, and then only to fight the patients and not the virus), and by the government — £65.5 million is given over to the BMA for research into an AIDS vaccine (a highly profitable market) but none to finding a cure (highly non-profitable and, as a leading doctor maintains: curing the disease would only mean prolonging the life of those already infected).

ACT-UP is an activist-orientated group that has already received some publicity on the TV and in the Gay Press with pickets, actions and Zaps — notably of Texaco's head office who are forcing all current and prospective employees to undergo an HIV test. Anyone found to be positive is fired/not hired in order to pro-

tect Texaco's pensions scheme. Their Chief Medical Officer's position is — all people who are HIV + contract AIDS, all people with AIDS die.

The Department of Social Security at the Elephant & Castle is to be zapped soon — if you had AIDS before 1st Jan 1989 you are still entitled to a full £98 a week benefit; before April 1989 only £50 a week; from now on, benefits will be cut again a further half. The basic dietary needs of a person with AIDS are at least £30 a week. The group also seeks to campaign against phony, heartless placebo tests such as Concorde-1.

ACT-UP is a diverse, non-partisan, ad hoc organisation committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis and meets every Tuesday, 7.45pm at the London Lesbian & Gay Centre, Cowcross Street.

Wednesday 24th May will see the first ACT-UP benefit with the ACT-UP ALL STAR REVUE featuring Jimi Somerville, Andy Bell & others at the Fridge, Brixton. Tickets are £5 (£3 concs.) and are available from ACT-UP, RCG, City AA and others. More information from 01-431-4372. **ACTION = LIFE Dom**

Pik off Botha

Wednesday 15 March in the early evening, the South African Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, arrived at the S. A. Embassy in Trafalgar Square for a little soirée with Geoffrey. 'I'm an eminent person' Howe. Earlier in the day Pik had enjoyed a civilised democratic cup of tea with Glad Rags herself, Madge Thatcher.

In a caring, sharing kind of way the Met had decided to barricade Duncannon Street from pedestrians. At 6.40pm nine demonstrators from the 100 strong picket, jointly called by City AA and the AAM, jumped over the barriers and tried to make their way towards Botha and Howe as they left through the back door. Immediately, the police jumped on top of the demonstrators, throwing them to the ground, sitting on top of them, and smashing them against the wall. Six were released but the cops arrested three gay activists well known to them — Maureen Oliver, National Coordinator of OLGA, Dominic Thackray, RCG member and Youth and Students Organiser of City AA and Andrew Gardner. All three sustained heavy bruising and cuts to their

arms, shoulders, faces and legs. Two were later charged under Section five of the Public Order Act, the other under Section 4 (sic). At the time, Inspector Read informed them that they would be charged with Attempted Murder (even sicker). After the arrests racist Inspector Read went further to demand that City AA's legal officer, Anil Bhatt, show him his passport, apparently threatening deportation.

A few years ago, four white South Africans were arrested on arms smuggling charges. They were given bail and fled back to racist South Africa. Pik Botha publicly stated that under no circumstances would he return them to face the British Courts. We merely wanted to make a citizen's arrest of Botha for his part in a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

We appear at Bow St Magistrates Court on Thursday 29th June at 10am. Homophobic bigot Magistrate Ronald Bartle has already expressed an interest in trying the case. Join the court picket from 9.30 am when readers may see a bit more of Geoffrey and Pik.

**A Luta Continua
Dominique Sacre**

Solidarity on Ireland

I was very annoyed on Wednesday 5 April when a large group of comrades from the Leninist tried to take over a meeting FRFI called on Ireland. They insisted on dominating the discussion on an inquest on a Hands Off Ireland meeting held last year. The Leninist jeered at our plans for our annual delegation to Belfast in August for the anti-internment commemoration making disparaging remarks about 'revolutionary tourism'. One of them said our delegation would diminish the Time To Go demonstration in London. Not so. The events are on two separate weekends and me and my comrades in FRFI will attend both. Let me tell these sectarians in the Leninist that the local people of West Belfast are always delighted to welcome our delegation and the people of Ballymurphy whom we stay with always express joy and gratitude for our support. On the anti-internment march up to Andersonstown people lining the streets cheer and clap their hands in

spontaneous applause as soon as our banner flutters into view. We made the front page of the Irish News last year in a photo showing three local youth holding the FRFI banner.

With so very little solidarity from this — the oppressor nation — so very little action in support of the risen nationalist people of the occupied Six Counties it is irresponsible of self-styled 'progressive' groups like the Leninists to sabotage any initiative on Ireland.

During the meeting the Leninist accused the RCG of supporting the IRA but not the IRSP/INLA who lost three men during the 1981 hunger strike. I have been an FRFI reader and supporter since 1982 and I know that the RCG offers unconditional support to liberation movements across the world. LTTE, South American freedom fighters, all the Southern African movements for liberation and certainly those in Ireland.

Looking for the way forward and united action is what is needed. Not petty, leftist posturing.

Yours in solidarity,
Ainne Fury
London.

Protest against category 'A' status

Being placed on Cat A means you are kept in the punishment block — even the people who are on remand are put in the block if they are Cat A and at Manchester you were even denied remand privileges and given closed visits, only close family allowed to see you through a glass partition where you have to shout through a metal grill to be heard. You were subjected to a search before and after each visit. Even the visitors were subjected to harassment, for before they were allowed to visit they must give a photo of themselves to the prison and their home address — the prison would then contact the police who would go to the visitor's home to see if it checked with the address and photo given to the prison.

Visitors sometimes had to wait for up to 2 hours in a room with no refreshment before they were allowed a 15-minute closed visit. They themselves were searched, even children and sometimes babies, with a metal detector. Our clothing was taken from us at nighttime and we were kept in cells with no heating whatsoever. A light was kept on 24 hours a day. There was no association, in fact we were locked up in solitary 23 hours a day. The only time we were allowed outside the cell was for an hour's exercise — a walk around a yard built inside a cage.

Because of this degrading and inhuman treatment we decided to organise ourselves and fight back! Two of our brother prisoners went on hunger and thirst strike. After seven days they were starting to die. It was only then that the governor decided to take any action which was to remove our brother prisoners from the block

to the prison hospital. I then went on a dirty protest and the rest of the lads staged a sit-in in the exercise yard and we refused to stop the protest until our demands were met. The governor promised us that he would look into the matter. The lads came off the sit-in and I decided to stay on the dirty protest. The next day the governor came round to everyone's cells and told them that as of today they would be allowed association and four open visits a week. The lads on remand were pleased with the result and it just goes to show that unless you have solidarity and are prepared to fight back, those scumbags will walk all over you. I was taken off Cat A but because I refused to come off the dirty protest, I was put on 43 GOAD. I was on it three and a half months and was then moved to another prison.

Carl Yung



Write to:

**FRFI,
BCM Box 5909
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or ring:
01-837 1688**

City of London Anti-Apartheid Group Rally

to celebrate 3rd anniversary of the Non-Stop Picket outside the South African Embassy

Saturday 22 April, 2-6pm
MANCHESTER: Transport to rally organised by Manchester FRFI leaves 9am, outside Mandela Building, (Manchester Poly Students Union), All Saints, Oxford Road, Manchester. Cost £6/£3 unwaged. Book through FRFI, PO Box 80, Manchester M60 1RY.

'Targetting Health Care - Lessons from Central America'

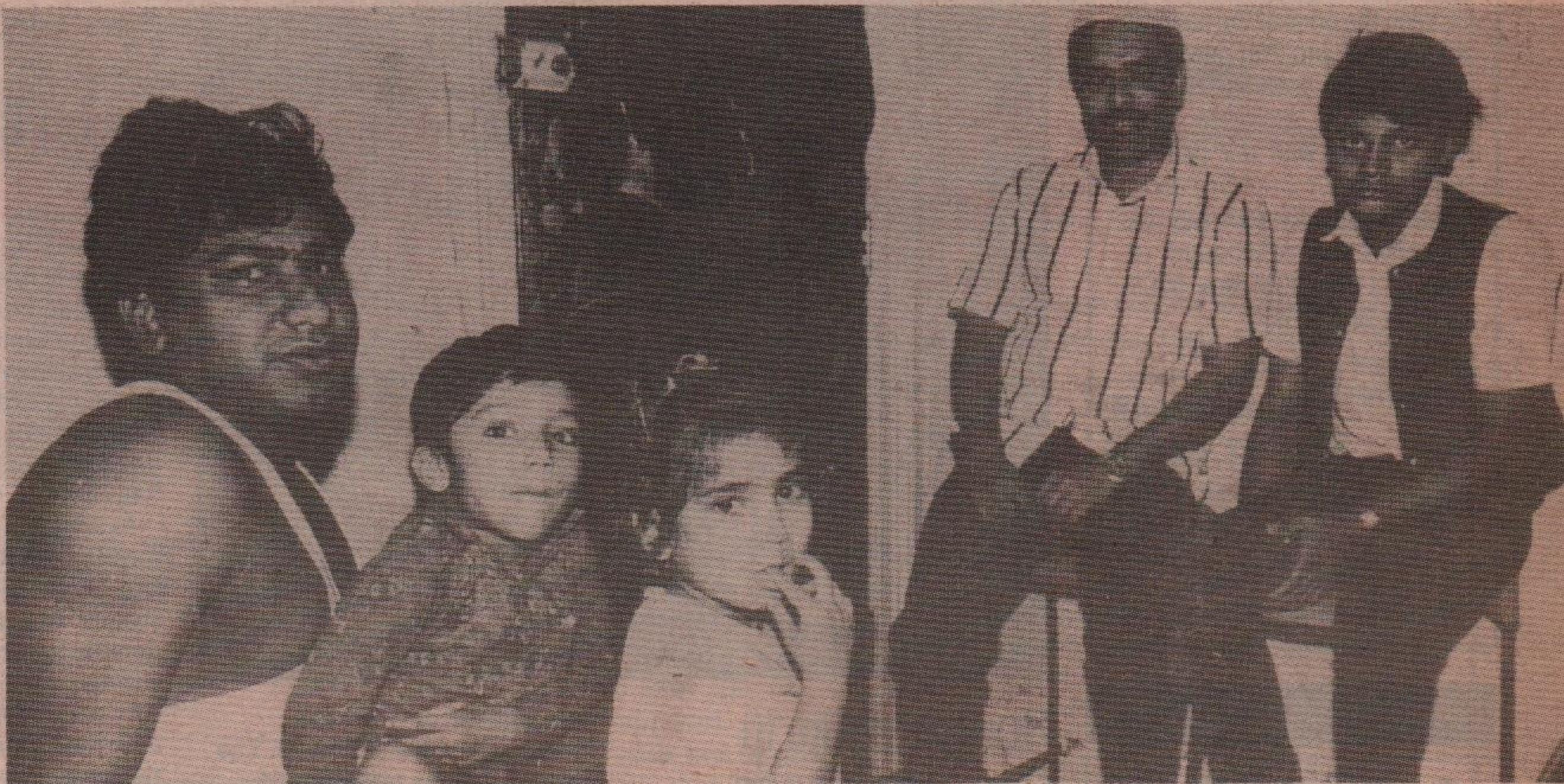
Conference on health care in Central America which will look at the contrasting experiences of health workers in Nicaragua and Guatemala and explore what can be learned from them by health workers in this country.

Speakers include **Andres Zamora of Nicaragua's health workers union and Margaret Harris, director of Guatemala Health Rights Support Project.** Manchester 17 June.

Organised by Nicaragua Health Fund and Guatemalan Committee for Human Rights. Further information from 'Health Conference', 83 Margaret Street, London W1N 7HB or phone 01-580 4292 or 01-631 4200/03.

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

SMASH THE POLL TAX



Ron Brown, Labour MP for Edinburgh Leith, sent the following message to FRFI:

The Tory Poll Tax is class law, benefiting the rich at the expense of the working class, especially pensioners and the low-paid.
Therefore socialists must start building a mass anti-Poll Tax movement which says collectively:
* Don't Cooperate!
* Don't Pay!
* Fight Back!
Unity is still strength!

The Poll Tax will be in operation in Scotland from April 1989 and in England and Wales from April 1990. Virtually everyone over the age of 18 is required to pay. It shifts the burden of local government finance onto the poor in inner city areas. It is a direct attack on the working class especially low paid workers, claimants and black people. LORNA REID examines the Act.

Claimants will receive an 80% rebate on the national average of £224 but not on the actual Poll Tax they have to pay. Pensioners not in receipt of benefit are required to pay the full amount. As well as imposing untold hardship on the poor, the Poll Tax register will be compiled from the electoral register. The low-paid and unemployed, in attempting to avoid payment, will not register and will lose their right to vote.

The Poll Tax will rob the poor to pay the rich. In Tower Hamlets, inner London, the Poll Tax per head will be £639 per year. A two-adult household faces an increase of £740 per year on their current rates bill. A similar family in rich Tory Westminster will save £47 per year.

In Bradford a two-adult household will pay £148 more per year. In South Bucks, stockbroker country, they will

save £430 per year. A two-adult working class family in Edinburgh will pay £181 more per year. Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland, will save £200 on his castle-like villa in an Edinburgh suburb. Local Government Minister, John Gummer, admitted that the average Poll Tax would be £196.40 in Tory-led boroughs compared to £294.40 in Labour boroughs.

Black people will suffer the most because they are more likely to live in inner city areas, to have a larger than average household size and lower than average earnings. The Low Pay Review of Autumn 1987 estimates that the average total Poll Tax will be £400 for white households and £800 for West Indian households. The unemployed will be hard hit. An unemployed two-adult household will have to find an extra £59.60 out of already reduced benefits. Working class women will suffer additional hardship. An unwaged woman who is married to or living with a male partner who is working is not entitled to Income Support and therefore has to pay the full Poll Tax.

As a percentage of income the poor will pay almost four times as much as the rich. Families on £500 or more per week currently pay 1.8% of their income in rates. Under the Poll Tax this will be almost halved to 1%. Families on £75-£100 per week (a third of all households) will face an increase from 3.7% to 3.9%. Under the Poll Tax, described as the jewel in the crown of Thatcherism, six million people will be better off but 30 million will be much worse off.

Every possible source of information will be used to force people onto the Poll Tax register: electoral roll, social security records, housing, education, driving licence, health and police records. Poll Tax registration officers have power to request in writing the 'name, address and any past or present place of residence of any person and the dates he is known or thought to have resided at that place.' School records are also to be used for information. The Poll Tax register will form a complete record of people's lives, every move they make, every change in their situation. Every adult will have a unique Poll Tax number - a national identity system in all but name. Every house-

hold will have to provide a 'responsible person' to provide information and guarantee payment. Failure to provide information will lead to a £50 fine for the first offence and £200 for each subsequent offence. Unpaid fines and Poll Tax will be recovered by direct deduction from benefits, or from wages, or from seizure and sale of property.

FIGHTING THE POLL TAX

Who will fight this assault? Certainly not the Labour Party. Labour-controlled councils in Scotland, England and Wales are implementing registration and payment. In Scotland they have already begun fining people for failing to register. Council workers in Strathclyde Region were threatened with dismissal if they failed to implement the Poll Tax with 'the utmost diligence'. 900 Poll Tax staff have been employed by Strathclyde. Lothian Regional Council spent £2.85 million on computers to file information on registration. Pat Lally, leader of Labour-controlled Glasgow District Council made it clear that the Labour Party would encourage the use of informers in the community. Lally stated 'People may have to be paid to inform on neighbours trying to dodge the new community charge... such a scheme, although morally repugnant, would be seriously considered'. Glasgow District Council has reissued application forms for housing benefit asking for each applicant's Poll Tax registration number. Those who have not registered will be denied Housing Benefit. Sheriff officers employed by Central Regional Council arrested the bank accounts of 130 people who had not paid their fine for non-registration. They included an unemployed, single parent of five children. Throughout England and Wales Labour-controlled local councils are recruiting Poll Tax staff.

All of this is done in the name of Stop It!, the Labour Party's official opposition to the Poll Tax. Stop It! amounts to urging councils to take their time in implementing the tax. It argues that only lawful methods of resisting the Poll Tax will succeed. It also, of course, consists of attacking those who advocate non-payment. Stop It! is the cover for the Labour Party's total capitulation to the Poll Tax. Kinnoch has made it clear that the Labour Party will not organise a

campaign of non-payment. The Scottish Labour Party recall conference held in September voted overwhelmingly against a campaign of non-payment.

The official trade union movement is using Stop It! as the reason to avoid organising effective resistance to the Poll Tax. NALGO, the local government trade union, has rejected calls for a campaign of non-cooperation. NALGO has threatened disciplinary action against any of its members who effect non-cooperation whilst at the same time offering union membership to Poll Tax staff.

The Scottish TUC's contribution to resisting the Poll Tax was to hold a derisory 11-minute industrial stoppage on 14 September 1988. The 30,000-strong STUC all-Scotland demonstration held in Edinburgh on 1 April 1989 did not have non-payment as one of its demands.

Yet despite the potential that exists to mobilise and organise widespread resistance the British left has allowed its subservience to the official labour movement to come before the needs of the thousands of poor and oppressed people confronted with a tax they cannot afford to pay.

Supporters of Militant in Glasgow have built anti-Poll Tax unions amongst working class communities and now lead the Strathclyde anti-Poll Tax Federation which is campaigning for non-payment. They were responsible for a 15,000-strong demonstration through Glasgow on 18 March. However, they remain tied to the Labour Party and are actively recruiting anti-Poll Tax activists to the Labour Party, the very party which is collaborating with the Tories in imposing the tax and is currently conducting another witch-hunt against supporters of Militant. Kinnoch is clear on how to treat anti-Poll Tax activists within the Labour Party. If they cannot be silenced they will be suspended or expelled.

The SWP and Workers Power share Militant's obsession with the official labour movement: 'Only industrial action can defeat the Poll Tax'. The most extreme example of this position was argued by the SWP at the national action conference against the Poll Tax in Newcastle in November last year: 'In a city like Newcastle the 250 employees in the Finance Department are more powerful than the

On average the Poll Tax for black families will be twice as high as for white households.

250,000 people who have to pay the Poll Tax'. To argue that only industrial action can defeat the Poll Tax at a time when there is no pressure on the official trade union movement to take any action on anything is tantamount to doing nothing and, further, demobilises the action within the communities which already exists. Community resistance involves trade unionists and if developed will create a movement which allows rank and file trade unionists to take the fight into the trade union movement with the real pressure of the community behind them. Trade union action will arise as the result of active and organised resistance within the communities.

The Poll Tax must be beaten. Millions of working class people have no choice: they will not be able to pay. A serious campaign against the Poll Tax must be based on the people who cannot pay and will not pay.

For now the Labour Party and its supporters have defeated the first stage of the fight against the Poll Tax. The next opportunity to challenge the Poll Tax will come when it hits hard at the poorest sections of the working class: when they are forced to defend themselves against the seizure of their wages and benefits, bailiffs and sales of their property. ■

How to avoid payment:

This is a brief summary of measures to take if you have decided not to pay the Poll Tax. More details are available from the Scottish Committee of 100 campaign at 53 Cochrane Street, Glasgow 1.

Apply for a rebate as soon as possible.

Do not return the form offering you simple methods of payment such as direct debit. If your local council insists on your agreement to a method of payment choose weekly or monthly instalments using a voucher book.

Do not respond to the demand notice which will be the first formal indication of how much you are liable to pay.

Do not respond to the 7 and 14 Days Notice which demand payment of Poll Tax arrears for three and twelve months respectively. The penalties for non-payment include arrestment of earnings and Income Support and warrant sales of your property, though not basic items. The cost of non-payment will be the Poll Tax + 10% surcharge + costs. Altogether, refusal to pay a poll tax bill of £300 could cost an additional sum of between £45 and £80.

How to delay registration:

Never fill in a poll tax registration form on the doorstep. Tell the canvasser to leave it with you and you will send it on.

If questionnaires arrive by post, send them back marked 'not known at this address'. Later you can say you never received the questionnaire.

You have 21 days within which to return your registration form. Wait two weeks after receiving the form then write back and tell them you never received it, your dog ate it or it fell in the fire - any excuse will do - and could you please have another one.

On receipt of another form wait two weeks and return it unanswered asking what one of the questions mean eg. are you the responsible person, if so what do you do if you are, can you appeal against being it?

When they return the form with an answer to your query, wait another two weeks and then repeat the process with another question. Five or six questions should cause at least four months delay.

Do not allow yourself to be pressurised into completing and returning the form until you are satisfied you completely understand it.