

# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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# MANDELA FREE

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Mandela has pledged the ANC's continuation of the armed struggle. Thatcher and the imperialists are banking on apartheid.

We analyse the current state of the struggle following the unbanning of the liberation movements

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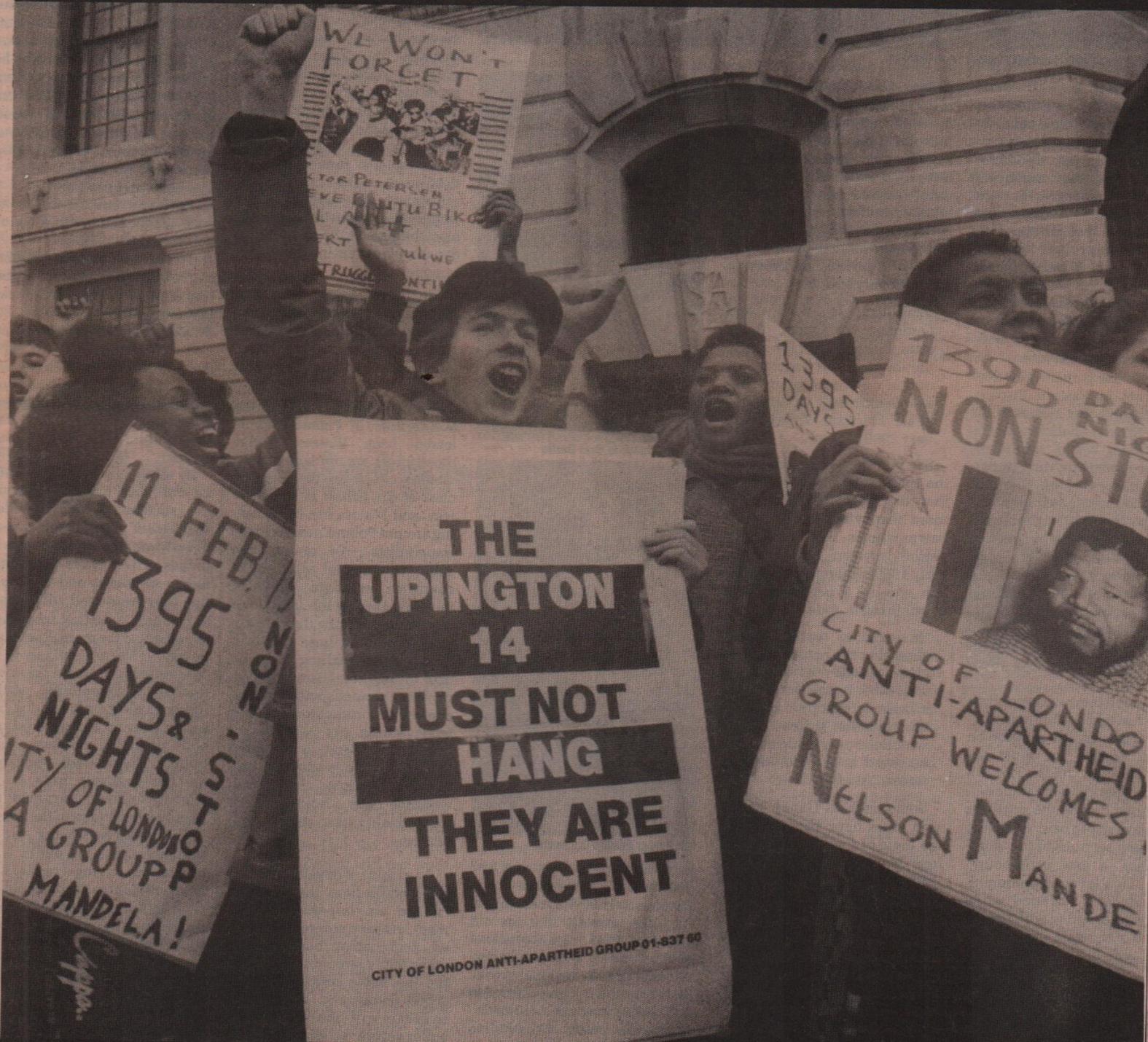
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# FORWARD TO MAJORITY RULE

PAUL MATTISSON

# Communism and Social Democracy—the great divide

*Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism's* assessment of the crisis affecting the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe fundamentally diverges from that of the rest of the British left. Whereas we recognise the counter-revolutionary essence of the political processes taking place, the rest of the left hails them as popular revolutions against totalitarian regimes.

Whilst we have seen in these developments the first stages in the restoration of capitalism (see *FRFI* No 92 and this issue), the British left has variously welcomed them as a defeat for Stalinism not for socialism (orthodox Trotskyists), the end of the Leninist, and in some cases, the Marxist legacy (various factions of the CPGB) and even the revolutionary assertion of workers' power (SWP).

What is the basis for our sharp and irreconcilable opposition to the British left on this question? Political developments are assessed from a class standpoint. We are communists. 'In the national struggles of the proletarians of different countries communists point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat independent of all nationality' (*Communist Manifesto*). Today the common interests of the proletariat are, and can only be, expressed through the struggle to destroy imperialism: that is the world-wide capitalist system which denies the vast majority of humanity the prospect of ever escaping poverty, hunger, disease and oppression. Whether a political movement is progressive or reactionary depends, therefore, on whether it advances or retards the struggle to destroy imperialism.

How then should political developments in Eastern Europe be judged on these criteria? Imperialism is jubilant. A whole area of the world once closed to the unrestrained marauding of its multinationals and banks, is now available for limitless exploitation and profit making. The real essence of this development has been sharply outlined by Fidel Castro:

'Imperialism is urging the European socialist countries to become recipients of its surplus capital, to develop capitalism and to join in plundering the Third World countries... an invitation which seems not to displease the theoreticians of capitalist reform. Thus in many of those (socialist) countries no one speaks about the tragedy of the Third World, and their discontented multitudes are guided towards capitalism and anti-communism - and, in one country, towards Pan-Germanism. Such developments may even lead to fascist trends. The prize promised by imperialism is a share of the plunder wrested from our peoples, the only way of building capitalist consumer societies.' (*FRFI* 92 for text of Castro's speech)

It is through this plunder of the Third World that imperialism has been able to sustain capitalist consumer societies as a mechanism to secure the loyalty of substantial layers of the working class in the imperialist countries. The political expression of this subordination of the working class to imperialism is social democracy.

It is the promise of such consumer societies that has proved so attractive to the privileged layers of the working class and professional strata in the social-



US President Bush with Solidarity leader Lech Walesa

ist bloc. That is why social democracy, aided, advised and financed by its political counterparts in Western Europe, is rapidly becoming the dominant trend within the organised political movement in Eastern Europe. It was to consolidate this alliance that in the first week of February, Neil Kinnock joined 19 other West European social democratic leaders in the People's Theatre on East Berlin's Luxemburgstrasse to answer questions and debate with an East German audience.

So who has gained from developments in Eastern Europe, who are the beneficiaries? Certainly not the socialist countries of the Third World, the liberation movements fighting imperialism, the working class of Eastern Europe or the oppressed and exploited millions throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. It is imperialism that is expecting a new lease of life from the counter-revolution and in its wake will crawl social democracy, its long standing and trusted servant in the working class movement.

To understand why the British left has taken a fundamentally social democratic position on Eastern Europe we must examine its class roots. The relative prosperity in the imperialist nations during the post-war boom gave rise to new, relatively privileged sections of the working class - a new petit bourgeoisie. This layer of predominantly educated, salaried white collar workers grew with the expansion of the state and services sector and, in the more recent period, with the information technology 'revolution'. This layer has always had privileged access to a 'capitalist consumer society'.

The British left draws its membership primarily from this layer and adapts to all its political prejudices, narrowness and eurocentricity. This is the foundation of its apparently unbreakable bond with social democracy and its refusal to risk this privilege by politically confronting British imperialism.

*Marxism Today* has given the most articulate exposition of the left social democratic standpoint on the lessons of Eastern

Europe. Crucial to their position is the view that the historic split in the international labour movement between social democracy and communism has no further justification. This standpoint is based on two reactionary assumptions. One, that the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe shows that Leninism is dead, as is the Bolshevik form of revolutionary struggle.

'Stalinism is dead, and Leninism - its theory of the state, its concept of the party, the absence of civil society, its notion of revolution - has also had its day.' (Martin Jacques, *Marxism Today*, January 1990)

Second, they argue that since the 1950s it has been quite clear that the capitalist system 'is more than viable'. Eric Hobsbawm argues that unlike the period between 1914 and the early 1950s when world capitalism was in a period of catastrophic crisis, today:

'In so far as we envisage a change in the nature of capitalism, it will not, within the foreseeable future, be through a basic catastrophic crisis of the capitalist system, out of which the only thing that can be saved is by revolutionary means.' (*ibid*)

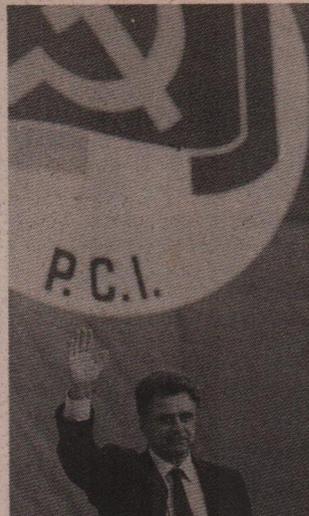
Some such as Gareth Steadman Jones have already drawn the logic of these two assumptions by stating that Marxism itself is 'a set of unsubstantiated claims.' (*Marxism Today*, February 1990)

The social and material basis for these views has been brilliantly parodied by A Sivanandan when he defined their socialism as an 'eat, drink and be merry socialism because tomorrow we can eat, drink and be merry again, a socialism for disillusioned marxist intellectuals who had waited around too long for the revolution...' (*Race and Class*). It is the class standpoint of the privileged new petit bourgeoisie who have more than adequate access to the 'capitalist consumer society'.

But what of the one third of British society (or indeed any advanced capitalist society today), that substantial minority which find themselves shut out



Demonstrator in East Berlin



PCI leader Achille Occhetto

from the benefits of prosperity? *Marxism Today* argues for a European-wide Keynesianism. Arguing correctly that the old vision of 1945, of a Keynesian welfare society is no longer sustainable on a national basis, their solution is a pan-European one. In the words of Achille Occhetto, the leader of the Italian Communist Party:

'Yes, national Keynesianism has come to an end, which means the end of those policies of redistribution on a national level in which the labour movement took part, and which at the same time also helped to reinforce it. The national dimension has failed and we must find an overall European alternative.' (*Marxism Today*, February 1990)

The collapse of the socialist bloc and the re-emergence of social democracy in Eastern Europe has created precisely the opening for a pan-European supranational Keynesian project. Such a project depends on the consolidation of the alliance between European social democracy and a strong European imperialism at the expense of the majority of the working class in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and the oppressed peoples of the Third World. This is why *Marxism Today* cannot approach the developments in Eastern Europe as communists must - and ask whether it advances or retards the struggle to destroy imperialism.

Unlike *Marxism Today*, the Trotskyist left attempts to impose a revolutionary, and not social democratic, gloss on the disintegration of the socialist bloc. In reality by applauding this disintegration they end up necessarily in the camp of social democracy and counter-revolution. This happens because their idealism, their Trotskyist theology, does not deign to recognise the very real existence of imperialism. The notion that the destruction of the Eastern European regimes by mass protest movements will leave intact the socialist foundation of these states is naive idealism. Imperialism and its social democratic allies are well organised and have limitless resources at their disposal to ensure that these socialist foundations are destroyed. The communist movement, non-existent in the imperialist countries, too weak elsewhere, is at the moment incapable of preventing this development.

British Trotskyism has, as a result of its petit-bourgeois idealism, supported and indeed openly financed counter-revolutionary forces in Eastern Europe. In the early 1980s they were unanimous in supporting *Solidarnosc* in Poland and its leader Lech Walesa. Today those forces are implementing a vicious attack on the working class at the behest of imperialism, and Walesa has been touting around Poland's assets to the imperialists. We remind the SWP, who regard all socialist countries as state capitalist regimes, that in the late 1960s they were peddling the views of Jacek Kuron, as those of a 'brilliant marxist' calling for a return to 'real socialism based on workers' councils and workers' control of production'. Today Jacek Kuron, as Minister of Labour in Poland, is directing the IMF's vicious austerity programme against the Polish working class. Anti-communists in reality have strange bedfellows.

As a result of developments in the socialist bloc, the communist and anti-imperialist movement has been severely weakened. Imperialism has been immeasurably strengthened. With the inevitable strengthening of social democracy, communists in Britain will for a whole period suffer severe isolation. The revolutionary struggle against imperialism will intensify as imperialism intensifies its plunder of the oppressed nations. There will be more revolutions and more rebellions in these nations. British communists, carrying on the traditions of Marx, Engels and Lenin to liberate humanity from the chains of capitalism, must continue the hard and difficult task of winning the British working class to the side of those fighting imperialism. ■

## Criminal Justice Bill means more injustice for all prisoners

NICKI JAMESON

Under the guise of 'reforming' the criminal justice system the Home Office white paper published on 6 February announced another stage of Thatcher's 'law and order' drive. The new proposals purport to deal more harshly with violent criminals whilst creating more 'punishment in the community' for less dangerous offenders. It is designed to appease both hardline Tories and liberal reformers but while the strengthening at one end of the scale is sure to be followed through, the 'softening' at the other is at best implementable and, at worst, a cover for yet more insidious forms of control becoming increasingly the norm.

The main proposals are:

- Power for crown courts to impose longer sentences for violent and sexual offences.
- Powers for courts to combine community service and probation and to impose electronically monitored curfews.
- All prisoners to serve at least half their sentences with extra days added for 'misbehaviour'. Remission will be abolished and parole only granted to prisoners whose release 'does not threaten the public' (whatever that means).

As all the press, and even the Labour Party, have pointed out the success of the so-called 'twin-track' approach rests heavily on the cooperation of judges. The powers to impose longer sentences and to ensure that they are served will apply to Britain's judiciary who have long lobbied for more draconian powers. They are unlikely to be so enthusiastic about 'punishment in the community', particularly as electronic tagging has so far proven a dismal failure and probation officers have publicly stated their resistance to changing role from social workers to law enforcement officers as demanded in the package.

The package is being sold in parliament and the public as a money-saving exercise as an antidote to the bad publicity Britain has received for giving more of its citizens than any other nation in Europe. According to the government's figures the 'punishment in the community' proposals will reduce the prison population by 1,500 a year and save £24 million but at the same time the package will increase the number of people in gaol by 1.4 million! With judges likely to overuse the most vindictive measures and underuse the 'punishment in the community' and with no mention of the large numbers of unsentenced prisoners in British gaols, the estimated net result of Waddington's 'reforms' is an extra 4 million added to the 50,000 men and women already behind bars.

# Ambulance service not for sale

LORNA REID

Hundreds of thousands of people took part in rallies and demonstrations across the country on 30 January in support of the ambulance workers' pay claim. Rallies in Glasgow and Liverpool both attracted up to 20,000 people and 30,000 people attended a rally at Nine Elms, London, while virtually every sizable town marked the day of 'people power' with some form of demonstration.

Support came from civil servants, local government staff, miners, health service employees, postal workers, building workers and even staff at the Department of Health, Whitehall. Many others joined them in taking industrial action for between 15 minutes and half a day.

A member of the ambulance workers support group at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, told *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* how they had mobilised for their 1000 strong rally outside the hospital on 30 January.

The support group was initiated by staff in the pathology department. They invited all staff to attend. Its aim was to discuss action for the 30th and to provide financial support for the ambulance workers and their families. Nurses and technical and clerical staff attended the first meeting which was addressed by an ambulance worker from Shoreditch station. We produced two leaflets calling for



support for our rally on the 30th. One was for distribution within the hospital, the other was aimed at office workers, building workers and workers in Smithfields meat market. We entered offices to speak to staff urging them to support the rally.

'On the day 1,000 people attended our hour long rally and the Midland and Barclays banks were closed for that hour. Support came from nurses and other health workers, Post Office workers and members of the Communications Union, Smithfields meat market, workers at the British museum - members of IPCS, CPSA members, NALGO and many office workers in the area.

'Everyone's morale was boosted at the success of the rally and we intend to continue providing financial support and solidarity action. Unfortunately, one week before our rally members of the

Socialist Workers Party from Islington NALGO attended our meeting and accused us of sectarianism because we had set up independently from NUPE. We explained that NUPE was welcome to join us. In fact the NUPE shop steward spoke at the rally. But we are not going to wait around for permission to support the ambulance workers.'

The support group at St. Bartholomew's is one of many that have been set up around the country. £4 million has so far been donated by the public to the ambulance workers. The strength of support for the ambulance workers displayed on 30 January must be further mobilised to turn the dispute decisively in favour of the ambulance workers. The TUC's call for a 15 minute industrial stoppage is pathetic. It is a marginal improvement on the STUC's 11 minute stoppage against the Poll

Tax in September 1988 but it is nowhere near a serious mobilisation of support. The fact that many workers took action for much longer than 15 minutes demonstrates that a call for effective public solidarity action would be responded to favourably. Once again the official trade union movement has refused to deliver adequate action in support of workers' claims for pay and conditions.

The ambulance workers will not be able to rely on Norman Willis or the TUC to advance their struggle. Ambulance crews in Crawley, West Sussex, and North London have taken strike action, crews in Greenock occupied their station after management removed keys and equipment from their ambulances, crews in Nottinghamshire have refused to accept a local deal which would entitle them to a two per cent increase on the national offer, many Labour-controlled Local Authorities and District Councils across the country are setting up alternative ambulance crews operated by suspended ambulance workers using converted ambulances. An escalation of these types of actions will require organised public support if the ambulance workers are not to become isolated and demoralised in the face of an intransigent government. The ambulance workers themselves must seize the initiative to draw the public into their dispute and together we must say to Kenneth Clarke - our ambulance service is not for sale. ■

INTERVIEW WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMITTEE TO DEFEND BLACK RIGHTS.

# Aboriginal people fight for their rights

The Committee to Defend Black Rights started in 1984 and is made up of the families of Aboriginal people who have died in police custody together with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers. We held major rallies every year from 1984 to 1986 until we realised that the press still weren't taking the issue up and we had at that time over one hundred deaths on our records. The families had always been calling for a Royal Commission into black deaths in custody because that was the most public way to expose what was going on and had the ability to get information out of the police. So we organised a national speaking tour of the families of six of those who have died. We were able to generate enough public awareness to go and meet with the then minister for Aboriginal affairs, Clyde Holding.

While this was happening the number of deaths increased. At that time there were about two every week. The chairperson of the CDBR went to Geneva to speak at the indigenous peoples' forum of the UN to raise the issue. Four days after she returned the Australian Government announced a Royal Commission into black deaths in custody.

They didn't consult with any Aboriginal people or with the families or the CDBR so the terms of reference for the Royal Commission were too narrow. For example the deaths of Abor-

on the Australian government. It was crumbs from the Bicentenary birthday cake.

In South Australia at Murray Bridge Kingsley Dixon was murdered by the police. They called over 50 witnesses in that case but the three crucial ones didn't come forward; two were in prison. There has never been any adequate protection for witnesses.

A cousin of Kingsley Dixon was picked up by the cops and thrown in jail and when he asked for a glass of water he got a bucket of water chucked on him. Then they beat the shit out of him. Then they took him on a 90 kilometre terror ride and repeatedly bashed him. Then they took him to another cell and when he asked to see a doctor one of them dressed up in a white coat and said, 'Well, here's a vet'.

There were a number of deaths in Yarrabah in late 1987. After the third in three weeks, the Aboriginal community fire-bombed the police station. That kind of action is quite amazing considering the massive police intervention in our affairs and that we're only one and a half per cent of the population.

Last year in Murray Bridge the Aboriginal community had their first ever march in two hundred years of invasion. On that march 16 of them were bashed by the cops in front of the police station. That kind of thing is quite common.

They used to have something called the dog tag system where Aboriginal people had to live in

# Poll tax resistance continues

LORNA REID

145,000 people in Glasgow now face summary warrants for recovery of unpaid Poll Tax - this is one in three of those eligible to pay. Official figures for non-payment in Strathclyde Region, announced on 7 February, put the total number of non-payers at 353,000 - 20%. It is estimated that by the end of the financial year £70m will be lost to Strathclyde Regional Council from unpaid Poll Tax. Lothian Regional Council has already lost £25m.

Nearly 700,000 Scottish people face action from Sheriff Officers empowered to arrest wages, bank accounts and ultimately to carry out warrant sales of people's household goods and personal belongings. However, the ability of Scottish local authorities to recover unpaid Poll Tax by these means has been attacked by the Society of Messengers at Arms and Sheriff Officers and the Committee of Scottish Clearing Bankers. Kenneth Simpson, spokesperson for the Society of Messengers at Arms and Sheriff Officers, said sending out letters to thousands of individuals was not a problem. Having physically to carry out proceedings, however, was another matter. There are only 200 Sheriff Officers in Scotland.

John Sutherland, secretary of

the Committee of Scottish Clearing Bankers, has warned that Scotland's clearing banks could not cope with a huge increase in arrestment orders against bank accounts. The banks estimate that if arrestment orders are eventually issued against just 100,000 people the banks' costs will exceed £20m.

Apparently refusing to acknowledge the strength of the non-payment campaign, Strathclyde Regional Council announced in January that the Poll Tax level for 1990/1991 will increase by 12%. The Poll Tax per head in Lothian Region will rise from £392 to £448 - an increase of 8%. More people will not be able to pay.

An independent study commissioned by the *Sunday Correspondent* published on 14 January suggested that the average Poll Tax in England and Wales will be £344 - 26% higher than the Government's estimate - as councils face new education costs. In addition, Government estimates are based on full Poll Tax registers whereas Local Authorities must realistically budget for at least 5% non-collection. This was backed up by a survey by the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation which said in February that Poll Tax bills were likely to average £340 on the basis of current spending plans.

The Government's majority was cut to 36 in Parliament on 18

January 1990 when Chris Patten, Minister for the Environment, set the average Poll Tax bill at £278 for 1990/1991 in line with Government estimates of Local Authority spending for that period. The Government estimates that Local Authorities should only spend £23.8bn in 1990/1991. However, just to keep current levels of spending in line with inflation councils will need to spend £34.1bn. Total spending is more likely to be £2.2bn more than this. 31 Tories voted against the Government as a protest against the mechanism for assessing the spending needs of each authority. Patten assured the Tory rebels that any Local Authority which set their Poll Tax levels too high to meet 'overspending' would be 'charge capped', similar to rate capping.

Figures compiled by the Council of Local Education Authorities say that local authorities will have to cut their education spending by 8.5% to remain close to Government assessments of their Poll Tax levels. This is equivalent to the loss of 58,000 primary teaching jobs or the closure of 900 secondary schools. The figures show that the Government has underestimated by £1.6bn what is needed in the coming year to maintain level funding of the education service. This is equivalent to an increase of £45 a head on the Poll Tax.

On 1 February the Labour Party announced their alternative to the Poll Tax - a levy based on the capital value of property with safeguards for low-income families living in highly priced houses or flats. Labour intends to introduce discounts for the installation of central heating, double glazing and other 'socially useful improvements'. Their alternative tax has been attacked by all parliamentary parties as the domestic rates system through the back door. The announcement came one week after 23 English and eight Scottish Labour MPs pledged their support for a mass non-payment demonstration in London on 31 March.

On 5 February Dick Douglas, Labour MP for Dunfermline West since 1979, announced his intention to resign from the Labour Party after 42 years as a protest against Labour's decision to rule out civil disobedience as a way of defeating the Poll Tax.

The Labour Party and national TUC have refused to back a call from the Scottish TUC to hold a national demonstration on 1 April against the Poll Tax. The Poll Tax represents the most severe attack yet on the rights and living standards of the working class. The struggle to defeat it cannot rely on support from the official labour and trade union movement. ■



Demonstrators outside Australia House, London

iginal people in mental institutions are not included.

The Eddie Murray case is one of the more prominent cases that the Royal Commission is looking into. Eddie Murray was an Aboriginal man who was picked up by the cops when drunk and found dead an hour and a half later. The police claimed he hanged himself. Eddie had just been picked to go overseas for an Aboriginal football team; he had everything going for him and no reason to kill himself. His blood alcohol level was so high that he couldn't even tie his shoelace or stand up. Eddie's father, Arthur, had been a fighter for their community's rights, involved with the union in the cotton industry in the west of New South Wales. So the cops came down on him and his family and eventually they knocked off his son. In that case the judge found that it was unlikely Eddie had committed suicide and was probably killed by person or persons unknown. Of course no one has ever been prosecuted for his murder.

Basically the whole Royal Commission has been funded to fail. It was given to us to alleviate international pressure

reserves. If you wanted to work you had to sign a piece of paper saying that you no longer recognised yourself as an Aboriginal and that you wouldn't drink and would be a good upstanding Christian citizen. If you look up the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act and apartheid legislation, they're basically the same.

The police were always used as an army of occupation. Aboriginal deaths in custody are just another stage in the continuing war that has been going on for the past 201 years.

Since the Royal Commission started there have been 32 deaths. We are aware the Commission won't solve anything but it is part of the ongoing process of taking the campaign and the situation of Aboriginal people into the international arena.

This is a quote from an anti-bicentenary poster: 'We will not be silent. We will not go away. We will not die. We will struggle. We will fight. We will win. Landrights. Sovereignty and Justice.' ■

Interview by Rebecca Marker and Leigh Avon

# Blood-money cricket tour

GARY ROSE

On 8 February, South African police attacked a crowd of 2,000 black teenagers with teargas and batons, injuring 300. Journalists were detained. The attack, which took place in Alexandra township, was intended to prevent the crowd from setting off for Johannesburg to protest against Gatting's scab cricket tour. The scabs are meeting with an ever-increasing surge of protest: the brutal repression of protests is a timely reminder that nothing has really changed in de Klerk's apartheid state.

The outrage provoked in the townships, particularly among black youth, by the scab tour, has sparked off the militancy that has been smouldering in the townships since 1986. Gatting and his mob have met with demonstrations and protest since before they ever set foot in South Africa.

The protests have not been confined to South Africa: since the summer City AA has ensured that Gatting, Emburey and the rest of them have been hounded wherever they have played. Activists have invaded the pitches, displayed anti-apartheid banners, disrupted the games and scattered leaflets. 'Oh no, not you again,' groaned Gatting as his Lords test match was disrupted on 13 August 1989. That match was nearly

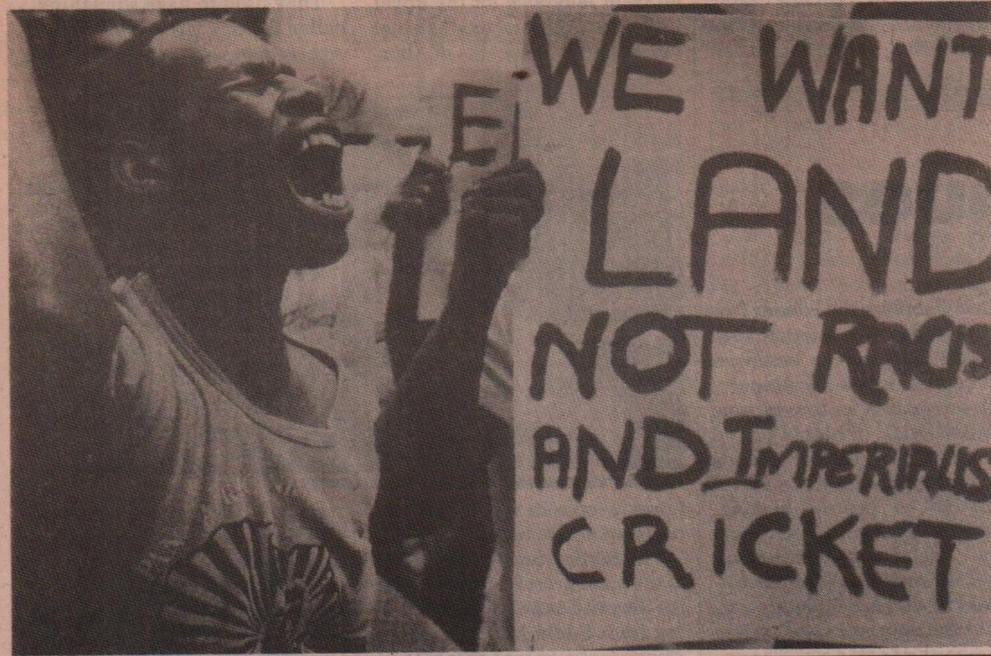
to prove his undoing: City AA summonsed him and Emburey as witnesses to the arrests that were made that day. The court date had been set for 25-26 January - when Gatting intended to be already sanctions-busting in South Africa. Frantically, the day before they were due to leave, Gatting and Emburey challenged the witness summonses in the High Court, and the judge ruled that, although Gatting had been barely five feet away from the defendants, he was not material to their case. City AA is challenging this in the House of Lords.

City AA's actions galvanised the AAM, whose previous contribution to the campaign had been to claim the pitch invasions as theirs, to make a highly-publicised intervention at the press conference held by Gatting and Co. at Heathrow.

The day before they arrived in South Africa, a crowd had already gathered at the airport chanting 'One rebel, one bullet'. The demonstration that greeted their arrival was met with police dogs, baton charges and teargas: more than a dozen protesters were mauled by the dogs, and many blinded by tear gas. (Gatting's wife remarked, 'I've got two dogs, and if anyone came round here doing things I didn't like I'd let them loose too.') 'To hell with rebels,' read one of the placards, 'we want land'. And they sang 'They are scared in Pretoria' - as well they might be. For the protests have snow-

balled in spite of all police attempts to stop them: workers at the hotels where the scabs have been staying have refused to serve them, and joined the protests (which Gatting referred to as 'a few people singing and dancing'). In Kimberley, where the first match took place, the 3,000 who turned up to protest were prevented from reaching the ground with teargas and shotguns. Barely 100 spectators turned up. The racists embarked on a PR exercise, organised by 'Freedom in Sport', a pro-tour organisation. The next time the scabs played, in Bloemfontein, 300 black spectators were bussed in and given free tickets and a lunchbox. They were moved around so that the camera could pan round an apparently packed stadium. For the Johannesburg match, unemployed people were tricked into thinking that they were being offered work. They got on the buses - and found themselves at the match being offered free tickets.

By these crude manoeuvres, the racists are fooling only themselves. They - and Gatting, who says the attacks on peaceful demonstrators are 'nothing to do with us' - have totally underestimated the strength of the anger which has been sparked off. Meanwhile, the townships are in ferment; hundreds have already been injured. It is the merest chance that no one has been killed. If that happens, it won't be beer cans that hit Gatting next time. ■



## Demonstration on first anniversary of Viraj's deportation

On 20 January, a demonstration of 300 people in Manchester commemorated the deportation of Viraj Mendis to Sri Lanka one year ago. A wide range of community, political and religious groups supported the demonstration. These included the Religious Support Group, the Defence Campaigns of Francis and Moji, Michael and Sharon and Nick Mullen, the Revolutionary Communist Group, Manchester Anti-Poll Tax Federation, Wages for Housework, the Manchester Martyrs Committee, Manchester Palestine Solidarity Group, Withington Labour Party, the Irish

Republican Socialist Party and individuals from the Socialist Workers' Party, Workers' Revolutionary Party, Iona Community, Hulme Tenants' Group and Lesbian and Gay Groups.

The march expressed its anger at Viraj's deportation, within the context of the increasing number of deportations from Britain (an estimated 80 per week) and the increasing violence in Sri Lanka. As the march passed the BBC, it protested against the almost total media ban on reporting the situation in Sri Lanka and the atrocities carried out by its British-backed government. ■

## George Silcott in gaol for one year

George Silcott, younger brother of framed prisoner Winston Silcott, was convicted of burglary and sentenced to a year in prison on 1 February. The previous month he had been charged and acquitted of a rape.

This is the pattern of continuous harassment suffered by the family of Winston ever since the uprising in 1985 at Broadwater Farm Estate and the Tottenham area following the death of Mrs Jarret after a police raid. See last month's *FRFI* for George's account.

Please continue to show your commitment to fighting police racism and injustice by supporting George and writing to him: George Silcott MT 3041, HMP Wandsworth, PO 757, Heathfield Road, London SW18 3HS.

# CLOCKWORK ORANGE A can of dangerous worms

MAXINE WILLIAMS

Hot on the heels of the Guildford 4 release and the latest twist in the Stalker affair have come new revelations about Colin Wallace. Skeletons are coming out of cupboards with a vengeance and much to the disquiet of British Government, its police and security services. What links all of these issues is the war in the Six Counties, a war waged by the British state using every device from murder, to frame-ups and dirty tricks.

Why, fifteen years after Wallace was forced to resign as an Army press officer, the Government should suddenly admit to finding documents that prove his allegations of a dirty tricks campaign is something of a mystery. Governments, both Labour and Tory, have consistently suppressed the Wallace issue. Thatcher herself has been sent detailed evidence of the allegations of Wallace and Captain Fred Holroyd about undercover operations in the Six Counties. Indeed it was Thatcher who refused to grant Wallace immunity from prosecution thus preventing him giving full testimony about the Kinvara Boys Home scandal. So while we should rejoice at the consternation being caused we should also ask why they have chosen to open this can of worms now.

For it is a can of rather dangerous worms. The Government has been forced to admit that there was an officially sanctioned policy of disinformation (ie dirty tricks) used in the Six Counties up to the mid-70s. It has claimed that Ministers, including the Prime Minister, who have consistently denied this, have been 'misled' by Ministry of Defence civil servants. Tom King has been forced to admit that documents supporting Wallace's allegations have been available to the Government since early last year. In that year they have planned how to limit the damage the affair could cause. They have established an inquiry with tightly drawn terms of reference which they hope will restrict investigations merely into whether Wallace's dismissal was unfair.

But much more is involved in this saga than the issue of Wallace's dismissal. Wallace worked as a Press Officer for the Army in the 1970s. In line with Kitson's counter-insurgency strategy, the army gave false briefings to the press aimed at

damaging the Republican movement. For example he peddled stories that one of the ingredients used in bomb making caused leukaemia to those who stored or handled it. In the run up to the loyalist challenge to the Sunningdale agreement, Wallace and his cohorts got the press to concentrate on a fictitious IRA plot to take over Belfast. Wallace however had some sense of morality. He found out for example that the explosives used to kill 19 people in Dublin may have been supplied by the British and that British forces were aiding loyalist assassination gangs.

He also became concerned about the Kinvara Boys Home. Housefather at the home was William McGrath, a loyalist politician. For years boys and their parents had complained of systematic sexual abuse and



rape being carried out in the home. The RUC would not investigate. The home was being used as part of an elaborate set-up by the intelligence services to gain material for blackmail. The boys were sacrificed to this end. When Wallace pressed for an investigation his career was finished. He was transferred to Britain, then sacked in 1975. He was subsequently imprisoned for manslaughter - a charge he strenuously denies and which many believe was a frame-up designed to get him out of the way.

There have been persistent attempts made to cover up these episodes. When Fred Holroyd, an officer in Special Military Intelligence Unit in the Six Counties in the same period, became concerned about undercover British assassinations, he was rapidly shipped off to a mental hospital.

But the issues have refused to go away. McGrath and others were finally charged for their role in sexually abusing boys at Kinvara. A series of bizarre in-

quiries have been held by the Government but none have questioned key figures including Wallace.

Wallace not only revealed operations in Ireland but in Britain. He alleged that the Clockwork Orange operation was a security service attempt to smear several British politicians and to undermine the then Labour Government of Harold Wilson. It is this operation that Ken Livingstone has referred to when he accuses Margaret Thatcher of being 'the beneficiary of treason'. For Margaret Thatcher's mentor was the late Airey Neave and he had close connections with the intelligence services at this time. Not only was the Labour Government smeared (Harold Wilson was said to be a KGB agent) but so too was Ted Heath. Heath was subsequently replaced by Thatcher.

Predictably, with a few exceptions, the thing which has most upset British politicians is the Clockwork Orange angle. Quite happy to see dirty tricks carried out in Ireland they object when they themselves become victims. Also very upset are Labour politicians such as Merlin Rees - then Northern Ireland Secretary, who ran British policy in the Six Counties. They are denying that they knew about dirty tricks. As Mitchel McLaughlin of Sinn Fein pointed out: 'It is unreasonable for the British Labour Party, particularly former Northern Ireland Officer ministers, to expect people to believe that they didn't know what was happening. The British Labour Party cannot simply wash its hands of involvement in dirty tricks.'

Even now, with Thatcher in a weak and vulnerable position on this issue, it is being left to determined backbenchers like Ken Livingstone, to put pressure on the government. It is not only Thatcher that fears exposure but Labour as well. How will it look if the truth about Britain's murderous role in Ireland stands revealed for the period when Labour was in office? That is why Labour is not pressing harder on an issue which, if properly used, could ruin Thatcher.

The Government is well aware of Labour's embarrassment and hopes to ride out the storm. They also hope that people will believe the tactics of disinformation, murder and intrigue in Ireland will be said to belong to history. The Stalker affair and the continuing use of terror in Ireland shows that they are liars. ■

## Serbian chauvinism rampant

DALE EVANS

The scourge of Serbian chauvinism still threatens the Balkans. Fearing Serbian control of the Yugoslav League of Communists, the Slovenian communists split from the League and immediately disbanded themselves.

In the southern Serbian province of Kosova, the indigenous Albanian population rose up in January. Their struggle is for

democratic rights and in particular for the province to be given federal republic status in Yugoslavia. However Serbia has used mass repression against the Albanians with over 25 being killed, and has accused them of separatism and irredentism. There are also rumours that the Serbs are giving backing to a group of royalist Albanians who intend to overthrow socialist Albania itself.

Albania has stood firm in spite of the fact that socialism in Eastern Europe is on the retreat. It

has consistently supported the right of Albanians in Yugoslavia to achieve their own republic. Rumours of student protest in Albania were confirmed as untrue by Greek diplomats. Meanwhile Western journalists are convinced that Albania will collapse within months. We hear the same voices pontificate about Afghanistan! Unfortunately for them the Albanian revolution took deep roots with the blood spilled in the fight against Italian fascism and German Nazism. ■

In brief

STOP PRESS

Getting out

The mercenary cricketers on their money-grubbing tour of South Africa are being kicked out. The tour is being ended prematurely for fear of mass demonstrations at the Cape Town match scheduled for next week. Mike 'I know nothing' Gatting and his team have been met with demonstrations at every turn. In the end Gatting had to be kept away from the press for fear that he would make yet another racist remark. Fortunately for all, Gatting was 'stunned' by the news - let's hope he remains that way. **The Mangrove Defence Committee, City AA, and other organisations have formed a Gatting Reception Committee to give the returning cricketers the welcome they deserve. Further information from 01-837 6050.**

Growth industry

The Association of Chief Police Officers has admitted that the Police Complaints Authority does not work and the public have no confidence in it. This is not surprising since the present system finds in favour of the police in 95% of cases. The Chief Police Officers are now proposing a separate agency, having failed to convince anyone that the present system is independent. Worst of all the public now prefer to sue the police and the cost of court awards against the Met in the last three years has risen from £11,000 to £252,000, and out-of-court settlements from £82,000 to £266,000. In some cases where awards of £40,000 or more have been made by juries for violent attacks by the police, the Police Complaints system has left the police undisciplined and still on duty. ● Following her acquittal on a charge of breach of the Public Order Act Section 14 in 1987 on the Non Stop Picket, Lorna Reid, RCG member, sued the police for assault, wrongful arrest and wrongful imprisonment. Last week the Met settled out of court with £1,500 damages and £3,000 costs.

The Gay Bar

In January Scottish judges were the centre of a 'scandal' when Lord Dervaird, young (for a judge) and up-and-coming, resigned on the advice of 'senior colleagues'. Both he and several other judges were questioned about frequenting gay bars in Edinburgh and the use of a remote cottage in south-west Scotland. The investigation arose after a request from the Metropolitan police for help in cracking a 'vice-ring'. Extraordinary justifications and contortions followed to cover up Scottish Office hypocrisy. Is it illegal for a judge to frequent gay bars? No, they said, it is not against the law. Is he facing criminal charges? No. Then why did Lord Dervaird resign?

Absent fathers

Mrs Thatcher, as part of a new 'softer image' for the next election, has decided to take an interest in one-parent families, God help us. Her interest is not in ensuring that one-parent families get all the help and support they deserve, but in ensuring that absent fathers pay up their maintenance - a new way of keeping the costs of benefits down. One-parent families won't get any more, of course, but they'll feel better for it!

# The frame-up of Danny Morrison

SARAH RICCA

**On Monday 8 January the Vice President of Sinn Fein, Danny Morrison, was arrested by the RUC along with eight other people. He is now on remand on charges of membership of the IRA, false imprisonment and conspiracy to murder Alex Lynch, one of the nine originally arrested.**

It is clear that the RUC's charges are groundless. When cross examined by Morrison in court, the RUC asked to reserve evidence on 1) whether Lynch had actually claimed he had even spoken to Morrison, 2) whether

there was any evidence linking Morrison with the alleged unlawful detention, with the alleged questioning or with the alleged violence - in other words, on all aspects of the charges.

Morrison's arrest is clearly a significant attack on the Sinn Fein leadership. It is connected with the RUC's use of informers and Sinn Fein's efforts to combat this. Lynch - the alleged victim of conspiracy to murder - was in fact a victim of the terror tactics used by the RUC to recruit informers. His father Billy explained at a Sinn Fein press conference that the RUC had threatened Sandy with imprisonment and with being shot.

Sandy was frightened and his father arranged for him to meet Sinn Fein and make public what had happened. It was during this meeting that the RUC made their arrests, taking Sandy and six others from the house where the meeting took place, one woman from the street outside and Danny Morrison from the house next door. The RUC have also now taken Sandy's wife into custody - allegedly for 'protection'.

In Britain we must expose the frame up of Danny Morrison for what it is: an attack on the Republican Movement and a desperate attempt to protect the use of informers.



Richard McAuley (Sinn Fein press officer), Jackie Lynch and Billy Lynch at the press conference

## British terror in Ireland

PAM ROBINSON

**British and collaborationist terror in the occupied Six Counties continues unabated.**

● **13 January** A British Army under-cover squad carried out a shoot-to-kill operation against three men who were robbing a bookmakers in West Belfast. Eye-witnesses said they saw the soldiers carry on shooting the men to 'finish them off' after they had fallen to the ground.

The British Government and RUC have claimed that the British soldiers were accidentally in the area when they happened upon masked men with guns. A fourth member of the gang who managed to escape has since revealed that the men were not masked, that only one of the three who were shot was actually armed with a replica gun which was concealed anyway. Also that they believed they had been under surveillance earlier the same day.

This has all the hallmarks of a classic British shoot-to-kill operation complete with cover-up.

● The RUC, British Army and UDR continue their harassment of Dermot Coyle who won his case against the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act at the Court of Human Rights in 1982. On 23 December Coyle, his wife and daughter were stopped at a check-point and held while the RUC were called. Coyle was arrested and taken to Cookstown RUC barracks where he was charged with assaulting a soldier. He was held overnight. The charges against him included a threat to kill an RUC inspector. He was held in custody in Crumlin Road Jail from 24 December until 2 January. Other incidents have included a loyalist murder squad attempt on his and his wife's lives during which they both suffered serious injuries.

● **3 January** In Ardoyne, Belfast, Gerard Ramsey was walking through Brompton Park with a 15-year-old neighbour when he was stopped by an Army patrol which handcuffed him with plastic handcuffs. Whilst holding Ramsey at gun-point, an officer swung round and opened fire on him hitting him in the left hip. He was further injured by being hit in the face with a rifle butt. The following



Two of the men executed by a British undercover shoot-to-kill squad

day the young neighbour went with her mother to the RUC barracks to make a statement during which time the RUC made obscene sexual innuendoes to her and tried to omit details from her statement but she insisted the statement was taken down properly.

● **6 January** A loyalist murder squad operation in Lurgan, County Armagh, shot a Catholic taxi driver dead. Martin Byrne had answered a bogus call made to the taxi office where he had only been working for one day. The PAF (Protestant Action Force), a cover name for the UVF, claimed responsibility.

● **8 January** The Army attacked Sinn Fein offices in Belfast. Connolly House in Andersonstown received substantial damage whilst the Falls Road Centre had documents, computer disks, photographs, mailing lists, *An Phoblacht/Republican News* research material and details of Republican prisoners removed. Also the Sevastapol Street office was broken into.

● **8 January** Danny McBrearty of Derry was released, rearrested and excluded from Britain. McBrearty was arrested in mid-October and held for three months in a high security jail. But the case was thrown out of Lambeth Magistrates Court for lack of forensic evidence. On his release he was immediately rearrested and an exclusion order was served on him banning him from entering Britain.

● **8 January** A further example of collaboration between the Army, RUC and loyalists. Loyalists wanted for questioning in connection with the inquiry into collaboration now being conducted were tipped off by their collaborators in the Army that the RUC would be calling on them. Needless to say they were out when the RUC called.

● **10 January** Cookstown, Portadown, was held under military siege for seventy-two hours while the Army conducted a seal and search operation in the area. During the seventy-two hours homes were maliciously damaged with floors, interior walls, fire-places and water pipes smashed. Residents were verbally abused while they were stopped and body searched. A three month old baby was body searched. Extensive damage was also caused to the local GAA club and grounds.

● **20 January** Loyalist attack in Portadown. Three loyalist gunmen in dark boiler suits and protective plastic gloves and footwear attempted to smash their way in to a family home in the early hours of the morning. When they failed to make an entry they fired shots into the hallway. Before making their escape they burned the boiler suits, gloves and footwear they had been wearing in the garden of the family home. Their escape was possible because of the delay of the RUC to arrive at the scene.

## Sinn Fein Ard Fheis

PAT CUNNINGHAM

**The accumulated effects of four years of repression and attempts to politically isolate Sinn Fein were the background to Sinn Fein's 85th Ard Fheis in Dublin on 2 February.**

The Party's poor performance in the 1989 Twenty Six Counties general election was put down as much to lack of organisation and continuous participation in mass struggles on everyday issues as to the effects of state censorship under Section 31. A motion calling for the removal of the Church's control over health and education in a future free Ireland was narrowly defeated, with the leadership voting against it.

Some delegates criticised 'certain aspects of the Northern campaign' which 'put voters off' and Richard McAuley, Sinn Fein's press officer, stated that 'the IRA must realise such actions damage the potential of our Party'. Others rejected this analysis saying that support for the IRA was higher than for Sinn Fein in some areas of the Twenty Six Counties.

Jim Gibney, a member of the Ard Chomhairle, who was released two years ago after a ten year sentence, said that the developments of the past year, particularly the march of 15,000 on the British Embassy in Dublin organised by the Forum for a

Democratic Alternative, 'showed the correctness of building a mass movement'. He went on to say that the Irish people should seek inspiration from and follow the example of the Palestinian youth of the Intifada and the fighting masses of South Africa, where popular participation and resistance have kept their liberation struggles to the fore internationally. He also said that he could smell signs of improvement about opposition to Dublin collaboration, such as a recent opinion poll showing that a majority of Irish people opposed extradition of political prisoners. It would be 'around such issues that we are going to integrate broad front mass politics'.

New emphasis was placed on the clarification of the nature of the national liberation struggle to those Protestants who consider themselves Irish but fear that 'Brits Out' applies to them. This clarification would be made in an attempt to win them over to the struggle for self determination.

In general this was very much an organisational Ard Fheis whose main aim appeared to be the building of Sinn Fein's structure in the South in preparation for local government elections and the intensification of its involvement in broad anti-imperialist movements such as the recently formed Irish National Congress.

## Bloody Sunday

**On 27 January 4000 people marched in London to commemorate the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry 1972. Joined by Republican Flute Bands the march rallied in Kilburn to hear speeches by Sinn Fein, Guildford 4 representatives and others.**

**High spot of the march was when, close to Kilburn, ambulance workers came out to applaud the march which cheered them back. Low spots were the normal display of sectarianism: the IFM boycotted the march; the stewards tried to force the RCG not to march with City AA and not to chant internationalist slogans. Evidently people must be divided into smaller and smaller units: Irish, black, women, political etc and must not stray. The SWP was not stopped from chanting its reactionary and incongruous slogan: Troops Out of Belfast! Troops Out of Baku! True to form these reactionaries who supported British troops being sent to Ireland in 1969 were siding with imperialism again.**

Jenny Sutton

The hard-nosed imperialist bourgeoisie, interested only in profits and super-profits, has seen beyond all the nonsense about a 'glorious transition from totalitarianism to democracy'. 'This is the equivalent of the discovery by Europe of Latin America, exploiting cheap labour and cheap supplies' commented a Senior Deutsche Bank economist. The *Financial Times* was equally frank arguing that 'low wage rates, at scarcely more than two dollars an hour even in relatively prosperous Czechoslovakia, are an attraction which could make these countries lucrative manufacturing centres.' The New York investment bankers Morgan Stanley, confident of the pro-capitalist trend of development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has announced that 'it is time to invest heavily in this massive revolution.'

The first task of communists is to oppose this imperialist offensive. But like the imperialists and opportunists, the British petit bourgeois left have welcomed developments, failing to understand that what is afoot is a fundamentally counter-revolutionary process setting the basis for a restoration of capitalism. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Revolutionary Communist Party and the assortment of other Trotskyist groups within the Labour Party have deluded themselves, and are trying to delude others, into believing that 'this is not a defeat for socialism but the defeat of Stalinism'. *Socialist Worker*, the newspaper of the SWP, sees the upheavals as 'the most powerful affirmation imaginable of the ability of ordinary working people to remake the world.'

Blinded by their petit bourgeois opposition to the socialist countries, British Trotskyists have applauded 'uprisings' against 'totalitarian' regimes, without caring to make a class analysis of the social and political forces involved. Blindly worshipping 'mass' movements, they refuse to examine the critical issue: which politically organised forces stand at the head of the mass movement? As we have shown in *FRFI* these are petit bourgeois and social democratic forces hostile to the working class and engaged in a conscious battle against socialism.

Communists do not ignore the de-

**The British ruling class, its servants in the Conservative and Labour Parties and its hacks in the media wildly applauded the collapse of the socialist system in Eastern Europe during the second half of 1989. The applause grew louder as they realised that, almost out of the blue, a massive market of over 400 million people is being opened up for plunder by capital. Report by EDDIE ABRAHAMS.**

# Socialist retreat: new imperialist advances

formations and distortions which existed in the socialist countries, yet we still recognise that recent developments represent a major setback for socialism. One only has to look at daily developments.

## MARKET AUSTERITY

Within Eastern Europe, the reactionary, anti-working class character of the unfolding process is most evident in Poland and Hungary. On 1 January 20 separate bills became law in Poland setting the legal basis for the restoration of capitalism. Overnight, working class living standards dropped by more than 30% as essential subsidies were removed. Coal prices rose by 600%, electricity by 500%, bus and rail fares by 250%, sugar by 300%, while bread prices are rising by more than 20% a week. The Polish Government has estimated that measures taken to rationalise and privatise the economy will create 400,000 redundancies in four months. But Jacek Kuron, Minister of Labour, admitted that this figure was 'pulled out of a hat' and that 'the IMF estimate is one million unemployed'. Employers have been given rights to sack workers en masse whilst the right to strike has been severely curtailed.

These austerity measures carried out at the behest of the IMF are no different from those the IMF forces upon the nations of the Third World. They are designed to 'discipline' the working class and ensure both profits for imperialist investors and the repay-



Willy Brandt, former Social Democratic Chancellor celebrates in Berlin.

ment of Poland's £36bn debt. The advantages once enjoyed by the Polish working class are fast vanishing. A Polish housewife comments: 'We can't buy any clothes, we can't paint the kitchen; theatres, cinemas and holidays are out of the question now.' While a pensioner states: 'By the time we have paid our rent, electricity and heating we will have just enough for a couple of pounds of butter.'

In Hungary a similar process is under way with an austerity plan freezing wages but raising rents by 50%, food prices by 45%, water by 300% and other public services, electricity and transport by 45%. These measures accompany massive privatisations and unemployment.

Given such propitious conditions for capital accumulation, major imperialist powers, their companies and banks are preparing multi-billion pound credit deals and industrial investment projects. US, EC and Japanese imperialism are threatening to transform the region into a battleground as they fight for the best position to extract the greatest profit for themselves.

When the Japanese Prime Minister visited Europe in January he extended \$150m to help Poland stabilise its currency and another \$25m for emergency food purchases. He also offered \$500m to Poland and Hungary in export credits and a further \$25m for technical co-operation. Meanwhile the EC and Germany in particular are planning their own credit schemes, hoping to outflank the Japanese.

Hundreds of imperialist multinationals are opening up offices in Poland and Hungary. In Hungary General Motors has taken a 67% controlling interest of the RABA truck firm, while General Electric has bought Tungsram, a major producer of electrical equipment. In Poland Chase Enterprises is investing \$900m in cable systems whilst Fiat, Honda, Suzuki and Murdoch's and Maxwell's newspaper empires are also hoping for lucrative deals.

What is happening in Poland and Hungary is a foretaste of what imperialism and its allies are planning for the whole of Eastern Europe.

## THE BALANCE OF FORCES

On an international scale developments in the socialist bloc have shifted the balance of forces in favour of imperialism and against socialism and national liberation movements. Speaking at the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) - the

socialist equivalent of the European Community) on 9 January, Cuban Vice President Carlos Rafael Rodríguez noted that: 'The weakening of socialism as a system gives the imperialists added euphoria and arrogance.'

This euphoria stems from the fact that liberation movements and socialist countries in the Third World are experiencing serious isolation and weakness as once accessible sources of political, military and financial aid are closed off. Imperialism will thus become more confident and more aggressive in its striving for domination and profit.

Liberation movements such as the ANC, which once enjoyed support from Eastern Europe, now find these countries opening their doors to the racist apartheid regime. In January Pik Botha was welcomed in Hungary where he discussed trade and economic collaboration. Simultaneously the apartheid regime has been allowed to wage a campaign to attract white labour from Eastern Europe to apartheid South Africa. The Palestinian people, and the PLO in particular, are also being abandoned in favour of the racist Zionist state. Poland and Hungary have resumed diplomatic relations with Israel which is sending its emissaries to mount a massive campaign to develop economic links and create a market for its commodities in the region.

Anti-imperialist and national liberation movements across the world which once enjoyed support from the socialist countries will now have to fight in much more difficult circumstances. Imperialism will be doubly ruthless. With no fears of significant response from the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, imperialism will use its awesome firepower to try and crush anti-imperialist movements.

In the immediate period ahead the socialist countries of the Third World stand to suffer most from the collapse of the socialist system. The basis of their independent economic development, already devastated by imperialist embargoes and sabotage, is now threatened further by the imminent collapse of the CMEA. The Cuban Vice President explained: 'One of the major accomplishments of the CMEA is having introduced, to the benefit of non-European members, preferential prices leading to the elimination of unequal terms of trade...'

These progressive relations are now threatened as the Soviet Union Prime Minister Ryzhkov proposes to end these relations and conduct trade within the socialist bloc in hard currency and at world market prices. Eventually implemented, such measures will have a devastating effect on the economies of countries like Cuba and Vietnam already suffering arbitrary price rises and interruption of urgent supplies from Eastern Europe.

Besides the imperialist ruling class, the only other force to benefit from developments in Eastern Europe has been social democracy: a pernicious, pro-imperialist, racist force within the working class which are familiar with in the form of Labour Party. Within the working class in Eastern Europe, social democracy is replacing communism and socialism as the dominant trend. Communists should be consistent in exposing the grave dangers that represent to the working class internationally.

Social democracy's programme is a mixed economy and a welfare state - ie a benevolent capitalism - can be realised only for a tiny minority of the world's population. It can only be realised at the expense of the majority. It depends on the savage imperialist exploitation and oppression of the Third World. This is the message communists must drive home. Only in this way we target the international working class's real enemy - imperialism and British imperialism in particular. ■

## Reactionaries threaten the Soviet Union

**Recent events in the Caucasus have revealed the Soviet leadership's inability to cope with a massive outburst of reactionary nationalism in Armenia and Azerbaijan. In both countries, the local CPs have lost all significant support to Popular Fronts who are whipping up national hatred and calling for secession from the Soviet Union. As a result there have been pogroms against Armenians in Baku, murders of Azerbaijani villagers in Armenia and the forced removal of 200,000 Azerbaijanis from Armenia and the same number of Armenians from Azerbaijan. VAHRAM RAZMIGHIAN comments.**

With the collapse of local Communist authority, Armenian and Azerbaijani nationalist militias, many armed with sophisticated weapons, had begun to replace Soviet authority. In Azerbaijan this trend was more pronounced with strident calls for independence and the destruction of border posts separating Soviet Azerbaijan from Iranian Azerbaijan. The pogrom in Baku against Armenians in early January forced the Soviet leadership to move in up to 30,000 troops on 19 January in an attempt to regain control.

Unfortunately this military operation can only temporarily stabilise the situation. It will not eliminate the roots of the inter-national conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis or dampen anti-Soviet sentiment.

Despite the enormous gains for all Soviet nationalities which socialism has brought, nationalism and national

antagonism survived and were fostered by uneven levels of economic and political development combined with discrimination, prejudice and the arbitrary and bureaucratic handling of national conflicts. These trends have been strengthened as a result of mounting economic problems and burst to the surface with Gorbachev's economic reforms. By encouraging the market and competition, these reforms pitted reactionary nationalist groups against each other. Exploiting the problems of the Soviet economy, they launched a struggle against central Soviet power, and other nationalities, with the aim of gaining economic privilege and advantage for themselves and ultimately declaring independence from the Soviet Union.

Such steps would be a disaster for the people of the Caucasus. Secession from the Soviet Union will allow imperialism to subjugate these nations

and destroy the magnificent economic, political, cultural, scientific and social gains which lifted the Caucasian people high up from levels of extreme backwardness.

The isolation of the Communist Party of the USSR from the mass of the Soviet population was highlighted at a national level by the CP Central Committee meeting in the first week of February when the first steps were taken to legalise opposition parties. To retain any credibility and control, the CP is being forced to legitimise political movements and forces which are fundamentally hostile not just to the Soviet Union but to socialism itself. Anti-communists everywhere are jubilant. They recognise the steps taken by the Central Committee as the first necessary measures for the eventual destruction of socialism in the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev has made this latest move in the hope of finding new social forces to push through his programme of perestroika in the face of resistance from the Communist Party apparatus. In doing so, he is becoming the plaything of counter-revolutionary forces.

Whether the USSR can avoid disintegration and defeat the growing chauvinist, nationalist and anti-socialist forces will depend on the Soviet working class's response to these latest developments. ■

In January thousands of Romanian workers took to the streets to defend the interim ruling National Salvation Front against attack from the Peasant Party and the Liberals. They made clear that they did not want the restoration of the landlords and capitalists of pre-communist Romania. For it is precisely these reactionary forces that the National Peasant Party and the Liberals represent. They hope to see the restoration of the class supremacy which they lost when Romania became a Peoples' Republic in 1948. DALE EVANS and MAXINE WILLIAMS report.

The events which overthrew Nicolae Ceausescu and unleashed long suppressed forces in Romania were not unexpected. There is evidence that Romania's National Salvation Front was formed last summer. Some of its members also claim that they had won support from the Soviet Union to topple Ceausescu.

Although the Front has considerable working class support it is not yet clear what class forces it represents. One of its leaders, Silviu Brucan, who has recently resigned from the Executive, has said that the Front's economic policy will result in the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs. Another Front spokesman has said that small private enterprise would be allowed but that state control would remain. Foreign capital would not be allowed to take over enterprises.

To fully understand the nature of events in Romania it is essential to know its history. For, however deformed the Ceausescu government was, whatever the excesses which made it unpopular, the workers of Romania may not be as ready as the imperialists would hope, to return to pre-communist days of bourgeois dictatorship. In fighting to retain those gains which the working class has made, they are facing the formidably reactionary legacy of Romanian history.

#### NATIONALISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Romanian politics was dominated in the inter-war years by the National Liberal and National Peasant Parties, both of whom are now once again active with the Peasant Party claiming 140,000 members. The dominant ideology of these parties was and is a reactionary blend of nationalism and anti-Semitism. The National Liberal Party represented the small Romanian elite of industrialists, landowners and financiers which ruthlessly exploited the people. Peddling a doctrine of 'national supremacy' they ensured the discriminatory treatment of the Hungarian and Jewish minorities. It was they who gave encouragement to the fascist Iron Guard. The National Peasant Party, though it had its origins in peasant radicalism, was dominated by business interests. Its policies when in government between 1928 and 1931 differed little from those of the National Liberals and its leader Iuliu Maniu concluded an electoral pact with the Iron Guard in 1937.

Soldiers during the December fighting



The vast majority of the population were poor peasants. Bourgeois land reform in 1918 had failed to solve their problems of insufficient tools, stock and credit. The working class was small and concentrated in a few industrial areas. Often freshly recruited from amongst the poor peasants their organisation was difficult. Nevertheless there were periods of class struggle and big strikes in 1920, 1929 and 1933 which were viciously suppressed. In 1938 King Carol made unions illegal.

One of the cornerstones of Romanian nationalism was anti-Russianism. With little domestic opposition Romania fought in the war on the side of the fascists until 1944. 286,000 Soviet troops were killed fighting against the pro-Nazi Romanian regime.

The Romanian Communist Party, many of whose leading members were Hungarian or Jewish, was founded in 1920 and made illegal in 1924. It was forced underground for the next twenty years and suffered severe persecution. It remained small, with less than 1,000 members in 1944.

#### 1945-1948 - YEARS OF CLASS STRUGGLE

This was the situation when the Red Army entered Romania. A coalition of National Peasant Party, Liberals, socialists and one communist governed. They arrested Iron Guard leaders and repealed anti-Semitic legislation. However, in many parts of Romania the Soviets had to ensure order in the face of opposition from reactionary forces. The next four years were to see intense class struggle as the bourgeois forces fought to regain control. The National Peasant Party and the National Liberal Party became a rallying point for fascists and other reactionaries. Romanian communists won growing support from workers and peasants, pressing for immediate land reform and other progressive demands. In 1945 communists organised a mass demonstration in Bucharest which was fired on by reactionaries. Government leader Radescu began to make openly anti-communist speeches. Against Western opposition the Soviets intervened to disarm the army in Bucharest and told King Michael to appoint a government of the National Democratic Front. King Michael, associated with the National Peasant and Liberal Parties, was forced to abdicate in 1947. In 1948 the communist-dominated People's Democratic Front was elected with an overwhelming majority.

However, it is clear that without Soviet support the Romanian communists would have been far too weak to take power. The Party grew massively in the post war period but many of those joining were former reactionaries and careerists. The party faced a very difficult situation - with bourgeois forces still strong but driven below ground and with an economy that was largely agrarian and outdated. Poverty and illiteracy were widespread.

#### INDUSTRIALISATION AND NATIONALISM

Nevertheless, under communist rule the economy made rapid advances. Emphasis was put on the production of heavy industry rather than consumer goods. Economic plans were carried out for large scale industrialisation, public works and the mechanisation of agriculture.

The leadership of Romania under Gheorghiu-Dej was forced to pursue a nationalist policy in order to industrialise. Under Comecon plans, Romania was to provide food and raw

# New struggle for Romania begins



Miners give their support to the National Salvation Front

materials within the 'the socialist division of labour'. The Party therefore forged ahead with industrialisation plans against the wishes of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. The position taken on the question of industrialisation gave the Party popular support and enabled it to complete the collectivisation of agriculture three years ahead of schedule.

On 19 March 1965 Gheorghiu-Dej suddenly died and the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) was assumed by Nicolae Ceausescu. Ceausescu followed a similar course to his predecessor - Romania 'first' - and continued industrialisation. The RCP's devout nationalism led to much support within Romania. Ceausescu followed a maverick line in foreign policy. Romania refused to break diplomatic ties with Israel after the 1967 war, consistently supported the Khmer Rouge in Kampuchea and condemned the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Within Comecon and the Warsaw Pact, Romania pursued an anti-Soviet position and often refused to toe the majority line. The imperialists supported Romania's anti-Soviet stance and obviously saw Romania as the way to undermine the socialist bloc of Eastern Europe. Thus Ceausescu was courted by the British, the Germans, French and Americans.

Ceausescu's nationalism had other consequences. The RCP hoped to increase Romania's population rapidly to 30 million. For Ceausescu this would enable Romania to play an even greater role in world affairs. Hence the ban on abortion which blighted the lives of countless women.

The RCP vigorously pursued its policy of industrialisation. At its 11th Congress in 1974 a decision was taken that Romania should reach the level of a 'developed' socialist state by 1990. Such a course was correct as Romania had an abundance of raw materials, although not iron ore, which was imported from the Soviet Union. Industrialisation led to many impressive results: a) the urban population increased from 25.4% of the total population in 1950 to 48.7% in 1979; b) infant mortality fell from 116.7 per 1000 live births in 1950 to 31.6 in 1979; c) life expectancy increased from 63.2 in 1950 to 69.8 in 1979. Through the 1960s and 1970s Romania recorded the highest growth rates of all the socialist countries, with an average of 8.7 per cent per annum between 1970 and 1975. (Figures are taken from *Problems of Com-*

*munist* 1979). Many projects were financed by loans from the imperialists.

#### CRISIS AND CORRUPTION

By the late 1970s worsening terms of trade coupled with Romania's ever-increasing demand for imported crude oil led to a huge balance of payments deficit. Economic inefficiency which, for example, meant that Romanian oil refineries were working a third below capacity, had brought Romania to the edge of a major economic crisis. Ceausescu altered course and decided that Romania's massive debt had to be repaid at all costs.

By 1981 Romania was indebted to the tune of \$10.2bn, and Ceausescu embarked on an absurdly extreme programme of austerity to pay the debt back ahead of scheduled timetable. By 1989 the debt had been paid off, but the RCP enjoyed very little public support.

Although industrialisation had created a working class, the RCP failed to politicise it. Increases in party membership were merely formal and did not indicate a population committed to communism. The austerity programme undermined rising expectations brought by industrialisation, and further exacerbated tension between the working class and party whose higher echelons pursued their privileges. In November 1987 the working class in Brasov rioted against their conditions.

In March 1988 Ceausescu announced that 7,000 villages were to be demolished and their populations reformed into 500 agro-industrial complexes. This scheme was hardly begun owing to major shortages of funds. However there can be little doubt that its main aim in Transylvania was to further extend the Romanisation of Hungarian peasants.

By 1989 Ceausescu had no social base remaining. Given the events elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the end was inevitable.

Elections are due to take place on 20 May and the National Salvation Front has formed a political party to contest these. The months ahead will be fraught with dangers for the Romanian working class. Western capital has its greedy eyes on Romania's natural resources and possibilities as a cheap labour force. Fascist and reactionary Romanians forced into exile are returning in droves. The National Peasant Party is standing on a platform of decollectivisation and extensive privatisation of the economy. The class forces are lining up for the bitter battles to come. ■

#### TROTSKYIST 'TRUTH'

*Socialist Worker* has shown its knee-jerk anti-communist reaction to Romanian events: it backs any opposition no matter how reactionary. Thus:

'[Demonstrators] tried to storm the Front's headquarters but some troops and drunken thugs armed with chains and clubs beat them back'.

In fact the demonstrators were reactionaries whilst the 'drunken thugs' were in fact Romanian workers who, unlike *Socialist Worker*, know what it was like to live under fascist rule by the Peasant Party.

And guess who wants the Romanian Communist Party banned - *Socialist Worker*.

'In Romania... demonstrators have been on the streets trying to stop the new government taking away the gains of the revolution... President Iliescu was... forced to promise to ban the Communist Party and to hold a referendum on whether the death penalty should be used for ex-Securitate men. But no sooner had the crowd dispersed than Iliescu retracted...'

#### MORE LIES

During the overthrow of Ceausescu the Western press claimed that up 70,000 people had died. Later even British officials admitted that no more than 4000 had died. The press has not come up with any evidence to back the larger figures they so eagerly invented.

A freelance reporter told the UK Press Gazette:

'And speculation has run wild on the number of deaths. The BBC talks about maybe 500 and maybe 70,000 and the next thing somebody is saying it could be three million. From my own experience in Timisoara, where the estimate was 4,600, I think we would be hard pressed to give evidence for more than a few hundred.'

#### THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY

For the last forty years the Hungarian minority within the Romanian socialist state, who form the majority of the population of Transylvania, have suffered discrimination and a denial of their national rights. Lenin made it clear that minority interests should be protected by communists against national chauvinism, but the Romanian Communist Party failed to take measures against the Romanian nationalist bully:

- In 1946 a university for Hungarians was established, in 1959 it was merged with a Romanian university, by 1989 only one 'department' was teaching in Hungarian.

- The Hungarian People's Federation was set up in 1945. It fought for a socialist Romania and had the support of 600,000 Hungarians. In 1953 it was abolished.

- By September 1956 the last remaining Hungarian newspapers, including Party publications, were discontinued.

- The 1952 constitution created the Hungarian autonomous region. Under the constitution it merely operated as a provincial authority and in 1968 it was formally dissolved.

- Under Ceausescu Hungarian factory managers and school principals in Hungarian areas were replaced by Romanians.

**Mandela is free! ANC, PAC, AZAPO are unbanned. Carol Brickley examines de Klerk's reforms and Thatcher's claims that her opposition to sanctions has brought apartheid to its knees.**

# Cracks in the wall of apartheid

On 2 February, white-only President of South Africa, FW de Klerk announced a radical package of reforms as the apartheid regime's most recent bid to solve its economic and political crisis. The announcement, coupled with Nelson Mandela's release on 11 February, was the latest move in a process which has been unwinding since PW Botha's removal from leadership of the Nationalist Party early in 1989. Botha had failed to quell internal uprising after more than three years of State of Emergency and South Africa faced severe economic crisis, compounded by political instability and sanctions. When de Klerk became President in September 1989, his instructions from South Africa's main allies, Britain and the USA, were crystal clear. Neither Thatcher nor Bush could influence the lifting of sanctions or rehabilitate South Africa unless apartheid had instituted specific reforms, at least to the extent that revolution would be a receding prospect. On 2 February de Klerk made the first significant moves.

**The imperialists have their own agenda for Southern Africa. Settlement of the Angolan war and Namibian independence were the first strategic moves intended to expand imperialist exploitation in the region. The main obstacle now to their progress is one of the biggest, most political and militant working classes in the world. It is de Klerk's job to convince the South African working class and its allies to settle for less than freedom.**

De Klerk failed to announce the entire package of reforms demanded by the imperialists: black political organisations, in particular the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), AZAPO (Azanian People's Organisation) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), were unbanned; Nelson Mandela was released; some political prisoners convicted of membership of banned organisations and all detainees will be released; a moratorium was announced on hangings and modifications were made to the laws governing detention without trial. None of this even touched the central apartheid laws.

Significantly the State of Emergency powers were only tinkered with, not lifted. It is not difficult to see why. The emergency powers are crucial to deal with opposition in the aftermath of the announcement, and their retention will reassure the security police that the big stick is to be disguised but not disposed of entirely. Nevertheless, on Mandela's release, Thatcher called for an immediate end to the sanctions, in particular on new investment, which are central to South Africa's economic crisis.

## THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

De Klerk is not a liberal wedded to reforming apartheid in the interests of justice. Limited reform of the system is essential to solving the dire economic problems which are both integral to apartheid and a result of internal and external pressure. As long ago as the 1960s a section of South African capitalists, particularly in the engineering, manufacturing and growing chemical and car assembly sectors, were arguing for reforms which, whilst retaining white supremacy, would allow a stable urban black workforce to develop and a growth in black consumption. Against them stood the traditional industries - farming and mining in particular - which relied on the unending supply of cheap, disposable labour provided by the operation of apartheid both internally and through its effect in neighbouring states.

Since then the growth of modern industry has sharpened the economy's reliance on imported technology. In boom times, the cost of imports could be offset against tax on gold production, but in the 1980s, with the gold price low and South Africa's share of the world gold

market decreasing rapidly, imports have drained South Africa's reserves. The growth of the black trade union movement in the last ten years has squeezed industry further. If this is combined with an internal emergency lasting from 1985 and sanctions - most importantly the Comprehensive Sanctions Bill forced on Reagan by the US Congress in 1986 - then the shape of South Africa's impending economic disaster is clear.

Key to de Klerk's election 'success' in September 1989 was his promise to Nationalist supporters that 'minority rights would be protected'. This is apartheid-speak for the maintenance of white privilege and blocking majority rule. On Tuesday 6 February, two cabinet ministers indicated just how little de Klerk's government is intent on reforming apartheid. Stoffel van de Merwe, Education Minister ruled out integrated education: 'Integration is not something that is very acceptable at the moment in South African society.' Herman Kriel, Planning and Provincial Affairs minister, referring to the right of races to live in their own areas as an 'indispensable principle', defended the Group Areas Act: 'We cannot allow the minorities that live here to be swamped by majority decisions'. De Klerk himself repeated his promise on 'minority rights' to a police conference at the end of January - a necessity since 70% of police are reputed to be members or sympathisers of the far right AWB. The reform package is intended to stretch only as far as is necessary to stabilise the economy and rid the regime of pariah status internationally.

## THE IMPERIALIST AGENDA

Thatcher, feigning surprise, warmly welcomed the reforms, claimed victory for herself, and lifted the non-existent cultural and academic boycotts. When Mandela was released she was packing her bags for a visit. She had to rapidly unpack when Mandela made his first speech in Cape Town, endorsing the armed struggle and sanctions. Bush was more cautious; facing a more powerful sanctions lobby, he kept sanctions in place for the time being. Thatcher found herself out on a limb backing apartheid and directly at odds with Mandela. Nevertheless, the US and UK are united. Through a rehabilitated South Africa, they will seek to foster capitalist domination of the whole region.

Even more than Eastern Europe, Southern Africa is hoped to be a profitable, stable and certainly less competitive prospect for investment.

Thatcher has been styling herself as architect of change in South Africa for the last three years. But whilst Thatcher has become renowned as apologist for the regime, and the most consistent opponent of sanctions in the Commonwealth and the EC, in practice British governments, Labour and Tory, have promoted British investments in and trade with apartheid throughout, simply because overseas investments which reap super profits are the mainstay of Britain's economy. Labour's wholehearted espousal of the anti-apartheid cause is recent indeed, and has not been tested in practice.

But before Thatcher can lead the imperialist trek through Southern Africa, the outcome of the reform package and much hyped negotiations, or even talks-about-talks, cannot be certain. Reforms in South Africa are inherently double-edged. Draconian repression has crippled the political organisation of black people since 1960, but even so, militant organisations have emerged, survived and grown. The unbanning of the major liberation movements and community organisations puts the aspirations of the black majority centre stage. These aspirations will be powerfully felt by any organisation or individual seeking or defending a leadership position.

## 'CLIMATE FOR NEGOTIATIONS'

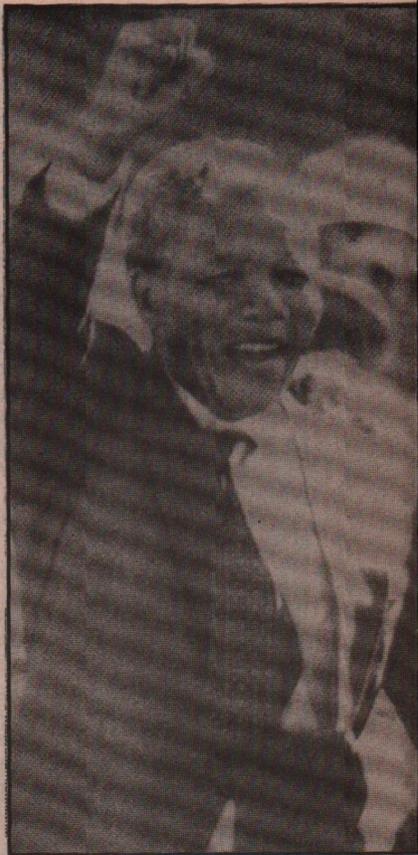
On 21 August 1989 the ANC presented its terms for negotiations to the OAU in Harare. The document accepted by the OAU, known as the Harare Declaration, described the moves necessary to create a 'climate for negotiations':

'Release all political prisoners and detainees unconditionally and refrain from imposing any restrictions on them;  
Lift all bans and restrictions on all proscribed and restricted organisations and persons;  
Remove all troops from the townships;  
End the state of emergency and repeal all legislation, such as, and including the Internal Security Act, designed to circumscribe political activity; and,  
Cease all political trials and executions.'

If de Klerk's reforms failed to meet Thatcher's demands, still less do they meet the ANC's. Only a minority of political prisoners will be released; the troops remain in the townships; the state of emergency remains and political trials continue. Nevertheless both de Klerk and Thatcher claim that the regime has done enough and that the ANC should now disavow the military struggle and, now Mandela is free, come to the negotiating table.

On 4 February, in an interview on Afrikaans television, de Klerk opined: 'Everything we do, we do to avoid revolution... the government will maintain law and order firmly and strongly.' Referring to Mandela's statement a few days earlier that both he and the ANC continue to support nationalisation of mines, banks and major industries, de Klerk said he hoped the 'silent majority' would now have a say instead of the 'radical minority': 'Now they [the ANC] have to defend their disastrous economic policy or abandon it'.

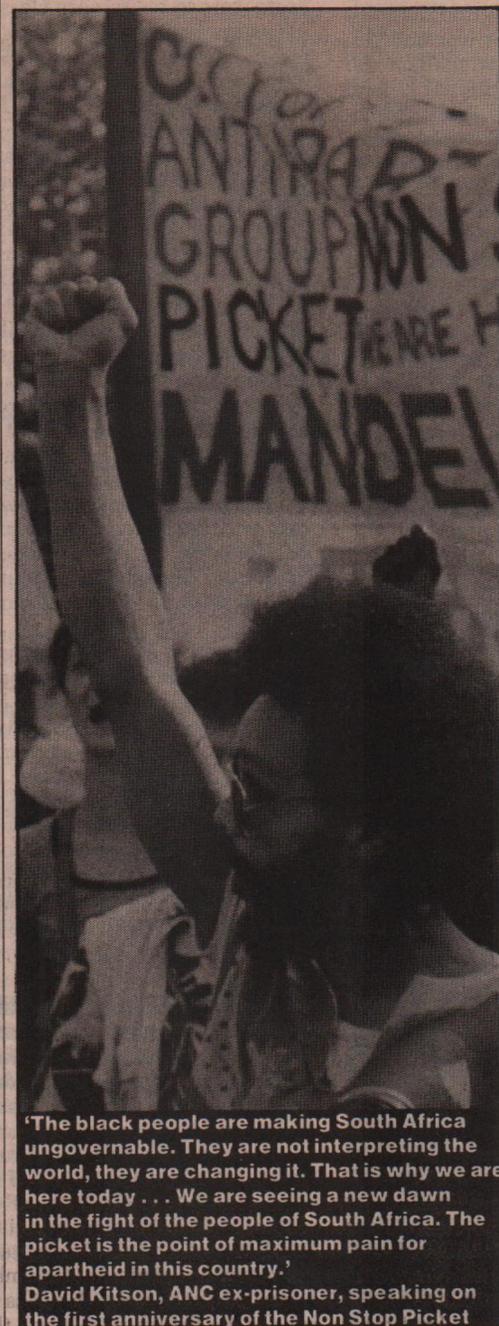
That the initiative is at present in the regime's hands cannot seriously be doubted. The end of the Angolan war and the initiation of Namibian independence, catalysed by the Soviet Union's detente with imperialism,



**Nelson and Winnie Mandela walk**

were carried on over the heads of the liberation movements SWAPO and the ANC. With its bases in Angola closed as part of the agreement, and the OAU pushing for settlement, the ANC has moved inexorably away from its former position that the only negotiations would be the hand over of power. At a meeting on 22 January in Lusaka to welcome Walter Sisulu, Alfred Nzo, ANC Chair, stated that preparation for negotiations must go ahead: 'If we do not prepare, we will surrender the initiative to the regime and allow it to impose its own solution on us.'

Nelson Mandela, from jail, has led



'The black people are making South Africa ungovernable. They are not interpreting the world, they are changing it. That is why we are here today... We are seeing a new dawn in the fight of the people of South Africa. The picket is the point of maximum pain for apartheid in this country.'  
David Kitson, ANC ex-prisoner, speaking on the first anniversary of the Non Stop Picket

# NON-STOP PICKET AGAINST APARTHEID

In 1985-6 mass uprisings in response to the harsh repression of the apartheid regime and its stooges with the Daily television news brought the regime and its stooges with being met with guns and tanks. Winnie Mandela called for liberation, and said:

'Every day, the blood of our people is being shed. Reagan and Thatcher continue to support the apartheid regime while in effect they are friends.'

RICHARD ROQUES & CAT WIENER

The Non-Stop Picket was started in the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group on 19 April 1986 in answer to this call. Its aim was to remain until Nelson Mandela was freed. It mobilised people in this country to smash Thatcher's collaboration with the racist apartheid regime. Kitson, ANC member and ANC ex-prisoner David Kitson, played a crucial link with the South African struggle, and played a leading role in setting up the picket, as did the revolutionary Communist Group. The picket was to prove crucial battles that lay ahead.

Today, nearly four years on, Nelson Mandela has finally been released. The picket has a widespread respect and support in Britain and in South Africa.

END THE STATE OF EMERGENCY!



... of jail - 'we are not going to accept a bone without meat'

... the promotion of the negotiating strategy. Alongside this a number of moves has been made to form alliances across the black political spectrum: beginning last year with a letter to Chief Buthelezi aimed at ending the conflict between UDF supporters and Inkatha in Natal, various overtures to bantustan leaders were made. More recently the Conference for a Democratic Future, organised by the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), incorporated bantustan representatives and attempted (but failed) to pull the Black Consciousness Movement behind the Harare Declaration. A letter is said to have been

sent by Walter Sisulu to the coloured Labour Party which has participated in the Tricameral Parliament, inviting an alliance. Whether this is true or not, the ANC is well aware that de Klerk hopes that the unbanning of political organisations will sharpen political differences in the black community and that, at the negotiating table, the liberation movements will represent several views among many. Mandela has stated his anxiety to ensure that the black community speaks with one voice. Some indication of the different viewpoints within the MDM came in response to de Klerk's reforms. Ar-

chbishop Desmond Tutu commended de Klerk: Dr Allan Boesak claimed that political life had been normalised; Joe Slovo of the SACP said 'if he [de Klerk] is prepared to go towards a really democratic solution, he'll find us ready'. ANC leaders were more circumspect about the partial nature of the reforms. And Winnie Mandela rammed the truth of the reforms home: 'We are not going to accept a bone without any meat'. The truth of this 'climate for negotiations' was visited upon crowds celebrating the unbannings on Saturday 3 February when they were attacked by police wielding batons and firing teargas and live bullets.

SELF-DETERMINATION

The terms of negotiations remain to be clarified, if indeed they get that far. At this stage it is more important to the regime that it is seen to be moving in that direction, than that negotiations actually take place. The time will come, however, when it will become clear that the regime has no intention of either dismantling the essentials of apartheid nor of allowing one person one vote. At that point the ANC will require other strategies. The ANC leadership's refusal so far to abandon the armed struggle is an indication of both the uncertain future of negotiations and that a substantial amount of support, especially among the youth, comes precisely because of this stand.

In sharp contrast to the ANC's strategy, the PAC has reiterated its dismissal of the possibility of negotiations with the regime. At a mass rally in London in July 1989, its President, Zephania Mothopeng, stated that negotiations at this point could only be on the regime's terms. Since then the PAC has issued its own terms for 'negotiations' in the Harare Communiqué calling as a preliminary for the dismantling of the main pillars of apartheid. In December 1989 the Pan

Africanist Movement held its inaugural conference inside the country. Its response to de Klerk's reforms was blunt: there is no possibility of reforming apartheid, it has to be smashed, and they promised to continue and escalate the armed struggle. This standpoint comes not from an anti-white programme (this is the racist myth promoted by the AAM in Britain) but from a commitment to self determination for African people and their right to the land stolen by white settlers. The test for the PAC over the coming period is whether they are able to win the majority to their programme, in a climate where



'There is no doubt that the suffering, sacrifice and service thus rendered by City of London Anti-Apartheid Group will go down in the history of the struggle as a sign of the determination and unflinching support of the oppressed.' Stella Moabi, PAC Women's co-ordinator

negotiations are being promoted as the only option.

MAJORITY RULE

There is very little prospect that negotiations can offer a way forward in South Africa. Although the far right of white opinion has been marginalised, any sense that they are unable to protect the privileges of the white minority will quickly prove disastrous. On the other side, convincing the black majority that democracy consists of anything other than majority rule will founder.

No doubt the regime imagines that the rural black majority, driven into the bantustans, will operate as a conservative bloc. They have become adept at manipulating stooge leaders, but have failed at fooling the majority of the black population. What stands in their way is the black working class which can and does offer leadership to the struggle as a whole. Black South Africans have had considerably more experience at building democracy than either Thatcher or de Klerk.

The black working class movement has been educated, not by a trade union bureaucracy, but by leading a mass movement in struggle. Trade unions like NUMSA, operate rigorous internal worker democracy, and promote community involvement in decision making through street and area committees. In major trade union disputes during the 1984-1986 period, trade union struggles were inseparable from the community's struggle as a whole against apartheid.

With the unbanning of the political and community organisations, the lessons of that struggle will come home to roost. There will no longer be a separation between external and internal struggle. The next period will be the testing time for the liberation movements, but it could also prove the undoing of Thatcher, de Klerk and the imperialist programme.

# STOP AGAINST APARTHEID

... swept the black townships of South Africa in ... and fake reforms of PW Botha's regime. ... images of black youth fighting the apartheid ... stones and petrol bombs out on the streets and ... arrests and imprisonment. On 5 April 1986 ... international solidarity with those fighting for ... children flows. While all this is happening, ... to call themselves friends of black people ... of racists.'

... for its principled and active support for all sections of the liberation struggle in South Africa and for the stand it has taken in defending democratic rights here in Britain. Our open and democratic campaigning has enabled us to win hundreds to support this stand, and to survive where other struggles have been compromised and defeated. We have achieved this in spite of our expulsion and subsequent boycott by the 'official' Anti-Apartheid Movement in this country, who together with some British-based members of the liberation movements allied to them have attempted to undermine and destroy the picket. Speakers representing wide sections of the movement in South Africa have joined the picket and spoken at City AA meetings: they include: Johnson Mlhambo, Chair of the PAC; UDF activist Simon Nkoli; Ida Jimmy

... of SWAPO; SWANU President Vekuii Rukoro; Haroun Patel, leading member of AZAPO; Comrade Mchpari of the BCMA, and NACTU. City AA has ensured that all sections of the movement, not just those given the stamp of approval by the AAM, have a platform and a chance to win support for their stand amongst the working class in Britain. The picket has also welcomed representatives of struggles from around the world, - the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, PLO, Broadwater Farm Defence Campaigners, Irish trade unionists, the Aboriginal Support Group, Turkish workers organisations - united in solidarity against imperialism. This non-sectarian position extends also to the movement here in Britain, where we have argued that all those who want to fight against apartheid have the right to participate in the picket, distribute their literature and voice their position. Only a broad-based movement, that gives a leading role to those who have no interest in supporting Britain's imperialist links with South Africa, will be capable of smashing British collaboration with apartheid. The Non-Stop Picket has been a constant thorn in the side of Thatcher: she took the torch from Reagan as the defender of imperialism in South Africa and friend and ally of the apartheid regime. Her ambition was to rehabilitate South Africa in the eyes of the British public and the in-

... ternational community and safeguard the interests of British capital in the region. Economically and politically, under Conservative and Labour governments alike, Britain has depended upon South Africa for continued super-profits from the exploitation of the black majority. The presence of the picket has been a constant reminder to the British people of the brutality of the apartheid regime and daily gives the lie to Thatcher's propaganda. Inevitably it came into conflict with the British state. From the first day we were subjected to arrest, abuse and assault in a sustained campaign to destroy the picket. It was no accident, either, that they should have particularly targeted black people, gays and women. Black picketers were followed of the picket, framed up and assaulted by the Metropolitan police. In the space of two months, 15 activists, many of them black, many of them communists, were framed on a total of 32 trumped up charges. Women were strip-searched in an attempt to humiliate them. It was outside the embassy that they first used the Public Order Act, introduced during the Non-Stop Picket. RCG member Lorna Reid won the case, and then sued the police for wrongful arrest and assault. The case was settled out of court when the Met police paid £1,500 plus £3,000 costs. In May 1987, on the day of the racist 'whites-only' elections in South Africa three City Group activists threw red paint over the embassy and closed it down for three days. The police moved in and used this as their excuse to ban the picket completely. A two-month defiance campaign and 72 arrests eventually brought four Labour MPs to make a stand with us. Our refusal to back down mobilised hundreds of people to make a stand for democratic rights and won back the right to demonstrate outside the embassy. Thousands have learnt from the experience of the picket that if you take

... a stand against apartheid you will inevitably come up against the racism and brutality of the British state - a daily reality for black and Irish people in this country. The fight to defend democratic rights and against the racism of the British state is a precondition for building a movement in support of the revolutionary struggle for democracy in South Africa. Out of nearly 700 arrests on the picket, we have won 96 per cent of all our court cases - in a country where 80 per cent of all court cases that come before magistrates courts result in conviction. We have learnt, vitally, that if we organise to fight back, we can win. It has not been only the police that we have had to withstand; not just British fascists, nor even apartheid agents. Far more insidious but no less dangerous has been the role played by the leadership of the AAM. Time after time, they have attempted to compromise the struggle against apartheid in their own interests. Year after year the RCG and City AA have waged battles in AAM AGMs. In 1985 we were expelled for defying a police ban on demonstrations outside the Embassy. In 1987 we attended en masse to expose Labour MP Bob Hughes, chair of the AAM, for scabbing on the Commonwealth countries who had boycotted the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh in opposition to Thatcher's position on sanctions. An open letter to the Scotsman, signed by Bob Hughes and other Scottish Labour movement figures, implored them not to 'damage Scottish interests'. The same AGM imposed a viciously anti-democratic delegate structure on the AAM - which we vociferously opposed. We have fought battles to win the AAM to a position of non-sectarian solidarity for the struggle in South Africa, only to see them refuse to support COSATU (in 1987) because it was not part of SACTU, undermine support for Moses Mayekiso and the Alex 5, deny entrance to the AGM to mem-

... bers of the liberation movements, PAC and AZAPO - even attempt to withhold support for a much-needed clinic for black women in South Africa because it was not being organised by the ANC. We saw their sectarianism in practice when we organised a 1000-strong march for Moses Mayekiso and the Alex 5 and they instructed their members not to support it. Or when the Sharpeville Six seemed likely to be hanged any day, and the AAM insisted on maintaining their picket several feet away from us, and shouting down speakers from the PAC and BCMA, to say nothing of City AA and RCG speakers. They have banned the sale of any literature but their own at their meetings and marches, and attempted to silence any voice that does not represent their views. They have attempted to deny the existence of the Non-Stop Picket, and when we get arrested they term us 'confrontationist' - even when the British courts find us not guilty. Theirs are the narrow, bureaucratic and sectarian politics of exclusion, which have proved unable, over the years, to mount any effective challenge to Thatcher's continued collaboration with the apartheid regime. They cannot represent a way forward for any genuine solidarity movement in this country. The RCG is part of a new tradition. Through City AA we have fought for a movement that is active, non-sectarian and democratic, a movement that stands in solidarity with those fighting for liberation in South Africa and is capable of mobilising those in this country who want to see the black working class and oppressed masses of South Africa come to power. The picket was formed to meet that challenge. The lessons we have learned from it will enable us to continue to work for that aim as the struggle intensifies. The forces who have kept the picket going, a beacon of resistance and solidarity in an imperialist heartland, are the forces of the future.

# Communism and the First International

**That Marx participated in the First International from the beginning was decisive and gave the International a place in working class history.**

**He was, in fact, drawn into its proceedings at the last minute, being invited to attend a committee meeting to finalise the arrangements of the founding meeting half an hour before it took place.**

**An estimated 2,000 people attended the meeting. It had been given a great deal of publicity in the London trade union movement through the *Beehive*. Besides the many British trade unionists present there were strong contingents of French, Italian, Swiss and Polish workers as well as many members of the German Workers' Educational Society. (This is the second in a three part series on the First International.)**



London demonstrations in support of the Paris Commune



Bakunin



Proudhon

In the opening speech the chair, Professor Beesly, expressed the hope that 'the results of the meeting would be to create a co-operative and fraternal feeling between the workingmen of England and all other countries.' In his address he attacked British foreign and colonial policy. 'England wrongfully held possession of Gibraltar from Spain, and her conduct in China, Japan, India and elsewhere was cowardly and unprincipled.' Beesly had included Britain's policy towards Ireland in his indictment but the *Beehive* failed to report this - a fact of some significance for later events. (Ireland and the First International will be covered in a separate article).

After the reading of British Address 'to the French workmen' and the French reply, an outline of a plan for organising the International was given. The establishment of an international association was later formally moved and a committee was elected to draw up rules and principles. This committee was the first General Council of the International and it was to meet in London. Marx was one of the two German representatives on the committee. On the 5 October 1864 he was elected to a sub-committee of nine which was to work out a platform of principles and rules of the International. After failing to attend the first two sub-committee meetings, but managing at a later date to have confused attempts to write the rules and principles rejected, Marx himself then wrote the *Inaugural Address of the Workingmen's International Association* and the 10 Provisional Rules of the Association. These were accepted with a few minor changes.

## BUILDING THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

The International brought together representatives of the European labour movement at different stages of development. There were English trade unionists who were indifferent to socialism and hostile to revolution. There were French Proudhonists, who while professing a form of socialism were hostile not only to revolution but all forms of politics. The French representatives elected to the General Council at the founding meeting were Republican democrats as were the Italian followers of Mazzini and both groups were actively opposed to an independent workers movement.

Marx understood that any attempt to achieve international unity of the proletariat could not be finally successful until socialist parties in the different countries were consolidated and strengthened. The working class movement in many countries was still in its infancy and only in a few countries had started to develop as an independent force. Such developments had to be encouraged. While it was necessary to fight against the bourgeois and petty bourgeois influences in the newly developing movements, the International had to be based on real forces in those movements as well as aiding the creation of independent working class parties in many different countries. The revival of the working class movements in Britain and France and the internationalist traditions of those movements, offered a real foundation on which to build. That was why Marx temporarily put aside his theoretical work on *Das Kapital* and involved himself in the organisation of the International.

Marx drafted the *Inaugural Address* and the Provisional Rules so that the general principles of communism which they did contain would be in a form acceptable to the real forces in the International - especially the English trade unions. The *Address* concentrated on what Marx privately called 'a sort of review of the adventures of the working class since 1845'. It took as its starting point the ever-widening gap between the wealth produced by modern industry and the poverty of the working class over the previous 20 years - an uncontroversial argument. Whereas the *Communist Manifesto* had

spoken of the need 'to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state', the *Address* said of the cooperative movement that it showed that 'production on a large scale... may be carried out without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of hands' but to 'save the industrious masses' it 'had to be developed to national dimensions, and consequently to be fostered by national means'. As the 'lords of the land and the lords of capital' would do all in their power to prevent the emancipation of labour, the *Address* argued that 'to conquer political power has become the great duty of the working class'. However, the context would allow the majority of English supporters of the International to interpret that as simply winning the suffrage. The *Address* ends by pointing to the 'heroic resistance' of the English working classes in preventing their government's intervention in the American Civil War. It argues that the fight to counteract such 'a foreign policy in pursuit of criminal designs...' forms part of the general struggle for the emancipation of the working class.

## DISPUTES IN THE INTERNATIONAL

In the early years of the International the main disputes were between Marxism and Proudhonism, and in the later years between Marxism and anarchism.

Proudhon opposed communism. He preached a version of anarchism which rejected 'politics' and looked to the 'free exchange' of products between independent artisans and co-operatives as the means of emancipating the small producer. This small scale production was to be made vi-

able by cheap credit from a 'people's bank' which would only charge a level of interest to cover costs. The state had no place in his scheme and was regarded as a coercive force which had to be opposed. The Proudhonists even rejected strikes as a 'forcible' interference in economic relations. Finally, in spite of their formal gestures at the first meeting of the International, the Proudhonists in fact opposed all attempts to involve the International in the Polish question.

Marx had already characterised Proudhonism as a petit bourgeois socialist trend in 1847 in *The Poverty of Philosophy*. Proudhonism, however, gained roots in the workers' movement in France in the 1850s and 1860s precisely because the state was associated with the tyrannical centralisation of Napoleon III and large scale industry was beginning to advance at the expense of the small independent producer. Proudhonism was the standpoint of the old petit bourgeoisie, artisans and small producers, confronted with proletarianisation as large-scale capitalist industry started to advance.

Proudhonism suffered a major defeat at the Geneva Congress of the International (September 1866) where a programme written by Marx was accepted. This programme emphasised the importance of struggle to win reforms from the existing bourgeois state with particular reference to labour legislation (the eight hour day, restrictions on juvenile and child labour etc) and the important role of trade unions in these struggles. 'In enforcing such laws,' said Marx, 'the working class do not fortify governmental power. On the con-

trary, they transform that power, now used against them, into their own agency'. Such struggles 'give direct nourishment and impetus to the requirements of the class struggle and the organisation of workers into a class' (letter to Kugelmann, 9 October 1866). Successful intervention by the International in strikes in France, Switzerland and Belgium not only led to strong sections being built in those countries but dealt a severe blow to Proudhonism.

Bakunin, like Proudhon, saw in the centralised state and its institutions the denial of freedom. But whereas Proudhon rejected the forcible overthrow of the state, Bakunin wanted to overthrow it and rejected any political action which did not aim at social revolution. He opposed campaigns for social reforms, participation in elections and all attempts to win reforms from the state. In particular, he opposed the dictatorship of the proletariat, seeing in it a form of despotism. Marx's arguments against anarchism at the time of the International are set out in *Political Indifferentism and Conspectus of Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy*. The pamphlet *The Alliance of Social Democracy and the International Working Men's Association* commissioned by the Hague Congress sets out the case against Bakunin's 'secret' organisation in the International.

## THE PARIS COMMUNE

As the Bakuninist campaign in the International got under way a major event occurred which raised vital new questions for the International on the issue of working class political power. Following the events taking

place after the defeat of Napoleon in the Franco-Prussian War (1870) the workers of Paris seized power for a period of two months - the Paris Commune was born (March 1871). The General Council's official position on the Paris Commune was written by Marx under the title *The Civil War in France*. It is a remarkable document and represents a substantial addition to the theory of proletarian revolution worked out in the *Communist Manifesto*.

In September 1870 Marx warned against an insurrection as an act of desperate folly. But after it had taken place, after the 'masses arose', Marx was able to appreciate 'that there are moments of history when a desperate struggle of the masses, even for a hopeless cause, is essential for the further schooling of these masses and their training for the next struggle' (Lenin). Marx used the heroic uprising of the Paris working class for the future struggle, drawing lessons which were of enormous importance for the Russian working class.

For Marx the Commune was essentially:

'a working class government, the produce of the struggle of the producing class against the appropriating classes, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of the working class.'

It had shown conclusively that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made state machinery and use it for its own purposes. It had to destroy the old state machine. The basic structural features of the Commune illustrate this. They were:

1. The abolition of an armed force separate from and hence opposed to the people - the abolition of the standing army and the substitution for it of an armed people.
2. The vesting of all political functions not in representatives but recallable delegates - chosen by universal suffrage and 'responsible and revocable at short terms'.
3. The absence of material privileges for delegated officials - 'public service had to be done at workmen's wages'.
4. The union of executive, legislative and judicial power - for example, 'public servants, magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible and revocable'.
5. The Commune was to be the political form from the smallest country hamlet to the district assemblies and the National Assembly.

*The Civil War in France* caused a storm of protest against the International. In Britain Odger and Lucreft, influential members of the General Council, came under severe attack in the British newspapers. As a result they decided to resign from the General Council. However, the crisis to which the First International eventually succumbed did not directly arise from this but from the conflict between Marxism and anarchism.

The London Conference of the International (1871) saw a victory for the Marxists against Bakunin in that it passed a resolution drawn up by Marx on the 'Political Action of the Working Class'. This resolution reminded the Conference of the passage in the *Inaugural Address* which said that 'to conquer political power has therefore become the great duty of the working class', and went on to spell this out in more concrete terms.

However, the disputes with the anarchists and Bakunin were by no means over, and eventually Marx found it necessary at the Hague Congress to propose that the General Council be moved to New York 'to protect it from disintegrating elements'. There it was safe in the hands of Marx's German American followers. It soon died a natural death. The International, however, had laid the basis for the building of proletarian socialist parties in many different countries. Its ideological gains were vital for the further development of the international working class movement.

David Reed

# Sound the alarm!

**'A growing challenge to US interests and national security strategy is so-called low-intensity conflict . . . The nature of US interests around the world will require that US forces be globally deployable, often with little or no warning'.**

US Army Chief of Staff, General Carl Vuono in 'Panama: training ground for future conflict', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 13 January 1990

**The 20 December invasion of Panama is the largest US military operation since the Vietnam War. It included the biggest US paratroop assault since the Allied airdrop on Arnhem in September 1944. Coming within a month of US Airforce intervention in the Philippines it demonstrated US imperialism testing its armed forces, its political will, international and domestic reaction in the context of the break-up of the socialist bloc. Fidel Castro described it as 'a humiliating slap in the face to the Soviet peace policy'. Ominously, polls showed 80 per cent of US people supporting the assault.**

**TREVOR RAYNE and KEN HUGHES report.**

The invasion comes at a time when President Bush has announced proposed US troop reductions in Europe, when the arena of struggle between imperialism and socialism has switched definitively to the oppressed nations of the Third World. It follows the tremendous November offensive by the FMLN in El Salvador and precedes the February election in Nicaragua. It was meant to be and was felt to be a threat by all the progressive governments and forces of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Cuban, Nicaraguan and Peruvian embassies were surrounded by US troops:

'Panama is only a trench. The war is against all of Latin America, whether or not Latin Americans want it, whether or not they dare to realise it or admit it and assume their responsibilities', Captain José de Jesus (Chuchú) Martínez, former bodyguard of the Panamanian patriot General Omar Torrijos.

## LIKE DOCTOR GOEBBELS

The US government declared that 'Operation Just Cause' was intended 'to protect American (US) lives, restore the democratic process, preserve the integrity of the Panama Canal treaties and apprehend Manuel Noriega'. Mrs Thatcher gave her immediate support and called upon all other governments to do likewise. Like Goebbels, the US government painstakingly prepared the psychological ground: Noriega was a brutal tyrant, tearing up 'democratic elections', running drugs, backed by 'armed thugs', the Dignity Battalions. Four days before the invasion the US seized upon a pretext: a US soldier was shot, a US woman companion was said to have been sexually abused. The dignity of the United States had been insulted. Never mind that the US soldiers were drunk, firing upon Panamanian troops, killing one. It fitted perfectly. Three days of detailed operational planning followed. At 1am, 20 December an action that had been rehearsed for months commenced.

Shortly afterwards US officials at Fort Clayton US base swore in Guillermo Endara as the new President of Panama. US Professor Noam Chomsky commented: 'And whom are we putting back in power now? The bankers who back in 1983 were identified by a Senate committee as among the main agents of drug money laundering'.

The US government claimed less than 300 Panamanians died. Former US Solicitor General Ramsey Clark put the number at between 4-7,000. Many more Panamanians slaughtered in the name of democracy by a foreign power than all those killed by Panamanian presidents, including Noriega. Meanwhile Christmas TV focused on Romania and claimed 60,000 dead, 6000, then, when attention had drifted, perhaps 600. As

with the British attack on the Malvinas/Falklands and the US invasion of Grenada, the US forces threw a news cordon around Panama while operations were in progress: journalists filed their despatches from Washington and Miami.

The President of the United States of America, 'the world's most powerful democracy', killed like the Nazis, lied like Goebbels and the US people applauded.

In 1977 the Carter administration signed a treaty with General Torrijos which stated that control of the Panama Canal would pass in gradual stages to the Panama government. Total control of the Canal would be transferred by the year 2000 and the 14 US bases would be dismantled. At the time the US ruling class was under pressure, following the debacle of Vietnam, to appear conciliatory towards Latin America. Nicaragua was still under Somoza, El Salvador relatively quiet. Today, the US-controlled Canal Zone is the centre of US operations against Central America, South America and the Caribbean: from here it conducts regional surveillance, military incursions and wields the 'big stick'. The invasion of Panama is intended to secure this military power on into the twenty first century. The US ruling class understand that the social conditions they have generated in Latin America will require it if continental revolution is to be destroyed.

Manuel Noriega was enlisted by the CIA at a military academy in Peru in 1959. His function was to spy on potentially progressive trainee officers. During the 1960s he was contracted to suppress communist influence among trade unionists on the United Fruit Corporation's banana plantations in Panama. So pleased with him were his CIA employers that in 1967 the US trained him in 'psychological operations' at Fort Bragg North Carolina. Even at this time (during the Nixon administration), Noriega's official employer, the Panamanian intelligence unit G2, was known to be smuggling drugs. The US Drug Enforcement Agency accepted it as fair trade for Noriega's services. In 1970 Noriega became chief of G2.

The deal went on, and in 1983, two years after Torrijos' mysterious death, attributed to the CIA, Noriega effectively became head of the Panamanian armed forces. He served as an intermediary between Colonel Oliver North, the Colombian Medellín cartel and the contras in the drugs-for-guns trade run by the US National Security Council. He met North twice in 1985 and once in London in 1986. He met Bush when the latter was head of the CIA in 1976 (at that time Noriega was on the top CIA pay of \$200,000 per annum) and later as Vice-President in 1983. On this occasion Bush wanted Noriega to step up supplies to the contras and to train

them on Panamanian Defence Force (PDF) bases. In 1985 US Vice-Admiral John Poindexter, head of the National Security Council, demanded that Noriega withdraw from the Contadora efforts of Central American governments to find a peaceful solution in Central America, and that he must provide the contras with equipment and training, and assign special units of the PDF to commit acts of aggression against Nicaragua. Noriega refused. The slander campaign began. The economic sanctions were imposed, and in the end they resulted in a 20 per cent fall in Panama's output, half of domestic private businesses going bankrupt and a third of the workforce rendered unemployed. Their aim was to narrow the social base of support for the Panamanian government.

Noriega, the PDF and above all the self-defence force, the Dignity Battalions, formed to counter US destabilisation, represented the national interests of Panama against the middle and bourgeois classes in alliance with the multinationals. Panama's struggle for the Canal is the struggle for independence and self-determination. Noriega understood that he would never be more than a siphon for US policies, insecure and dispensable, without the support of the Panamanian poor and their demand for sovereignty over the Canal. Ill-equipped, with forces less than half the numbers of the invader, the people fought, and they fought for all the peoples of Latin America.

## STEALTH BOMBERS TRIED OUT

The US 82nd Airborne Division, formerly deployed against Grenada in 1983, was sent in: the US needs 'an unquestioned ability to conduct unopposed entry into combat . . . Army airborne forces are uniquely capable of performing this function' (General Vuono). Light tanks and armoured vehicles edged forward behind helicopter gunships and jet fighters. F-117 stealth bombers were tried out for the first time in Latin America to bomb PDF bases and working class neighbourhoods. The district of Chorrillo containing the headquarters of the PDF was flattened. Thousands were killed, bodies tipped into mass graves. Five thousand Panamanians, government workers and political activists were rounded up and held in US prison camps. Panama is an occupied country.

For the first time in decades the US government did not justify an overseas military action in the name of combatting a 'Soviet threat'. This was the thirty seventh US military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean this century. In many ways it is the most sinister. Protest in the USA and Britain was pathetic compared to the scale of the crime. Communists, socialists and progressives everywhere - sound the alarm! ■



US troops rounded up 5,000 Panamanians.

## How much abuse have we come to in this world?

'But they didn't attack fearlessly, that is, fearless of the death of imperialism's own mercenary soldiers. Quite the contrary. They killed as many persons as necessary to avoid their own losses. Wherever there was resistance they didn't send soldiers. They used planes and helicopters to drop bombs, and they 'flattened' areas with artillery. Then they attacked. Wherever they encountered resistance, they would retreat again and 'flatten' the area, using air power and artillery. This is the type of war they have waged in the capital of Panama, in the most densely populated communities. This is what has created thousands of civilian victims.

'Imperialism's mercenary soldiers who are wounded receive immediate attention. They are picked up in modern ambulances, taken to hospital planes, and flown to the best hospitals in the United States. Meanwhile, they don't even permit ambulances to pick up wounded Panamanian combatants. And they don't even permit them to pick up the wounded civilian population. Thus people are dying, and the streets of the capital of Panama are covered in blood . . . How much barbarity and abuse have we come to in this world? Thus, while the empire's wounded soldiers travel immediately to the best hospitals over there, Panamanians lie bleeding in the streets'.

Fidel Castro, 21 December 1989.



Panama City's working class district of El Chorrillo, which bore the brunt of the US aggression

## RCG fights sectarianism

Approximately 250 people, the majority Latin Americans, protested at the Panama invasion outside the US embassy in Grosvenor Square on 21 December. The event was organised by Latin American Support Groups based in London. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* and the RCG mobilised a contingent and brought our banners and voices along. The organisers refused to allow the RCG to sign a letter of protest to be delivered to the embassy or to have a speaker. After they rejected our arguments, an RCG comrade, Eddie Abrahams publicly challenged the organisers. He pointed out that sectarian divisions had always weakened our movement, that we were not so many as to be able to exclude anyone genuinely opposed to imperialism, and that the refusal to allow the RCG or other left organisations to sign the petition was a ban on communists. Many of the Latin Americans present sympathised with us. The organisers looked embarrassed and backed down. We signed the petition and had a speaker.

This protest meant that sellers of *News Line*, *Morning Star* and the *US Militant* also present could also sign the petition if they wanted to. True to form, the Trotskyist organisations - Militant, SWP and RCP stayed at home.

What were the organisers attempting to achieve? How did they see their role? Did they want authenticity, credibility, respectability? Who were they trying to impress? The US government, Latin America, the British press, each other? By and large they come from the same left organisations, the Labour Party and the CPGB, that claim proprietorial rights over the Anti-Apartheid Movement. It was not just the RCG they were excluding but people who were angry and disgusted at what the US had done and Thatcher's support for it. People who protest, people who organise have a right to speak, a right to express their protest and solidarity. When will the British left learn some respect for others and for democracy? What is it afraid of . . . ? When will they learn?

Trevor Rayne

PETER BERRESFORD ELLIS, author of *A History of the Irish Working Class (1972)* and *He or Connacht (1975)* reviews a history of the ATGWU in Ireland • PAUL MCKINLAY reviews *Ballymurphy and the Irish War* • SARAH RICCA on Renwick's novel • JACKIE BAILEY reviews an inspiring book on the Mothers of the Disappeared in Argentina

## Eagle or Cuckoo? The story of a British trade union in Ireland

**Eagle or Cuckoo? The Story of the ATGWU in Ireland** Matmer Publications, Dublin, Ir£9.50, paperback.

Few books have been written about the history of the trade unions in Ireland. Their origins and battles to win recognition have a different history to their English counterparts, for their early development was inextricably linked with the anti-imperialist struggle. Nevertheless, I can name only a handful of works dealing with the subject, perhaps the most invaluable study being *Labour and Nationalism in Ireland (1925)* by J. Dunsmore Clarkson, a work which is crying out to be reprinted for, in spite of the intervening years, it contains a wealth of background material necessary to the understanding of the labour and socialist movements in Ireland. There is, of course, Andrew Boyd's excellent small volume *The Rise of the Irish Trade Unions 1729-1970*, published in 1972, providing a good groundwork.

Now Matt Merrigan has written *Eagle or Cuckoo? The Story of the ATGWU in Ireland*. Although this is simply the story of one particular trade union, or rather the 26 Counties branch of a British-based trade union of which Matt Merrigan was a leading official, I believe it is essential reading for anyone interested, not only in trade unionism in Ireland but the anti-imperialist struggle. Anyone who has observed or had contact with Irish trade unionism or socialism during the last half century will have encountered the name of Merrigan who has spent a lifetime fighting for his beliefs.

Here is a union official who never abandoned his Marxist views that the political and industrial struggle of the working class is indivisible. Not only did Merrigan hold that view but his life was spent fighting for the principle. He was a firm adherent of many of the teachings of James Connolly, the most profound mind and greatest political theoretician among the men whose actions in the 1916 uprising gave birth to the modern Irish state. Merrigan saw the fulfilment of Connolly's prophecy that the

Partition of Ireland would produce a carnival of reaction which would set back working class unity in Ireland for generations. Merrigan believed that Partition must be ended, Ireland re-united and that the Irish working class should take the lead in that struggle to end English imperialism in Ireland and not play a passive role in the struggle as they were misled into doing during the Civil War (1921-22).

In spite of recent attempts at 'revisionism', to either rubbish Connolly or re-interpret him, in spite of the rise of the neo-colonial school of Irish historical writing, Merrigan remains firmly committed to his belief in a re-united 32 county socialist republic in Ireland.

So what we have is not some laborious, hard to read history full of statistics and irrelevancies. We have a work that is highly spiced with controversial references, snippets of information gleaned from personal experience, invaluable for future historians, and references and comparisons with current disputes, a work not divorced from today's struggles.

Merrigan does not shy away from one of the points of difference he has with Connolly. Connolly believed that the interests of the Irish workers should only be represented by *Irish* trade unionists. Connolly, of course, was a syndicalist rather than a trade unionist (a position I personally agree with) and saw that trade unionism, as opposed to industrial unionism, was 'forging greater fetters for the working class'. The trade union to which Merrigan devoted his working life was British based.

The Republic of Ireland constitutes a *district* of the British ATGWU. Indeed, most of the unions and trade associations in the 26 counties are either branches or districts of British organisations and can make no major decisions on their own account without the sanction of the English majority. Surely this is an extraordinary state of affairs for the trade unions of a supposedly sovereign republic to be governed by the will of the majority in another state? This is imperialism

in another form. And this is the point at which I differ with Merrigan who can argue for Irish independence in all other forms except independent Irish trade unions.

When on 30 January 1970, members of the 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment opened fire on a Civil Rights demonstration, killing 13 unarmed demonstrators (one more was to die of wounds later) and wounding 17 others, among those killed were three members of the ATGWU: Jim Wray, Patrick Doherty and Michael McDaid. Calls were made on members of the Republic of Ireland *District* to leave the British-based union and join the ITWGU, which was, at least, Irish-based, as a protest against the atrocity. 'Membership of a British-based union shared some of the guilt of the British government and its army in the North of Ireland for the carnage in Derry', it was argued. Indeed, several members transferred to the ITWGU.

Merrigan argues against 'the siren song of the professional patriots'. Superficially, the arguments are good. Trade unionism is international. But, really, is this a justification for trade unionists of one country to have the right to say what is good for the trade unionists of another state? If we had a reversal of roles would British trade unionists accept their affairs being governed from an organisation in France or Germany, with any decision made by them subject to approval or disapproval by those organisations? But this is the situation in Ireland. It is nothing less than trade union imperialism. And through it we can see that imperialism has many levels.

But such debates aside, Merrigan's book is an important volume. It is a treasure trove of information which is essential for the understanding of events in Ireland during this century. Merrigan's style is forthright and easy to follow, although I would have liked an index and a system of footnote references to the documents from which he quotes and a bibliography.

Peter Berresford Ellis

## The Battle of Ballymurphy

**Ballymurphy and the Irish War** Ciáran de Baird, Aisling Publishers, 1989, paperback £5.50.

This 'local' history is very much a history of the current phase of the Irish freedom struggle.

In 1969 and 1970 in Ballymurphy, in West Belfast, the people rose up, and kicked out the marauding Orange mobs and took on the British occupation forces.

On 23 June 1970 the Central Citizens Defence Committee, a body taken over by the nationalist middle class and Catholic Church establishment, was told that an Orange march planned for the coming Saturday was to pass through the Bombay Street and Clonard area of the Lower Falls, recently rebuilt after it had been burnt out the previous year by invading loyalists backed up by the RUC. Another march was to pass burnt out houses in the Ardoyne, and yet another to form up in New Barnsley and pass along the top of Ballymurphy along the Springfield Road.

The following days showed the impotence of the middle-class element's plea to the British state, and demonstrated that only the oppress-

ed working-class community organised as an independent force could hold off the pogroms and British occupation forces.

The Battle of Ballymurphy which ensued started with the expulsion of the organised Orange element from New Barnsley. As the Orange thugs legged it down the Springfield Road in disarray, the nationalist people took the RUC barracks apart, attacking the hated Henry Taggart British Army base close by.

The Battle of Ballymurphy, which followed as the people resisted the British Army's attempts to occupy the area, raged for seven months until in January 1971 British Army commanders met with IRA representatives and agreed for the time being to keep out of Ballymurphy and a number of other nationalist areas.

The Battle of Ballymurphy saw the British Army intensify repression using CS gas, snatch-squads and rubber bullets, and the community defend itself. They fought back with blast bombs, nail bombs, low-lying clothes lines, trip-wires and cheese-wire, catching soldiers speeding along the narrow streets in their jeeps.

But the people found themselves under attack from another quarter - the middle-class element and the Catholic Church establishment, which, as the biggest landowner in Ireland, spoke for the interests of property. The Bishop of Down & Connor denounced those who fought the occupation forces as acting under 'immoral orders'.

The mould of the struggle was set down to the present day, a struggle that Ciáran de Baird documents admirably with the understanding of one familiar with a remarkable community over a sustained period.

It is the more valuable that it stands as a carefully researched work complete with references to those that wish to check out his account and find out more. He draws not only on his own recollections, but also on the other existing available sources, and most valuable of all has carried out dozens of original interviews.

Make sure you get hold of this book. It is one of the best histories of the current phase of the struggle, highly readable and cheap enough for you to buy an extra copy for a prisoner.

Paul McKinlay

## Last night another soldier

... *Last night another soldier* ... Aly Renwick, Information on Ireland, 1989, £3.95 paperback.

Aly Renwick is a former soldier who served for 18 years in the British Army before managing to buy himself out, and who later became a founding member of the Troops Out Movement. His first novel... *last night another soldier*... takes as its subject the war in the north of Ireland, focusing on the experiences of two people on opposite sides of the war - Billy, a Scottish youth who joins the British army to escape the dole queue, and Sorcha, a young Irish nationalist woman whose experience of British occupation of the Six Counties leads her to join the Republican movement.

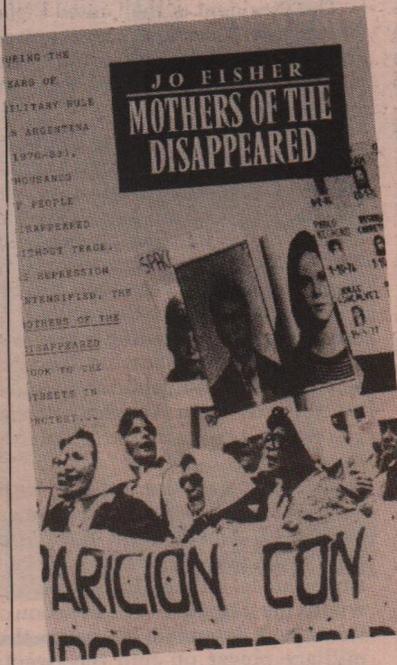
Sounds like an interesting read? Regrettably it's not. While the stiff-

ly violent and racist atmosphere of army life is vividly portrayed, where - especially in the scenes in Ireland - plot and characters are all too thinly over the author's (able) message: that British should get out of Ireland. In case message is not hitting home, author regularly introduces passages of factual information - but this novel, not a piece of propaganda, the facts are necessarily selective as unlikely as the author's fiction convince any but the already convinced.

It would be nice if worthy and genuine commitment enough to produce good entertainment. Unfortunately, as Aly Renwick's novel proves, they are not.

Sarah F

## Mothers fight the silence



**Mothers of the Disappeared** Jo Fisher, Zed Books, £7.95 paperback.

On 24 March 1976 a military junta composed of the three commanders in chief of the armed forces installed itself as the government of Argentina. At that time, the country itself was in economic and political turmoil; mass strikes, annual inflation at 500 per cent and the country stood within days of defaulting on international debt repayments.

The new regime pledged to govern by the values and moralities of christianity, patriotism and the family and set out to free the market from the restrictions imposed by previous governments. However, the success of this depended on inflicting a decisive defeat on working class organisations and politics in order to paralyse working class reaction. Under the guise of a 'war against subversion' the military junta took complete control of all the machinery of the state and began the ruthless elimination of all who threatened this process. It is estimated that in the first year alone approximately 15,000 people 'disappeared'.

It is against this background that the *Mothers of the Disappeared* came into being. The book describes itself 'as a history of a collective struggle' and that is exactly what it is. Initially, the Mothers were individuals trying to find their families, and through interviews they explain the difficulties they came up against, especially in a society where the ideology of 'machismo' is so deep-rooted and views women as having a 'natural' role of 'home maker' in subservience to

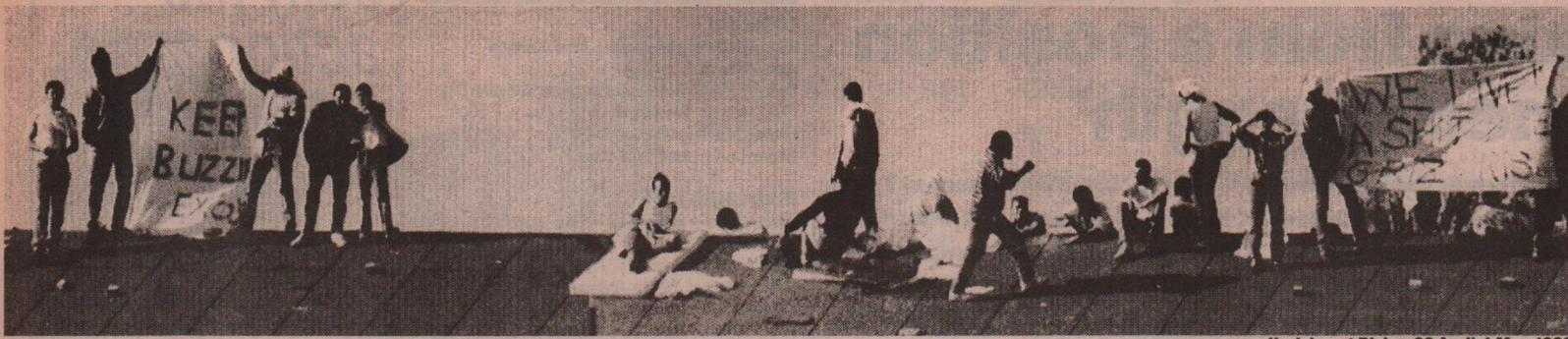
men. However, against this the women persevered and as they began to meet other women in the same situation their consciousness grew: 'we began to realise... the explanation for the disappearance of our own children could only be found in the explanation for all the other disappearances'. The Mothers, who had no legal or political experience, recognised that their only way against the regime was collective direct action. So in April 1977, a decision was taken to install a permanent weekly presence at the government house in Plaza de Mayo.

Made up almost entirely of interviews with those involved, the book charts the struggles of the Mothers; the intimidation, harassment by the police and army, threats and beatings to the mothers and the eventual 'disappearance' of the most militant and experienced of the Mothers; the betrayal by other human rights and political organisations and the Catholic Church who worked alongside the military junta; the collusion of the media in maintaining a deliberate silence on the issue and the continued support of the regime by numerous countries world-wide, notably Britain and the USA.

Despite all this, the Mothers continued to organise. They recognised the need to build a mass, democratic campaign and travelled all over the country and the world speaking to anyone who would listen. In Latin American countries they found that similar things were happening and pledged that until the USA stopped its interference in these countries and Nicaragua in particular, the Mothers would boycott all there. They produced their own newspaper which also travelled worldwide and eventually had support groups both inside Argentina and around the world. Most importantly they continued to protest in Plaza de Mayo every week, and these protests grew from what was originally a handful of Mothers to hundreds of thousands of people. These protests became the focal point of the resistance to the junta after the Falkland Islands war and led directly to the downfall of the regime.

These are just a few of the lives and achievements of the Mothers contained in the book. The most interesting thing about it is that it illustrates so vividly the side by side development of the revolutionary movement and the political consciousness of women involved. It is both informative, inspiring and highly recommended.

Jackie



Uprising at Risley, 30 April-4 May 1989

# Support the Risley 54!

Events have moved on since the May Day uprising at the Risley Remand Centre. The Risley 54 have been scattered around the prison system and we have all now been charged with counts of Riot and Criminal Damage. The combined tariff for these two charges is 20 years imprisonment! WADI WILLIAMS explains, on behalf of the Risley 54.

Clearly the state is now committed to making an example of us for daring to protest and resist the dehumanising and barbaric conditions within these 'penal colonies'. Secondly, and perhaps more insidious is the concerted attempt to criminalise our actions and obfuscate the issues underpinning the uprising.

To combat this and to provide an effective, politically inspired defence, we have organised 'The Risley 54 Defence Group and Support Committee'. Our objectives are threefold:-

1. Keeping the nightmare of these 'Penal Colonies' on the political and social agenda.

2. Co-ordinating our defence, legally and politically.
3. Providing a support network for our families and friends.

To this end we are:-

- a) Making contact with grassroots organisations and individuals, in order to mobilise public and community support for the Risley 54 and articulate the real issues involved in the uprising.
- b) Organising a petition and letter-writing campaign to the Home Office, national and local media, MPs etc, highlighting the attempt to railroad the 54 and demanding that the charges be dropped.

On the domestic front we hope to be able to provide both moral and material support for our families. As I am sure you are aware, the state only subsidises the travelling costs for one visit per month to a convicted prisoner and offers no subsidies whatsoever to families of unconvicted prisoners. As the 54 have been dispatched to various prisons around the country and most of us are 'unwaged', keeping contact with our families and each other is proving extremely difficult and creating enormous financial and psychological pressure.

The Defence Committee intends to organise fund raising events to help the families, friends and supporters of the Risley 54 to continue the struggle. It is our hope that the readers of *FRFI* will be able to help us on three fronts. We would like you to:-

1. Organise petitions and write letters to the Home Office Prison Department, media, MPs etc, supporting the Risley 54, calling for an end to the railroading and demanding the charges be dropped.
2. Provide us with any relevant information which might aid our defence.
3. Financial: Please, please make contributions to the Risley Defence Fund and where possible, we would appreciate it if you could organise fundraising events for us. (If you decide to help in this way, please make donations payable to 'The Risley 54 Defence Fund'.)

All communications should be addressed to: Ya'el, Coordinator - Risley 54 Defence, 85 Asbridge Street, Toxteth, Liverpool, L8 0UG. Tel: 051 709 6389.

## Barbaric treatment in Britain's prisons

### WANDSWORTH

I was held at the infamous Wandsworth 'block' for four months (26/8/89 until 5/12/89) having been charged, under prison rules, with two offences.

Down the block I was subjected to the usual beatings. Often I was used as a punch bag and beaten so badly that the screws confined me to my cell for periods of 24 hours a day so that other comrades could not see my cuts and the bruising over my face.

I was summoned into the governor's office and told that because I was 'involved in subversive actions', and because I received a Christmas card from Winston Silcott as well as several letters from Domenyk Noonan of the 'Prisoners League Association' that I should be 'very careful'.

After this threat the beatings multiplied. I was denied exercise, mail was tampered with; the list is endless.

I complained to my MP, MEP, petitioned the Home Office, but to no avail. I even went on hunger strike.

While down the block, I was fitted up for a further eight 'minor' offences and found guilty on all eight by the governor.

Then an adjudication date for the two offences was set. Domenyk Noonan was to be called as a witness. As soon as this was revealed, the charges were dropped.

I was subsequently bundled into a minibus and taken to Swaleside prison which I was told by screws was my 'sweetener'.

Well, I'm glad to say I don't give in to bribery. After taking legal advice, my solicitor and I are preparing to confront the racist regime at Wandsworth by bringing a case against the screws and authorities guilty of committing criminal acts against prisoners.

I plead with anyone who has suffered or witnessed the misconduct of Wandsworth screws, to give me full details because I need to get support if my case is to be won.

I intend maintaining my opposition by putting pressure on the authorities, and will not be intimidated into giving in. It is crucial that I have support at this vital stage, if I am to have a successful campaign.

I intend bringing legal action as soon as a case in March 1990 is held at the Appeal Court, concerning a prisoner who was subject to similar treatment.

Mark De Lazarus

### BRUTALISED WHILE ON REMAND

At the end of November, *FRFI* received a letter from Gary 'Jiffy' Broomhead, then a remand prisoner in Durham jail. Jiffy detailed the disgusting treatment he was undergoing in the prison. He was put in a strip cell twelve times in under two months and twice knocked out in the process.

With no reason given, his rights as a remand prisoner were systematically denied: he was barred from special visits to church, reception and hospital and barred from visits with his Probation Officer. His personal money was denied to him by the governor and consequently he could not buy his own toothpaste, shampoo or soap; prison soap brought him out in a rash and the prison tooth powder made his gums bleed. He could not buy stamps and his girlfriend and brother were turned away from visits. While he was in the strip cell his food was spat in by screws.

Jiffy was head of Durham PLA and was singled out for this and for standing up for his rights. Put on Rule 43b, he was given Category A treatment before court appearances including being put in a special cell and frisked with a metal detector.

The good news is that Jiffy is now out of jail. The bad, that his barbaric treatment whilst on remand is characteristic of the brutality prisoners suffer inside British jails, in particular if they are organised and stand up for their rights.

Alexa Byrne

## Salute to comrade Terry O'Halloran

On Sunday 28 January comrades, friends and relatives of Terry O'Halloran commemorated his tragic death a year earlier by gathering in Highgate Cemetery to lay a wreath at the tomb of Karl Marx.

Terry died on 23 January 1989 aged 36. His death came as a great shock and his loss is deeply felt. Those of us who worked with him in the Revolutionary Communist Group miss him both as a friend and for his incisive political capabilities, his journalistic skill, his clear-sightedness and above all for his wit.

To commemorate Terry's life and work the RCG, supported by friends of Terry and sympathetic members of the NUJ, Terry's union, set up the Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund. Money raised by this fund will provide progressive books and publications, including *FRFI*, for prisoners in British gaols. One of Terry's most consistent contributions to political struggle in this country was the work he did through this page on issues relating to prisons and prisoners. He did this work not as a liberal or a humanitarian, but because as a communist he recognised that the struggles of prisoners are not separate from but part of the struggle of the working class. This principled position is unique to the RCG among the British left.

Speaking on behalf of the Memorial Fund, Maxine Williams said:

'We are here to remember Terry O'Halloran, his life and work. The last year has been a painful one. Today we dwell not on the pain but on the positive achievements of Terry's life and the respect for him which draws us together today.'

'At a time when the rich and powerful people who rule are celebrating what they choose to believe is the death of communism, I have no doubt that Terry would have continued to wear the label "Communist" proudly.'

'When we talk of Western demo-



cracy, let us recall that the prisons are full to overflowing. The fund allows prisoners to develop their ideas; hopefully it even sows some seeds for the future.'

Robert Clough paid tribute to Terry on behalf of the RCG and said:

'The hundreds of millions of oppressed, those who have nothing to lose but their chains, will sooner or later prove that the respite for imperialism is temporary. We must have the confidence in the future of communism that breathes through Terry's contribution to our organisation.'

In its first year of fund-raising the Memorial Fund has collected £2000 and is now receiving and dealing with the first requests from prisoners for books and newspapers. At the commemoration books were received on behalf of John Walker of the Birmingham 6 and Winston Silcott of the Broadwater Farm Three by his brother George.

The event was chaired by NUJ member Tim Gopsill. Messages of solidarity were read out from the Risley 54 and the Prisoners League Association and from prisoners in Full Sutton and Long Lartin.

Nicki Jameson

## Two prison survival guides

NICKI JAMESON

The Prison Reform Trust have produced an excellent *Prisoners' Information Pack*, containing ten separate pull-outs covering vital subjects such as visits, discipline, release, life sentence, remand and special conditions for women prisoners, along with a list of useful addresses of campaigning, reform and support organisations. Also enclosed in the pack, and aimed at prisoners' families rather than those on the inside, is PRT's invaluable guide, *Visiting Prisons* which details every gaol in England and Wales, listing addresses, visiting times, access by public transport, facilities for children etc.

The pack is free to any prisoner who writes to PRT (address below) requesting a copy.

Along similar lines but longer and not free, is *From Arrest to Release* written by TV scriptwriter and former prison visitor, Shirley Cooklin. As the title suggests, this guide, which is in book rather than pack form, begins two stages further back in the process and the first 45 pages are devoted to demystifying procedures in police stations and the various types of court. This section is informative and well-written as is the whole book; however, the remaining two-thirds are based almost exclusively on the PRT Information Pack with *Visiting Prisons* reprinted in its entirety.

Although she claims to be addressing three audiences - 'those involved in the system first hand', those visiting prisoners and 'society' - Cooklin's book appears most suited to use by professional advisers: probation officers, social workers, CABs etc while the PRT pack is more applicable to prisoners themselves.

*Prisoners' Information Pack* 1989. Published by Prison Reform Trust, 59 Caledonian Road, London N1 9BU. Free to prisoners and their families. £2.95 plus 50p p&p to anyone else.

*From Arrest to Release* by Shirley Cooklin. Published by Bedford Square Press. 1989. £6.95.

## INSIDE NEWS

■ Domenyk Noonan has written to *FRFI* to ask us to warn prisoners in Full Sutton with whom he corresponds that his letters are being stopped by the governor there and to ask them to write to their MPs, solicitors and the Home Office complaining about this censorship. All other prisoners who correspond with Domenyk or the PLA are advised to write recorded delivery and to begin investigation if they have not received a reply within 21 days.

### PRISONERS' BIRTHDAYS

6 February: Liam Quinn 49930, HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS.

7 February: Michael McKenny L4686, HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Brasside, Durham, DH1 5YD.

25 February: John McComb B51715, HMP Frankland.

3 March: Ella O'Dwyer D25135, HMP Durham, Old Elvet, Durham, DH1 3HU.

### MURDERED BY BRITISH IMPERIALISM

*FRFI* remembers Frank Stagg, framed by the British state, who died on hunger-strike for the right of repatriation on 12 February 1976.

# 'We are talking from a position of armed strength'

**Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!** met the former Jaffna Commander of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Kittu, in London with the International Liaison Officer, K Kuhan, in January and asked him about the progress of the struggle for Tamil self-determination. Kittu was recently in Colombo for the LTTE talks with the Premadasa government.

**FRFI** Can you tell our readers a little about yourself and your experiences of struggle?  
**Kittu** I joined LTTE in 1978. The LTTE leader, Prabhakaran, came from my home village so it was easy for me to approach him. Before I joined the LTTE I was a supporter of the TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front) and I went to their meetings and believed they could win our rights, but I came to understand that they could not deliver any goods, so I joined the LTTE and the armed struggle. Our former leaders, the TULF, were engaged in non-violent struggle. Its failure made the people realise that armed resistance was the only way to achieve our goal.

In the beginning I worked on an LTTE economic project, small scale farming. Through a co-operative system we were able to get money and develop the movement. After two years I joined the armed wing. Gradually, as our members were martyred I became a responsible person and eventually in 1984 in charge of the military struggle on the Jaffna Peninsula. From 1985-1987 we managed to bring the whole peninsula under LTTE political and military control. We kept the Sri Lankan army in the barracks. Not only were we involved in the armed struggle, we also mobilised and politically educated the people. The whole people organised to protect themselves, a people's militia, a people's war.

**As a guerrilla commander did you learn from other liberation movements in the world?**

Definitely! We have adopted lessons from other struggles and at the same time we also create our own initiatives to bring us victory. If you look at our political and military struggle you see we have managed to beat the world's fourth largest army, India's, without any political or military support from outside. We achieved this victory because of the historical development of our struggle. We believe in the historical process and the lessons it teaches. We believe in history.

**It is now over two years since the Indian assault. What impact has this had on the fighting capacity of your cadres?**

We have not lost many cadres. Maybe 600 cadres against Sri Lanka and 600 against India. Such figures show we are winning this struggle tactically and strategically. The last 17 years of armed struggle gives a morale boost to our people and movement.

**How many Tamil civilians have been killed by the Indian army?**

Altogether, including victims of the Sri Lankan government, 25,000 people killed. In the last two years, up to 10,000 people killed.

**What casualties have you inflicted upon the Indian army?**

Officially India says 1,500 troops killed, but we know it is really about 3,000 soldiers and 12,000 wounded.

**What was the Indian strategy to undermine the LTTE leadership of the Tamil people?**

India wants a stable Indian Ocean. We are not against this, but it does not mean that they can destroy our national struggle or make us a slave to India. We ask the Indian government to recognise our right to self-determination. If they do this there will be no problems with us. In India there are a lot of small nations. In the early stages they wanted independence

from the Delhi government, but it suppressed them. They thought they could do the same thing with the Tamil people. Delhi is scared that if Eelam came to exist it would give moral support to the other national struggles within India.

**What is the role of the EPRLF and the Provincial Council they administer?**  
 The Provisional Council Administration is illegally constituted. The people do not accept this administration. Any imperial force occupying parts of another country will use divide and rule tactics; try and get some local support. EPRLF is an example of this. They are trapped into India's interests.

**What is the Tamil National Army?**  
 As far as the people and LTTE are concerned we do not recognise the TNA. There is no such force. It consists of the small groups EPRLF, TELO, PLOTE etc, being used by India. When India leaves they want these groups to be in charge. With the help of the Indian troops the EPRLF has taken 7,000 youths forcefully from their parents to military camps for training and arming by the Indian army. We believe RAW [Research and Analysis Wing of Indian intelligence] is involved in this. Then they are given an attractive name: Tamil National Army.

**Will the Indian Army complete its withdrawal?**

Yes, Tamil people have hope on this. They have withdrawn from six districts. In these districts there are no groups other than the LTTE functioning. The youths that were taken forcefully by TNA we take back to their parents and we ask the TNA to surrender.

**What has become of the TULF?**

TULF were rejected by the people in 1984. They were politically isolated. They went to India after the 1983 pogroms and they are no longer with the people.

**In the press we are told the LTTE is abandoning armed struggle to form a political party: what is the truth of this?**

We have not given up the armed struggle. We have stopped armed activities and are involved in a political process. You can see that India is withdrawing and the Sri Lankan government does not want to fight with us. To the world Sri Lanka is showing that they are going to give Tamil people rights. In this situation LTTE has a responsibility to the people, after so much warfare and hardship, to try and advance the struggle peacefully.

To understand our strategy you have to look at our enemy, the Sri Lankan government. They have realised that they cannot beat our armed struggle. They allow LTTE to come to Colombo to talk to them, without giving up arms. They are in a weak position and willing to co-operate with us. They are authentic in wanting to find solutions. If Premadasa betrays us we can continue the armed struggle. We are losing nothing at this stage. Internationally, people are talking of peace; we want peace, but we are talking with our enemy from a position of armed strength.

**Will the LTTE contest elections?**

We have told the Sri Lankan government and India that when we come to elections Indian troops must not be there. After that we want free elections. Any group should be free to take part. The people must have a democratic choice.

**Can you tell us of your social policies?**

You know we have formed our Party (People's Party) known as People's Front of Liberation Tigers (PFLT). Our movement is becoming a national movement. All sections of people can play an important role in our struggle through our Party. It is going to be a mass political movement and will continue to fight to achieve a permanent political solution for our people. All people in the north and east must live peacefully with no oppression of one section by another.

You can see today the socialist countries going through massive changes. We look to do what the Tamil people want. We will create a socialism incorporating the psychological make-up, the culture and economic programmes of the Tamil people. People will study their own problems and find solutions to their oppression. In our culture there is much oppression of women. We study this and try to fight against it. We believe the leadership must come from the women themselves. You can see lots of young women joining the LTTE struggle. It takes a lot of time to educate the people. We cannot simply adopt other experiences and bring them to our communities. Women have the right to create their own ideas to fight against male chauvinism, Sinhalese chauvinism etc. Within the LTTE male chauvinism should not influence women's decisions.

**Some on the left and among Asian people in Britain have used the murder of Rajani to implicate the LTTE. What do you say to these accusations?**

First of all we want to say that we totally, categorically deny these accusations. Secondly, we welcome criticisms from our people and listen to them. We never counter-attack people because of their views. If you look at the other groups when they have disputes they have killed each other, more than 3,000 people. We never do that and we do not kill civilians when they criticise LTTE. All progressives in Britain must understand that we welcome positive criticisms and that we do not kill civilians.

**During the guerrilla struggle what role have health and education played, and how do you envisage them in a future Eelam?**

We give priority to them. One example, from 1983 up to today we have never given any instructions to universities or colleges to stop for even a single day. Education is important to our people. In the South the JVP and others have shut the universities down for years.

**How do you view the Sri Lankan Government's elimination of the JVP leadership?**

JVP never say anything about the Tamil national struggle. They have no political programme relating to us, and so, it is difficult for us to comment on them.

**Will you give us your response to the recent upsurge in fighting in El Salvador and the US invasion of Panama?**

In El Salvador and the Philippines US imperialism is trying to crush the national struggles. We support the people and give maximum solidarity to their organisations. The US involvement in Panama is wrong. It is for the Panamanian people to decide. ■

## FRFI READERS AND SUPPORTERS GROUPS

### LONDON Mandela's release - the end of apartheid?

Speaker: Carol Brickley, FRFI editorial board/City AA Convenor. Wednesday 21 February, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, St Martin's Lane, WC2. Nearest tube Leicester Square.

### MANCHESTER Mandela's release - the end of apartheid?

Wednesday 28 February, 7.30pm, The Millstone, Thomas Street, Off Tib Street, Manchester City Centre.

For details of FRFI readers and supporters groups in your area please contact, FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

### Ireland: the key to the British revolution

A series of six public forums organised by the RCG.

1. Marx and Engels on Ireland. Introduced by David Reed (author of *Ireland: the key to the British revolution*). Wednesday 14 February, 7.30pm.
2. The RCG and the Irish Solidarity Movement. Introduced by Sarah Ricca. Wednesday 14 March, 7.30pm.
3. The Irish revolution: Larkin, Connolly, the Easter Rising and the partition of Ireland. Wednesday 11 April.
4. The Protestant working class in the Six Counties: a labour aristocracy or misguided workers? Wednesday 16 May.
5. The rise of modern Republicanism: the bullet and the ballot box. Wednesday 6 June.
6. Twenty years of British strategy 1969-1989: Labour and Tory repression. Wednesday 4 July. All meetings take place at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1N. Nearest tube Holborn.

### CITY OF LONDON ANTI-APARTHEID GROUP

#### The Uppington 14 must not hang!

Rally outside the South African Embassy, Trafalgar Square. Saturday 24 February 3-6pm, on the birthday of Zonga Mokgatle.

#### March for the Uppington 14

Saturday 26 May. Details from City AA.

### 13th anniversary of Sharpeville Massacre

21 March. Rally jointly organised by PAC and City AA, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Phone City AA: 01 837 6050 for details.

## LARKIN BOOKS

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

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

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

**NEW PUBLICATIONS:**  
**Murder on the Rock How the British Government got away with murder.**

by Maxine Williams. 64pp., £2.50, plus 40p p&p

**A new path for socialism? Revolutionary renewal in the Soviet Union and Cuba.**

By David Reed and Trevor Rayne. 21pp, £1.00 plus 28p p&p.

**Value and Price in Marx's Capital** by David Yaffe. A Revolutionary Communist reprint. 19pp, £1.00 plus 28p p&p.

All cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications. Please send your orders to Larkin Publications, 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. 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   
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## 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!**

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

## FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM! FIGHTING FUND RAISES £1,820

Many thanks to our readers and supporters who donated £1,820 to our fighting fund. This exceeded our £1,500 target. All donations to the fighting fund will go towards funding the political work of the RCG.

## FRFI needs £500 every month!

In January we raised £400 for our FRFI fund. We need £500 every month to help us keep the price of the paper to 40p waged and 20p unwaged. Act now by sending us your donations to subsidise FRFI, and help us with our political work.

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# LETTERS



Black people demand that Gatting go home.

## Cricket mercenaries aid apartheid

I saw in my newspaper a quote by Sebastian Coe on the scab tour to South Africa by Mike Gatting and his mercenaries declaring, 'Frankly we are as ashamed of it as most of the black African nations', which is most laudable coming from a sportsman and prospective Tory MP.

What really got me was the quote underneath that Conservative ignoramus John Carlisle (MP for Luton North) had said which was: 'Coe should keep his mouth shut and stick to sport.'

It is worth bearing in mind that this is the same arch enemy of the Non-Stop Picket who some time ago raised the question in the House as to why the Picket was still there (and hadn't been dispatched South African Police style), also that this is the same

man who enjoys many 'freebee' trips to South Africa courtesy of the regime where in the first half of 1986 alone, over \$5 million were paid to sporting personalities alone to boost apartheid sport and where for every 1000 Rands spent on white sport, only one Rand is spent on its black counterpart.

The reaction of the 'security' forces to the demonstration at Kimberley just shows the stark reality of the 'reforms' of de Klerk and one cannot help feeling that the 'hurdles' that Winnie Mandela referred to are the decisions of ministers to punish 'violent demonstrations' by detaining Nelson Mandela further. Meanwhile the Non-Stop Picket will continue to embarrass the racists inside their imperialistic monolith in London and annoy Carlisle and his ilk. Yours in struggle, STUART B Kent.

## Chestermark - Keneth Clarke: hand in hand against the workers

In response to the ambulance workers' call for a general 15 minute stoppage on 30 January 1990, the five workers at the Euston station 'Croissant Shop' fast food counter took a democratic decision to stop work and lock the shop. As the supervisor at the time I left the shop and explained to the public what was happening. I was subsequently sacked for what was termed a 'gross misconduct'. I was later told that we should have asked for permission from the management to close the shop. Workers do not ask for permission to strike, it is our right and our only weapon

against our employers.

Chestermark is, more generally, a thoroughly backward employer. New employees work in a cramped, unpleasant environment for £2.60 an hour. Chestermark employ mostly immigrant labour and the majority of the workforce is made up of women - targeting of the most easily exploited sections of society.

The Chestermark management claim that they sacked me because I was the supervisor at the time. It is quite clear however that my dismissal came about because I had sold *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* to other employees, defended my co-workers, fought against racism and sexism in the shop and because I played an organising role in the stoppage. Yours in struggle, LEIGH AVON London.

## Puerto Rican independence: not forgotten

Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States, the richest and most powerful neo-capitalist empire in the world. As a consequence Puerto Rico finds itself underdeveloped, exploited and poor. 80 per cent of her wealth has passed into the hands of absentee US corporations who make no contribution to her treasury and whose greed is attracted by a cheap labour force.

Puerto Ricans in the US live the American dream - unemployment, racial discrimination in housing, police brutality, poor education and health care services.

Puerto Ricans denounce the false referendum of June 1991 and demand a plebiscite ruled by international law under supervision of the United Nations. In 1960 UN resolution 1514 called for self determination in all countries that had not become independent, for a transfer of all powers to the people of those territories in accordance with their freely expressed wishes or desires.

The referendum bill is false, it suits US capitalism's interest. 400 years of Spanish rule, 90 years of US rule - Puerto Rico is under the continuous crime of national enslavement. On 17 June 1989 80,000 Puerto Ricans in San Juan held a rally for independence during congressional hearings on the future Commonwealth status and on 12 August 1989 in New York thousands of Puerto Ricans marched for self determination and independence.

I cannot say my full name for fear of political harassment. I am a US born Puerto Rican. As a nationalist I feel that the US is doing a bad thing but I cannot freely express my desire for Puerto Rico's independence. Yet I will not stop protesting. I will continue my struggle for the independence and socialism for my native land.

Que viva Puerto Rico Libre! The struggle will not end! AL South York.

## The Balkans: a key distinction

The letters on the Yugoslav and Greek Communist Parties by Dale Evans and Gary Clapton reveal one of the greatest errors a revolutionary can make: inability to distinguish between victory and defeat. For the material conditions of struggle against German imperialism were basically identical and the differing outcomes must have been related to the strategies followed. It cannot be that British imperialism was nicer to the Yugoslav Communist Party than to the Greek one. The switchover in British policy on Yugoslavia came when Tito's Partisans already controlled most of the country, and when the royalist Chetnik forces, which the British had until then supported, had long since been known to be collaborating with the German occupiers and the Croatian Ustasha fascists. (Naturally, the switchover was also designed to maximise Western influence in the new Yugoslavia; it began to pay dividends when Tito supported the US aggression in Korea in 1950.)

A couple of key incidents show the contrasting strategies. In his autobiography Tito describes a 1944 meeting in Moscow with Stalin, Molotov and Beria: 'Stalin assured me of the need to reinstate King Peter; the blood rushed to my head that he could say such a thing. During this meeting a report, which proved false, came

in, that British troops had landed in Yugoslavia. Stalin asked if this really happened. Tito replied, 'We should offer determined resistance', a reply which he thought clearly not to Stalin's liking.

When the British landed in Greece in late 1944 the policy of the Greek CP for several weeks was to offer no resistance, and to physically liquidate or denounce to the enemy those forces inside and outside the party who tried to organise any, because as a statement from the Party leadership explained, 'Greece

belongs to an area where the British assume all responsibilities', and this in a country large parts of which the CP controlled. The Greek liberated zones before the British landed were bigger than the Salvadorean ones are today. Of course, the Greek CP's willingness to relinquish such a favourable position in order to facilitate good international relations could be taken as an advance taste of 'new thinking'. Many Greek workers and peasants doubtless have a less polite term for it. Comradely Greetings, MIKE WEBBER



## Greek Communists culpable

It is a hallmark of opportunism to blame the defeats of the movements it leads exclusively on external causes. Never does the responsibility lie with the quality of its leadership - a minor blemish or two may be admitted, but never is there any thorough self-criticism. This trait is no different when opportunism calls itself communist, or if it operated 40 years ago.

Opportunism, even if in a left variety, had been adopted as the official standpoint of the Communist International by 1935. Should we then be particularly surprised that it was to be practised 10 years later in the Greek revolution, or that it was to lead to bloody disaster? Do we minimise the responsibility of British imperialism for those terrible events, or that of its hand-aiden, the Labour Party? Of course not! However, if we were to accept that apart from minor blemishes, the leadership provided by the KKE in 1943-45 was faultless, then we would have to accept the complete impossibility of the Greek revolution. That is the one and only possible conclusion from the two responses to my article. They say that there was no chance of a successful revolution in Greece because the British were bound to intervene. Such is their logic. The British intervened. The Greeks lost. That is all there is to it. Imperialism intervenes. The Greek people lose. There is nothing more to be said.

Yes, British imperialism intervened. Both comrades Dale and Gary (see FRFI 92) explain how British imperialism was bound to intervene. They neglect to ask: should the KKE have expected it, and if so, should they have prepared for it, and did they? Given the British support for the pre-war Metaxas regime, the constant interference in Greek political affairs during the war, the answers in turn should surely be

yes, yes, and no. Comrade Gary admits as much. He points out quite rightly that EAM/ELAS controlled 90% of the Greek countryside by autumn 1944, that in December 1944 it could organise a demonstration of 500,000 in Athens. He could have added that it had pinned down a 180,000-strong fascist army for over two years. The British invaded in December 1944 with an army of 40,000. Just 10 weeks later, this mighty movement capitulated and surrendered its arms. Why? Because the movement was unwilling and unable to fight? Or because its leadership was unwilling and unable to fight?

The crucial issue is: did the KKE leadership regard the development and extension of the partisan movement as the means to social emancipation? Herein lies the difference between 'mistakes' and an opportunist line. Concluding formal military agreements with British imperialism (June 1943), accepting a coalition with the quisling EDES, subordinating the liberation movement to the bourgeois exile government in Cairo (1944), accepting the right of imperialist intervention in Greece at the same time - I suppose with lax enough standards these may be passed off as 'mistakes'. But when the KKE leadership at the same time makes it constantly clear that it is not fighting for revolution, and imposes these agreements on a rebellious rank-and-file, I would think they have gone beyond being mere 'mistakes'.

The history of the Greek liberation struggle is also the history of the political struggle between the opportunist leadership isolated in Athens and

those like Velouchiotis who led the struggle in the field. The tragedy is that the former prevailed, led amongst others by Siantos (pace comrade Dale). And, pace comrade Dale, they then denounced Velouchiotis and sent him to his death because he refused to give up his arms following the Varkiza capitulation.

There seems little doubt that Vukhmanovic was a Great Serbian chauvinist, comrade Dale states, citing Enver Hoxha in his support. There also seemed little doubt to the Cominform that he was 'an agent of the British and American secret services' who had a 'compromising attitude' towards 'the Nazi invader and the Gestapo'. In this fantasy world, you pay your money and make your choice.

Comrade Gary's response is the more explicit in stating the futility of any attempt at a Greek revolution. The Varkiza capitulation, he says, was the 'recognition of reality'. And what was this reality, apart from the mass revolutionary movement he describes? An imperialist power with one army bogged down in Italy, another stalled in Germany, a third struggling in Burma. An imperialist power so overstretched that it was going to have to withdraw within two years because it was bankrupt. In truth, the British actually did not stand a chance, at least not if the KKE were led by Communists. In these circumstances, serious resistance by EAM/ELAS would have precipitated an enormous crisis for British imperialism. England's difficulty was indeed Greece's opportunity. ROBERT CLOUGH Liverpool.



## German reunification embraced by capitalism

Miles of cars and pedestrians passing affable border guards flashed across the Christmas and New Year television screens. I was spending three weeks in Swabia, the affluent rural south-western corner of West Germany. There were moments of televised enthusiasm and jubilation, but I found the general feelings about changes in the East distinctly reflective and equivocal.

In 1989 800,000 Eastern Bloc 'refugees' came to West Germany. In January this year, a further 13,000 East Germans arrived. The unrepentant influx has surprised any West Germans who thought

the haemorrhage would desist with reforms. Two West German counties have now refused to take Eastern Bloc newcomers as genuine political refugees. Distribution is centrally determined and towns generally cannot refuse their allocations. But people told me of nationalist-inspired differing acceptabilities; East Germans first, then ethnic Germans from elsewhere, then the rest, guestworkers and asylum seekers.

Over the last few months West German friends report growing uneasiness about the impact of 'refugees' on job and housing availability even in the affluent south. There is concern about expenditure (even on East Germans) from the fairly generous welfare system. The official position is that unemployment has not increased but this is not wholly believed. From the 'open

arms' rhetoric of nationalism - fostering politicians, the mood has shifted to the need for aid to assist the countries of origin.

Support for reunification seemed limited in December but things have moved apace since then. I found in December a prevalent fear of fascism reborn in one nation. To the left, the capitalist expansionism of reunification was clear and was the voiced fear of East German socialist friends. West German awareness of the material and social benefits of the East German system is quite acute. And liberal left support for reform is couched less in terms of 'death of communism' more in the 'end of oppressive dictatorship' - but with no vision of an alternative economic way ahead.

Despite the costs of West German unification with a poorer, environmentally degraded country, industry is optimistically encouraging total openness to capitalist penetration. The recent encouragement of de facto unification through the economy within the EC, and with the support of Modrow and Gorbachev, suggests that the equivocations of German people, East and West, will be swept aside by capitalist economic momentum. RUTH ALLEN South London.

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## Time of reckoning for Nicaragua

**PHILIP VINE** recently returned from Central America. In *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! 91* he reported from El Salvador on the situation preceding the FMLN's November offensive. Here he assesses Nicaragua's forthcoming 25 February elections. The views expressed are his and are not necessarily those of FRFI.

**Ay Nicaragua, Nicaraguita. La Flor Mas Linda . . . So the popular song goes in the besieged Central American state. During ten and a half years of socialist revolution 'little Nicaragua, the beautiful flower' has shown itself to be a resilient bloom. The tiny country of three million has suffered long and hard for its stand against US imperialism. The suffering has crossed economic and physical thresholds but Nicaragua still stands. A tribute to the Sandinista Government and the people. An inspiration to socialists the world over.**

On 25 February the flower of Nicaragua goes on international display. The elections on this day will be an acid test of the revolution; whether the people believe all their suffering has been worth the prize of independence: 40,000 killed fighting the Contras. More importantly in terms of Nicaragua's future, it will be a clear message to the US and the international community that attempts to unseat the government in the name of democracy are criminal acts.

The elections will be the second since the revolution in 1979 and the second free elections in the country's history. The last, in 1984, gave Daniel Ortega the mandate to continue as President and the Frente Sandinista Liberacion Nacional (FSLN) 65 per cent of the vote.

Since then conditions have changed: some for the better, some for the worse. In 1984 the war against the US-backed mercenaries, the Contras, was at a peak. Almost half the country's scarce resources were going on the defence budget. Now the Contras are a spent force. The demobilisation process has been grounded, but Reagan's stormtroopers are no longer the threat they were. On the downside, the war, classed as 'low intensity' by the Pentagon experts, plus economic manipulation, have crippled the Nicaraguan economy. Only severe austerity measures by the Government have managed to tame runaway inflation. As a result the ambitious social programmes have been cut back to the point where they are starting from scratch again. The literacy programme which reduced illiteracy from 50 to 12 per cent is having to be relaunched as Education Ministry surveys show the rate is rising drastically.

The FSLN has been criticised by some on the left for not taking a tougher stance with the plantation owners and bourgeoisie in general. They say land reform needs to be speeded up and the Government should have control of all the means of production. But the 1979 revolution was won with the help of some of the rich who stood opposed to the dictator Somoza. Ortega has stayed faithful to these landowners and relies on them to some extent to generate foreign exchange from agricultural exports. Standing against the Sandinistas in the elections are some of these critics, various splinters of the left. This includes the Nationalist Socialist Party and the Communist Party which have sided ironically with UNO, the right wing National Opposition Union coalition, in order to get some power.

Nicaragua has been able in the past to look for aid from the Soviets and Cuba as the US moved to stem flows of Western development money. The Soviet Union indicated last year that it intended to comply with the Tela peace accord reached by the Central American Presidents and stop supplying arms to Nicaragua. With the Soviet Union's economic difficulties, it is not in any position to supply the funds needed to get Nicaragua back on its feet. Increasingly Nicaragua is looking towards Europe for assistance. Even simple things like pencils and paper, which Nicaragua is forced to buy from capitalist El Salvador at an inflated price, are vital to the country's recovery.



Defending the revolution: Sandinista regulars near the Honduran border

Together with the drain of the war, the US has pulled every international string available to isolate Nicaragua. Using its veto at the International Monetary Fund, stopping development loans from the World Bank, putting pressure on Nicaragua's trade partners to stop trade and imposing its own economic blockade. The election then takes place at a time of severe financial hardship. Despite this the Government is spending millions of dollars to ensure the US cannot ignore the election results, accusing the Sandinistas of fraud, as happened in 1984. The Sandinistas also hope the election will pave the way to increased European aid. The independent Supreme Electoral Council, given the task of running the

polls, estimates the total cost to be around 25 million dollars. International observers started arriving in August and even the Tory Government agreed to send a representative. It must be one of the most scrutinised elections in the history of Latin America.

The international presence is an assurance for the Sandinistas that given the predicted victory, the US will not be able to use 'democracy' as a justification for its bloody hegemony. However, the US has a history of disregarding international opinion. It has already been found guilty of violating international law by supporting the Contras at the World Court in the Hague. More recently, the US has been using the Contras to try and wreck the Central American Presidents' peace plans and to disrupt and discredit the Nicaraguan elections. Unfortunately the peace process came crumbling around everyone's heads at the end of last year. The 1988 armistice between the Nicaraguan Government and the Contras, forged under Costa Rican President Arias' Esquipulas agreement, was called off by Ortega on 31 October. In total contravention of the Treaty, the Contras had been escalating attacks across the Honduran border. Forty people were killed in one Contra attack when they were on their way to register to vote. President Ortega said the actions of the Contras against the civilian population in the past 19 months had resulted in 3,000 victims. On New Year's day they killed two nuns and tried to blame the Sandinistas.

The demobilisation process has gone on ice as the Nicaraguan Government and the Contras fail to reach common ground on renewing the ceasefire. In the meantime the Contras continue to make forays into Nicaragua from their camps in Honduras while leader Enrique Bermudez denies authorising the raids. One way or another the US administration has achieved its goal of maintaining the Contra force intact over the period of the election.

### THE DOLLAR VERSUS THE PEOPLE

While funding of the Contras remains 'strictly humanitarian' according to the US Congress, funding for the opposition parties in Nicaragua is another story. Putting clandestine money aside, the US has sent \$9m to the opposition parties to run against the Sandinistas, £6m directly to UNO.

Democrats in the US Senate rightly questioned Bush's present to UNO. Senator Tom Hahn said Somoza, the former dictator, used to manipulate his elections by paying 30 centavos a head. 'Now', he said, 'we are doing it at five dollars a vote.' It is an interesting exercise to take this \$6m and multiply it by a ratio of the relative wealth of the US and Nicaragua. You come up with the astronomical figure of more than \$13 billion.

It is illegal for other countries to support political parties in the US, but imagine if Japan, for instance, gave the Democrats \$13 billion to run in the next election; not to mention other more disguised disbursements going south. *Newsweek* ran a story saying the CIA was sending \$5 million to UNO. That is on top of the \$3.5m that *Barricada*, the Sandinista newspaper, claims the National Endowment for Democracy has already sent in private funds. That is nearly half the annual budget of this right-

wing organisation which sends money to 'favourable causes' all over the world.

UNO is a wide and loose coalition of 13 political parties, largely right wing. The Popular Social Christian Party pulled out of the coalition and together with the Social Christian Party has formed a small centralist block. But the two contenders will be UNO and the FSLN.

Running against Ortega for the presidency is Violeta de Chamorra, publisher of the anti-Sandinista newspaper, *La Prensa*. Despite the injection of US funds her campaign has failed to match the well-organised rallies of the FSLN. The small size of the country makes politics a real family affair. Violeta's husband was editor of *La Prensa* when he was gunned down in 1978 by Somoza's National Guard. It was one of the incidents said to have sparked the revolution. Violeta herself was a member of interim Government after the revolution but never gained a

US and to carry on with a mixed economy. Its appeal is to the patriotism of the Nicaraguan people.

The popularity of the Sandinistas is almost puzzling to a first time visitor to Nicaragua given the economic hardships evident. Although a series of economic reforms have brought inflation down from the astronomical 30,000 per cent of 1988 to around 100 per cent for 1989, the price has been high. The Government laid off upwards of 10 per cent of public employees, took subsidies off all but essential foodstuffs, removed subsidies for investment in new equipment and carried out a series of devaluations. As if that wasn't enough, Hurricane Joan in December 1988 swept the country from east to west, destroying \$848m worth of property. This necessitated a second austerity programme.

The austerity programmes are along the lines recommended by the IMF; tightening the screws and saving money in direct contrast to the



A brief respite in the fight against the Contras

place in the permanent Government. Her son, Pedro Joaquin Chamorra Barrios is an ex-Contra leader returned home last year to help his mother in the election campaign. Another son, Claudio Lucia, works for *Barricada* and is a Sandinista Party activist. He has made public his disgust that his mother's followers include ex-members of the National Guard who killed his father. The Contras give 'complete unconditional support' for UNO.

Violeta accuses the Sandinistas of being boy soldiers and is trying to convince people that the economic austerity is due to incompetence; that her election will ensure the end of the war and an end to conscription; and a switch to a capitalist system will ensure increased living standards. Although she has much support from capitalist governments, including Britain, her connections with the Contras leave her with less credibility within the country. This was further damaged by her support for the US invasion of Panama: a position further to the right than all Latin America other than El Salvador's President Cristiani.

Ortega's electoral platform is to continue on the same path, hopefully in an environment of peace which may emerge after the elections. The FSLN wants respectful relations with the

Sandinistas' early policies of public spending. But unlike the developing countries under IMF guidance Nicaragua has no financial cushioning. It is surgery without anaesthesia. This meant the 19 July 1989 tenth anniversary celebrations of the victory came during the hardest times experienced by the people since the overthrow of Somoza. Despite this background around ten per cent of the population, an estimated 300,000 people, turned up in the capital for the fiesta.

One of the reasons for this groundswell support for the Sandinistas has to be defence of the revolution. The fight against Somoza and US aggression has steeled the people to defend their achievements. It is still a truly popular movement based on the poor and the working class, aided by a Latin American sense of nationalism and independence.

The big question mark hanging over the future of Nicaragua is not so much the election result but the US reaction. The Bush administration has shown it is not afraid to use direct force to further its imperialist goals, witness Panama. If the opinion polls are proved true and the Sandinistas triumph, it is hard to believe after all this time that the US will cut its losses and go home. The US ruling class and electorate do not like a defeat. The Contras are still on the payroll. ■