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FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

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interviews with PAUL HILL, his mother LILY HILL, and Armstrong's and Richardson's solicitor ALASTAIR LOGAN. Five page exposé of the Guildford frame-up

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Why have the Tory thieves fallen out?

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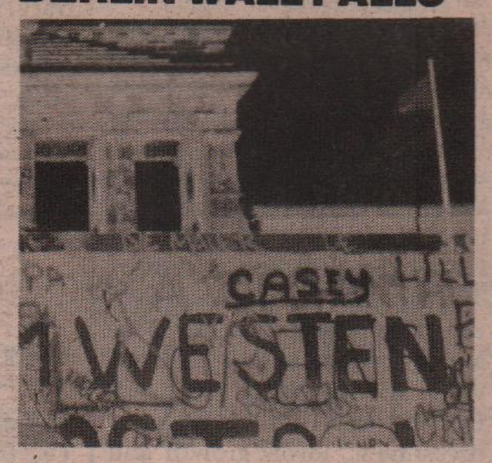
BERLIN WALL FALLS



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Thatcher baulks at European hurdle

Major political changes, it appears, are always precipitated by apparently minor, obscure and relatively peripheral events. So it is that a dispute over whether and when Britain should join the European Communities exchange rate mechanism (ERM) threatens to rip the Tory Party apart and end the era of Thatcherism. However, behind the internal convulsions devouring the once formidable fortress of Thatcherism are issues of enormous importance for the future direction of British capitalism and British politics.

DAVID REED

What is it then that has caused Thatcher's 'brilliant', and apparently 'unassailable' Chancellor to walk out of the government and even the Empress herself to announce that she too very soon will be vacating her throne? The answer lies in the state of the British economy and the failure of Thatcherism over ten years to halt and reverse Britain's relative economic decline.

The 1914-18 imperialist war ended Britain's supremacy as the dominant imperialist power. By the end of the Second World War power had irrevocably passed over to the United States, and Britain, in order to retain a significant role as a major imperialist power, became the junior partner of US imperialism. The retention of the British Empire, the international role of the pound sterling, and, to a large degree, the economic viability of the British economy, were dependent on the alliance with the US.

The special relationship with the US while allowing Britain to play a world role imposed an enormous burden on the British economy. Britain had to bear the costs of maintaining the imperialist economic and political order with the US, without an industrial base to support such costs. Britain had the highest military spending of the NATO alliance apart from the US. It continued to sustain the pound sterling as an international currency. And inevitably the development of the British economy followed the priorities of Britain's international trade and financial interests.*

The post-1945 period was dominated by the conflict between the international priorities of British business and finance and the political and economic requirements for expansion of the domestic economy. This took the form of repeated balance of payments crises, a deficit in the balance of payments threatening to undermine confidence in the pound. Confidence was restored by raising interest rates, raising taxes and curbing credit. That is, by deflating the domestic economy. The stop-go cycle became a feature of the British economy. This and the predominantly international orientation of the major British companies, led to lower investment, lower growth and lower productivity than in the economies of its rapidly growing competitors, most importantly, those of Germany and Japan. So the need to sustain Britain's imperialist interests is the root cause of Britain's continued relative economic decline.

Sections of the ruling class began to recognise that British economic policy would have to take a new direction if this relative economic decline were to be halted. They saw British economic interests as being better served by joining a regional, potentially very powerful imperialist economic bloc in Europe rather than remaining an overstretched imperialist power in the tow of US imperialism. Those arguing this position began to fight for a European perspective. This, however, would only make sense if the EEC developed into a federal or unitary state capable of upholding European economic interests in the face of the challenge from the other powerful imperialist powers, the US and a rapidly growing Japan.

The Heath government managed to secure entry to the EEC early in 1973. Its industrial policy changed direction and an expansionist phase began, only to be very quickly halted by the abrupt end of the post war boom precipitated by the quadrupling of oil prices by OPEC countries. That and the 1974 miners' strike saw the back of the Heath government. The new Labour government, like the previous one, very soon returned to the orthodox position of defending the pound (an IMF loan and harsh deflation) and, although accepting British membership of the EEC, was a far from enthusiastic participant. This Labour government laid the foundations for Thatcherism and the return of the so-called market strategy to reverse Britain's economic decline.

Thatcher has always refused to accept a secondary role for Britain in world economic and political affairs. On the contrary, she has relished the position of junior partner to US imperialism. The thought of Britain's imperialist pretensions being constricted by a wider European sovereignty has been anathema to her. Thatcher has regarded the EEC as an arm of anti-Soviet policy rather than a means to economic and political co-operation. In May 1980 it was only the threat of a split in her government which forced her to compromise over the EEC budget. Even so it took another four years before a permanent arrangement was finally made.

To sustain such an independent stance however is another matter. Unless Britain could build a strong competitive, profitable economy to hold its own with those in Europe, Thatcher's pretensions would eventually be exposed as grand delusion. That is why it is precisely when the myth of a British 'economic miracle' is being laid bare that Britain's relationship to the EC has forced itself into the centre of British politics.

With inflation at around 8 per cent, a predicted current account deficit of more than £20bn or nearly 4 per cent of GDP, base rates at 15 per cent and a 10 per cent depreciation of the pound this year, no one can be optimistic about Britain's economic prospects. But what of Thatcher's claims to have produced a 'supply-side' miracle, structural changes in British industry that will improve Britain's prospects for the future? The facts simply do not bear this out.

Since 1979 real business investment has grown by more than 4 per cent per year (7 per cent a year since 1981), nearly double the growth of the previous decade. Since 1986 manufacturing investment has been up by one third. On the surface these appear to be impressive results. However once the composition of this investment is analysed the situation takes on a quite different perspective.**

If business investment is divided into 'material production' (industry and agriculture) on the one side and services on the other we get a very different picture of the shape of the British economy. Whereas 'material goods' investment was still below the level of 1979 in 1988, investment in services has practically doubled.

Business Investment

Gross investment
% change 1979-1988

Total business	37.4
Industry and agriculture	-8.4
Services	93.1

Between 1979-1988 manufacturing investment increased by a paltry 0.6 per cent. Within the services sector, whereas investment in transport (an essential ancillary of material goods production) has fallen by 17.4 per cent between 1979-87, that in banking and finance increased by 125.5 per cent and in business services by 148.4 per cent. With this kind of imbalance in investment there is no prospect of overcoming the balance of payments problems resulting from the decline of British manufacturing industry.

International comparisons are also not favourable. Investment in Britain rose from 17 per cent of GDP in 1986 to 20 per cent in 1988 passing the 1979 level for the first time. However, even last year investment was very much higher in Japan (over 30 per cent of GDP), slightly higher in Italy and France and at the same level in Germany. More to the point, every year in the 1980s investment has been higher in these countries. Britain has the lowest share of manufacturing as a percentage of GDP than in any other major industrial country.

Even at its points of strength Britain is being challenged. Heavily dependent on the earnings from overseas investment and sale of financial services through the City, it now has to meet the threat from Japanese and German imperialism. The City is losing its share of world markets despite a growth rate of financial services since 'Big Bang' which is treble the rest of the economy. Tokyo has now overtaken London as the major centre for international bank lending. West Germany has now overtaken Britain in world ranking of countries with the largest net overseas assets. At the end of 1988 Japan's net external assets were $291bn, West Germany's $199bn and Britain's $162bn.

Thatcher's pretence that Britain is, or can be again, a great imperialist power is simply delusion. Lawson and most of the Tory Cabinet accept this. Lawson is no more keen on European union than is Thatcher. But while Thatcher has clung to the special relationship with US imperialism, he knows that Britain's future as a capitalist power must now be tied to Europe. If Britain does not join the European exchange rate mechanism in the near future the other European nations will go ahead on their own. The longer Britain stays out the less impact will this rapidly declining imperialist power have on the future of Europe.

Lawson resigned because Thatcher was not only stubbornly resisting the inevitable decision to join the ERM, but was using her adviser Walters to rubbish such a decision. Lawson had to go. Thatcher, however, is unrepentant.

In rejecting any moves towards political union she states: 'We firmly went in to co-operate as 12 nation states, to pool our sovereignty over certain things like safety standards and to play by the same ground rules – otherwise you could not have a single market – but still keep our identity, our pride, our loyalty as sovereign states.' She boasts of the battles she has won in the EC as if she were listing her imperial conquests. 'We won over the Common Agricultural Policy . . . I won over the European budget . . . And that is why Britain's reputation is high – because I will not be a doormat, I will not make Britain a doormat for other people to walk on – and the world knows it.' (*The Sunday Correspondent*, 5 November 1989)

These are delusions of grandeur which will leave her isolated in her own party. She senses this and has pre-empted the push by saying she will soon stand down. The real battles are still to come. For the present we can be certain that the era of Thatcherism is nearly over. The economic factors will prove to be the decisive ones.

* see *Britain in Decline*, Andrew Gamble, 1981, for further analysis.

** Andrew Glyn, Extraordinary Contrasts, *Financial Times* 8 November 1989.

We are no longer unassailable

CAROL BRICKLEY

For anyone who is not *One of Us*, that means You and Me, the crisis which followed Nigel Lawson's resignation as Chancellor of the Exchequor on 26 October was a flickering light at the end of a very long dark tunnel. The paucity of parliamentary opposition to Thatcher's government over ten long years has begun to convince us that defeat of the Tories is more likely to result from self-immolation than any popular alternative.

26 October was like Bonfire Night with Nigel Lawson in the rôle of Guy Fawkes. Would it be a sparkler or a Mortar Rocket? The explosion rocked Mrs Thatcher more than any of the previous Cabinet dust-ups which have sent smarting Ministers to the backbenches. So soon after ruffling Sir Geoffrey Howe's feathers, and amidst gloomy economic forecasts, Commonwealth flak over South Africa and a judiciary and police force discredited by the release of the Guildford Four, the central planks of Tory rule were beginning to stink of damp rot. Nigel Lawson was a minister whom Mrs Thatcher, like it or not, could ill afford to lose. 'He was unassailable (*by her*) – she said so.

Why then did Lawson resign? The debacle of Sir Alan Walters versus Nigel was nothing new. Lawson had been complaining about the activities of Thatcher's erstwhile economic adviser for years, and Walters had received several imperial commands from Downing Street to shut up. In the Walden Interview on ITV, Thatcher professed herself mystified as to Nigel's reasons, saying that he could not possibly have resigned over 'this small particular thing [Walters]'.

Offering clarification, Lawson explained to the Commons in his first speech from the backbenches: the Walters criticisms were 'of significance only in as much as it represented the tip of a singularly ill-concealed iceberg with all the destructive potential that icebergs possess'. He was referring to his ill-concealed disagreement with Thatcher about EMS and ERM.

Thatcher had very little regard for this argument, and neither had the British public she confidently informed the *Sunday Correspondent* on 5 November: 'I can tell you they are fed up to the back teeth with it [ERM], and they are bored.' (*Exit Nigel, scorched*).

Others have suggested that the resignation was a result not of policy differences, but personalities. This is nothing new either. In 1979 new frontbenchers emerged from their first Cabinet meeting shaken and amazed that the Shadow Cabinet had been putting up with Thatcher's behaviour for four years since her election as Party leader. Even some of her own backbenchers refer to her as 'slightly off her trolley, authoritarian, domineering, refusing to listen' (Walden).

Throughout all the years of brouhaha Nigel kept his plump little fingers gripped on Maggie's apron. Why let go now? Of course he was being treated intolerably, but after ten years, so what?

The alternative view of his reasons for resigning, and neither Thatcher nor Lawson are likely to advance it, is that Lawson was keen to go before too many economic chickens came home to roost. A recession is imminent and not even *We* can alter that.

The crisis did have its good points for Thatcher. It allowed her to reshuffle again – a bit before time perhaps – but its swiftness had the hallmarks of a long term plan. Hurd – designated liberal in the Thatcher-context – went to the Foreign Office (this does not matter as Thatcher distrusts the Foreign Office anyway). Waddington – hard line, loyal, pro-hanging right winger, became Home Secretary, and Major went where he was intended to the Exchequor. This is probably a Cabinet more united in spinelessness than any previous.

The spin-off for You and Me may be in a different area. In her *Correspondent* interview Thatcher suggested that she did not envisage going on for ever! She admitted that there might be people capable of taking over (provided only that they agree with her). 'I might fall [be pushed] out of a helicopter tomorrow' she admitted in a wholly new recognition of mortality. The end of the Walden Interview must have been a shock:

BW: 'Prime Minister, I must stop you there.'

PM: No, you must not.

BW: 'I must thank you very much indeed.'

PM: 'Strong leadership will continue'.

Like the tide, ITV was unwilling to obey her command. Strong leadership was not enough to extend the programme.

Her PR advisers will now be anxious to cast aside her image as a megalomaniac. While they redo the wardrobe (more frills?), the voice (less shrill?) she will be confined to making speeches on the Environment. Hard luck on the Environment!

Upheaval a threat to socialism in the GDR

EDDIE ABRAHAMS/TREVOR RAYNE

'This is the equivalent of the discovery by Europe of Latin America, exploiting cheap labour and cheap supplies.' (Norbert Walter, Senior Economist with Deutsche Bank)

Behind the scenes of jubilation, beyond the slogans heralding victory for freedom and democracy, this is capital's cold, accurate assessment of recent developments in the German Democractic Republic (GDR). The bourgeoisie is applauding what it sees as the collapse of the barriers to capitalist accumulation and the transformation of socialist countries into spheres of capitalist exploitation where workers from socialist countries will once more become wage-slaves.

Massive demonstrations in the GDR during October and November culminated in the resignation of the government, the Communist Party leadership and the lifting of all travel restrictions and border controls. Meanwhile, the Central Committee of the Communist Party, meeting in an emergency, is preparing to yield to the combined pressure of domestic and international capitalist and petit-bourgeois forces. It is expected to announce elections in which anti-communists such as the New Forum will participate. Additionally proposals are to be advanced for economic reforms which will extend the operation of market forces and strengthen the already signficant private sector.

These developments could take place only because the Communist Party has lost the support and loyalty of a substantial section of the GDR population. Tainted by corruption and bureaucratic methods it not only alienated sections of the working class but failed to eliminate significant vestiges of social democracy. As a result, small but significant bourgeois forces were able to maintain an organised existence and are now vying for power.

East Germans run across the Austro-Hungarian border.

The West German bourgeoisie relying on the combination of popular hostility to the Communists and an increasingly confident pro-capitalist movement, is taking the initiative to begin the process of destroying socialism in the GDR. Chancellor Kohl has offered substantial economic aid in exchange for an end to the Communist Party's 'monopoly of power' and 'free elections'. By these means the German bourgeoisie hopes to restore its rule over the whole of Germany and allow German capital to emerge as the major power in Europe ready to accumulate through its exploitation of the socialist countries.

These developments are a serious setback for socialism not only in the GDR but internationally. Imperialism's counter-revolutionary offensive, spearheaded by the US military build-up during the 1980s, has thrown the Soviet Union onto the defensive. The retreats from socialism in Poland and Hungary are threatening to turn into a rout. The massive diversion of resources into military uses required to match the imperialist threat exacerbated the economic problems of the socialist countries. As a result the weight of the German capitalist economy has increasingly drawn the GDR into its economic and now political orbit. The Soviet economy was an insufficient counterweight to this tendency. The tens of thousands of young GDR citizens who desert to West Germany are an expression of this tendency.

A central component of the offensive against the socialist countries has been European social democracy. It has both sanctioned the imperialist military build-up and sought to provide ideological legitimacy to imperialism and capitalism. It makes a direct appeal to workers in the socialist countries, presenting itself as an alternative to communism. In the socialist countries some communist leaders have encouraged these processes. The majority, for example, of Hungarian communists now define themselves as social democrats.

No communist can applaud developments in the GDR and other socialist countries as advances, as measures which enhance democracy and freedom for the majority. On the contrary, the subjugation of fresh supplies of resources and labour in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union will enhance the ability of transnational capital to extort profits from labour at home and abroad. Ford, for example, have announced that investment scheduled for Dagenham will now be made in Poland where labour costs are only a fraction of those in Britain. At the same time as British labour has to compete with Polish labour, so Polish labour is stripped of the social provision that socialism afforded. Already in Hungary and Poland poverty and unemployment are reappearing on a massive scale.

Thatcher declared the opening of the Berlin Wall 'a great day for freedom, a great day for liberty.' The German Chancellery Minister claimed that 'socialism is at an end and the drive to freedom is unstoppable.' Those are the hypocrites who equate freedom and liberty for the people with capitalism. Under capitalism and imperialism freedom and liberty are the privileges of giant industrial and banking combines which own the means of production.

The prosperity and 'democracy' in capitalist countries rests on the enslavement and brutal exploitation of the oppressed nations. The freedom and liberty of the imperialist countries is akin to that of ancient Greece built on the back of a slave economy. Last year alone, Third World debt repayments to finance Thatcher's 'freedom and liberty' amounted to $142.4 billion. The net transfer of just banking resources from oppressed to imperialist nations was $50 billion. As a result 1.3 billion people in the Third World are seriously sick or malnourished. Every day 40,000 children die from malnutrition and hunger related diseases. Just the money that is spent on body deodorants in the imperial heartlands in a single year is six times more than the sum needed to eradicate all curable diseases in the oppressed nations. To finance Thatcher's 'freedom and democracy' the peoples of oppressed nations, accounting for three quarters of the world's population, endure unimaginable poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease, homelessness and misery.

Events in the GDR have not yet finished unfolding. Whilst Thatcher finds it easy to applaud what she sees as the collapse of socialism, contemplating the prospect of German re-unification generated by recent developments is a far more foreboding business. The ruling class in Britain, USA and France are in somewhat of a quandary. Whilst eagerly awaiting the collapse of socialism they are opposed to German reunification. Thatcher responding to a question about reunification said:

> 'I think you are going much too fast. You have to take these things step by step and handle them very wisely . . . The first thing is to get a genuine multi-party democracy in East Germany and I hope that movement will spread to the rest of Europe.'

What they fear is the emergence of Germany as a mighty world power capable of challenging any combination of other imperialist powers. In the competition for markets which are hoped for in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, a mighty re-unified Germany could easily win out against other imperialist capitals. This is the fear that makes Thatcher shy away from German reunification.

Developments in the GDR, the prospect of German reunification and the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe would fundamentally and irrevocably alter the political and military map of Europe. With socialism weakened and on the retreat the NATO alliance could splinter as competition for control of vast new markets intensifies with each ruling class seeking to satisfy its own appetite at the others' expense. The imperialist offensive against the socialist countries can only be halted if socialists in the imperialist countries do their utmost to end the counter-revolutionary interference of their governments in socialist countries. ■

Cambodia: Hurd's facade of lies

DALE EVANS

'We never have given, and never will give support of any kind to the Khmer Rouge,' Douglas Hurd, Foreign Secretary. Since the recent showing of John Pilger's film *Cambodia Year Ten*, Thatcher's government has come under a great deal of pressure against its wholesale support for the various groups of Cambodian contras' bases in Thailand.

The statement is a façade behind which Thatcher's government has been consistently backing the Khmer Rouge, the United States and Chinese interests in South East Asia. On 25 December 1978 Vietnam invaded Cambodia (Kampuchea) after years of border raids by the Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot. 30,000 Vietnamese had been killed. Vietnam found a country where one to two million Khmers had been killed by the genocidal regime of Pol Pot. Five million faced starvation. In spite of this appalling prospect the United States, backed by Britain, were to use Cambodia as a battle field for a diplomatic, political and economic war against Vietnam. The position commonly adopted was to stop Vietnamese expansionism. 'Unless the Vietnamese feel pain, they'll have no incentive to leave Cambodia', said John Holdridge, US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific.

'CAMBODIA IS ALL VIETNAM'S FAULT'

As Cambodia starved, Britain undermined the rescue operation through inaction and dirty tricks. While food aid to Vietnam was suspended, Thatcher gave £425,000 to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees), which was providing aid for refugees on the Thai-Cambodian border. Britain alongside most of the capitalist world refused to recognise the new Cambodian government. This led to a virtual boycott of aid to Cambodia from the large aid organisations of the United Nations and also the 'neutral' International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The new Cambodian government made an immediate call for 100,000 tons of rice: UNICEF and the ICRC responded with only 1,300 tons during the first few months.

British officials also tried to dissuade non-government organisations such as Oxfam from joining the relief operation, citing various Vietnamese obstructions to the efficient distribution of aid. Neil Marten, Minister for Overseas Aid, told a journalist: 'The government will be helping through the International Red Cross. One of the objections [to giving aid to Cambodia] is that the Vietnamese are preventing it from getting in and their inability to get it distributed. The Red Cross is doing what they can, but don't seem to be getting much help though. Anyway, the situation in Cambodia is all Vietnam's fault!'

PERMANENT ISOLATION AND THE UNITED NATIONS

In 1979 under public pressure the Thatcher Government dere-cognised Democratic Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge). However, in the United Nations the British voted consistently in favour of giving Democratic Kampuchea a seat at the UN in four separate votes on credentials between 1979 and 1982. Before the 1980 vote, Lord Carrington (Foreign Secretary at the time) explained: 'The stand taken by the countries of the Association of South East Nations (ASEAN) has my government's full support': that is, full support for the Khmer Rouge.

Denying the People's Republic of Kampuchea a place at the UN has starved the PRK of much-needed development aid to rebuild an infrastructure, education, health care, industry etc. This has led to terrible suffering; for example, 1/5 of newborn babies die before they are 5. Only 2 per cent of the population have access to noncontaminated water. Britain has supported this stand for ten years. Hurd's recent gift of £250,000 in such circumstances is a disgrace.

Since 1982, Democratic Kampuchea has been a coalition of three forces: the Khmer Rouge; the National Sihanoukist Army (ANS); and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF). All three have been rebuilt under the auspices of the United Nations. 260,000 people live in refugee camps on the Thai-Kampuchean border, and each camp is controlled by one of the military organisations. The refugees are hostages used by the United Nations as evidence of popular support and a social base for Democratic Kampuchea. They live a life of untold brutality where murder and rape are common and teenage boys and young men are press-ganged into the terrorist armies. Even civilians take part in military operations, such as walking through mine fields with supplies. The three armies and civilians alike are clothed and fed by the United Nations Border Relief Organisation (UNBRO). The United States has contributed over $70 million to UNBRO, and Britain has given £13 million. With arms from China and ASEAN countries and UN material aid, the Khmer Rouge now has an efficient army of 20,000 men. Furthermore, Pilger has publicised the fact that SAS officers, veterans of the Malvinas War, have been training terrorists in the KPNLF and ANS since 1985. Officer training courses were given, but also a special crack sabotage unit was created to destroy bridges, railway lines, power lines etc. The training of the contras seems to be part of a perverse strategy that a strong non-Khmer Rouge military force would be politically stronger to influence the Khmer Rouge, and perhaps split it. In fact Thatcher truly believes that anti-Pol Pot Khmer Rouge really exist: 'Some of the Khmer Rouge of course are very, very different. I think there are two parts to the Khmer Rouge: those who supported Pol Pot, and then there is a much, much more reasonable group within the Khmer Rouge.' Pilger put this to the Foreign Office Minister who was unable to name the nice Khmer Rouge and cut short the interview. In reality the contra organisations will often fight together and giving military training to two will also affect the third, the Khmer Rouge.

RECOGNISE THE PRK NOW!

Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd's statement is just the most recent cover-up for British imperialism's continued support for the Khmer Rouge. The last Vietnamese troops left Cambodia in September; since then the coalition has launched an offensive, capturing some towns near the border. The return of the genocidal Khmer Rouge is now a possibility. On 15 November Britain is backing a UN resolution which supports the placing of a Khmer Rouge government in Cambodia. Write now to your MP and the Foreign Secretary, demanding full recognition of Cambodia's rightful government, the PRK! ■

Destroy the five pillars of apartheid

Comrade Gora Ebrahim is Foreign Secretary of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania. He recently attended the Commonwealth Heads of State Summit at Kuala Lumpur. On his way back to the United Nations he stopped off in Britain for a meeting at the Foreign Office. While in this country he spoke to DAVID REED about the Commonwealth Summit and recent important political developments in South Africa.

What progress was made at the Commonwealth Summit?

We went to Kuala Lumpur with the important objective of getting the Commonwealth to sustain the present sanctions, as well as to look at new areas where you can introduce new forms of sanctions against South Africa; a recognition by the Commonwealth that sanctions do work and that they should be sustained and intensified.

In this regard we can say that we have succeeded, because on the financial aspect the Kuala Lumpur conference decided that sanctions against South Africa should be continued, and new areas should be looked at. It was also a triumph in the sense that the South African racist regime also had its eye on the Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Heads of State meeting, because they took the opportunity to release some political prisoners in order to arm Mrs Thatcher to go there and try to defuse the continued call for sanctions and the strengthening of sanctions by the Commonwealth countries. In this regard they failed. So in that objective we can say we were successful at the Kuala Lumpur conference.

What was the general response to Mrs Thatcher's political behaviour at Kuala Lumpur?

John Major, the then Foreign Secretary, participated in the drawing up of the document on Southern Africa, and there were certain concessions that were made in order to accommodate the British position. After that, the document was taken to the Summit as a whole where Mrs Thatcher moved for its adoption, and it was seconded by Mr Mulrooney of Canada. Two hours afterwards, Mrs Thatcher's Press Secretary issued a statement, quite evidently written by Mrs Thatcher, which then repudiated what had been agreed. All of the 48 members were infuriated, including ourselves, the national liberation movements, that Mrs Thatcher and Mr John Major should first and foremost participate in drawing up the document, agree the document, move its adoption, and then go out of the meeting to repudiate it.

There was total unanimity there, with perhaps the sole exception of Mrs Thatcher, that whatever cosmetic changes the South African racist regime was introducing, that whatever postures de Klerk was taking in the country, were all due particularly to internal resistance and international pressures, specifically sanctions. Even John Major admitted sanctions did play a role, although he tried to say it was not the role that sanctions played that were bringing about the changes now taking place in South Africa.

Do you believe, as has been put over in the Western media, that there is any real possibility of substantial negotiations with the racist regime?

In the 1970s we had Vorster, who said 'Give me six months and I will introduce changes'. He ruled for six years after that and ended up by invading Angola. Then you had Pik Botha, the current Foreign Minister, who at the United Nations said that apartheid was dead. We have all been looking for the body to give it its due ceremonial burial, but we have all failed to find the body. Then came PW Botha with what some may consider an even more dramatic statement: 'We should either adapt or die'. Now, it is true that he almost died, he is politically dead, but he never adapted. Now we have a person, in F.W. de Klerk, who is posing as a messiah of reform, but he has said that he wants five years in which to introduce the reforms. If you look at his five year proposal, if you look at the Manifesto of the National Party, they all talk about reforming the system within the present institutions, so that one cannot really talk about a basis existing for negotiations. We of the PAC have said categorically that there are certain issues in our country which are not negotiable.

The Population Registration Act must go; the Land Act of 1913 and the Group Areas Act must go; the Bantu Education Act must go; the Tricameral Parliament system must go, the Bantustans must go. These things cannot be negotiated.

Our position is that there must be in our country one person, one vote to a single, non-racial chamber, and enshrined in the constitution the guarantee of individual rights. That, we believe, is the only practical solution to the problem in our country. These things, as far as we are concerned, are not negotiable. What we can negotiate is when to implement them.

A great deal has been made of the statement by the OAU, which certainly doesn't go anything like as far as your demands. What is the significance of the Harare statement in your view? What kind of support does it have in the country?

The Harare declaration is now considered to be the position of the OAU. There are positive aspects to the document, particularly the intensification of the struggle, including armed struggle, the imposition of comprehensive, mandatory sanctions, and the isolation of the regime which we support. As for the question of what constitutes a conducive climate for negotiation we do not believe that the release of political prisoners, the lifting of the state of emergency, the unbanning of organisations, the return of the exiles and the removal of the police from the townships, constitute a fundamental base for negotiations in our country or create a conducive climate. Our position is that the five fundamental pillars of the apartheid regime must go if you are talking about creating a conducive climate. The document, as far as we are concerned, reflects the overall position of the OAU. But it is not the programme of the national liberation movements, certainly not the programme of the PAC. And no country on the continent has asked us to abandon our programme for that declaration. We have our programme and we will continue to implement our programme.

Could you explain your fundamental objections to that programme in more detail?

First and foremost they are calling for a peaceful solution to the South African problem. We say if you are talking about peaceful solutions, it means the eradication of the system and not asking the oppressed and dispossessed majority in the country to end their resistance to the regime, because that is what is implied in a sense when you say there must be cessation or suspension of violence on both sides. We believe that the people at Sharpeville, Langa, Soweto, Uitenhage and other places who were massacred in our country were unarmed, defenceless people, and the national liberation movement, the PAC in particular, decided that it was the legitimate right of the people to defend themselves. If we are now to be told that we must disarm, and leave the regime fully armed, then this is something which is unacceptable to the PAC.

The other question is the mechanism for bringing about the changes in our country. They start off by saying there must be a cessation of hostilities. Our view is that unless our demands are met, there can be no cessation of hostilities as far as we are concerned. We believe the legitimacy of our struggle must be recognised.

We believe that we are where we are today precisely because of a combination of the armed struggle, the political struggle and the international isolation of the regime. We believe that none of these should be relaxed, because any relaxation on any of these three fronts, in our view, will only play into the regime's hands in giving it the much-needed time it wants.

The transfer of political power to the majority, based on the principle of one person, one vote to a single chamber cannot be brought about by merely appealing to the regime. This can only be brought about by the intensification of the political struggle, in particular the armed struggle, and the international escalation of sanctions against the racist South African regime.

Could you say what steps you see being taken to gain support for these five demands as the minimal basis for any negotiation with the regime?

We of the Pan Africanist Congress have always maintained that ours must be an internally based struggle, and therefore the demands that we are talking about must come from the internally based organisations within our country. There must be a democratic discussion on the part of the people as to what they are struggling for. The struggle of our people was not merely for the release of political prisoners, for the unbanning of organisations, and for the return of the exiles. Those were not the essential aspects of the struggle. The essential aspect was the total eradication of the apartheid system, the people exercising their inalienable right of self-determination, and that still remains for the people inside the country the major and the ultimate objective.

Now, what are they doing about that? In this regard, we want to say, the trade union organisations in the country, the youth organisations in the country, the student organisations, the women's organisations, part of the enlightened or progressive clergy in the country, all these people are in fact preparing a position in the country that will clarify what the struggle is all about. There is in the view of many in our country an attempt to divert the struggle, to say to us that a messiah of reform has descended from the South African political scene. That is something that our people reject.

Inside the country the mass organisations have now consolidated into the steering committee of the Pan-Africanist Movement (PAM). The Pan-Africanist Movement's basic task will be to co-ordinate the activities of the people in the country and to come up with a principled document, reflecting the basic principles which the PAC have always espoused. PAM is an umbrella organisation inside the country that will be launched in early December.

We are very confident that the position we have enunciated and which will be further enunciated by PAM, has already gained acceptance in many African countries, has gained acceptance by the Commonwealth, and we know that many of these things will be reflected in the coming special session of the United Nations which will take place on the 7 and 8 December, where the position will be further clarified as to what the struggle is all about and what constitutes the essential aspects of apartheid.

What you're basically saying is that any notion that talks with the regime are about to start is a totally false conception of reality, and that a long struggle still exists in order to force the regime into a position which is acceptable to the vast majority of black people in South Africa?

What I would say at the moment is that the regime has been weakened; it is facing a political crisis, an economic crisis and a military crisis, but that this does not at this moment in time create the climate for negotiations. The basis for negotiations now does not exist, although the granite wall of the apartheid regime has in fact been displaying major cracks in it. What the international community and some elements within the country are saying to us is that over the past three decades you of the PAC, in particular, have been carrying out a systematic attack with a sledge hammer against a granite wall. Now that the cracks are visible, what you should do is throw away the sledge hammer and watch the wall fall by itself. And that is what we are saying would be suicidal on our part. This is the time when we should even swing the sledge hammer with much more force for the final destruction of the apartheid system. ■

Elections in Namibia

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM

Namibians queued for hours in the intense sun to cast their votes in the country's first election. Polling is over five days, from 7-11 November, at 385 voting stations. The result, splitting the votes proportionately against 10 competing lists of candidates to a 72-member Constituent Assembly, is expected, after we go to press, on 15 November.

South Africa administered the poll under United Nations supervision. They were forced to meet many of the UN objections to their original election plans, but have still been able to load the dice. Special trains and buses have brought 10,000 whites across the border to vote from their residences in South Africa.

On 1 November Pik Botha claimed he had a document giving 'evidence' that 600 SWAPO fighters had infiltrated the north from Angola. This was quickly proved to be a forgery. An embarrassed Botha had to back down. Whether Pretoria's foreign minister was fed disinformation from his own military, or the British Signals Regiment which controls UN communications in Namibia, has not been revealed.

SWAPO's treatment of its dissidents has been a feature of the campaign both for Namibians who are loyal to the cause of liberation as well as South African propagandists. The UN mission that visited Angola and Zambia seeking 1,100 people, were able to account for 785 names on their list. Explanations are still being asked of SWAPO's leadership to assist in tracing the remaining 315 names.

Attempts by Pretoria to make SWAPO's detainees the sole news story serve only to deflect attention away from the brutality of its own colonial rule. The DTA, which governed on South Africa's behalf, is awash with money. The Namib Foundation, with R30 million at its disposal, has funded some of the smaller electoral fronts that include collaborators.

It is the polarisation of wealth between the white minority and black majority that any incoming government must address. The Namibia National Front has stressed in its campaign the need to return the land to the people, and in particular the land owned by the absentee landlords. In pursuit of its policy of reconciliation with settler interests SWAPO has invited the Afrikaner nationalist farmer Jannie De Wet to be agriculture minister in a SWAPO led government. De Wet, who was the colonial 'Commissioner General for the Indigenous People of South West Africa' from 1970-78, has put his conditions:

'If they are prepared to guarantee not to expropriate our properties, and if they are prepared to give us Afrikaners the right to live according to our own culture, then I would be willing to serve with them'. ■

STOP PRESS

Initial reports on the election results give SWAPO an overall majority but not the two-thirds vote needed to write the constitution alone. The South African-backed DTA will be the largest opposition party. SWAPO will form the new government.

Oxygen for apartheid

CAROL BRICKLEY

Before the Commonwealth Heads of State Summit in Kuala Lumpur, 18-24 October, Moses Mayekiso, General Secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers (South Africa), predicted of Mrs Thatcher: 'She is going to Malaysia to allow a steady blow of oxygen into the regime to enable de Klerk to construct a South Africa that will suit the interests of British capital'. He was absolutely right.

Despite the stated intention of many of the participants that they did not think that the issue of South Africa should dominate the proceedings, as it had done at previous summits in Nassau (1985) and Vancouver (1987), Mrs Thatcher ensured that acrimony was the order of the day. The underlying disunity was bound to surface – Mrs Thatcher would see to it. She went to Kuala Lumpur armed with de Klerk's personal announcement to her that he intended to release leading veteran ANC and PAC political prisoners. Never before have such releases been announced well in advance, allowing full media coverage. The Commonweatlh Summit was to be accompanied by international publicity of 'positive change in South Africa', stage-managed by de Klerk and Thatcher.

Thatcher almost certainly travelled also with the knowledge that part of South Africa's crippling foreign debt had been rescheduled by the banks ahead of time. The announcement was timed, at the request of the South Africans, to coincide with the Summit, and neutralised one possible avenue for tightening sanctions on the regime. The stage was set for Thatcher's 'diplomacy'.

The various foreign secretaries, including Johnny comelately Major for Britain, wrangled for 17 hours to produce a communiqué on South Africa which everyone thought had unanimous support. Britain had insisted on registering its disagreement with four clauses, but that was expected. After Mrs Thatcher had herself moved acceptance of the communiqué in the full meeting, the Secretary General welcomed her signature and described the statement as 'the largest measure of unanimity yet achieved'. He spoke too soon.

Within hours Thatcher had issued a separate statement, said to be from herself and Major (although they had not met to discuss it), with all the hallmarks of Thatcher's new alternative to gun-boat diplomacy. She had already tested this method out at the Madrid Summit of the EC in order to block acceptance of economic and monetary union: agree to everything in the meeting, then issue a statement registering total disagreement. This 'Now you see, Now you don't' diplomacy has the advantage, from Mrs Thatcher's point of view, of throwing enraged opponents (including sometimes her own ministers) into disarray and rendering them foolish.

It is worth examining Thatcher's method in relation to the communiqué. The 'agreed' statement acknowledged that significant changes in South Africa 'may yet prove to be within reach'; that the purpose of sanctions was not punitive but to apply pressure for change; that sanctions had been a major factor in influencing the regime towards change; that this was not the time to consider any relaxation of existing sanctions which would have to await 'evidence of clear and irreversible change'. The communiqué also proposed tightening of financial restrictions on the regime and strengthening the arms embargo, to both of which points Britain's disagreement was registered.

Thatcher: 'If it is once again one against 48, then I am sorry for the 48'

The British statement welcomed the Commonwealth's recognition that 'change is under way' and that 'sanctions should not be punitive' and that the international community will need to 'respond to evidence of clear and irreversible change.' In all of this there is a none too subtle change of emphasis. As a final spanner in the works, the British statement goes on to declare that 'all sanctions are punitive' and Britain is opposed to all 'punitive sanctions'. Britain was therefore totally opposed to the central points in the Commonwealth communiqué which it had signed hours earlier: that sanctions work and that they should remain in place. The British statement goes on to propose a more positive approach, without openly declaring what this would consist of. Have no doubt though, that easing the international pressure on the regime is 'positive'. 'More carrot, and less stick' said Thatcher, referring not to the repression used by the regime against the majority of its citizens (or indeed that used by any regime) but to how South Africa should be treated by the Commonwealth.

Thatcher pronounced herself 'utterly appalled and utterly astounded' by the ensuing furore. Rumours of a rift between Major and Thatcher were quickly squashed by Whitehall: 'we think he did a damn good job in protecting British interests'. Mrs Thatcher however clearly thought that the victory was her own. Speaking of her opposition to sanctions she said: 'Then when *we* get rid of apartheid and there is a new government there, they will inherit a strong economy. And out of 49 members of the Commonwealth they will have *one* to thank for that' (our emphasis, for *we* read *I*). With such sentiments as these Thatcher consigned 49 Commonwealth countries to the dustbin, having lectured them on the virtues of hard work and enterprise. The wonder is that they keep coming back for more.

Mrs Thatcher behaved exactly as she intended, and exactly as Mayekiso predicted, in the long term interests of British imperialism. It should be clear by now that Thatcher and de Klerk are acting in collusion. There may be a momentum for change in South Africa but neither de Klerk nor Thatcher is the architect. They are both in the business of ensuring that any change will not outstrip their control and will not damage either white minority privileges, nor British investments in apartheid. ■

Money for apartheid

MARK FARMANER/CAT WIENER

On 18 October, 330 international banks, including three prominent British banks, once again stepped in to bail South Africa out of its economic crisis. The deal reschedules £8bn of South Africa's £12.5bn foreign debt repayments, originally due by June 1990, over the next three years, on terms the racists will have little difficulty in meeting. The announcement was quite deliberately timed to coincide with the Commonwealth Summit to avert the threat of sanctions. Once again, the banks have, quite literally, bought time for apartheid.

In 1985, the regime was plunged into its worst economic crisis ever when the uprisings in the townships, coupled with international campaigning, forced banks to suspend lending to South Africa. In the previous five years, South Africa's foreign debt had quadrupled to $24 billion, with British and US banks as the two single largest creditors. South Africa was unable to meet its debt repayments. In March 1987 the banks agreed to reschedule $14 billion worth of their loans. A 'net' was created which allowed South Africa to make repayments on only about 10% of their total debt over three years. The immediate crisis was averted.

However, it became increasingly difficult for South Africa to meet its debt repayments. The imposition of sanctions meant that exports and foreign capital investments fell, and gold and foreign exchange reserves had to be depleted to meet the debt. Since 1985, South Africa has experienced a net capital outflow of more than R25bn (£5.8bn). With a population growth of three per cent, it would need economic growth of 5 to 6 per cent a year to keep pace: however, economic growth has averaged just over 1 per cent in the 1980s. The regime has dealt with this by escalating blac unemployment and freezin wages, and by running surplu on its current account.

The banks were eager to r schedule the debt, not only b cause South Africa pays intere at a higher-than-market-rat but because it recognises th necessity of stabilising the situ tion in South Africa. If the r gime is to be able to buy off an significant section of the blac population, it will need the ec nomic as well as the politic resources to do so. It will als need the money to continue arm itself against those wh refuse to lay down arms. The im perialists are intent on makin South Africa a very profitable i vestment indeed.

35 of the world's largest bank sit on the Technical Committe which stage-managed the r scheduling. Foremost amon these are the British banks N tional Westminster, which thought to have reschedule £400m of the debt, Barclays (als about £400m) and Standar Charter. It is on these banks th the British anti-apartheid mov ment will have to concentrate i campaigning, to expose Br tain's collaboration with Preto ia, and cut off this lifeline to th apartheid regime. ■

BRITISH BANKS' LINKS WITH SOUTH AFRICA

- NatWest, Barclays, Standard Chartered, Lloyds and Midland all have loans to South Africa. Lloyds has the least
- Bank of Scotland and Royal Bank of Scotland have very small loans which have either run out or are due to so in the next few months
- The Co-Op provides only a customer service for transferring funds to an account in South Africa
- TSB has so far refused to make loans to South Africa
- Girobank is not legally permitted to make overseas loans. The same applies to building societies

Freed leaders pledge to fight on

CHARINE JOHN

At dawn on 15 October, eight leaders of the struggle against apartheid emerged from a total of over 180 years of incarceration, having been unconditionally released on orders from State President, F.W.de Klerk. The releases were first announced in a telephone call to Mrs Thatcher on the eve of the Commonwealth Summit in Kuala Lumpur.

Five of the eight were gaoled for life in the notorious Rivonia Trial of 1964: they are Walter Sisulu (77), Raymond Mhlaba (69), Andrew Mlangeni (63), Ahmed Kathrada (60), and Elias Motsoaledi (65). Also released were Wilton Mkwayi (67), who took command of the ANC's military wing after the Rivonia Trials, and the legendary Trades Union leader Oscar Mpetha (80). Only one PAC leader was released; Jafta Masemola (60), was the regime's longest serving political prisoner.

As news of the releases spread, celebrations in the form of huge political rallies and meetings were organised in open defiance of the State of Emergency. Huge crowds gathered at the homes of the leaders, and where the security police were kept away, these celebrations were joyous and peaceful. Young comrades took over townships, ANC and PAC flags adorned the rooftops and were draped by marchers over the statue of Afrikaner icon & butcher Louis Botha in front of de Klerk's official Cape Town residence. The celebrations culminated in a huge ANC rally of over 100 000 at Soweto's Soccer City Stadium on 25 October.

However, a question must be asked about what lay behind de Klerk's decision to release these veteran prisoners. By announcing the releases as he did, on the eve of the Commonwealth Summit, de Klerk hoped to enable apartheid's staunch ally, Thatcher, to buy time for the regime by preventing the imposition of any further Commonwealth sanctions. For de Klerk, the releases were a deviously cynical attempt at conning international opinion into believing that positive change is happening in South Africa. The regime's twisted ally Thatcher did indeed lustily pursue her defence of apartheid at the summit meeting despite opposition from every single other Commonwealth nation. Her support for the apartheid regime was welcomed by de Klerk – the releases, said Thatcher, proved that South Africa was indeed reforming – de Klerk meanwhile went on to attack the other 48 Commonwealth nations for 'appearing to proscribe a timetable or agenda for reform'. On the day de Klerk rejected a proposal presented to him by Church leaders Desmon Tutu, Allan Boesak and Fra Chikane asking for six steps to taken towards ending apa heid. These steps contain minimum demands such as t release of all political prisone and those detained witho trial, lifting of the brutal State Emergency and reprieve f those on Death Row.

There remains in South Afri all the horrors of apartheid the Group Areas Act, the La Act, the Population Registrati Act, the bantustans, Separa Amenities Act, mass detentio without trial and torture young children, death row a thousands of political prisone To pretend, as the British go ernment does, that apartheid reforming is to condone repre sion, hypocrisy, brutality a murder. Apartheid can never reformed: this is the messa coming from the black majori that the world must now listen and decisively act upon. ■

News

Nicaragua

On 27 October President Daniell Ortega of Nicaragua announced that his government was ending the ceasefire with the US-backed contra terrorists that had been formally in effect since March 1988. In fact this ceasefire, if such it could be called, had been repeatedly unilaterally extended by the Sandinistas in the face of a steady stream of torture, rape and murder by the contras. The last straw seems to have been a contra attack in which 17 Sandinista reservists were killed a few days before Ortega's announcement.

The Bush administration's response was predictable. Bush told the conference on 28 October that Ortega's statement was a 'terrible blow to democracy'. The US intends to keep the contra army intact and equipped until after the elections in Nicaragua on 25 February, and indeed several thousand armed contras remain on Honduran territory in violation of *three* regional peace plans that call for them to be disbanded. Bush's rationale for subverting the accords is that the contras are needed to pressurise the Sandinistas into holding free elections, but in fact he will only recognise them as free if the Sandinistas lose.

Clapham Report

The report into the Clapham rail disaster, in which 35 people died, has been published 11 months after the crash. The 230-page report singles out 11 British Rail employees as responsible, but states 'it is a collective liability which lies on British Rail'. The inquiry considered the factors which led to the wiring error and makes 93 recommendations, but fails to address the government's under-funding of the railways and therefore does not consider the general level of safe operation throughout the system.

The report paints a detailed picture of a railway, the staff of which are underpaid, overworked and often unfit for their jobs.

The average public support for European railways in 1987 was 0.68 per cent of gross domestic product, whereas in the UK it was less than 0.27 per cent.

Whilst the 11 BR employees face disciplinary action and possible prosecutions, it is the ones responsible for the disaster, the government and British Rail, on whom we have to rely to make the railways safe.

Racist police

11-year-old Bianca Burns was upstairs in her mum's bedroom on 1 November when she heard her 10-year-old brother André shout, 'The police have pushed into the house'. Then began a seven-hour ordeal for Bianca and her mother Beverly.

At 8.35 am six uniformed and two plainclothes police forcibly entered the family's home demanding that Beverly produce her three children, Bianca, André and four-year-old Khan. They had been informed by a neighbour that the children were being beaten. The Burns are the only black family in London's Hampstead village. The neighbour is known to the family as a racist.

The police had no warrant and had not informed Camden Welfare Officers before taking their action. André and Khan had to be taken to school by the family lodger while the police physically examined Bianca.

The police told Beverly she was being arrested and told Bianca to get ready as she was also being taken to the police station. When she protested she was told, 'Tough. You've got to go now.'

Bianca told *FRFI*, 'the police questioned our lodger about hearing screaming and shouting. The lodger said 'no'. They took my mum and me to West Hampstead police station in a meat wagon.'

Bianca and Beverly were held for six hours before Beverly was released without charge.

Brooke admits IRA unbeatable

MAXINE WILLIAMS

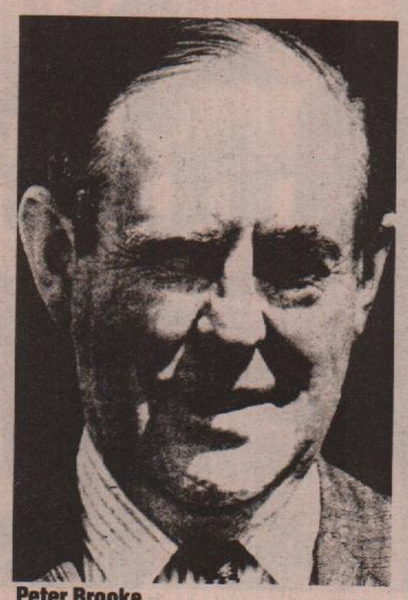
Peter Brooke, Northern Ireland Secretary, has admitted that Britain cannot beat the IRA by military means. He also said that the government would be 'flexible and imaginative' if the IRA ended the armed struggle. He refused to say that a British government would never talk to Sinn Fein.

These were not careless words by Brooke. They represent a further, carefully worked out stage in the British strategy of attempting to bolster constitutional nationalism. By appearing to hold out hopes of a peaceful method of resolving the situation in the Six Counties, Britain hopes to politically isolate the revolutionary struggle.

Gerry Adams responded:

> 'Only the ending of partition can bring about the ending of the conflict and the creation of those conditions which would sustain peace and justice in our country.'

The subtlety of Brooke's strategy was, of course, lost on the Unionists, who protested vehemently at this 'sell out'. And who joined them? Why, of course, the British Labour Party. Kevin



Peter Brooke

McNamara, Labour spokesman, warned Brooke against giving comfort to the IRA and that 'careless talk costs lives'. Once again, the Labour Party has placed itself to the *right* of even the Tory Government. Whereas the Tories have inborn ruling class arrogance which enables them to be secure enough to be 'flexible' if it suits their aims, Labour does not. They must prove their credentials to govern by being more overtly colonialist than even the Tories. Which is about what you would expect from a Party which sent troops into Ireland in 1969. ■

British terror

PAM ROBINSON

The recent weeks have seen the nationalist communities subject to a continuing reign of terror carried out by the occupying British forces and their collaborators.

● *Tuesday 21 September:* A driver of a black taxi in Belfast was stopped and beaten by two members of the army who threatened they would 'get' him that night. This driver has been stopped and searched 39 times in the last three months and beaten on numerous occasions.

● *Monday 26 September West Belfast:* In the early morning the Royal Marines moved in on the homes of nationalists and carried out three and a half hour raiding sessions during which time they caused damage to property and personal belongings. In one home they left a 'calling card', 'Lots of love from the Royals'.

● *Saturday 30 September Belfast Sinn Fein Councillor attacked:* Alex Maskey was assaulted by members of the army outside his home. He was kicked and had his clothes torn when he was dragged along the road towards an army land rover. The intervention of neighbours prevented him being thrown into the army land rover.

● *Wednesday 4 October:* Loyalist gunmen in Belfast opened fire on a Catholic man on Crumlin Road hitting him once before driving off.

● *Friday 6 October:* Thomas Bradley was attacked by members of the Marines in the Ardoyne area of Belfast. He was head butted by a Marine wearing a riot helmet and beaten with rifle butts. He escaped more injuries because a neighbour intervened. He needed four stitches to his head injury and also suffered bruising to his back and chest. He has been targeted since May this year when he refused to become a RUC informer.

● *Sunday 8 October:* Brendan Curran, a Sinn Fein councillor in Lurgan, was shot and seriously injured by loyalist gunmen. He was at his parents house when he was shot in the neck, chest and leg. When the gunmen fled they threw a fragmentation grenade through a window. Brenden Curran's father received facial injuries from the shrapnel. Brendan Curran is in hospital in a serious condition.

● *Thursday 12 October:* At 1am Jim Toman was attacked by Royal Marines in Turf Lodge, Belfast. Alerted by the family dog barking, Jim had gone into his back garden to check for an intruder. The Marines shot the dog and hit Jim around the head and left him on the ground. They prevented his wife from calling an ambulance by entering the house and disconnecting the telephone.

● *Monday 16 October:* At 6.30pm Royal Marines in West Belfast attacked nine years old Dawn Michelle O'Riordan with a fire extinguisher. Dawn was playing on the street with friends when a Marines' patrol drew up. Soldiers encouraged children to go near their vehicles and lifted them on to the saracens. Dawn was one of the children. When she peered into the saracen a soldier sprayed her in the face with a foam fire extinguisher. She was taken immediately to hospital. The damage caused to her right eye may be permanent. ■

PRISONERS FIGHTBACK

Armley inquiry

DOMENYK NOONAN

As I write, a police inquiry is underway at Armley Prison into complaints of serious brutality. The inquiry, though late, has been welcomed by many, particularly by the families of the five young prisoners who died in Armley and on whom verdicts of suicide were recorded.

Since the inquiry started, a disturbing catalogue of serious brutality towards prisoners, particularly young ones, has been unfolding which has so far resulted in seven screws being arrested and a file being sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

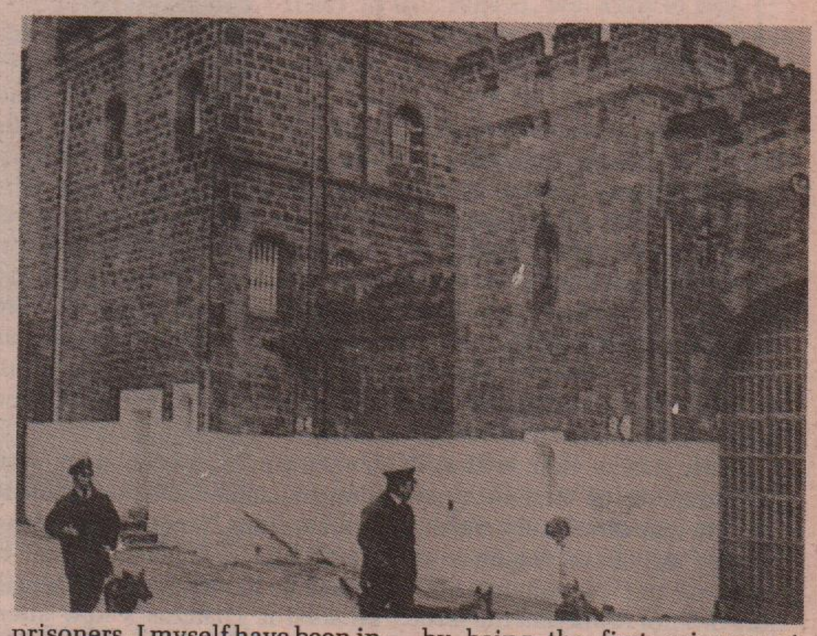
Statements made by prisoners describe how screws inflicted horrific injuries on them or how they saw other prisoners being injured.

One prisoner described how he had received several stitches for a hand injury. This injury was caused by a screw bending back his thumb and causing the skin to burst open.

> 'The screw twisted and pulled on my thumb. I screamed in agony and pleaded for him to stop. I almost passed out. I complained to the governor; two hours later he returned, stating he had fully investigated my allegation and that I should think myself lucky not to be placed on report for a charge of false and malicious allegations.'

Another prisoner described how he was handcuffed and placed naked on the floor of a prison van and transferred from Risley to Armley where on arrival he was severely brutalised with truncheons, later receiving numerous stitches for a head wound. The next day he was placed on report on trumped-up charges of assaulting screws. He was subsequently found guilty by an unjust Board of Visitors.

The police officers who are investigating the brutality are from the West Yorkshire force. They have travelled up and down the country interviewing several hundred ex- and serving



prisoners. I myself have been interviewed three times. Because of possible prosecutions arising from the inquiry, I won't go into detail about the beating I received but this is a general outline: I was transferred from Risley to Armley on 8 May 1986 and received the routine threats by the segregation screws. I wrote to Neil Kinnock and Gerald Kaufman imploring them to inquire into the brutality but received very inadequate replies. I wrote to the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire who did not reply. I wrote to a total of 16 MPs – to no avail. Eventually a rooftop demonstration was started. After one hour the governor had brought it to an end because he was desperate to avoid bad publicity for the prison. That is when my nightmare began.

Forty two riot screws appeared and I received the beating I thought was going to kill me. I was confined to a strip-cell for six weeks in handcuffs with the cell lights and extractor fan permanently on making sleep difficult. I had no books or news papers and my mattress was taken from me for 12 hours a day. The cell was infested with cockroaches and my food was tampered with. I was on no formal punishment although I was presented with the usual trumped-up charges of assault.

Five days after the rooftop demo, I was due at court for my trial. My face was a mass of bruises and I made legal history by being the first prisoner at Manchester Crown Court to be handcuffed to two screws and flanked by another six. Of course, if I had walked out at my trial I would have taken the matter of Armley further and the screws knew that so they convinced the judge I was a dangerous man. This no doubt influenced the jury. It is now a matter for the Appeal judges to decide because I shall not let the matter drop.

I would like to say to all prisoners who have made statements against the brutal screws of Armley: you have done a brave thing and have probably saved other prisoners from serious injury or death. I have been in nearly twenty prisons and Armley was the most ruthless. Every prisoner should speak out against brutality if they receive or witness it because the system says screws are there to rehabilitate and set an example, not to brutalise and on occasion murder. So let justice be served. ■

Domenyk Noonan is in Wormwood Scrubs

The Prisoners League Association is now at the following address:-

47 Hilton Street (North),
Higher Broughton
Salford,
Manchester M7 9DH.

Letter from Hull

ANDRZY JAKUBCZYK

On Tuesday 17 November Paul Ross, John McGranagan and Pepe Davis were transferred from the Hull Special Unit on 10/74s. No reasons were given. They were unlocked individually at approximately 6.45am and removed from the unit separately by approximately eight screws.

Paul contested the move as did John. In the ensuing confrontation both were threatened with violence unless they left their cells peacefully. Paul was shanghaied to Manchester. He had vehemently rejected the Special Unit and was there less than three weeks. During that period he was targeted by unit screws because of his persistent stand against abuses of inmates' mail. He will now likely be put on the 'circuit' ie. the rounds of local segregation blocks.

Prior to Paul's arrival at Hull he spent 15 months incarcerated in various segregation units subjected to almost incessant physical and psychological brutality. It now appears that he is to be subjected to a repetition of this treatment solely because, in the short period he was on the wing, he made it plain he would not be bribed by a liberal regime into passive surrender of his rights or tolerate abuses to himself or other inmates.

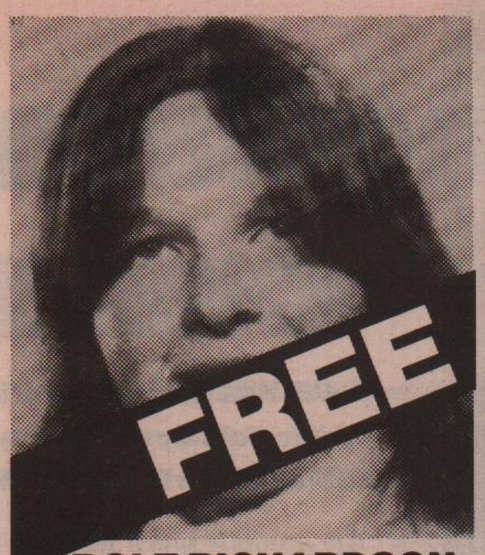
Paul has consistently put himself out on behalf of fellow inmates regardless of the cost to himself, the recent rooftop protest at Full Sutton which highlighted the cases of John McGranagan and Alan Byrne being a typical example.

My sincere regards to Paul for the future and sincere personal thanks for his help and solidarity; his presence is sorely missed. Regards also to John McGranagan.

Andrzy Jakubczyk, A Wing, Hull Prison.

PRISONERS BIRTHDAYS

11 November: **Paul Norney**, 863522, HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX
17 November: **Brendan Dowd** 758662 HMP Full Sutton, Yorks, YO4 1PS.
7 December: **Hugh Doherty** 338636 HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Eversham, Worcs, WR11 5TZ.
11 December: **Noel Gibson** 879225 HMP Full Sutton.

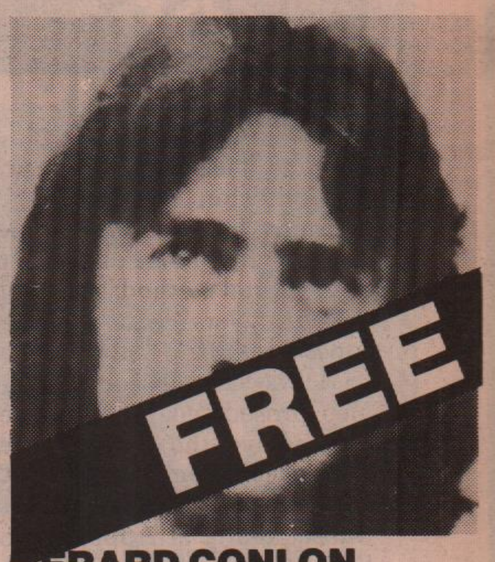


CAROLE RICHARDSON

PATRICK ARMSTRONG

THE GUILDFORD FOUR ARE INNOCENT

STOP THE FRAME-UPS



GERARD CONLON

PAUL HILL

There was at least some poetic justice in Lord Lane, who turned down the appeal of the Birmingham 6 last year, having to set the Guildford 4 free. He gave no apology to the Four who had spent fifteen years, all of their adult lives so far, in Britain's foul prisons. A renowned opponent of ever admitting that injustices occur, Lane must have been sweating with rage under his judicial wig. Very different emotions from those of the four, their families and those who, over the years, have supported them in their grim struggle for truth and freedom.

Poetic justice is about the only kind that can be expected from the British system. The Four were not released because British justice suddenly awoke to the obvious fact that four innocent people had been gaoled. On the contrary, successive governments, Home Secretaries, judges, lawyers and police, have been presented with a massive amount of proof of the Four's innocence. Political pressure, a few timely retirements and deaths of some of the key actors in the frame ups have, however, now combined to make it possible to free the Four.

It is therefore perverse for Lord Scarman to proclaim that the decision would 'restore . . . faith . . . in the British system'. Perhaps only a Law Lord could still have any faith in a system which can systematically manufacture evidence against four people, suppress defence evidence, brutalise the four and lock them up for life, deny their appeals, imprison and kill Gerard Conlon's father . . . and then fifteen years later discover that something was wrong.

Of course, those with a vested interest in limiting the damage to the police and judicial system will join Lord Scarman in his restored faith. Those, like the Birmingham 6, Winston Silcott and countless others framed, will not be fooled. What happened to the Guildford 4 was not a miscarriage of justice. No Irish person facing political charges gets a fair trial. And not only the Irish. The activities of the West Midlands Crime Squad over many years have, it has now been shown, been based on systematically framing all sorts of people.

THE FALL GUYS

The release of the Guildford 4 has taken a very long time because it opens a very large can of worms. No wonder Douglas Hurd, as pressure mounted, sat very still on the case for two years. No doubt since the Somerset and Avon police found the crucial evidence of manufactured statements, he has been discussing how to release the Four and quickly limit the damage. The chosen strategy appears to be this: find the least important fall-guys and set up a judicial inquiry under a judge, Lord Justice May, who can be relied on not to rock the boat too much.

The first chosen fall guys are some very low ranking Surrey policemen. The Crown lawyer went out of his way to exonerate the DPP, Crown lawyers and the Metropolitan police of complicity in the frame-up. Of all the evidence they could have chosen as grounds for declaring the convictions unsafe it is surely significant that they have homed in on a few statements altered by low ranking officers. However, already it is also coming out, as it was bound to, that Sir Norman Skelhorn, as Director of Public Prosecutions, suppressed alibi statements for Conlon and, it is said, was responsible for the suppresssion of evidence linking the Balcombe Street IRA men to the Guildford and Woolwich bombings.

So these are the people who, so far, we're being led to as the culprits. Three officers have been suspended: Sgt John Donaldson, Detective Constable Peter Lewis, PC Vernon Attwell. (Two others are implicated but one is dead and the other retired.) No doubt if they could have said it was the police station cleaner or dinner lady they would have. But some altered statements by three (or five) police officers are simply the tip of the iceberg in this case. Those who have been involved with it read like a *Who's Who* of the British establishment since 1974.

THE GUILTY MEN?

Peter Imbert, now Commissioner of Metropolitian police, travelled to Guildford police station to interview the Four. The Four maintain that they were brutalised and beaten in custody. There is now no other explanation for their statements. Did Imbert not notice? As an experienced officer in the Bomb Squad did he not notice the discrepancies in their statements and the fact that they were highly unlikely IRA activists?

Later, in 1975, he questioned the Balcombe Street men who admitted to having planted the Guildford and Woolwich bombs. He was in a unique position to compare the confessions. It is said that the Bomb Squad saw enough evidence to charge Eddie Butler with the Woolwich bomb but that this was subsequently removed from the charges by the DPP. The forensic expert was told by the Bomb Squad to alter his evidence so that links between the Balcombe Street unit bombings and the Woolwich bomb did not come to light. (This was especially important as some of the explosions took place whilst the Four were in custody).

The defence lawyers for the then-convicted Guildford 4 were not told of the Balcombe Street unit's admissions, either by the police or the DPP. They learned of them from a member of the Prisoners Aid Committee some five months later. Is it good enough for Imbert to now say that he believed both Guildford and Balcombe Street units were involved in the Guildford and Woolwich bombings? An elementary reading of the various statements shows the Guildford 4 admissions to be wrong on most details and the Balcombe Street men to be right. At the very least, why did he not insist that the Balcombe street unit were charged with Woolwich?

The only reason for not doing so must have been to continue to uphold the fiction that the Guildford 4 were guilty. Moreover, he and the Bomb Squad showed little interest in questioning the Guildford 4 about the other wave of bombings which had taken place in London.

THE SURREY POLICE

Each of the Four had a team of officers assigned to them. For Armstrong this was: Det Chief Insp Thomas Style (retired), Det Sgt John Donaldson (suspended), Det Con Vernon Attwell (suspended). For Hill: Det Chief Superintendent Walter Simmons, Assistant Chief Constable Christopher Rowe, Det Sgt Anthony Jermey. The second team which has been accused of manufacturing the suspect statements was: Det Insp Tim Blake (deceased), Det Con Peter Lewis (supended). Is it possible to believe that the second team fabricated evidence without the knowledge of the first team?

Assistant Chief Constable Christopher Rowe was in charge of the inquiry. Does the responsibility for what happened to the Four not lie with him primarily? Is it conceivable that he would have failed to notice

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Free the Birmingham Six

'If the six men win, it will mean that the police were guilty of perjury, that they were guilty of violence and threats, that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence and that the convictions were erroneous . . . This is such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say: it cannot be right if these actions go any further.'

Lord Denning denying the right of appeal to the Birmingham 6

Following the release of the Guildford 4, Lord Denning should now eat his words about the Birmingham 6. In the Guildford case, as every 'sensible person' now knows, and the state has been forced to admit, the police were indeed guilty of framing four innocent people.

Perversely however, despite the parallels between the two cases, the Establishment has now closed ranks against the release of the Birmingham 6. Home Secretary Waddington's first act in office was to announce that these six innocent men must stay in prison where they have already spent fifteen years.

The reason is clear. One case – the Guildford 4 – can be presented as an isolated miscarriage of justice, caused by a few bad apples. But two cases starts to look suspiciously like a systematic denial of justice in Irish cases. It begins to expose what Irish people have always known – that they cannot get justice from a British court.

This government, the police and judiciary know what is at stake. Therefore, now is the moment when the campaign on the Birmingham 6 needs the greatest support. Pressure must be mobilised to force their release. It is a shameful fact that the British progressive movement has failed to get them released for the past 15 years. If a movement is not built now, in the wake of the Guildford victory, there may not be another chance. That is the real appalling vista.

British justice

The parallels between the convictions of Winston Silcott, Engin Raghip, Mark Braithwaite and the Guildford 4 are striking. Consider the following:

- An atmosphere of police outrage following the death of PC Blakelock and 'shock-horror' headlines in the gutter and establishment media following the inner-city uprisings of 1985.
- No forensic evidence of any kind linking the three acccused with the attack on PC Blakelock.
- The only evidence of any kind was police evidence of statements given under interrogation.
- Widespread attempts by the police to persuade witnesses to name the accused.
- Alibi witnesses threatened that they too would be charged with serious offences if they confirmed the accused's alibis.
- Denial of solicitors to those arrested.
- Detention in solitary confinement.
- The use of a leaked police mug shot to proclaim the guilt of the accused before the end of the trial.
- In the case of Winston Silcott widespread dissemination of completely false information about the accused's 'vicious character and long history of robbery, violence and drug dealing'. These lies were used to confirm, in the public mind, the justice of the verdict.
- The exposure of all the above facts and circumstances by campaigners and civil rights observers within a short time of the actual events. The consequent rubbishing and boycotting of attempts to publicise the injustice.

Mrs Mary Silcott said, on hearing of the release of the Guildford 4: 'It's wonderful news. It's like a lamp being held up on a dark night. We must stay strong, I must stay strong, to continue the struggle.'

DC Melvin is facing charges now for his disgraceful treatment of the three juveniles originally charged alongside the three men with the death of Blakelock. The time must come soon when he is called to account for leading the frame-up of Winston, Engin and Mark, imprisoned for life. ■

Susan Davidson

STOP THE FRAME-UPS

continued from page 7

the state of fear, exhaustion and mental confusion of the Four? Or the methods being used to deal with them? Some of the Four accuse him of using brutal methods against them.

Lord Havers – a Conservative MP – prosecuted the Four both at their trial, and the subsequent appeal. He also prosecuted the Maguire 7. He glossed over the discrepancies in the Four's statements by saying that the confusion was a deliberate IRA plot. Subsequently at Appeal he claimed that both the Balcombe Street unit and the Four had been involved. This, despite the wealth of detail the Balcombe Street unit were able to give about the bombings and the manifestly unlikely event of a highly professional IRA unit collaborating with four young people, some on drugs etc.

To the allegations by the Four that they had been terrorised into making admissions he said (and perhaps should be reminded) that if the allegations were true there must have been 'a really gigantic conspiracy' between two police forces – Surrey and the Bomb Squad – involving officers of all ranks, including Commander Huntley of the Bomb Squad, Detective Chief Superintendent Walter Simmons, Surrey Assistant Chief Constable Christopher Rowe, which had culminated in 'a most appalling perversion of justice'. He made his career on this case and went on to become Lord Chancellor and Attorney General.

Lord Donaldson, former Tory councillor, was the Guildford trial judge and amazingly also the judge in the Maguire case. He gave the four massive sentences of life, 30 years, 35 years and in Hill's case the term of his natural life. He is now Master of the Rolls (senior judge in the Court of Appeal).

Lord Roskill presided over the Guildford 4 appeal and decided their convictions were satisfactory. He took the unprecedented decision to hear completely new evidence (that of the Balcombe Street men admitting that they and not the Four did the bombings) without rehearing the evidence of the original trial and without a jury. He said: 'So far as the new evidence is concerned we reject it in all relevant respects. That evidence therefore gives rise to no lurking doubts whatever in our minds. We are sure that there has been a cunning and skilful attempt to deceive the Court by putting forward false evidence.' To explain the detailed knowledge of the Balcombe Street men he accepted the scenario which had the Guildford 4 and Balcombe Street men involved in the bombings. To explain vast discrepancies in their evidence he said that ' the partially true is intermingled with the deliberately false so that false trails may be followed and the ascertainment of the real truth certainly delayed and hopefully made impossible of achievement.' Thus Roskill ensured that no jury was ever able to judge this new evidence and that the four were to spend a further 12 years in prison. Roskill also refused the Maguire family leave to appeal in 1977.

Roy Jenkins – Labour Home Secretary at the time of the Guildford Four arrests – introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) under which the Four were arrested. The Labour Party was also in government when the Appeal was rejected. The Labour Party consistently refused to take up the case when in opposition. In 1988 the NEC (National Executive) refused to add its support to claims that the Four were innocent.

These pages were written and compiled by MAXINE WILLIAMS except where otherwise stated

TERRORISING THE IRISH

But it is not only a matter of the Establishment covering up for its own. There is even more at stake with both the Guildford and the Birmingham cases. On his release Paul Hill went straight to the heart of things: 'I believe that in this case, as in the Birmingham case, it was an example to the Irish community and a method of terrorising the Irish community.' In the early 1970s, before the introduction of the PTA, the large Irish community in Britain was active politically and organising in support of the Irish struggle for self-determination. The knowledge of the Birmingham and Guildford frame-ups, along with the draconian PTA, sent shock waves through the Irish community in Britain and has played no small part in demobilising solidarity work in Britain.

The Irish people recognise, because they suffer it directly, that the police and judicial process in Britain is weighted against them. They can be, and still are, convicted on the flimsiest of evidence. Major General Sir Frank Kitson explained the process in his counter-insurgency manual:

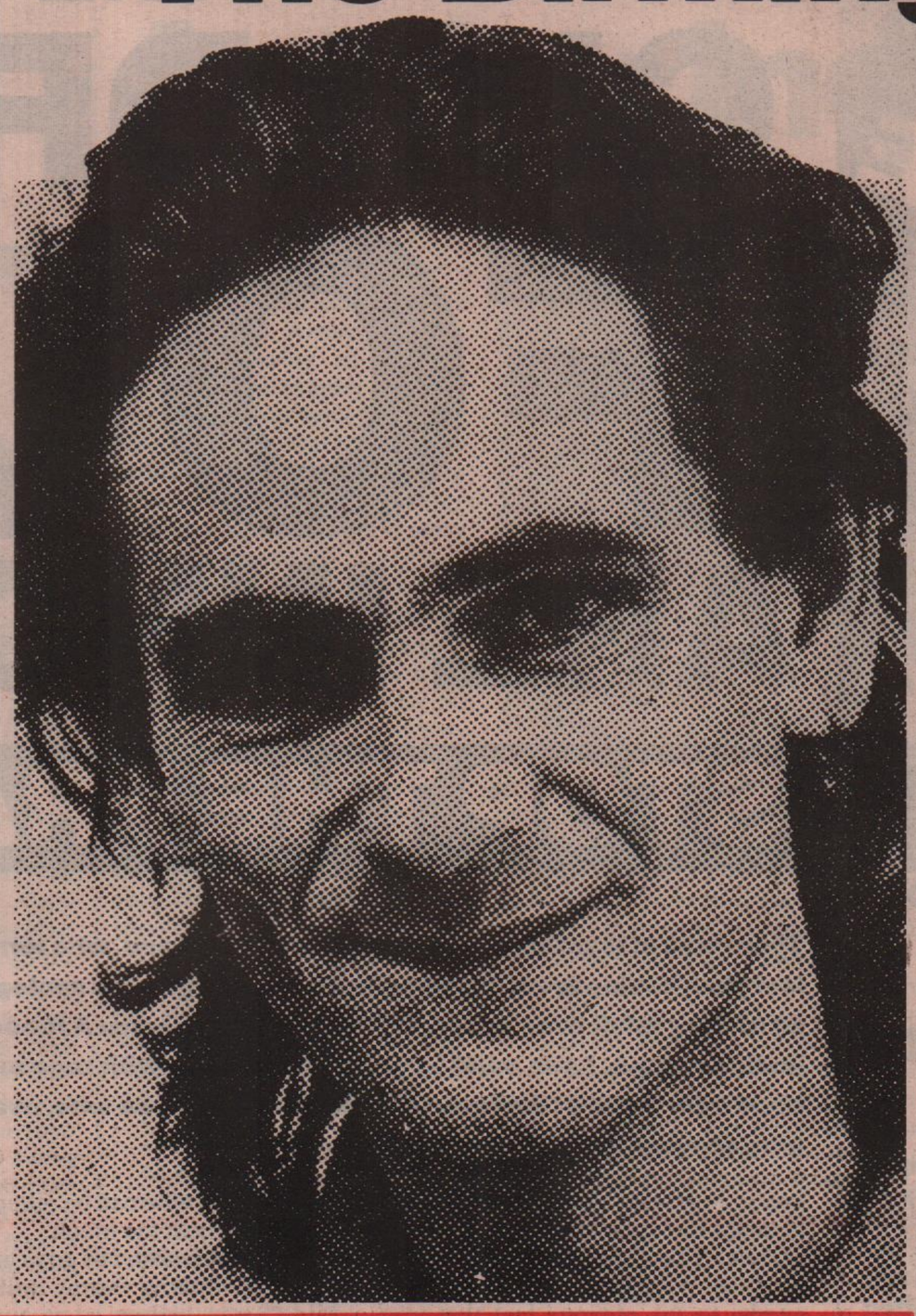
> 'The Law should be used just as another weapon in the government's arsenal and in this case becomes little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public. . . . The activities of the legal services have to be tied in to the war effort in as discreet a way as possible . . . '

It would therefore be an enormous mistake to regard the Guildford 4 case as a miscarriage of justice, now righted. The denial of the right of self-determination to the Irish people has led to a systematic erosion of civil liberties in Ireland and in Britain. In Ireland, every method, from torture to murder, from internment to frame-ups, has been used. The much-vaunted processes of British democracy and justice quite simply do not exist for those who the British ruling class regards as enemies. That applies to the Irish, to many black people, to striking miners in 1984. That is what the case of the Guildford 4 really exposes.

It has taken fifteen years of campaigning to free these four people. And the fight is not over yet. The Maguires must be cleared, the Birmingham 6 must be released. The pressure must be kept on to ensure that this government does not get away with a whitewash. If they do get away with it, it will be an insult to those who have suffered and still suffer at the hands of British justice. ■

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL HILL

'The Birmingham G come



PAUL HILL, one of the Guildford 4 of it in solitary confinement. Wh *FRFI*. LORNA REID AND MAXINE

The grounds given for your release point only to certain low-ranking police officers. Do you think the frame-up goes much higher? What do you think about Peter Imbert, for instance?

Well, it does. It encapsulates Peter Imbert, the DPP, the whole legal process. If Imbert was the investigating officer for Woolwich, then he knows that innocent people went to prison for Woolwich, there's absolutely no doubt about that. How can junior-ranking officers collate information which they then feed to senior ranking officers which is doctored and fabricated and the senior ranking officers can't see that?

You were brutalised, weren't you, not just by junior officers, but senior officers?

I was brutalised by senior officers. One of the people I made allegations against was a Deputy Chief Constable. I also made allegations against the then Commander of the Bomb Squad, Commander Huntley, who participated in beating me down a flight of stairs.

Given that Imbert and Huntley were there in Guildford Police Station, they must have been aware of what was going on with the four of you.

Yes they were aware of what was going on. Obviously they were aware.

When you came out you said that the purpose of the frame-ups was to terrorise the Irish community. Is that the context? Do you see the PTA as relevant?

Yes, I see it as more profound than a miscarriage of justice. Justice was aborted, it wasn't miscarried. It was aborted because we were Irish. The PTA wasn't passed as a legal mechanism, it was passed by politicians. Politicians passed a law which enabled the police to arrest me the day that law was passed and to be sentenced to 15 years in prison. This is not a legal thing, this goes much deeper, this is militarism, this is low intensity operations against a community, and in this case not an indigenous community, but an immigrant community.

Within one week of our arrest, the Irish community knew that we were innocent, and that was precisely the message that the state wanted to give. People have done this all over the world. You just have to read Kitson's book. This is the whole ideology of Kitson, who was the commander of the armed forces in Ireland. These are the faceless, unaccountable people, the decision-makers, whom we never see and who are never brought to book. That's the same in this case, because those people will still be at large, those people will still be pursuing the same terror tactics.

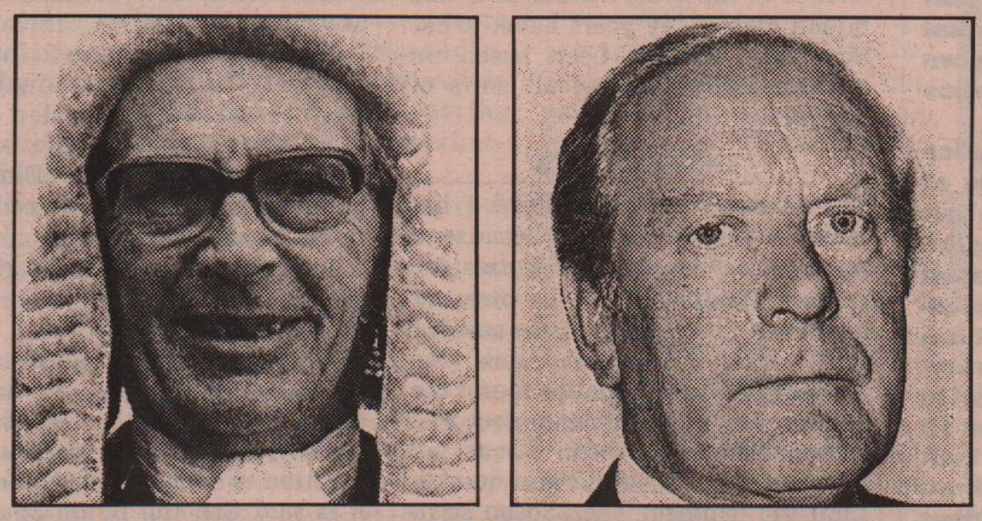
The Home Office has denied you were arrested under the PTA, haven't they?

It was made abundantly clear to me that I was arrested under the PTA because I was told I would be held for a week. When I was in the police station they said 'A holding order's being made against you and you'll be held for a week'. I was the very first person.

There's an argument being put now that the Guildford 4 case is an isolated miscarriage of justice that can now be remedied but these things are also happening today, aren't they?

Well, of course they are, yes. And

THE BIRMINGHAM SIX – framed prisoners



THE GUILTY MEN? – Donaldson and Havers

s must home'

, spent 15 years in gaol, 1600 days ilst in prison he regularly received WILLIAMS spoke to him in London.

they're being moved around to fit each situation, like Broadwater Farm, which has glaring parallels with what happened in Guildford. That was a black community under siege. You know, even the Republicans in prison, who quite openly said they carried out their offences, they didn't go through the legal mechanisms. So it's not just the innocent people who are in prison, you know, it goes much deeper than that.

How do you see the situation in Ireland as being relevant to the frame ups?
I'm on bail at the moment with absolutely no restrictions, I have a passport, it would be easy to go to America. I've been in Dublin. When I met Charlie Haughey I said 'you're lucky I don't sit down in the street and refuse to go back to Belfast'. There was nothing he could have done. He couldn't possibly order me to be removed back to Belfast, with the way emotion is in Ireland at the moment, it's just an impossibility.

You said earlier you saw the border as the nub of the whole thing, really?
It is, yes. If I'd been born in Leeds or Birmingham, or Yarmouth, I wouldn't have seen a prison in my life. I happened to be born in the Six Counties of an occupied country, that's the bottom line.

Can we turn to the question of the campaign for your release. You were in there for 15 years and got news of it sometimes, presumably.
I heard about it on my visits. I also realised that sometimes my treatment would intensify and I would realise that the campaign was basically being run at a high level by my uncle and my aunt, and the authorities were trying to get at me. My aunt and my uncle would come and they would say . . . 'do you think this is us, and shall we stop a little bit?' and I would say, no, the more they do it to me, it means there's movement . If you're a threat politically or physically, then they continuously focus on you and continuously move you around.

'Within one week of our arrest, the Irish community knew that we were innocent, and that was precisely the message that the state wanted to give.'

You fought for your rights in prison, didn't you?
I did, yes. I almost view other prisoners as class prisoners rather than criminal. There is also a large percentage of black prisoners. When I first went into prison, into a special prison, there were very few black people. Now there are loads and loads of black people. So something's happening. The black population isn't increasing, not that rapidly. You know they say prison life is a microcosm of society as a whole.

The black prisoners and the Irish prisoners are singled out for bad treatment, it seems.
Yes, but all rebellious prisoners are.

Outside the Old Bailey on Thursday 19 October, supporters of the Guildford 4, including hundreds of Irish workers, cheered as Gerard Conlon triumphantly stepped into the street. An Irish tri-colour flew above the crowd.

Irish prisoners are particularly singled out because most prison officers are ex-servicemen, and so they have an axe to grind immediately. This service mentality also means colonialism, and that's why they are so involved against black people.

How would you sum up your treatment – how long did you serve in solitary?
1600 days, not in one dose, but interspersed, you know. I had 10 months at one period non-stop, and that's bad. 28 days, 56 days, 100 days . . .

You were badly beaten, weren't you, in Hull?
I was beaten on several occasions. I was beaten in Winchester, I was beaten in Leeds, I was beaten in Lincoln. I was beaten in Wandsworth. The most obvious beating I got was in Hull, I though they would kill me. They had people running along joining in the beating who had big steel-toecapped boots. Basically they're cowardly people.

Did you get politicised in prison?
Yes. First I read books given to me by two members of the Angry Brigade. When I first went to prison I couldn't read some of the names of the books. I thought 'arty farty' this mob. That's why we have a bad view of the English left. We tend to think the English left think it's a very chic thing to be.
Not today it's not!
Well in the late 60s early 70s it was. There's no unity with the English left that's the sad thing.

What relations did you have with the Irish prisoners?
We had good relations. The Irish prisoners are well respected. When we first went to prison they let it be known to the rest of the prisoners that if anyone assaulted the Guildford 4 or the Birmingham 6 that they would deal with it. Throughout our imprisonment they made this clear. They're not people to be trifled with. They are pretty determined people. You never once hear them moan. I met all four of the Balcombe Street towards the end. The first time I came into contact with them I was in the block at Parkhurst on the last day of 56 days punishment for a sit-down protest at Albany.

I went to see the governor there, who said 'This is the last chance you're being given. The Home Office has told me that one more act of indiscipline from you and you'll be removed from the dispersal system for quite a long period'. I said: 'I'm not giving you any assurances about my behaviour. I view myself as no more nor less a hostage than Terry Waite. In the area where Terry Waite is being held the people that hold him are the legitimate law in that area.' They used to say me 'Are you going to work?' and I used to say 'When you give me a letter from Terry Waite saying that he's working, then I'll work.'

The Irish prisoners in English gaols have had a list of demands for a long time. What do you think should be done?
They should be repatriated. The Irish government have a great shame on them because they will not ratify a convention which would allow them to be repatriated.

I wanted to ask you about the Birmingham 6. Both you and Gerard Conlon have said very clearly since you came out that something has to be done.
Something has to be done. The Birmingham 6 must come home. Everybody needs to solidify. Everyone's so fragmented. There's so many groups, so many committees. Fragmentation serves no one. The state won't fragment.

So you think there should be one big movement for the Birmingham 6?
Yes and upon the release of the Birmingham 6 then that movement can focus elsewhere. I think public opinion means nothing. If public opinion meant anything British troops wouldn't be in Ireland.

There was a big campaign for you in the end. Merlyn Rees who joined in later years said on the radio the other day – he more or less claimed the credit for him and the Establishment figures that participated and said that the political campaign had been a nuisance and an irrelevance. What do you think?
Well, that's absolutely absurd: he was Home Secretary while I was in prison, and I could tell you a story about Merlyn Rees at a meeting at the House of Commons when he, with several eminent people who were there, were having a drink in their yah-hoo bar, he banged the table and said, 'and to think that I could have released these people'. So that's Merlyn Rees. Merlyn Rees had better get back into the closet from which he emerged, you know, because he will never be respected by me.

Nor Gerry Fitt, who chased my mother from the City Hall in Belfast, and who told Gerry Conlon's mother on the plane, 'don't speak to me on the plane'. Now this nonsense about him being the last man to shake the hand of Guiseppe Conlon. Guiseppe Conlon took his oxygen mask off and asked him where he'd been for five years. That's what he did. And now there's all this nonsense 'I was the last man to shake Guiseppe Conlon's hand'. Guiseppe Conlon would turn in his grave.

The Labour Party can't claim any credit whatsoever. Several individuals within the Labour Party can, but they're the individuals who are castigated by the Labour Party. Kinnock personally has attacked Jeremy Corbyn, my local MP, who tramped the length and breadth of this country, who came to see me at moments when I was very despairing, when I was at loss, and cajoled me and made it a personal campaign. And you have people stand up saying 'friends of terrorists' and 'friends of gunmen' and all sorts of nonsense.

Politicians passed the act that sent me to prison for 15 years, an act which is still on the statute books – someone could be arrested tonight. I met the wife of a person lying in Brixton, Danny McGravey, done on evidence which absolutely mirrors the evidence in the Birmingham case . . . nothing else. So here, after 15 years, can anyone say it's a victory for Danny McGravey if he's sentenced on that? It's not a victory if people are handed back from southern Ireland to the same jurisdiction that did that to me. ■

THE GUILDFORD 4 ARE FREE

Keep fighting, never give up!

LILY HILL, interviewed here by Gary Clapton, is Paul Hill's mother. For the last fifteen years she has consistently campaigned for the release of her son and his three co-accused. Their release is testament to her refusal to ever give up the fight.

Why do you think the Four were released now?
So much has come out into the open this year. For example the existence of UDR/RUC/British Army records on so-called suspected terrorists and the way these records have been openly distributed. The Anglo-Irish deal was coming under a great pressure.

What do you think about people like Merlyn Rees claiming responsibility for getting them released?
Merlin Rees added his voice to those of the ordinary people in the campaign. Their release took everyone from the bottom up to the top.

Lord Scarman said the release vindicated British justice.
The imprisonment of Paul and the others shattered my faith in British justice. They have been wrongly held for fifteen years. I don't call that justice.

Only four policemen are being held responsible for the frame-up. Do you think the responsibility stops there?
The responsibility goes to the top of the tree. The DPP, the judge, Peter Imbert, Michael Havers, Bob Huntley

Lily Hill

and Jim Neville of the Bomb Squad, Chris Lowe Head of the Surrey police – they are all responsible.

You've constantly campaigned over the past 15 years. What have those years taught you?
A lot about injustice. It still exists and will unless people come out and let their voices be heard.

What would you say to the relatives and friends in your position – those of the Birmingham 6 or the Broadwater Farm frame-ups?
Keep campaigning. Never give up and never let the cases go away.

What do you think of the Birmingham 6's chances now?
We are organised in Belfast in a Relatives Action Group and are fighting with definite hope. We're also fighting to clear the names of the Maguire 7 and the Winchester 3. At our meeting last night one of Hugh Callaghan's brothers told us that he had spoken to Hugh for 25 minutes on the phone to the prison. This hasn't happened before. Also Gerard Conlon has been in to visit Paddy Hill. There is some hope, definitely. ■

THE BALCOMBE STREET TRIAL

'No crimes, no guilt'

The Balcombe Street IRA Active Service Unit was arrested after a siege on 12 December 1975. They were Joe O'Connell, Harry Duggan, Eddie Butler and Hugh Doherty. After their arrest they were interrogated by Jim Nevill and Peter Imbert, then of the Bomb Squad. They admitted to carrying out the Guildford and Woolwich bombings as part of a string of bombings which had taken place. The Judge was Justice Cantley who had been on a list of targets of the Unit and so, of course was very impartial.

The Balcombe Street unit recognised the court only in so far as it was necessary to point out that the Guildford 4 were falsely imprisoned for bombings which the unit had in fact committed. It was an extraordinary trial in many ways. The prosecution fought to keep Guildford and Woolwich out of it. During the trial a forensic scientist giving evidence for the prosecution admitted that he had initially included Woolwich in his series of bombings attributed to the Unit but had subsequently removed it on the instructions of the Bomb Squad. On one of 100 charges they faced, bombing the Hilton Hotel, the defence established that the Unit had given a 20 minute warning but that the police had merely sent a patrolman to the Hotel and had not insisted on clearing it.

For once, the jury in an Irish trial became tired of the charade being played out in front of them. Instead of retiring and reappearing quickly with rubber stamp guilty verdicts they were out for almost eight hours. They stunned and enraged the Bomb Squad (including Imbert) by reaching not guilty verdicts on 26 of the charges. For example, they found the unit not guilty of murder but guilty of manslaughter for the Hilton bombing indicating that they placed responsibility for the deaths with the police.

One of the factors which must have influenced the jury was a statement read from the dock (in the face of constant interruption from Cantley) by Joe O'Connell. It is a masterly exposure of British imperialism and its corruption. Indeed the jury asked for a copy of it, which Cantley refused them. It says something about the processes of British justice that the jury were arrested, after the trial, in a pub to which they had gone after sentences were passed and where they were vocally expressing indignation at the length of the sentences.

We reprint in full Joe O'Connell's speech from the dock.

Speech from the Dock

Text of the speech from the dock by Joe O'Connell at the Old Bailey on 8 February 1977.

Members of the Jury:

There has been an attempt by this court to isolate certain incidents which have been called 'crimes'. These incidents have been put completely outside the context in which they occurred in a way that is neither just nor consistent with the truth. The true context is that of the relationship between this country and our country - Ireland. That relationship is one of a state of war against the occupation of Ireland by Britain. No mention has been made in this court of the violence suffered by the Irish people; of the use of internment without charge or trial in the Six Counties; of the conviction before the European Court of Human Rights of the British government for the torture of Irish people; nor of the many brutalities of British colonial rule. The judge has attempted to restrict the reference to bombings and shootings to 'terrorist' offences. We would like to ask the judge whether the bombing of Hiroshima and Dresden were terrorist offences? Whether the torture carried out by British soldiers in Aden and Cyprus and Hola Camp Kenya were acts of terrorism? Whether the British were guilty of terrorism when they forced thousands of civilians into concentration camps in South Africa where thousands of them died?

We say that no representative of British imperialism is fit to pass judgement on us, for this government has been guilty of the very things for which we now stand accused. This government carries out acts of terrorism in order to defend British imperialism and continues to do so in Ireland. We have struggled to free our country from British rule. We are patriots. British soldiers in Northern Ireland are mercenaries of British imperialism. Yet none of them has ever been convicted for the murders of unarmed civilians which they have committed in Ireland. We ask the members of the jury to consider this paradox.

We are all four Irish Republicans. We have recognised this court to the extent that we have instructed our lawyers to draw the attention of the court to the fact that four totally innocent people – Carole Richardson, Gerry Conlon, Paul Hill and Paddy Armstrong – are serving massive sentences for three bombings, two in Guildford and one in Woolwich, which three of us and another man now imprisoned, have admitted that we did. The Director of Public Prosecutions was made aware of these admissions in December 1975 and has chosen to do nothing. We wonder if he will still do nothing when he is made aware of the new and important evidence which has come to light through the cross examination by our Counsel of certain prosecution witnesses in this trial. The evidence of Higgs and Lidstone played a vital part in the conviction of innocent people. Higgs admitted in this trial that the Woolwich bomb formed part of a correlated series carried out between October and December 1974 and that the people on trial were in custody at the time of some of these bombings. Lidstone in his evidence at this trial tried to make little of the suggestion that the Guildford bombs could have been part of the 'Phase One' bombings with which we were accused with the excuse, and this appeared to be his only reason, that the bombings in Guildford had occurred a long time before the rest. When it was pointed out to him that there were many clear links between Caterham and Guildford and that the time between Guildford and the Brooks Club bomb with which we were originally charged was 17 days and that Woolwich occurred 16 days later, and that equal time gaps occurred between many of the incidents with which we were charged, Lidstone backtracked and admitted that there was a likely connection.

This shifty manoeuvring typifies what we, as Irish Republicans, have come to understand by the words 'British justice'. Time and again in Irish political trials in this country innocent people have been convicted on the flimsiest evidence – often no more than extorted statements or even 'verbals' from the police. Despite the often repeated claim that there is no such thing as a Political Prisoner in England, we would like to point out the stress laid in Irish trials on the political beliefs of the prisoners and the fact that over the last few years convicted Republicans have been subjected to extreme brutality in English prisons. This brutality has led to prisoners being severely injured like six Republicans in Albany in September last year, and to the almost constant use of solitary confinement for such prisoners. It has also resulted in the deaths of three of our comrades – Michael Gaughan, Frank Stagg and Noel Jenkinson.

We do not wish to insult the members of the jury when we say that they are not our peers. An English jury can never be the peers of Irish men and women. We will be judged only by our countrymen. Any verdict or sentence from this court is nothing more

than the continuation of the hypocrisy of British rule in Ireland and the injustice it has inflicted on our country and its people.

We admit to no 'crimes' and to no 'guilt' for the real crimes and guilt are those of British imperialism committed against our people. The war against imperialism is a just war and it will go on, for true peace can only come about when a nation is free from oppression and injustice. Whether we are imprisoned or not is irrelevant for our whole nation is the prisoner of British imperialism. The British people who choose to ignore this or who swallow the lies of the British gutter press are responsible for the actions of their government unless they stand out against them.

As volunteers in the Irish Republican Army we have fought to free our oppressed nation from its bondage to British imperialism of which this court is an integral part.

Joe O'Connell, Eddie Butler, Harry Duggan, Hugh Doherty

This speech is reprinted from the *Irish Prisoner*, magazine of the Prisoners Aid Committee. The PAC was active in the 1970s in building support for Irish prisoners both in England and Ireland. The RCG was active in these campaigns with the PAC.

INTERVIEW WITH ALASTAIR LOGAN

Solicitor in search of justice

In 1974 Alastair Logan was the only Guildford solicitor who would defend Paddy Armstrong, one of the Guildford 4. Since then he has doggedly campaigned for the case to be re-opened. Following their release MAXINE WILLIAMS talked to ALASTAIR LOGAN about the implications.

The grounds for releasing the Guildford 4 just zone in on a very few, low-ranking police officers. Are you suspicious about this?

I think one has to look at it as a damage limitation exercise. I don't believe we know the full extent of what they've discovered, and I don't think that until we do know, that we will have any clear idea of how much there was available. It would not surprise me to find that they had taken a course which identified junior officers. It would certainly be my intention to make sure that junior officers don't take the can for it. Junior officers may well have been involved, but they were led by and supervised by very senior officers.

The Crown went out of its way to say that no blame attached to the Metropolitan police, yet Imbert played a quite crucial role in the whole business, didn't he?

I think that Sir Peter Imbert's role in this matter will have to be examined and I think that it is evident by the extent to which he has been forced to go public, asserting to everybody that he has considered his role in this matter and is quite satisfied with it, that he has been called on to account for his movements. I hope to contend that the judicial inquiry should examine the role of the Metropolitan police in detail. What we are talking about here is just not officers beating a prisoner. What we are talking about is a large number of senior officers engaged in the deliberate concealment of material which a jury *should* have seen.

Which material was concealed?

The links that showed that the Balcombe Street ASU were the authors of the offences at Guildford and Woolwich. These links demonstrated clearly that at the time that they had the Guildford 4 in custody, a number of linked offences had been committed. *Any* police officer charged with the responsibility of investigating would have automatically asked questions about those linked offences. The Guildford 4 were never suspected of those offences, interrogated about those offences, and no mention was made about those offences at all. And therefore, when one looks back on it, one has to say to oneself, to what extent *did* they investigate? Or had they decided that these people were the candidates for the job and the whole exercise then became a question of shoring up that decision? And the way I look at it is that having decided that they were going to prosecute these people, particularly when Richardson's alibi hit them completely off guard and between the eyes, it became a question of all hands to the pump, in order to ensure that the decision to prosecute was shored up.

I think a lot of ordinary people will be questioning the role of prosecution lawyers and the judges.

What this case demonstrates is that the last forum into which we could put matters of miscarriage of justice is the legal system, because the legal system has proved itself totally unequal to the task.

The legal system has demonstrated that bias creeps in. They argue that there is no politics in a courtroom, and yet politics in this case dictated what went on in the courtroom. The very thought – you could see it in what Lord Justice Roskill was saying – that police officers had lied and convicted terrorists had told the truth, was so unimaginable to him that he couldn't contend with it. It is what Lord Denning said. At least you have to give him credit for having actually said what he thought. When he came out with his 'appalling vista' speech, he was only articulating what many, many judges and many members of the higher echelons of the establishment think. He was simply saying, 'It's unbelievable. I can't accept it. I can't live with it'. What we were saying was that you can't try people fairly if you've got this inbuilt prejudice: they're Irish, they're bombers, they've committed murder, they're dangerous terrorists, all that kind of background means that people's judgment gets interfered with and perhaps eradicated.

You think the system itself fails to protect the rights of particularly those who are on trial for opposition to the British state?

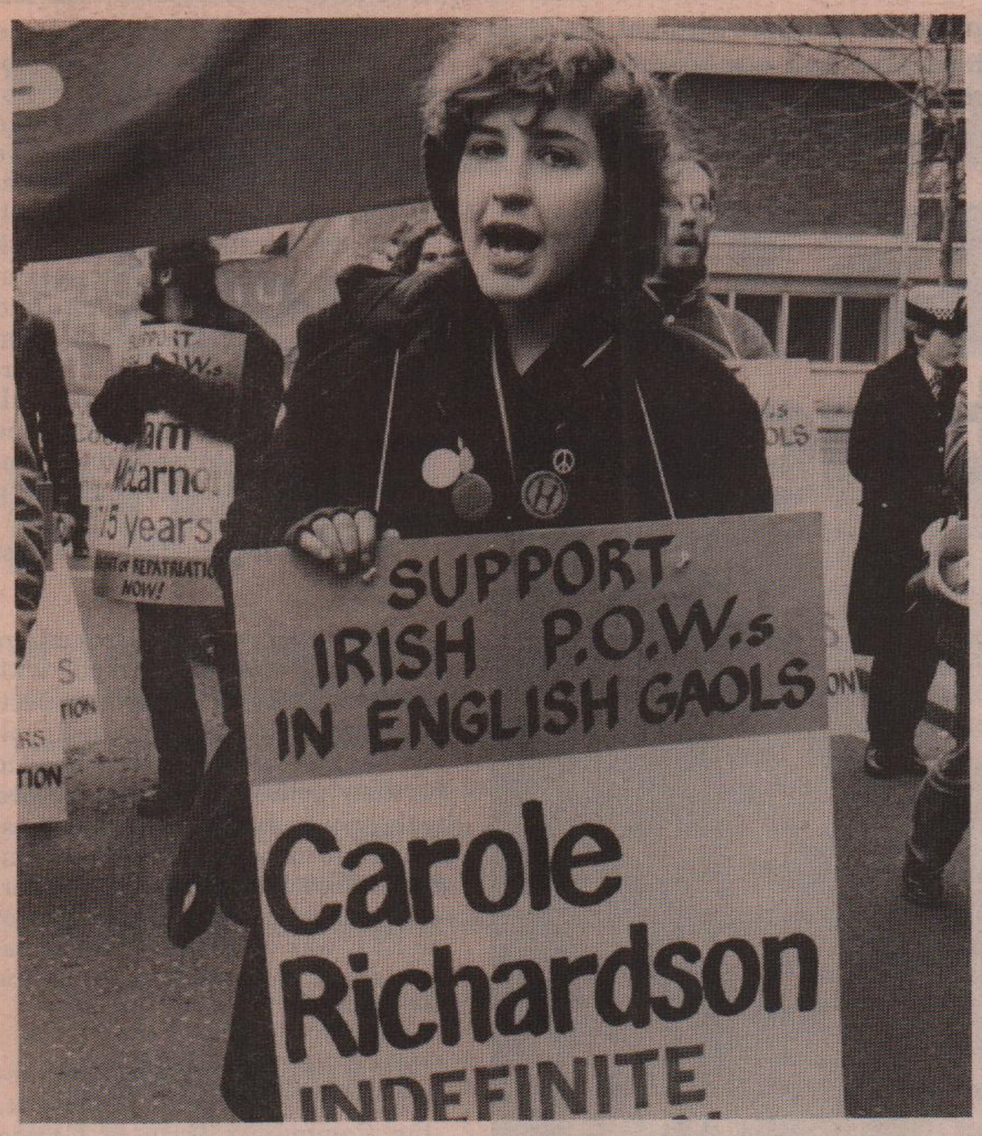
Yes. If capital punishment came back, and I was asked to deal with an Irish terrorist-type case, I would have to refuse it. I would have to say to that individual, 'I know, from experience, that I am not going to be able to guarantee you a fair trial, and if I can't guarantee you a fair trial then what I am in fact taking part in is a charade which will ultimately end up with you dangling on the end of a rope.' I couldn't look someone in the face and say 'Be sure, be sure, I will guarantee to you a fair trial.' The Guildford case proves conclusively that that can't be done.

Is that partly why you've become so involved in it, because you thought you'd taken part in a charade at the first trial?

Yes. I hadn't had any Irish trial before. My problem was that when I went into the law, I thought I could professionally assist people, that I had certain standards, and that the law provided standards by which conduct between one person and another was judged.

I had a deep unease about the convictions. Patrick Armstrong *could not* have committed that offence. He had no ability to do so, because he shook from head to foot like somebody with Parkinson's disease even at the thought of going through in his mind what he had gone through in that police station. If that was the situation, what would he have been like carrying a home-made explosive device into a public house?

I didn't know enough about the



others' cases at that time to be so sure about them to the same degree. Not that I doubted what they had to say, but I didn't know enough. Carole Richardson we all knew enough about because that alibi couldn't have been manufactured. I mean, the explanation the Crown offered for the alibi was so much nonsense, it was unbelievable, but it was swallowed by the jury.

When I found out what the Crown had got up to I was really angry because I had been conned into thinking that these offences were isolated acts. Everybody got blinkered into this idea that we were dealing with a solitary act at Guildford and a solitary act at Woolwich.

I think the context in which this took place is that we had acts of terrorism, as society looked at it, and so long as they were blowing each other up in Northern Ireland it didn't really make any difference. When it came here, then it became a serious matter, and of course the police were ill-equipped to deal with it, and they were under tremendous pressure to get results.

We had this idea that people who got engaged in that kind of offence were so beyond the ordinary ken of the ordinary person that we didn't have to treat them as human beings any longer. That of course smacks of what the Nazis did in the Second World War as far as the Jews and other races were concerned.

I think that restraints came off and we got ourselves into a situation where police officers behaved quite uncharacteristically and with great brutality, and with great sadism in certain cases. And then ultimately you came into a situation where they said to themselves, well that's the kind of person they are so it's alright to bend the rules to get them banged away. So the end justified the means, and of course it never does.

The rules seem to go out of the window then?

I think it's when a high degree of emotion gets injected into it, either because society considers itself to be under attack, or because a section of society which has power considers itself to be under attack. I think that people in the Broadwater Farm situation brought out a lot of emotions which clouded judgment because there wasn't a dispassionate examination of the facts. You know, the idea that there must be somebody found for it and the means by which that is done don't require any kind of examination.

I don't think the system is inherently bad, but I think the system is inherently capable of being influenced by the politics, or the emotion, or a combination of both of them, and it's when you get the combination of both of them that the legal system becomes totally incapable of functioning with fairness.

Do you anticipate a whitewash with the May enquiry?

Well, I have to say that it is certainly not my intention that the May inquiry should avoid looking at all the important aspects that arise out of this case. On the other hand, like everything else, you have to look at the historical perspective. There has not been a single judicial inquiry that has not ended up 're-convicting' the people who were the subject or the cause of it. In the case of Timothy Evans, we had the obscenity of Timothy Evans being found to be guilty again, even though they'd executed him. The Confait thing ended up by finding that these people were the people who had committed the offence, the Cyprus Spy Trial, exactly the same. It would be, in my view, absolutely outrageous if the end result of this judicial inquiry was a suggestion that the police had actually caught the right people, and through some technicality the convictions had been set aside.

What about the Maguires?

The Maguires' position is very difficult. They cannot come out of this judicial inquiry with an acquittal and equally they cannot and wouldn't refuse to participate because it gives them the one and only opportunity to try and clear their name.

I am very sure that the Maguires' case will get a full and proper hearing. We will do everything in our power to bring to the fore all the factors that demonstrate that they are innocent people convicted for an offence that never took place at all. They were convicted of handling nitro-glycerine which the prosecution said was an explosive, or the constituent part of an explosive, but they were never able to find any explosives and they were never convicted of any attempt to make them into any bomb. Therefore it isn't a question of 'if the Maguires didn't do it, who did?', it is a question of 'did any offence ever take place?' And if no offence actually took place, which is what the Maguires have always said, and which I firmly believe to be the truth, then in those circumstances is this inquiry going to be able to produce a result which will give them any satisfaction? It's a question to which I don't yet know the answer.

What you think about the Birmingham 6's prospects now?

There are a lot of parallels in the case. So far as treatment by the police is concerned, what the Birmingham 6 have stated is a reiteration of what the Guildford people were saying in different circumstances and at a different police station. I think also we've broken the barrier of the public coming to accept that this sort of thing can happen.

It's not a case with which I've had any intimate connection and therefore I couldn't really go any further than that. But it is a case which I feel calls long and loud for an impartial, further investigation. There is no question, as far as Patrick Armstrong, Gerry Conlon and Paul Hill are concerned, who have spent 15 years with these men in jail, that they are unutterably convinced that they are innocent, and that is a view shared by a large number of people.

What do you think is the best system for reviewing these sorts of cases?

I think we should take the whole question of miscarriages of justice out of the legal system, put it into the hands of an independent body, which will be charged with the responsibility of carrying out an investigation which would not require the defendant to prove his innocence or the prosecution to re-convict him, but which would be an impartial inquiry into various facts. I think we should have transcripts of trials. You know, one reason we don't have transcripts of trials automatically is given as cost. Another reason *could* be that we don't want our mistakes to be so obviously available to other people who look at them later on.

I think that we could staff such an independent body with a variety of qualified people in various disciplines. They should have access to the public laboratories, the forensic science laboratories, which the police regard as being their own private domain. We should ensure that these people are paid in such a way that they are not civil servants at the behest of the police.

I think we must also ensure that *no* convictions are based on uncorroborated confessions, and *no* keeping people isolated in police stations even for only a tiddly 48 hours as the police would say.

Police spokesmen are saying things like 'This could never happen again because our interrogations are now being tape-recorded'. But the tape-recording business doesn't apply to so-called terrorist offences.

No, neither does getting a solicitor in immediately. There's a deferral period of 48 hours. And the 48 hours isn't as a result of the exercise of humanitarian considerations, the 48 hours is quite pragmatic. The research that's been done in this country and America shows that if you can't break a man in the first 48 hours, you're very unlikely to break him in seven days. So it's very pragmatic: we want the man broken, the maximum period which realistically speaking we can expect to achieve that in is 48 hours, therefore we will exclude lawyers for 48 hours. What the Guildford case proves is that if you have that sort of situation, you can end up with false confessions.

The handling of witnesses is also important to the process of investigation. In the Guildford case the defence witnesses were treated as if they had committed the offence themselves.

This case dragged you into politics, really, didn't it? What lessons have you drawn from the whole experience?

Well, I really didn't have any politics in 1974. I mean, I used to vote, and I honestly can't remember how I voted, because it never really was of any importance to me. What I can say is that I have never voted since, because it seemed to me that it didn't really matter what hat was being worn in government. At the end of the day the problems were still the same.

What I have also found, though, is that it is a lie when it is said that politics doesn't come into the courtroom. It is a lie when people say judges are apolitical. I've learned that politics goes hand in hand with humanity.

It is as offensive to be prosecuted for holding a view which is contrary to the state's view as it is to be prosecuted because you happen to be of a class of person who's at the moment regarded as a *persona non grata* – Irish, Jewish, black, whatever it may be, and the difficulty is that the legal system kids itself all the time that politics isn't there. But we've had enough experience to know that it is. The search must be constant to ensure that justice, in its fullest sense, is there, and justice for everybody. ■

THE MAGUIRES and GUISEPPE CONLON

More victims – the Maguires and Guiseppe Conlon

The Maguire family was arrested in December 1974 solely because they had been named in statements forcibly extracted from the Guildford 4. No explosives were found in their home, no admissions were made by them.

Those arrested were: Ann and Patrick Maguire, their sons Vincent and Patrick, two friends Sean Smyth and Pat O'Neill. With them was arrested Guiseppe Conlon, father of Gerard Conlon who was in England to try to get legal assistance for his son. Disputed and now discredited forensic evidence formed the only evidence against them. Nevertheless they were sentenced to 12-14 years for the adults and five and four years for the Maguire sons.

Guiseppe Conlon, sick with TB, died in prison protesting his innocence. We reprint an article, first published in *FRFI* in March/April 1980, by TERRY O'HALLORAN who spent all his political life campaigning for Irish prisoners, and who died earlier this year. The Maguires have still not been cleared and their case is to be included in the forthcoming inquiry by Justice May.

Up to Wednesday 23 January 1980, four Irish prisoners had been murdered in English jails. On 23 January 1980 Guiseppe Conlon became the fifth Irish prisoner to be murdered.

He died in Hammersmith Hospital as a result of the chronic lung disease which he had suffered from throughout his five years imprisonment. His death certificate will not record 'Murdered by British imperialism' but he was murdered just as surely as if he had been hanged, shot, electrocuted or beaten to death. His arrest, conviction, imprisonment and treatment in jail was one long slow act of murder.

He was arrested at the end of 1975 whilst visiting his son Gerry who is serving at least 30 years also on a trumped up charge. Guiseppe Conlon was charged with possession of explosives. The sole evidence produced against him consisted of the 'discovery' of a 1000th part of a grain of 'nitroglycerine' under his fingernails. He denied the charge from that day right up to the day of his death. This 'evidence' however was sufficient for him to be sentenced to twelve years in prison. At no time, either during or after his trial, was his home in Cyprus Street Belfast searched! Yet this man was supposed to be part of a bombing team!

Guiseppe Conlon entered prison seriously ill and never received proper medical treatment for his illness. Throughout his imprisonment he fought to establish his innocence. He went on a five week hunger strike in 1979. He was refused parole in November 1979. Then he contracted pneumonia and was rushed, in a coma, to Hammersmith Hospital on 31 December 1979 to die. But even this was not the end of the story.

In a perverse display of imperialist brutality – Guiseppe Conlon was actually taken to Wormwood Scrubs prison on 11 January. He was in an oxygen tent being fed on drips when he was snatched from his bed, wrapped in a single sheet, bundled into a taxi and taken back to Wormwood Scrubs. After a week of agony he was returned to Hammersmith Hospital at 10pm on 18 January. He finally died on Wednesday 23 January. ■

THE GUILDFORD 4 ARE FREE

An Irish Solidarity Movement Conference: left to right Alastair Logan, Michael Holden, Terry O'Halloran, Helen O'Brien (sister of Irish PoW)

During World War II Yugoslav and Greek communists conducted an armed struggle against the Nazi occupiers. This review by ROBERT CLOUGH contrasts the revolutionary and opportunist tactics pursued by the Yugoslav and the Greek Communist Parties respectively. It elucidates fundamental principles about the relation of communists to the armed struggle.

COMMUNISTS and armed struggle

ELAS fighters in action

Forty years ago saw the publication of Svetizar Vukmanovic's pamphlet, *How and Why the People's Liberation Struggle of Greece met with Defeat*. Written in 1949 after the final defeat of the Greek revolutionary movement, it is a document that has been unjustly neglected.

In the late 1930s, the author was a youth leader in the underground Yugoslavian Communist Party (CPY); during the war he was a partisan army commander in Macedonia. Afterwards, he became an adviser of President Tito. When he wrote his pamphlet on the Greek revolution, it was from first-hand experience: he spent six months with leaders of the Greek revolutionary army (ELAS) during 1943 in an attempt to unify the two struggles.

The war of national liberation in Yugoslavia started in June 1941 after the German invasion, whilst armed resistance developed in Greece a year later. Two crucial questions were posed by the formation of partisan detachments in either country: what would be the role of the Communist Parties, and what was to be the relation, if any, between national liberation and social emancipation? These are central to Vukmanovic's pamphlet, and he provides a powerful polemic against the opportunist standpoint on both these issues.

The positions of the CPY and the Greek Communist Party (KKE) were completely different. The CPY spearheaded the move to armed struggle in 1941, and by emphasising the primacy of armed struggle, it ensured that the question of social emancipation became fused with that of national liberation. However, in Greece the KKE and ELAS retained entirely separate existences, and although KKE members were the core of the ELAS command, they were not KKE leaders themselves. The latter spent the war in Athens, well away from the military struggle. These two different approaches gave two very different results.

Vukmanovic recognises that the issue is not whether Stalin ordered the KKE to limit its struggle in any particular way, as Trotskyists often argue. Stalin did try to restrict the CPY, but under Tito's leadership, they rightly ignored him. Even less could he impose his view on the KKE; anyway, he did not contact the Greek Party. Hence whatever the KKE did in the period 1942 to 1947 was entirely up to its leadership, and Vukmanovic rightly approaches it thus.

Vukmanovic shows that the KKE leadership believed that despite the changed conditons arising from global war, the focus of the revolutionary struggle must remain in the towns, and that there had to be an underground economic and political struggle leading to the creation of armed workers' detachments as the nucleus of a revolutionary army. The problem was that conditions had changed, and an enormous peasant-based explosion had taken place throughout the country. So the question was, how should the KKE react? As Vukmanovic says:

> 'This question (that of the forms of revolutionary struggle) inevitably faced all Communist Parties during the Second World War . . . It was, plainly, a matter of whether, in the new conditions . . . one was to work towards developing the revolutionary struggle of the people through economic and political strikes, through demonstrations and battles at barricades, through armed risings in towns, and so forth, or else work to develop the revolutionary struggle of the body of the people by means of a mass partisan war, not solely against the invaders, but also against one's own traitorous bourgeois reactionaries. Those are quite definitely two different policies, which appeared in this war. The first was an opportunist policy . . . '

Vukmanovic recognises that there was mass partisan war in Greece, but argues that this was made use of as an 'incidental, auxiliary form of revolutionary struggle', and continues:

> 'The other revolutionary policy consisted in regarding a partisan war waged by the whole nation as the basic form of revolutionary struggle, while the conduct of mass struggles in the towns was applied solely as an incidental, auxiliary form of struggle. This policy resulted in victory in China and Yugoslavia, ie, in those countries in which it was applied.'

Hence the CPY instructed the working class cadres to leave the towns and join the partisan forces, not only to raise the political level of the revolutionary army, but also so that they could acquire military experience. In this practical way, an alliance was forged between the working class and peasantry under Communist leadership; with the strengthening of the working class contingent, any peasant-based attempt to reduce the war to that of national liberation was frustrated. This effectively excluded the bourgeoisie from any political influence.

The approach of the KKE was quite the opposite. Far from ordering the working class members to join the resistance, it tried all it could to prevent that happening, arguing that they had to remain in the towns. Vukmanovic asks

> 'Now, what did such a policy amount to, under the actual historical conditions, with the whole country lapped in the flames of a partisan war, with the vast majority of the peasantry caught up in the armed struggle?'

He answers:

> 'In practice it meant dragging the revolutionary movement backwards, and preventing further broad extension of the armed uprising. Lenin taught us that when a revolutionary movement has taken up the watchword of armed uprising, and begun an armed struggle, all other forms of revolutionary struggle must be subordinated to the basic form of struggle, the creation of a revolutionary army and conduct of armed action.'

Independently of the working class, the peasantry had taken up a war of national liberation. Vukmanovic says

> '. . . It depended on the strength and organisation of the revolutionary workers' movement whether the armed struggle of the peasantry would remain a struggle for national liberation alone, or grow into a struggle for the establishment of a people's democratic regime in the whole country, in other words, whether the peasantry would or would not finally pass to the side of the revolution.'

The KKE had decided that workers' action at the point of production was the only way to undermine the fascist occupation. Vukmanovic does not deny that there is a role for traditional forms of struggle. But limiting the working class to these, and so preventing it from direct participation in the armed struggle was

> '. . . more than opportunism; it was a betrayal of the cause of the people's liberation struggle.'

True, there were a number of armed workers' detachments in the Greek towns, but they were lightly armed, and in the nature of things, unable to mount more than the occasional sporadic attacks. The responsibility of the KKE was to ensure that the working class obtained as much military experience as possible, by drawing workers from the towns and forming proletarian detachments in the countryside.

> 'Such units would in a military sense have matured sufficiently, not merely to smash the resistance of the domestic bourgeois reactionaries' armed forces, but to smash as well the resistance of the British regular forces, on whose intervention [in December 1944 – RC] the leadership should have counted.'

The overwhelming peasant nature of ELAS was a major political obstacle despite its enormous achievements, which we must not forget: its re-organisation of social life in the liberated zones, where, for the first time ever, women had the vote and were drawn into social life. But the peasant units tended to confine themselves to their neighbourhood, so that there was no nationally united revolutionary army. This was in marked contrast to Yugoslavia, where large mobile formations were created, which traversed the country engaging the fascists, and thereby acting as a focus of unity for all the Yugoslav nationalities.

Vukmanovic then shows that the KKE, by dividing the working class from the armed struggle of the peasantry, weakened and ultimately destroyed both. The wider aims of social liberation, the standpoint of the working class, were deliberately kept away from ELAS. An episode related by Dominic Eudis in his book *The Kapetanios: Partisans and the Civil War in Greece 1943-49*, illustrates this perfectly, since it involves Vukmanovic himself, on a visit to promote co-operation between ELAS and the CPY in 1943. ELAS leader Andreas Tzimas, also a KKE leader though opposed to the KKE position, invites Vukmanovic (Tempo) to speak at a conference of partisans, attended also by some British liaison officers. Eudis relates:

> 'Before the meeting began Tzimas took Tempo aside and asked him what theme he was going to bring into his address.
>
> "I'm going to speak about our liberation struggle".
>
> Tzimas hesitated
>
> "Er . . . it would be better not to mention Russia or the Communist Party. We're not supposed to use KKE propaganda material here."
>
> "In that case I won't speak at all. Where I come from it's the Party that supports armed struggle. The other democratic parties haven't stood up to the occupying forces at all."
>
> Tempo mounted the rostrum and went straight to the heart of his subject without any preliminaries: "We have a lot of enemies in Yugoslavia: the Germans, the Italians, the Bulgarians, the Rumanians, the Hungarians, the Quislings, the Cetniks and the British who are arming the collaborators. Nobody gives us any help. Tito told us: If you need arms, take them from the enemy. Now we have artillery, machine guns, tanks. All we ask of Great Britain is that she refrains from helping Germany indirectly. We don't need anything else from her".
>
> An ovation drowned his last words.'

British interference in Greek affairs was already well established, with persistent attempts to impose a post-war government made up of Royalists. The partisans were in no mood to see their democratic gains usurped by those who had been their oppressors before the war, and who were inactive at best in opposition to the German occupation. But the position of the KKE was different. A proclamation issued by its leadership in June 1943 said:

> 'While awaiting the final aim, socialism, the party of the proletariat, the Communist Party of Greece fights today for national liberation, but after the war will fight for a democracy, when it must be transformed into the party of the broad working masses, a party of millions of members, a party of a people's regime in Greece.'

As a consequence:

> 'The Communist Party of Greece, aiding the national liberation struggle with all the means at its disposal, will do all it can to secure the unification of the last patriotic force in one unbreakable national league . . . '

The KKE tried to restrict the struggle to one of national liberation, in other words, to one that could be accepted by sections of the 'democratic' bourgeoisie. In separating the national liberation struggle from that for social liberation, it provided an avenue for the discredited bourgeoisie to regain its former positions.

In consequence, the KKE had to keep the working class and the peasantry separate and make the development of armed struggle a subordinate issue. How would the bourgeoisie join the national liberation struggle if the working class were armed to the teeth alongside the peasantry? The only chance for the re-establishment of some kind of bourgeoisie dictatorship was if the working class was rendered politically and militarily defenceless.

This is just what happened. Although ELAS liberated the majority of Greece, the British invaded as soon as they could, in December 1944. The immediate instructions to the invading army was to disarm ELAS, to behave in Churchill's words as an occupying force. The working class resistance, with honourable exceptions, was very limited. In February 1945, ELAS, under the pressure of the KKE, capitulated. Although repression provoked further armed struggle from mid-1945 to 1947, the working class played no further active role.

Through its polemical form, Vukmanovic's pamphlet clearly contrasts the two fundamental positions, and shows how opportunism can take on the most radical guises. At first sight, the KKE had the more revolutionary position of pure working class struggle. In truth, however, it was opportunist through and through. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and as Vukmanovic says, in those countries where partisan warfare was adopted wholeheartedly by the Communist Party, a revolution was achieved. In those countries where it was viewed as an auxiliary form of struggle, there was only defeat. ■

El Salvador: Right attempts to crush popular resistance

On 31 October a massive bomb ripped through the dining hall of the headquarters of the left-wing union federation Fenastras (National Workers' Federation). Ten people were killed, among them the Fenastras' leader Febe Elizabeth Velazquez, and over thirty injured. The attack was blamed on the military. In response the FMLN broke off the tentative talks which they had been holding with the government. As we go to press the FMLN have hit back and their fighters have taken over parts of the capital, San Salvador and there is fighting in two other main cities. The house of fascist president Christiani was bombed. Below PHILIP VINE, a correspondent, reports direct from El Salvador on the situation he encountered earlier this year.

San Salvador, 15 September: 3000 people march for peace and call for a negotiated settlement to the civil war.

On 19 April the Policia de Hacienda and Policia Nacional stormed the office of CRIPDES, the Christian committee for people displaced by the war in El Salvador.

The police captured a total of 63 people from the San Salvador office, destroyed the premises, took files, raped many of the women and some of the men.

The popular movement in El Salvador is facing a new wave of violence. Since April the number of disappearance of students, unionists, church activists and human rights workers has been escalating. The moderate left is running scared and beginning to go underground again.

The ARENA party under the presidency of Alfredo Cristiani came to power last year winning the elections on a platform of using an 'iron fist' against the FMLN insurgents. After eight months they are no closer to a military victory. Peace negotiations with the guerrillas are still at a stalemate.

A peace dialogue was held between a government commission and the commandantes of the FMLN in Mexico on 12 – 15 September. They were conducted with an air of renewed goodwill but nothing concrete was achieved. The ceasefire the FMLN had pledged for the talks expired and on 26 September the insurgents launched one of the most comprehensive offensives of 1989, striking military targets in 10 of the 14 regions of the country. The FMLN claimed to have accounted for 90 soldiers, taken nine prisoners and destroyed four aircraft. Radio Venceremos said the operation was for the increasing repression of the workers and unions.

'We have a war situation in the city now,' says Anna, spokeswoman for FECMAFAM – a San Salvadorean based group which protests against the captures of civilians and denounces torture, disappearances and assassinations by the army and security forces. 'The government thinks that every union leader, every student, everyone who looks suspicious is a guerrilla'.

The reasons for this official war being waged against the moderate left are not entirely clear. It is obvious however that ARENA, having gained a complete majority in the National Assembly is not willing to share any of this power with the centralist opposition let alone the popular movements. Cristiana appears to be setting out to dismantle any broad movement which might be capable of threatening the government politically. As the repression grows it is having the effect of pushing more of the moderates into armed struggle.

As a student at the national university said: 'As I see more of my friends and fellow students being captured and tortured for protesting I want to fight against it. The only real way is joining the FMLN.' San Salvador is a nation tired of war. The people are weary of the civil war which has been going for eight years now at the cost of some 70,000 lives. The population wants peace as shown by the 3,000 strong march for peace on 15 September, the day the government was staging military processions to mark the 168th anniversary of Central American independence. However, as more people are killed and imprisoned for unarmed struggle, the logic of passive resistance begins to make less sense. The recent actions of the military against the popular movement seem to be polarising the government and the opposition even more.

It could be too, that the army are frustrated by their failure to contain the FMLN and are taking out their frustrations on the popular movements. The FMLN launched the first large scale urban operation in eight years at the end of July. This was in response to the army's 'operation red' to destroy the urban commando cells of the resistance. The FMLN hit 30 city targets in 24 hours causing consternation in the military and in Washington.

Another factor in the underlying motivations of the Cristiani government is the new economic package. Introduced soon after Cristiani took office, the 18 month plan based on a framework of liberalisation towards a market economy has created a great deal of hardship. Mass lay-offs of public employees, inflating prices of basic foodstuffs as traditional exports like cotton and coffee are encouraged at the expense of producing staples like rice and beans, attempts to hold down wages as prices spiral, are all hurting the lower and middle classes.

The package is an IMF blueprint for developing countries and includes a move towards free trade and the privatisation of banks. In this way Cristiani is hoping to get IMF funding and attract outside capital. An economic direction which he says will see improvements in a year and a half. There may be improvements, but who will reap the benefits? The oligarchy and the nouveau-riche which owns the means of production and make up the ARENA party. Any trickle down effects are limited under the present structure of ownership.

The reaction from the people to this imposed austerity has been strong. The price rises of basic products (upwards of 60-100 per cent since May) and the new taxes on water and electricity and other amenities have really hit the low paid and underemployed. In San Salvador the change in pricing structure of the bus services resulted in several buses being burnt in the streets. Many young people are heading north to Mexico and the United States to find work in places like burger bars and send money back to their families. The queues outside the fortress that is the US embassy in the capital stretch back for a block.

The popular movement, in opposing these hardships for the people, has given the government another reason to continue their war against the unarmed struggle.

Tutela Legal, the human rights office of the Catholic church, has recorded from January to August of this year 105 disappearances, 574 captures and 74 death squads and security forces killings of civilians.

FECMAFAM's figures show 741 people were captured up to the end of June and in July alone there were 194 civilians imprisoned by the security forces. (This includes those released again).

The statistics from the non-governmental commission for human rights are even higher. Its latest figures show there were more than 1000 captures, 145 disappearances and 1500 assassinations up until August.

This is only an indication of the levels of violence. The real picture is hard to ascertain as these independent organisations are obstructed by the military and police and refused permission to travel into the conflict zones. Their figures come from testimonies given by friends and family of the victims as well as trying to follow up possible human rights infringements reported in the newspapers.

The situation in El Salvador is such that not only do the political movements face extreme repression but the human rights organisations which try to monitor and bring an end to the killings, torture and disappearances become caught in the net of violence as well.

Spokesman for the Commission, Reynaldo Blanc has seen his friend and colleague, commission coordinator, Herbert Erneste Anaya Sanabria gunned down by the Treasury Police of the Policia de Hacienda.

'Most of us here have been jailed and submitted to torture. The ARENA party with its complete grip on power is trying to completely neutralise social discontent.

'There is a group in the intelligence unit of the Treasury Police, where the death squads work. Since the coming of ARENA they are more formalised and have more force. They feel with their friends in power they can't be punished, there is an air of impunity. (Captures especially have been increasing since Cristiani's inauguration in June).

'Most civilians captured are now submitted to torture. They are making more use of electric shock and the *capucha*.'

The *capucha* is a rubber bag lined with lime put over the victim's head. The cord is tied tight around the neck and the person struck on the back making them inhale the lime which leads to semi-suffocation and they pass out, to be kicked to consciousness and the process starts again.

The feeling has been described as dying over and over again. The lime causes permanent damage to the lungs.

Humanity science student at the national university, Jose Lindolfo Carballo was picked up by four members of the Policia de Hacienda at 7.30 on 29 August. He was tortured for 72 hours using the *capucha* and a type of vice clamp he couldn't describe because of the blindfold. His crime was belonging to the students association. They made him sign a confession saying he was part of the FMLN urban commando and had carried out acts of sabotage in the city.

'I do not belong to the FMLN but the torture was too hard, I had to sign,' he said.

He was lucky. A friend with whom he was arrested had some connections with one of the political parties and he thinks they were released because of this. But not before he was told he would be killed if he kept on working for the student association.

Torture is commonly used to extract a confession of this type. That is the excuse used for captures, the victims are part of the guerrilla. So the security forces need some evidence to get them imprisoned. The court accepts this extra judicial document and the person joins the ranks of political prisoners.

Since December the First Infantry Brigade of the El Salvadorean army has had soldiers surrounding the campus. Their reason – the university is harbouring FMLN commandos. University authorities have repeatedly asked the military to officially search the campus but have received no reply.

On 17 July a group of about 1000 people were demonstrating on the campus about the previous days capture of Rene Cruz, a popular student leader. The First Brigade opened fire on the demonstration wounding 13 people including a US citizen. Since December the human rights commission has recorded 26 captures, five assassinations and one disappearance of university students and teachers.

President of the Federation of El Salvadorean University Students, Carlos Costillo, said in September students from the national university were being picked up almost daily.

Also in that month the printing press of the Catholic University, UCA, in San Salvador was bombed, putting it out of action. This represents a clear intention on the part of the right to dismantle the means of peaceful opposition.

On 19 August Juan Francisco, union delegate at a private company Empresa Lida and a photographer from another union Christia Chan Chan were picked up by soldiers from the FAS, an arm of the air force. There are witnessed testimonies from several people to this capture but the military refuses to acknowledge the incident.

These two people are now on the list of unionists disappeared. Their relatives have exhausted every channel of investigation into their whereabouts. In desperation they placed advertisements in the daily papers in September asking Cristiani or the head of the security forces, Emilio Ponce, to tell them whether they are dead or alive.

On 26 September, 25 members of the country's largest union UNTS were captured at a peaceful demonstration and festival to the north of San Salvador.

UNTS executive committee member, Guillermo Rojas says although the absolute levels of violence against the union are not yet as high as the early eighties, the frightening thing is that due to the complete power of the military within the ARENA party there is nothing to stop the ultra right.

The rising levels of human rights encroachments is a blow for Cristiani's international image. His attempts to overcome the tar brush of the death squads which are synonymous with ARENA are made in order to solicit aid and investment from the US, the IMF and other western countries.

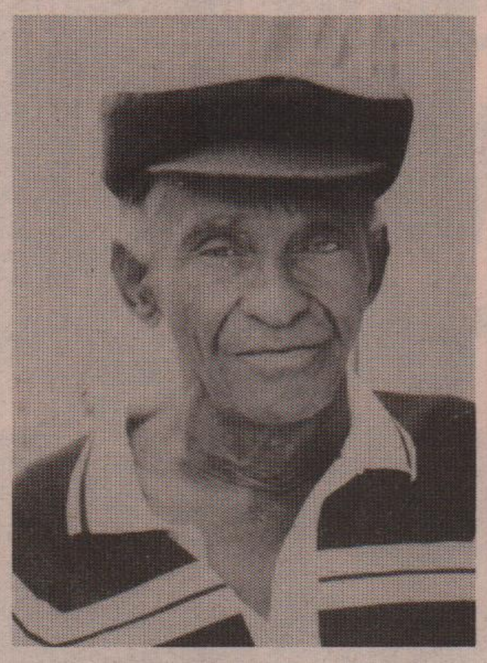
On 21 July the US House of Representatives approved the 1990 $14.3 billion foreign aid appropriations bill which included $85 million in military aid for El Salvador. But on 1 April 1990 the Bush administration must submit to Congress progress reports on the situation in their model democracy. This includes civilian control over the security forces, reduction in the activities of the death squads, the establishment of an efficient judicial system and the dialogue for peace with the FMLN.

It is perhaps with this and other factors in mind Cristiani formed the commission for dialogue in early September, though the lack of army presence in the five-man committee raised the question of its real effectiveness to negotiate as well as doubts over Christiani's sincerity.

Head of the Estado Mayor, Emilio Ponce, has made some valiant statements about cleaning up the army and stopping human rights violations. Sympathetic foreign observers of the ARENA government say a shake-up in the military ranks could occur at the end of the year, but there are no visible signs of a purge of the right who still hold the purse strings and the strings of power. ■

REVIEWS

■ Cubans on their revolution



Cubans, Channel 4 11.00pm 30 October 1989

'Listening to rock music doesn't make us any less revolutionaries,' said a young Cuban school student justifying his enjoyment of popular western music. 'My husband is waiting for his medical to go to Angola . . . It's our way of paying back our debt to humanity' said Marta, a wife, a mother, an obstetrician and party member. These are just two views expressed by Cubans speaking of their everyday lives in the admirable Channel 4 film, *Cubans*, directed by Iain Bruce and Ross Keith.

This year the Cuban revolution celebrates its 30th anniversary. Cuban society is undergoing fundamental change. A process of 'rectification' began a few years ago. This attempt to make the Cuban economy more productive and efficient has taken a very different direction to the process of *perestroika* in the Soviet Union.

Cuba has rejected capitalist market solutions to its economic problems and has, instead, stressed collectivist methods consistent with a socialist morality. For this Cuba has been attacked in the British media and press, including the left press, as a bureaucratic and antiquated regime. By allowing ordinary Cuban people to speak about their own lives, problems and experiences of the Cuban revolution, *Cubans* gives us a sense of the enormous potential socialism has for human advance.

This film features Cubans from very different walks of life, different generations and different points of view in the provincial capital of Cienfuegos. Cienfuegos is an old sugar port which has industrialised rapidly since the revolution and has a work force drawn from every part of the country. It boasts the lowest infant mortality rate in the country, on a par with Japan and Sweden. A remarkable achievement.

Reynaldo is a retired leather worker who has worked since he was nine years old. When his father died his mother had to go out to work because there was no widow's pension before the revolution. His only school was shoe-shining. He spoke of the bag factory set up after the revolution to give people work. It was cheaper to import bags than to produce them in Cuba he said, but it was necessary to give people work. There were problems with the availability of raw materials which often led to people sitting around with no work to do. Rectification has seen cutbacks in the workforce to increase productivity. As people retire they are not replaced but no one is made redundant. 'The state does not make anyone redundant.'

Marta explained the various serious economic difficulties facing Cuba. She reminded us of the US economic blockade of Cuba. This led to problems with replacement parts for equipment not only from the United States but from other countries prevented by the US from sending crucial materials to Cuba. In addition to this, Marta explained, 'Our controls are not very good.' This wouldn't happen in a capitalist country but workers would be sacked. We need more control on the activities of the workforce, not bosses to sack people.

As a doctor, Marta closely identified with the great advances made in health care in Cuba. 'We treat everyone the same in clinics . . . everyone is able to get their health needs met.' She wouldn't like to see private clinics in Cuba. She appeared slightly embarrassed by the fact that fathers are still not allowed into the delivery room at their child's birth. After 30 years of revolution, in this area new ideas are coming slowly.

Jose Ramon is a young black construction worker, a migrant labourer from the east of Cuba, currently lives in a workers' camp on an oil refinery. When he first arrived he got a bad impression of the camp. Trays and glasses were thrown around the canteen. The place now has security guards. He also complained about the canteen workers who he said didn't do their work. When inspectors came to the canteen however, the workers were served properly but after they went things got back to 'normal'. Nevertheless, Jose liked the camp, the work he was doing and especially the trips into the nearby town. His brother was serving in Angola. He was ready to give his life to help another nation and wanted to see other countries free like in Cuba. 'In Cuba,' Jose said, 'you don't see man's exploitation of man.'

The sculptor Wayacon complained about bureaucratic narrow-mindedness in the attitude of Party officials to his art. They rejected a sculpture he wanted to present to the town. He believed that Afro-Cuban culture had been lost after the revolution. Despite this, Wayacon fought the US backed counter revolutionaries at the Bay of Pigs and said he would take up the gun again in defence of Cuba 'to defend what is humane.'

A banner displayed across a square declared, 'The new generation is a solid guarantee of the revolution.' Cuba's young people are not impervious to the attractions of youth culture in the capitalist countries. However, while they would like to travel to these countries to see how other people live, those appearing in this film had no illusions about the reality of capitalist society. They were aware of the class divisions and inequalities under capitalism: 'Some live like the bourgeoisie, others live in poverty' one of them said.

A lot of the coverage of the young people concentrated on their discussions about sex, relationships and the status of young women. Their views on 'easy' women were no different and no more progressive than their equivalent in a British secondary school.

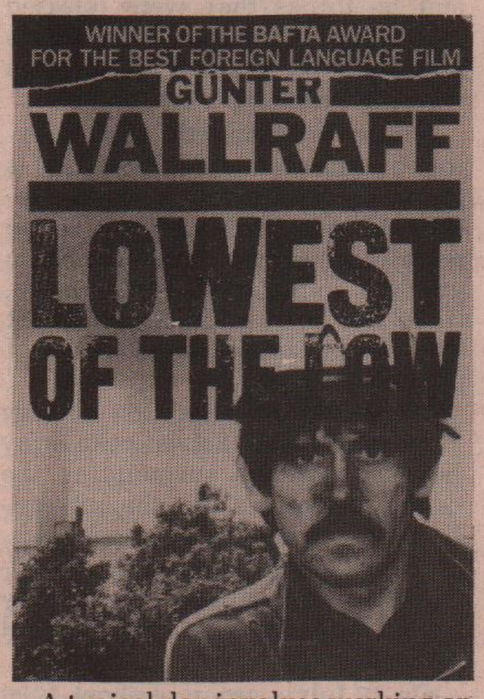
The production team returned to Cuba with a rough cut of the film and the finished version ends with the participants commenting on what they have seen. The young people complained of the narrow coverage given to their discussion. One of the young school students suggested that they should 'show the young people discussing proletarian internationalism.'

Cuba is a third world country with many problems remaining to be solved. The film did not disguise this. But it also showed the enormous gains made for the Cuban people since the revolution. As Marta said food is guaranteed, there is milk for all children, beef every nine days and while there are queues not a single household goes without food. This remarkable achievement would not have been possible without socialism and the revolutionary commitment of the Cuban people.

David Reed and Lorna Reid

■ West German racism

Lowest of the Low, Günter Wallraff, Methuen, 1988, £4.99, 208pp.



Any illusions of the glamour of the West which the recent émigrés from the German Democratic Republic may harbour would immediately be dispelled by even a cursory glance through *Lowest of the Low*. First published in West Germany in 1985, it caused a massive public outrage – and no wonder. Investigative journalist Günter Wallraff lays bare the terrible oppression of capitalism. No one reading this book could fail to conclude that capitalism has nothing to offer but untold human misery and suffering. Life this side of the Berlin Wall is not as rosy and romantic as the glossy brochures make out.

For two years Wallraff disguised himself as a Turkish immigrant working in West Germany, suffering not only racial abuse but also the appallingly low pay and disgusting and dangerous working conditions of the *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker).

Wallraff's first months as 'Ali' are spent on a number of temporary jobs, from renovating bars to shovelling fish-meal, and even a spell at playing the barrel-organ. He is taken on at the Thyssen Steel mill at Duisburg – not as a regular employee, but worse – as a subcontracted labourer. He becomes the property of Adler the subcontractor, to be sold to the mill or other clients as expendable, cheap, low-grade labour – eager to work and easy to hire and fire. Many of the labourers are illegal immigrants, all are desperate to find work to feed themselves and their families. Hence they enter into the clutches of the subcontract labour system.

A typical day involves working on several sites: unblocking toilets ankle-deep in shit and piss; freeing jammed conveyor belts by hand, dislodging thick layers of dust with pneumatic blasters; crawling around and inside machines to loosen encrusted iron ore. It is hard physical toil, in cramped underground conditions or standing high above ground on shaky scaffolding; either outdoors in temperatures of –20°C or underneath blast furnaces. Always there is deafening noise with poisonous fumes. The dust contains dangerous concentrations of at least 25 heavy metals and is so thick it is literally eaten by the mouthful. No protective clothing is provided. Six months later 'Ali' spits black saliva after coughing attacks, his health permanently damaged.

Two or three consecutive shifts and a monthly total of 350 hours are not unusual – accidents through fatigue are frequent. Safety procedures are blatantly flouted. With sirens and warning lights indicating a gas build-up or overheating the foremen simply drive the men to finish quicker – before moving on to the next death trap. Dissenters are immediately sacked.

Adler negotiates (with two of Wallraff's journalist friends posing as industrialists) to send a group of labourers into a nuclear power plant to effect urgent repairs. The levels of radiation are thousands of times above legal limits. Adler's only concerns are to keep the 'suicide squad' ignorant of the risks and to choose only those who have a 'willingness to return to Turkey' to prevent any possible scandal when they eventually die of cancer abroad. The tie-up with the aliens' department is natural and simple.

The profits to be made from the subcontract slave trade are immense. After taking a generous cut from the wage agreed with the contracting firm, the subcontractor leaves less than 10 per cent for the worker. Come pay-day the subcontractor claims that this 10 per cent is gross and not net wage. On top of that he denies that the worker has worked so many hours: exploitation several times over. As the work is unofficial, the labourers are powerless to object.

Lowest of the Low is not about one unscrupulous capitalist. Rather it gives an inkling of the barbarity and obscenity of the capitalist mode of production as a whole, and the misery, indignity and suffering that it brings.

Virman Man

■ Ireland's POWs

Captive Voice, 24 pp., 85p or £4.00 for annual subscription.

Any new publication written by Irish Republican prisoners of war is welcome. Past documents such as *Irish Voices from British Jails* and *Questions of History* have shown that truly Britain's jails are the university of the Irish revolution.

Captive Voice begins boldly. It 'is a new magazine written by Republican prisoners currently being held in gaols in Ireland, Britain, Europe and the US . . . we have thwarted all attempts to break our resistance: we speak from the direct experience of having confronted the coercive hardware of the British state in Ireland or wherever its military might is stationed. We are political prisoners because we are prisoners of war.'

It is this direct experience which adds bite to the contributions in *Captive Voice*. There are political commentaries, poetry, short stories and up-dates on the struggle against extradition and the campaign for 'lifers'. There are pieces on the environment, women and the national struggle and a fly-on-the-wall report about dinnertime in H-Block 8. A book review section includes a review of a book on South African prison life by a young woman jailed for activities after the Soweto uprisings. There is even a crossword.

All of this is written and illustrated by the POWs themselves (including Joe Doherty, presently in the 'metropolitan correction centre, New York').

My personal favourite contribution is a short story written by Laurence McKeown (Long Kesh), which features on the middle pages. This is a moving account of the last few days and thoughts of Francis Hughes – the second of the ten hungerstrikers who were murdered in 1981. In his story, Laurence recounts a visit to Francis Hughes by the then Labour Party opposition Spokesman on Northern Ireland – the notorious Don Concannon. Concannon arrives and tells Francis Hughes that Labour supports the Tories and that he ought to give up his hungerstrike for political status: '''Is there anything I want to say to him?'' asked Francy, turning his eyes to the figure at the bottom of the bed. ''There is alright,'' he said. ''Will you shut that door, my boy – from the outside.'''

The story is told with passion and the insight of a fellow hungerstriker who has experienced the conditions and mental images of a prolonged fast as well as the things that keep the spirits up, such as songs on the Block until 3am and letters from 'oul boys'.

Captive Voice is produced to a high standard. Its central theme is spelt out in the editorial: 'In gaol we continue as political activists determined to do all in our power to bring about the day when British troops no longer walk our streets and imperialism's writ no longer runs our country. *An Gror Gafa* will reflect this by presenting our views on those issues which affect the daily lives of our people through Ireland and by suggesting our ideas for a way forward.' I look forward to the next one.

Gary Clapton

***Captive Voice** can be obtained from POW Department, 51/55 Falls Road, Belfast.*

FRFI READERS AND SUPPORTERS GROUPS

LONDON
The Crisis of Thatcherism
Wednesday 6 December. 7.30pm
Marchmont Centre, Marchmont Street, WC1. (Nearest tube Russell Square)
Speaker: David Reed, Editor of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*

MANCHESTER
The State and Revolution
Wednesday 22 November. 7.30pm.
The Millstone, Thomas Street, off Tib Street, Manchester City Centre
Perestroika: A return to Leninist principles?
Wednesday 6 December. 7.30pm.
Venue as above.
Cuba's Transition to Socialism
Wednesday 20 December. 7.30pm.
Venue as above.

Manchester Readers and Supporters Groups are held every fortnight. For more details contact Manchester FRFI, PO Box 80, Manchester M60 1RY

For details of FRFI Readers and Supporters Groups in your area please contact FRFI, BCM 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

THE UPINGTON 14 MUST NOT HANG!
Rally. Friday 15 December. 6pm. On the Non-Stop Picket of the South African Embassy, Trafalgar Square, London, WC2.
Organised by City of London Anti-Apartheid Group (837 6050.)

DEFEND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS!
Tower Hamlets Trades Council Open Meeting on the defence of basic democratic rights.
Monday 27 November 1989. 7pm.
Davenant Centre, 179/181 Whitechapel Road, London E1.

MANCHESTER MARTYRS' COMMEMORATION
March and Rally.
Sunday 26 November. Assemble 12.30pm.
Longsight Market, Dickenson Road, Manchester.

Join the action **join the RCG**

- A movement must be built in Britain in solidarity with the struggling peoples of Ireland, South Africa, Palestine. 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 build this movement – **Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built which challenges and defeats the treachery of the opportunist British 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

TERRY O'HALLORAN MEMORIAL FUND

The RCG has launched a Memorial Fund to commemorate Terry's life and contribution to the political movement in Britain.
Terry played an important part in fighting for the rights of prisoners. The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund will be used to provide books and publications for prisoners at their request.
We plan to produce a special book plate for each book.
Please fill in the form below if you wish to donate.
I/We would like to donate £_____ to The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund
NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
_____
Please tick the box if you would like a receipt ☐
Cheques/POs should be made payable to 'The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund'
BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

LETTERS

Write to:
FRFI,
BCM Box 5909,
London
WC1N 3XX.

Between the devil and the deep blue 'reds'

Anti-Poll Tax campaigns are growing throughout Britain. Because so many people will be so badly affected by the tax the campaign has transcended party political allegiances.

Yet the campaign is threatened from two opposite directions by people who share a horror and fear of being in any situation over which they do not exercise direct and firm control. The two threats to the campaign's broad and effective nature are the right wing of the Labour Party and Militant.

Militant came into the campaign late and tried to either take over and control existing groups or ignore them.

Instead they set up their own parallel separate anti-Poll Tax Unions. In a few places they have done good work in door to door canvassing and setting up street committees. But all too many of the Poll Tax Unions exist only on paper and only in order to vote Militant delegates to Militant-controlled Federations or to the 25 November conference in Manchester.

This conference will try to set up a nationwide, Militant-controlled organisation to fight only on Militant's terms.

Militant is promoting the tactic of refusing to pay as the only possible tactic. This is a very powerful tactic where it is possible but we do not dogmatically assert that it is correct everywhere and under all circumstances. It won't work without truly mass participation and only local groups can decide whether they have the necessary support or whether other tactics would be more appropriate.

Many genuine broad based groups will be going to the Manchester conference so there is just a chance that Militant could be outvoted and a genuine broad based movement founded. I hope this happens and this is why as many anti-Poll Tax groups as possible should attend.

It will not be easy with Militant controlling the agenda and chairing – they are not noted for fair play. If we fail we must continue to build a net work of broad groups.

At the same time a new impetus has come from the right wing of the Labour Party since their recent conference. The party has never trusted or supported any broad based campaign which it does not control and has failed to give the leadership it could have. Now they are putting pressure on local groups, equating the refusal to pay tactic with the Militant tendency and demanding that groups throw out both together.

The Labour right are attacking the refusal to pay tactic because, they say, it will cut revenue and embarrass Labour local authorities in an election year. It may lead to some temporary cuts in revenue while the tax is being replaced with a fairer system but these will not be as bad as the cuts created by the Poll Tax itself.

If Labour had led a serious campaign to oppose the Poll Tax it could already be in government – mass popular pressure can force an early general election. Refusing to campaign against the Poll Tax is no way for Labour to try to win the election.

Some local Labour parties are debating whether to openly oppose local anti-Poll Tax campaigns or take them over to force them to comply with Labour policies. Either will wreak enormous harm. If groups are seen just as part of Labour's electoral machine then people from all other parties will leave.

The anti-Poll Tax groups must keep their separate identity and refuse to be blackmailed by right or left. We must not allow the campaign to be torn in two between the right-wing Labour and the Militant. Militant and Labour right are two sides of the same undemocratic coin.

Many campaigns against government policy have been wrecked in the past by similar two-fold attacks, which is why Mrs Thatcher has appeared to be unbeatable.

Whether by accident or design these ultra-left splitters and right-wing supporters act as the government's first line of defence.

But the Poll Tax campaign is different to all others – too many ordinary people are going to be hit too hard financially. This campaign will survive attempts, deliberate or otherwise, to destroy it and it will stop the Poll Tax.

DAPHNE LIDDLE
Greenwich, S. London

The full text of this letter appeared in the bi-monthly newletter of the National Federation of Anti-Poll Tax groups.

Defend the Altaf/Khan Family

Community groups and individuals in East London are united in their anger at the vicious racist attack on the Altaf/Khan family.

For years the Khan family in Manor Park, Newham, were harassed by racist neighbours. On 3 August at 8pm these neighbours attacked Mrs Khan and her niece with bicycle chains and dustbin lids. Mrs Khan was repeatedly punched and kicked in the stomach – she was nine months pregnant at the time.

Mrs Khan and her niece managed to scramble back into their home but the attackers then smashed the windows with rocks and chanted 'Paki bastards, go back to where you came from.' The Khans rang the police and the attackers responded by cutting the telephone wires. The police did not arrive and when Mrs Khan's brother, Mr Altaf, came by he was immediately attacked by six men wielding iron bars and wooden clubs. When he staggered into the house the men broke down the door. Another attacker tried to stab Mr Altaf. Mr Altaf avoided the knife and the racist thug accidentally stabbed one of his fellow attackers instead. At this point the police arrived and when Mr Altaf explained what had happened they told him, 'Shut your bloody mouth' and arrested him, leaving the racist attackers free to go home.

Mr Altaf has been charged with Malicious Wounding and the Khan family has been forced to leave their council house and move into bed and breakfast accomodation.

You can help our campaign by:
* Publicising the case, distributing leaflets and collecting signatures on our petition which are available from our campaign.
* Writing to the Chief Prosecutor, Crown Prosecution Service, Solar House, 1-9 Romford Road, London E15 demanding that the charges against Mr Altaf be dropped.
* Writing to the Director of Housing, 91 The Grove, London E15 demanding that the council evict the racists who attacked Mr Altaf and the Khans.

In solidarity,

DEFEND THE ALTAF/KHAN FAMILY CAMPAIGN
PO Box 273 Forest Gate, London E7.

Justice for the Winchester Three

Two public meetings were held in the last week of October by the Winchester Three Campaign in support of Martina Shanahan, John McCann and Finbar Cullen – the three Irish people sentenced in 1988 for allegedly conspiring to murder Tom King, and 'other persons unknown'.

The meetings were held to mark the first anniversary of the Winchester trial, at which the three were sentenced to 25 years. By coincidence, they also followed the release of the Guildford Four. All speakers welcomed their release but it was not seen as 'a vindication of the British system of justice'.

Bob Woffinden, journalist and author of the book *Miscarriages of Justice* said at the London meeting, 'Not so. The imprisonment of the Winchester Three last year demonstrates that the judicial process is still today suspect to alarming error. The trial of the Winchester Three was both manifestly unfair and subject to blatant political interference.'

Speaking of the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six cases, and the campaigns around them, Douglas Hurd had said during the week that judicial proceedings should not be politicised. Paddy Hillyard, Vice-chair of the National Council for Civil Liberties (speaking in a personal capacity) replied to Hurd's statement: 'One of the crucial aspects about the Winchester case was that it was highly politicised.' During the trial Tom King had declared the ending of the 'right to silence' in the north of Ireland and had indicated that those taking this right were suspect. The three in Winchester had already taken this right.

Mary Cullen, mother of Finbar Cullen and member of the Dublin based Winchester Three Support Group, expressed the feelings of the campaign saying: 'The bottom line is very simple. Those three should never have been convicted.'

MORNA RIVERS
Winchester Three Campaign
c/o Grass Roots,
1 Newton Street,
Manchester.

Waiting for Justice? One woman's story, Martina Shanahan's experience on remand as a Category A prisoner in Risley is available for £1.50 from the above address.

A prisoner writes from Holland

A young comrade Huib Speijer was transferred into one of the worst psychiatric prisons, Van de Hoevenkliniek, on Thursday 19 October. He is being detained on a court order which places him in open ended detention until such time as the state's psychiatrists are prepared to release him. His offence is a series of bank robberies, with his mother, during his teenage years (he is now in his early twenties).

He was extradited from Spain in order to face a specific bank robbery charge for which he received four years. The TBS sentence ie. open ended detention in a 'clinic' was originally imposed as a threat, it was conditional upon his not being caught again. After the extradition from Spain, the Dutch government attempted to impose the conditional sentence during his four years detention, but we managed to prevent it by legal moves. However, several days after his release he was caught in possession of a fire-arm, received a six months sentence and then found himself undergoing the TBS punishment. This is in clear breach of international extradition law – charges to be faced, including previous sentences must be specified in the extradition warrant.

Huib's family were known to be financially supportive of revolutionary cells operating in West Germany and Huib is known to be active in prison resistance. His political commitment is being used as 'evidence' of his 'psychopathy'.

In the Van de Hoeven Kliniek, Huib has been located on the infamous Nicolai-atdeling: 23 1/2 hours a day isolation. Huib has been told that he will remain in this regime until: 1) he breaks contact with me and renounces his commitment to our shared project of prison resistance; 2) he breaks contact with other friends in the prison system; 3) he ceases to provide political analyses and satirical/political cartoons for the alternative media, including The prisoners' magazine (BWO Nieuws); 4) he repudiates his support group from the alternative media; and 5) he renounces his political commitment.

Huib has categorically refused to co-operate with the 'clinic' – and on the day he was transferred he began a hunger strike. His demands are:
1. Free communication inside and outside the prison/TBS Kliniek.
2. Closure of the isolation unit.
3. Location in self-chosen groups within the prison system.

Publicity and messages of support can make a difference between Huib's life or death. Please send cards and letters of solidarity and comfort to Huib – he can read English – and messages of condemnation to the Director of Van De Hoevenkliniek via Huib's support group: c/o Thekla and Henk, Boekhaidel Slagerzicht, Albert Cuyp 8 – 10, Amsterdam. The telephone number is 020-6644117.

We are concerned about Huib's psychological survival just as much as his physical well being – he has given much to the struggle so far and we don't want to lose him.

The struggle continues,
ALAN REEVES,
p/a Strafgevangeris,
Pompstationsweg 14, 2597 JW Den Haag, Holland.

Support FRFI! Help us raise £1,500

We need to raise £1,500 by Xmas to develop the wider distribution of our newspaper and publications. Rush your donations to us.
Make cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications and return to FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX
I/We want to donate £_____ to the FRFI Fund
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Address _____
_____
_____ Tel _____

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

AMBULANCE WORKERS DISPUTE

Safe in their hands?

51 military ambulances from Chelsea Barracks were deployed at police stations throughout London on 9 November to answer emergency calls from ambulance headquarters. LORNA REID examines the strike.

That day Health Minister, Kenneth Clarke, insisted in a Commons emergency debate that the army would run the emergency service for as long as necessary. The intervention of the military and police is the latest government move to defeat the ambulance workers' demand for binding arbitration on their pay awards.

The 6.5 per cent increase offered to 22,500 ambulance workers is below the annual increases afforded to the police (9.25 per cent) and firefighters (8.6 per cent). It is way below the 10.7 per cent increase given to MPs.

Unlike the firefighters and police, ambulance staff do not have a long term pay formula. The dispute aims to restore the parity with firefighters reached in 1986. There is currently an 11.4 per cent differential in their hourly rates of pay.

2,500 ambulance workers in London were suspended on 23 October for working to rule following a breakdown in talks between the unions and management. Since then ambulance staff have turned up to work as normal, prepared to answer emergency calls without being paid. Management has responded by diverting all 999 calls to Scotland Yard.

The government has declared war on the ambulance workers. Workers at Camden station said to *FRFI*, 'This dispute has gone beyond our pay demand. It is about defending the NHS. If the government backs down to us, they open the flood gates to other NHS workers' demands – the ancillaries, the porters etc.' Ambulance workers completing a three day fast outside the Department of Health on 9 November echoed this. Steve Gazzard from Exmouth said, 'For 10 years the public sector has been pushed and bullied around by a so-called 'caring' government. This isn't just about a pay rise, it's about providing a service. Dedicated staff are leaving the service. At my station we work 10 hours overtime per week just to keep our heads above water.'

Non-emergency work has been banned by crews in East Sussex, Greater Manchester, the rest of Lancashire, Norfolk and Hampshire. The enormous public and professional support enjoyed by the ambulance workers is coming to the aid of the dispute. Firefighters at Belsize Park and Kentish Town stations and doctors at the Royal Free hospital and University Hospital College are calling direct to crews at Camden ambulance station instead of to Scotland Yard. The staff at this station told *FRFI* that at every meeting and event they attend they are given enormous support.

The crews are furious that the government is prepared to gamble with peoples' lives in order to defeat the dispute. The army medical vehicles are old and two types used are designed for battlefield use. It is known that they are liable to topple over if driven at speed. The vehicles do not carry sophisticated resuscitation equipment or pain relieving gas for women in labour and the crews are not trained in paramedic treatment. Even the Police Federation has expressed its unhappiness at being used against the dispute.

FRFI was told by ambulance workers outside the Department of Health and at Camden station that they would not take strike action. 'We are committed to providing a service to the public. The government wants us to go on strike to lose public support. We will not play their game,' said one worker. Another crew member said, 'We have to link up with the enormous support we have. The union should hold a national demonstration in London. Thatcher and Clarke will have to decide if they want to remain isolated. We have won the argument. We now have to win the fight.' ■

POLL TAX

Hitting the poorest

236,415 people in Strathclyde (16 per cent of all those eligible to pay) have received a final notice to pay their Poll Tax within two weeks or face legal action by the Labour controlled Regional Council. As a result of protests against bailiffs attempting to poind the possessions of non-payers the Council has decided against recovering money owed through warrant sales. Instead they will freeze wages and bank accounts. At the same time £20,000 is to be spent investigating the impact of the tax on all social groups in Strathclyde. LORNA REID reports.

Final notices have also been delivered throughout Grampian and Lothian where non-payment figures stand at 15 per cent and 17 per cent respectively. Grampian Regional Council is pressing ahead with warrant sales and expects to carry out 100 per month.

Leo Gilbert, Tooting, South London, now faces a £200 fine for repeatedly 'failing' to register for the Poll Tax. After reporting the loss of his registration form in July Leo heard nothing more from Tory-controlled Wandsworth Council. On 28 September he received a registration form accompanied with notice of a £50 fine. Leo refuses to register under threat of a fine and will contest any legal action taken by the Council to recover the unpaid fines.

The Government is now trying to use DSS staff as Poll Tax snoopers. Form NHB 10(CC) to register claimants for the Poll Tax has been distributed to some DSS offices. Staff at several London offices took strike action in October to defend colleagues who had been threatened with disciplinary action for refusing to cooperate with the form.

On 11 October David Hunt, Minister for Local Government, announced that Local Authorities in England and Wales would only contribute to the 'safety net' for the first year; it would then be funded by the Treasury for three years. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities criticised his back dated payment to them as a 'half-baked, ill conceived solution . . . to try to save the Government from acute embarrassment.' It is estimated to cost £30 million to administer.

Hunt announced that under the 'transitional relief' scheme individual householders and couples would not be required to pay more than £3 a week more than they are paying in rates . . . *so long as their council keeps to 'sensible spending'*.

On 6 November Chris Patten, Secretary of State for the Environment, announced the Government would spend an extra £1.3 billion over the next four years to ease the impact of the Poll Tax, especially in inner cities. But again, Patten's announcement that extra grants would be made available from Central government to Local Authorities to reduce Poll Tax levels was conditional on councils keeping to Government spending assumptions. Realistic estimates indicate that local councils could face a £2.5 billion shortfall overall next year. This would have to be met with either cuts in services or higher Poll Tax payments.

366 councils out of 403 are spending above Government approved levels. Transitional relief will not be available to residents in areas run by these councils. It will also not be available to people living in property which does not have a separate rateable value eg. halls of residence, long stay hostels, short stay lets or blocks of flats.

When all this is taken into account the Hunt/Patten package adds up to one big con. No tricks, though, when it comes to looking after their friends. All non-London MPs will be exempt from paying Poll Tax on their 'Parliamentary second homes', thus saving them an average of £500 per year. ■

WATER PRIVATISATION

Thirsting for profits

The result of water privatisation is that water bills will on average rise by at least 20 per cent per annum, and probably even higher for larger families or the poorest sections of the working class. Such is the outcome of the government deliberations on how to make sure that the City comes up with the money in December when the share sale goes ahead. ROBERT CLOUGH explains how H_2Ownership is robbery.

In detail, the government has decided that the newly privatised water companies may increase water bills by up to 5 per cent beyond the prevailing rate of inflation, already 8 per cent. But on top of this, they can pass through costs of complying with forthcoming EC directives on sludge disposal at sea and on keeping pesticides out of drinking water. More: they can pass on the extra costs associated with the fact that inflation in the building industry is greater than the standard Retail Price Index. This will be a substantial amount given the huge amounts that are supposed to be spent on rennovating the sewer system. If this weren't enough, the costs of installing meters, probably £100 at present, will also be passed on to the consumer. These extras will take the annual increase from 13 per cent touted by the Government to the true figure of 20 per cent.

To get the City interested, the Government has written off £5 billion debts, and if this wasn't enough, given the companies a dowry of a further £1.5 billion. In addition, in a nominal attempt to attract small investors, heavy discounts of up to 10 per cent are being given on the opening price of shares. However, just in case City institutions do not bite, a water roadshow has been organised at a cost of £500,000 to tour Japan, Canada, US and five European cities to seek further investors. The gross proceeds of the sale have been marked down from £7 billion some six months ago to about £5.6 billion – a notional loss of nearly £1 billion.

What of the mass of the people? Of course, a plague of sewer rats, filthy rivers and beaches, and worst of all, poisoned drinking water, the extent of which was revealed in a study carried out by Friends of the Earth. They showed that two million people are drinking water with more than EC permitted levels of lead (causing brain damage in children), two million are drinking water with excessive levels of aluminium (associated with senile dementia), and 1.7 million excess nitrates (associated with various cancers).

The provisions of the Act mean that those responsible for monitoring pollution of drinking water are the water companies themselves; the statutory obligation on local authorities to monitor its cleanliness has been removed; indeed, one provision of the Act allows the Environment Secretary to forbid them to carry out any monitoring at all!

The introduction of charging on the basis of consumption rather than the rateable value of the house, will shift the burden disproportionately onto the poor or those with large or extended family. This alone could double annual charges for some people, not to mention cutting the bills for the rich. People who have to cut back on electricity and gas will only be able to cut back on water consumption when a meter is installed, because until that time there will be no means of recording their reduced consumption. Water bills for many will rise to the level of the Poll Tax.

The continued unpopularity of the measure (despite a £40 million publicity campaign) has perversely meant an even greater bonanza for those investing in shares. In the nineteenth century, votes were bought in the so-called rotten boroughs at open auctions. Now the Government has turned the whole of Britain into a rotten borough, and any level of bribery and corruption is deemed fit so long as it preserves the dwindling support for the Tories. ■

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