

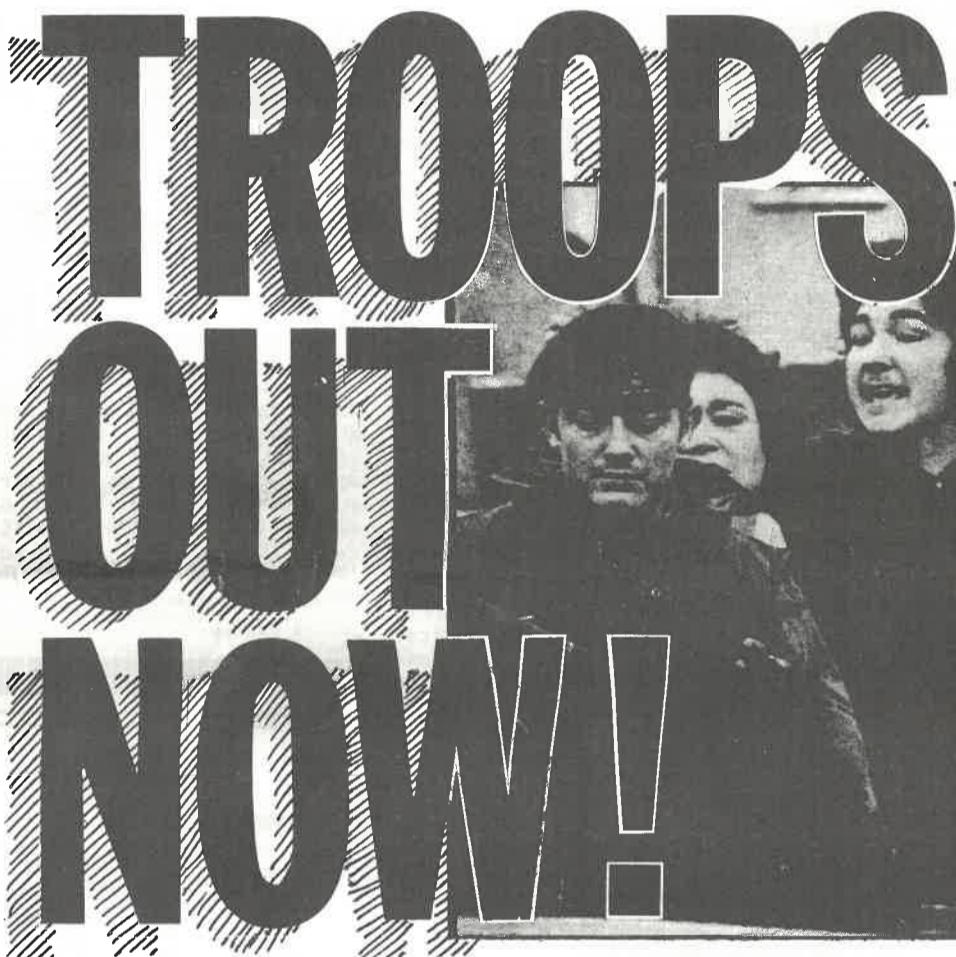
CLASS STRUGGLE



Political Paper of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain

VOL.12 NO.3 APRIL 1988

No British Solutions in Ireland



SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE

On Wednesday, March 16th, over 20,000 people from every part of Ireland, came to the Republican burial ground at Milltown Cemetery in Belfast, for the funeral of Mairead Farrell, Dan McCann and Sean Savage. On Monday, 14th March, thousands had lined the route and followed the coffins, as the bodies were brought from Dublin, through Dundalk to Belfast.

The three had been unarmed when they were shot dead in Gibraltar by the SAS unit of the British army. They were, the Republican Movement stated, on active service. But no weapons or bombs were found. No attempt had been made to take them alive.

At the time, some voices were raised in this country, against the cold-blooded assassinations. But they were soon forgotten, as events moved on. A lone gunman attacked mourners at the Milltown cemetery at the funeral and the following Saturday, two British soldiers were killed after driving into another funeral procession.

To many people in this country,

they were shot dead in Gibraltar

the events seem like a cycle of meaningless violence, a cycle that cannot be broken.

RUTHLESS WAR

The reality is, however, that the British army and its allies, are fighting a ruthless war against the Irish people. It is a war that combines murder of some individuals with policies aimed at terrorising the whole nationalist people. It is a war that has seen the British army use every dirty trick in the book. It is the British presence that lies at

the bottom of the cycle of violence.

It is for this reason that successive governments pretend that it is not a war that they are fighting in Ireland. An important aspect of the governments' strategy has been to convince people, here and around the world, that there is no war, only a law and order problem.

But the Irish people know that they are fighting a war against an army of occupation. Their presence at the funerals shows that they know that the dead Republicans were their soldiers, in a people's army, fighting for Ireland's freedom.

It is the same fight that led to the Easter Uprising, led by James Connolly, seventy two years ago. It is a war that will go on until the British occupation ends and Ireland's freedom is won.

National Health ↗

Private Wealth ↙

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LEEDS PENSIONERS ORGANISATION
"FULLY SUPPORT HOSPITAL WORKERS IN THEIR STRUGGLE"



Celebrate

Women

CENTRE PAGES

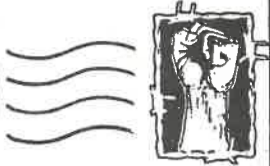


Shakka Dedi '87

Glimpses Into Herstory Part 2

PALESTINE

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EDITORIAL

There are many similarities between the situation in Azania (South Africa), in Palestine and in the north of Ireland.

Not so long ago, we saw on television scenes of South African police, armed to the teeth, invading the black townships in their armoured vehicles. We saw the unarmed people fighting back and the funerals of men, women and children. As political organisations and meetings were banned, the funerals turned into moving occasions of mourning but also expressions of the people's determination to continue the freedom struggle.

More recently, we have seen scenes of the Uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Again, the army has invaded the Palestinian towns with all the equipment of modern warfare and met the resistance of a people armed with rocks and petrol bombs. The people have been shot, beaten and imprisoned. But the struggle goes on.



In the north of Ireland, the British army is equipped with the latest technology and counter-insurgency methods. Yet the struggle of the nationalist people continues on many different fronts. Sadly, the last few months have seen many Republican funerals. March 16th saw at least 20,000 people at the funeral of the three volunteers, shot dead in Gibraltar. It was the biggest show of support and respect for the Republican Movement since the deaths of the Hunger Strikers in 1981.

In all three places, the authorities have attempted to ban press reports of what is happening. They do not want the scenes of violent repression shown around the world. Yet, it is a fact that in all three places, the armed forces have been unable to put down the people's struggles. They can bring immense suffering and repression. But people fight on.

Although the north of Ireland is the only one of the three still a British colony, the people share a common history as peoples subject to oppression and exploitation by Britain, and this continues today. Much of the earlier structure of colonialism remains in new forms and many of the 'emergency' laws were originally laid down by Britain.

But more fundamentally, they share a common tradition of peoples fighting imperialism, whether British, American or in its new form as Soviet social-imperialism.

They are part of the great historical movements of the twentieth century which has seen the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America rise up against exploitation and oppression.

Communists in the heartlands of imperialism have a duty to support this struggle. We have, after all, a common enemy. At the same time, it is no easy task to integrate the different struggles. Precisely because of its superexploitation of peoples in the Third World, in countries like Britain, the ruling class has managed to "export" its most sharp contradictions and hide its most violent face.

But the 1970's and 1980's have seen imperialism in crisis. It can no longer afford to make concessions and will increasingly turn to repression to solve its problems. In this country, we can see substantial numbers of people further impoverished by changes such as social security cuts, low pay, unemployment etc. We can also see the collapse of social-democracy which always depended on reforming imperialism to make it more acceptable. But the reality for us too, as for the people of Azania, Palestine and the north of Ireland, is that we have to build an opposition that is based in the people, and determined to struggle for a complete change in the system, whatever repression it may be faced with. We can find inspiration in all those around the world fighting a common struggle.

Dear Editor,

I was surprised that there has been no correspondence generated by the article on the 13th Congress of the Communist Party of China, in the December 1987 issue. Your contributor asks us to "emancipate our minds". But given the paltry coverage of events in China, I was disappointed with the space given in two issues to what struck me as essentially a travelogue, 'From Beijing to Sichuan'. I would have preferred the space given over to some discussion or explanation of some of the points made in the 13th Congress report.

In the past, China was treated as a mature socialist society by communists overseas. That certainly displayed a lack of perspective both on Chinese and world history. The explanation from the 13th Congress, that China is still at the early stage of building a modernised, socialist society, fits more the historical legacy of centuries of feudal rule and widespread patterns of feudal thinking. If anyone doubts the nature of those, even after nearly forty years of communist rule, they should read the Chinese people's own testimony in 'Chinese Profiles'.

In many of his writings, Karl Marx envisioned socialist revolution occurring in countries which had already reached an advanced stage of material development. Few foresaw a socialism, like in China, born of a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society. No-one would doubt that China, with almost one fourth of the world's population, but only one seventh of the world's total arable land, needs to develop. China states that almost one quarter of the population is still semi-literate, that it is still primarily an agricultural country, with well over 70% of the population engaged in the rural economy. Zhao Ziyang says that China is said to be building the material foundations for a developed, socialist society, and will remain at this stage until about the middle of the next century.

It is argued that the low levels of China's productive forces determine her economic potential and Zhao warns against impatience with the pace of development or unrealistic expectations. The target for the next century is a gross national product equal to the present level of the medium-developed capitalist countries.

THEORETICAL GROUNDS

In February, 'Beijing Review' carried an authoritative article that set out the theoretical grounds for such judgements. It argued that "it is a necessary step to let some get rich first" and that "to each according to his work" acts as the main element governing distribution.

If the theoretical explanation is taken at face value, then the practice as applied in China today, seems to lead to socialism without revolution, that the measures to develop China materially, including those measures associated with capitalist production, are at the expense of Marxist ideas of social behaviour and value.

We cannot rely on others for theoretical understanding, and while the Marxist-Leninist movement in the past has tended to underplay the transitional and transformative character of socialist societies, should these developments be regarded as a healthy sign that thinking about socialism in China has become more realistic and less utopian? It can be argued that pragmatism seems to be passed off as creative thinking. That is not a judgement of ossified thinking but a product of concern at developments in China.

ANALYSIS NEEDED

This brings me to a criticism of an aspect of 'Class Struggle' coverage. Generally it offers little in the way of empirical analysis that cannot be gleaned from other left publications. There is little in the way of explicit theoretical education until last issue's 'Glimpses Into Herstory'. The advancement of the theoretical tools to understand and change the world are necessary but are we to understand the role of Third World countries, international tension, racism, cost-cutting attacks, amongst other things, by the symptoms reported in the pages of 'Class Struggle'? This is not to suggest reproducing chunks of Marxist work for readers to haphazardly read and study in the manner of the Eurocentrism article last year. China's new course has led to a re-evaluation of historical experience. It raises questions about our understanding of socialism. But one would hardly guess that from 'Class Struggle'. I would have thought that one of the educational roles of the paper would be to draw those lines of demarcation more clearly.

Do any of your other readers agree?

North London reader.

Dear Editor,

The illegal military occupation of the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands has cost £3.8 billion so far.

The NHS requires £2 billion urgently but got nothing in the Budget.

Such are the values of this barbaric imperialist system.

A Birmingham reader.

Dear Editor,

Referring to the March issue of 'Class Struggle', although I don't entirely agree with your analysis of Khalistan, I applaud your raising the lid on the question of Dalits, Tribals, Muslims and other minorities in India. Amongst the Indian left, both in India and here, this was and still is a non-issue, the mechanical economic "class" struggle being considered to be the main thing.

The question of Hindu chauvinism has been effectively denied till recently. Now it has become fashionable to lump it together with "Khalistan fanaticism". What these people forget is that Khalistan fanaticism is a defensive reaction against state-led, long-existing and nationally dangerous, Hindu chauvinism. The misguided Indian left in UK, by lumping these together and by declaiming Khalistan fundamentalism as "danger" to the so-called national unity and a fundamental contradiction, have effectively denied the main danger which is fascist Hindu Chauvinistic revival.

But again, most of the proponents of such theories hail from the so-called high castes who have never suffered from the caste oppression and hence don't have any idea of what Hindu Chauvinism is like. They have yet to raise their voice against the Muslim massacre at present or the 30,000 or so atrocities against the Dalits every year. Their record or lack of record against opposing Hindu Chauvinism speaks volumes.

A Reader.



MAY DAY

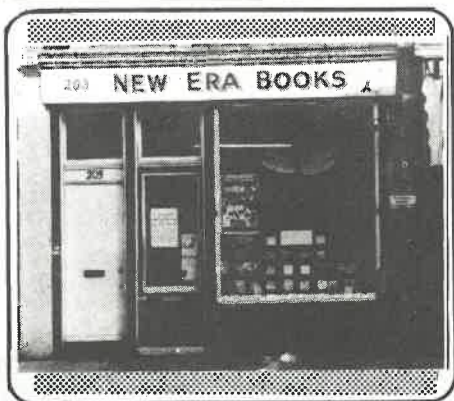
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PRIVATE MEDICINE - A SERIOUS HEALTH RISK

C.S. CORRESPONDENT

Central to the whole debate about the future of the National Health Service (NHS) is the need to understand about and oppose the extension of private medicine, for it poses a serious health risk to the vast majority of people in this country.

In this article, we look at how private health care has expanded in recent years and at plans to expand it at the expense of the NHS.

PRIVATE HEALTH: PRIVATE PARASITE

Far from showing the superiority of private enterprise, the private sector in health care only exists on the scale it does, because successive Labour and Tory governments have cut back on the funding of the NHS. It is this that has led to the longer waiting lists which the private sector has not been slow to exploit.

All the private sector staff were trained at the tax-payer's expense in the NHS. The private sector could never afford that expensive training.

The majority of doctors working in it are employed in the NHS; they do the private work as extra sessions. This also applies to some of the paramedical staff who moonlight in the evenings and weekends to supplement low pay.

The private sector gets its blood supplies from the freely donated blood collected and processed by the National Blood Transfusion Service.

The research into better ways of treatment and investigation of new illnesses is done by the NHS. The private sector pays nothing for that knowledge.

Local health authorities actually buy services from the private sector or even send patients to be treated at tax-payers' expense.

CHANGES IN PRIVATE MEDICINE

It was Labour's Barbara Castle's decision in 1975 to phase out pay beds in the NHS that triggered off an expansion of profit-making private hospitals.

Prior to that, private hospitals were mainly non-profit-making charity institutions (e.g. Nuffield Nursing Home Trust). These associations provided better and quicker treatment for those that could afford it. The range of services available were however less than those provided by the NHS.

The next big surge came in the wake of the 1978-79 "winter of discontent". Again, it was a result of the Labour government's policies: low wages forcing NHS ancillary workers to take strike action. A 30% increase in the number of people taking out private health insurance followed.

The 1982 NHS pay strike also boosted the demand for private medicine.

Chronic under-funding of the NHS and actual cuts (by both Labour and Tory) have helped the private sector. By March 1988, the British Medical Association (BMA) estimated that 5,300 hospital beds have been axed: 1 in 20 of the total.

By the end of Callaghan's government in 1979, there were 63 'for profit' private hospitals which accounted for one

third of all private hospital beds. By the end of 1986, half of all such beds were for profit. The total number of beds had increased by 30% over the same period, the vast majority of the increase being in the private sector.

As might be expected, the rise in private sector hospitals has been paralleled by a decrease in the uptake of pay beds in the NHS. Despite an increase in the number of pay beds from 2,400 (1979) to 2967 (1985), the average use of them dropped from 63% to 36% occupancy over the same period. It is interesting that the Tories never reversed the cuts instigated by Barbara Castle.

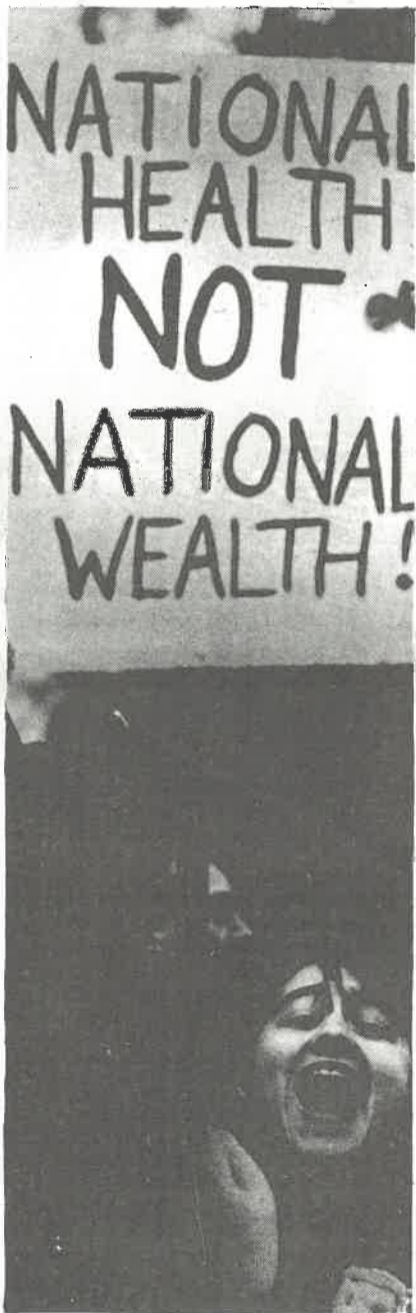


Photo: Maggie Murray

The private sector has made significant inroads into areas of health care other than acute care. For example, the number of private nursing homes for the elderly and handicapped rose by one third between 1974-1979 (under Labour). Since then, the numbers have risen sharply, particularly since 1982. In 1985, there were 80-100,000 people in such homes. Between 1976 and 1985, the number of places in the private sector for people with mental illness and mental handicaps rose from 1,600 to 3,400.

The private sector has, however, not all been a runaway success. It is true that it carries out some 400,000 operations every year. Indeed, in some areas of non-urgent surgery (varicose veins, hip replacement and

hysterectomies) one in four operations are carried out privately. Private medicine accounts for 16% of all hospital treatment.

In 1986, it was reported that private hospitals were losing £6 million a year. They are worried about under-use of beds and spiralling charges. During the last couple of years, 16 hospitals have closed, 16 more have changed ownership and 15 new ones have opened. Competition is getting intense.

DO THOSE WHO PAY GET VALUE FOR MONEY?

In the most expensive hospitals, the patients enjoy much more comfortable conditions than in the typical NHS hospital, receiving treatment much quicker than those waiting years on NHS waiting lists.

However, many working for the NHS who know anything about the private sector, are not convinced that private always means best. When ability to pay determines what you get, you can also receive some unnecessary treatment. Also, some private hospitals do not have all the back-up facilities, should anything go wrong.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT UP TO?

The outcome of the Thatcher/Moore re-think on the NHS is not known yet. What, however, is clear is that an increased role for the private sector is on the cards.

Moore is keen on providing tax incentives to encourage more people to take out private health care insurance and on increasing the co-operation between the NHS and the private sector.

The biggest shake-up is proposed by the Centre for Policy Studies (a right-wing think-tank set up by Thatcher before she was Prime Minister). Health authorities and Family Practitioner Committees would be abolished. Managed health care organisations would replace them. These would be funded out of taxes and they would buy services from GP's, NHS hospitals and the private sector. They would contract for services in a form of total privatisation.

Another approach is proposed by Tory MP, Ray Whitney, former Junior Health Minister. He wants everyone (except the old and chronically sick) to be given a £300 health care voucher to buy services.

BUPA proposes that everyone should be made to insure themselves for non-emergency surgery, the premiums for the elderly and chronically sick to be paid by the government. Everyone could then shop around for immediate treatment in private hospitals or NHS pay beds.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE?

The whole basis of the NHS is under threat.

A two-tier service is being created: fast and possibly efficient for those that can afford it; slow and impersonal for those that cannot.

All the evidence suggests that 1988 may see the end of the NHS as we know it.

The need to build a broad, effective campaign to defend and extend the NHS is now urgent.

THE WAY FORWARD?

Last month, we interviewed a shop steward from a Birmingham hospital about the growing protests over the state of the National Health Service (NHS). This month, he puts forward his views about the way forward:

Class Struggle (CS): How successful do you think the pre-Budget protests were?

Birmingham Shop Steward (BSS): Given the short time to organise, they were quite successful. Protests pulled in many people from a range of backgrounds who had not been involved before.

Obviously, it was the big march in London that grabbed the national headlines. But there were big marches elsewhere. About 8,000 marched in Birmingham and there was the march in Shrewsbury, the following week. The day before the Budget saw protests outside many hospitals with both hospital workers and others taking strike action. It is noticeable just how different groups of people are finding many ways of voicing their protests.

However, we have to be realistic. It's going to take a much bigger campaign over a longer period of time to rock this government. It's the future direction of the campaign that has to be decided quickly.

CS: What are the main obstacles to building an effective campaign?

BSS: One problem comes from those on the so-called left, such as Militant who want the TUC to call a one-day strike. Quite honestly, we should not hold our breath waiting for them to act. They were only forced into calling the London march at the last minute. All they wanted to do was call a delegate meeting to discuss the NHS.

We also have to be aware that amongst the health service unions, there is a lot of rivalry and locking after sectional interests. There are, of course, moves to call national conferences to try to co-ordinate activities. But no doubt they will be plagued by the so-called left groups squabbling over who gets the leading jobs and using the issue to build their organisation.

A second problem comes from those on the right, from within the Labour Party. Some want to use the issue of the NHS as a vote-catching exercise for the May local election, while others just want to concentrate on festivals to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the NHS in July.

One thing I noticed locally on March 5th was the lack of involvement from the black national minorities. I don't blame them. They get the worst deal from the NHS as it is. I believe that if there is to be a really strong campaign to defend the present health service, then the white majority, and particularly the white working class, is going to have to face up to the issue of racism.

There is also a general feeling that the Tories' large majority makes them impregnable and also if the miners could not beat them, then no-one can.

CS: You put forward a fairly negative prospect. Don't you think anything can be done?

BSS: Don't get me wrong. I am not pessimistic. I just feel that if you are going to build up a successful campaign, then you have to start with a realistic understanding of the problems.

I feel that the Tories are vulnerable on the NHS. Public opinion polls show a large majority who support the basic idea of the NHS. There are few who really believe that private medicine is a real alternative.

The extensive protests will not go away. Good local campaigns exist. Workers outside the NHS are taking action. There are many good links between NHS trade unionists and other groups.

CS: So what do you think the way forward is?

BSS: July this year sees the 40th anniversary of the NHS. That gives a three months target to aim at, for really big national action. It is practical to build for a week of action then. To do this we need to be able to make use of the different types of support and action.

Those in the NHS, and industrial workers generally, who feel they can take industrial action should do so. Dinner-time protests and hospital gate vigils should also be organised and encouraged.

Equally, we need to provide an opportunity to involve those who cannot or will not take strike action. Broad protest marches should be organised on the Saturday nearest to the 40th anniversary. If we can disrupt the centres of a large number of cities and towns, it will have an impact. We should go for as many local demonstrations as possible because they can involve more people than a national or a few regional demonstrations can.

This type of week of action can also provide a focus for signing petitions, festivals in parks etc. Pressure needs to be built up through the trade union movement. Local campaigns need to get together to swap ideas and build links. Unity needs to be built between the different strands of campaigning to work towards a common goal.

★★★★★★



Photo: Leeds Other Paper

GLIMPSES INTO HERSTORY.....

WOMEN AND PAID WORK

The labour of women is devalued both at home and in the workplace. In different countries and societies around the world, women have in common that their oppression and exploitation is related to their child-bearing role. In most societies, women have the main responsibility for bringing up children (at least very young children) and providing food etc. However, in most societies in the world today, women's labour, which plays an essential role in reproducing and maintaining the workforce, and in social production as well, is not rewarded in economic, political or social terms (money, power or status).

On this dual exploitation of women's labour, the whole complex political, ideological and social structure of oppression is built. Although this article will concentrate on women's work outside the home, we will constantly find that this aspect of their oppression is closely bound up with others, in particular their work inside the home, and wider aspects such as violence against women, the education of women etc.

WOMEN WORLD-WIDE

A single article can only touch on this huge subject. (Whoever sat down and wrote one article on man's work?) This article will concentrate on the differences between women and men's work, and the historical and material basis for this.

Women of all classes and nations are oppressed as women and their labour devalued, but working class women also suffer from class oppression and Third World women from national oppression. This produces a complex relation between women world-wide. Imperialism has exploited women differently, at different times and in different places, in order to maximise profits and this has produced both a sexual division of labour and an international division of labour. In concentrating mainly on this

trends. On the one hand, women have at different stages worked outside the home in large social units of production of service work, and today they make up a significant section of the workforce. On the other hand, in many ways women's role in social production has been restricted progressively.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Britain was still an agricultural society, with the vast majority living on the land and producing enough for bare survival. Among the peasantry, women were essential in the family economy. The peasant's wife bore children, which meant more hands to toil and she also

by the mid-17th century. In the woollen trade, women retained quite a strong position although by the 17th century, they were being restricted to carding and spinning at home, while men did the sorting and dyeing. In 1639, Mary Arnold went to jail because she continued to brew, contrary to an order of the Brewers of Westminster. Women healers were increasingly persecuted as witches and the expensive education required for medicine as a science excluded women. Midwifery survived for the poor only.

COLONIAL WIVES

By the 18th century, the idea that men should be able to support women from their wage gained credence, although only amongst a very small minority at first, of course. The Victorian middle class male required wives who were decorative, accomplished in music etc. to entertain him, but most importantly, in charge of all domestic concerns and able to bear children, so that he could

strengthening the hands of the industrialists.

Marx saw women being drawn into factory production in this era as the beginning of their emancipation. Indeed, it was a very complex process. Despite the brutality of conditions in early factories, the complete control of male overseers, the double burden of caring for children, as well as twelve-hour factory shifts; despite all this, women for the first time were earning money and gaining some glimpses of economic independence.

FAMILY WAGE

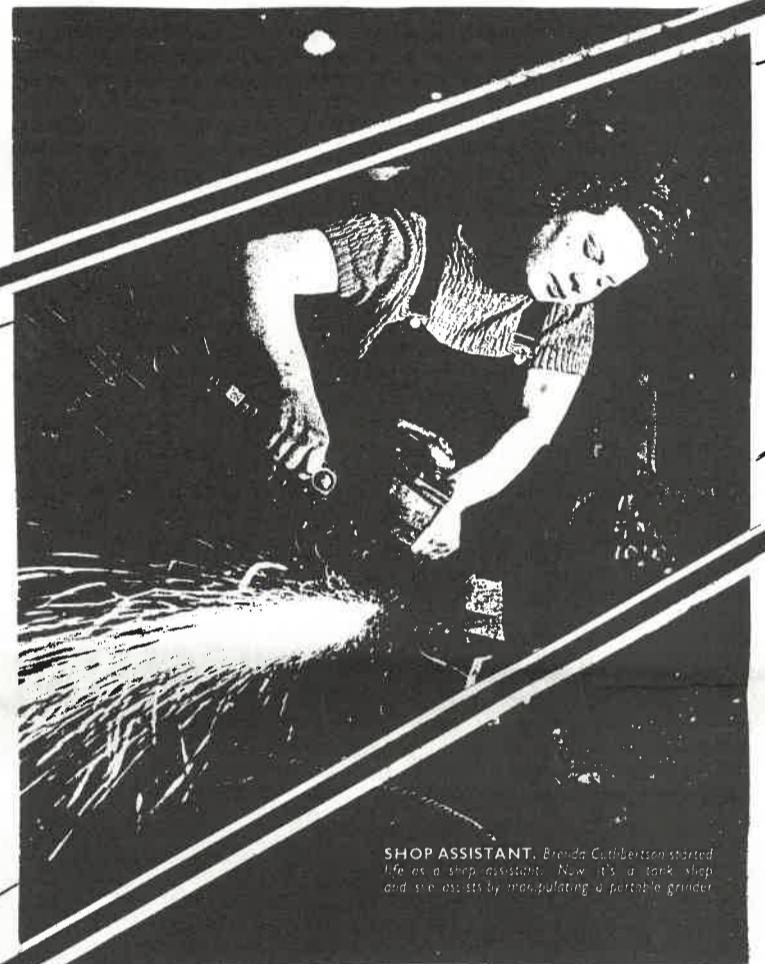
Many working class men resisted the entry of women into

worked to maintain the labour force at home.

In the early years of the industrial revolution, the work of women in reproducing the men and children's capacity to labour was drastically reduced. With protective legislation and fewer hours in the factory, women workers spent more time doing housework in the family. The need for women's labour in the family, in reproducing and maintaining labour power thus exercised a certain restraint on the direct exploitation of women's labour power in industry. But women's social usefulness was never recognised or recompensed.

1900's

A woman's life in Oldham before 1914 ... 56 hours a week at the looms and housework on top.



SHOP ASSISTANT. Brenda Culbertson started life as a shop assistant. Now it's a tank shop and she assists by manipulating a portable grinder.



country, we do not mean that international aspects are not important: both women internationally, and national minority women in this country are of extreme importance. But lack of space and resources must make us concentrate here on the history of women's work in this country, whilst learning from, and supporting, women's struggles elsewhere.

WOMEN IN PRE-INDUSTRIAL BRITAIN

Historically, there has always been a sexual division of labour. Under capitalism and imperialism, there have been complex and contradictory

laboured herself. The rise of trade started a more complex and specialised society and richer yeomen's wives withdrew from agricultural labour. In the towns, workshops became larger with the main division being between masters and workers, and a lessening role for masters' wives and widows. The trades which women kept control of longest were those relating to women's household tasks: drink and clothing production such as brewing or spinning.

Gradually, women were forced out of the more profitable trades, and women's work became associated with low pay. There were wide variations from place to place and from trade to trade. In Wales and Scotland, feudalism lasted much longer. Young printers, for example, were protesting against women in the unskilled printing processes in the 1630's and had virtually excluded them

put all his energies into his capitalist and colonial ventures.

By the early 19th century, the middle class had a distinct identity and there was a close connection, in England, between business and landed property which changed the feudal relations in the countryside and produced rich farmers with "non-working" wives and farm labourers.

Whilst the rich women were being excluded from production, the lives of poor women were ceaseless labour. Women agricultural workers had the bearing and succour of large families, work in the fields, especially at harvest, and also would work as domestics in the big houses. Poor women played an active, and if necessary violent and organised, part in the struggles for a cheap loaf of bread.

WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The industrial revolution gradually separated women's work in the family for work for wages. Women and children forced off the land by capitalist farming methods, as well as Irish immigrants starved out by English colonialism, competed for jobs, thus

factories, both because they wished to remain master in their own home, and because of competition for jobs. In reality, then as now, families depended on wives' earnings. But the idea of a man's right to a family wage gained credence. Protective legislation for women workers was a two edged sword: men and women desperately needed shorter hours and better conditions. But women were excluded without alternative employment. The reasoning behind such legislation was often more to do with maintaining patriarchy within the family and imposing middle-class values than bringing working women any relief.

Despite the growth of factory production, there were large areas of work where it was still cheaper to use low-paid female labour as outworkers, for example, finishing off, lace-working. In addition, domestic service absorbed many women, seasonal agricultural work, and shop work.

DOUBLE OPPRESSION

Thus women continued to labour for capitalism in two ways. Although capitalism broke the complete control of the working class man over his woman and children, in that they ceased to be directly a means of production for him, the women's low wage was still complementary to the commodity system. Women could not enter commodity production on the same terms as men. Like the man, they sold their labour power now as a commodity. But they still

Capitalism and imperialism have used women's labour in different ways at different times. But this basic contradiction remains unchanged and is reflected today in women's place in the wage labour market, their role in trade unions and attitudes to women within the unions.

WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS

The growth of workers' organisations in the early 19th century, which culminated in the legalising of trade unions in 1824 and later the Chartist movement in the 1840's, included some women. For example, a spinners' strike in 1818 saw men and women drawing equal strike pay. In 1832, there was a strike of 1500 women card setters. But most of the early unions of strength were in male-dominated industry. The Chartist movement included some women united on a class basis but it did not take up women's problems as such and campaigned for a family wage and a place for women in the home.

The expansion of trade unionism in the 1870's included some women-only unions which were united under the Women's Protective and Provident League by Emma Paterson and in 1876 such unions were welcomed into the TUC. However, conflict soon broke out. Not surprising with prominent trade union leaders such as Broadhurst, who said it was "...very natural for ladies to be impatient of restraint at any time wives should be in their proper place at home."

Despite this, women workers took increasingly militant action at work. The matchgirls' strike is the best known. But in the same year of 1888, there was action by blanket weavers in Heckmondwike, female cigar-makers in Nottingham, girls in a tin box manufacturing in London (who pelted men who continued to work with red-ochre and flour), and jute workers in Dundee.

Women workers were helped by some male trade unionists, radicals and socialists, and in 1891, a big demonstration of laundresses in Hyde Park was supported by the railway workers amongst others. There is, however, very little written about the ideas and aspirations

of hundreds of years of struggle and resistance and this tradition has continued in new forms in this country. Some of the most militant women's strikes have involved black women, for example, Grunwicks. Many black women in this country are employed in jobs which make union organisation extremely difficult (without taking into account the racism of the unions), like homeworking and small workshops. In 1981, homeworkers in Leicester were earning an average wage of 80p an

wives and mothers, because of the reality of life at home and the low wages and boring, alienating work they were offered in the factory.

Anna Pollett, studying in a tobacco factory in Bristol, in 1972, found the same occupational segregation and low

1980's

A 'NEW SERVANT CLASS'

hour with no expenses paid, no benefits or legal rights.

pay. Young women there could only treat their unskilled manual labour as an affirmation of their own worthlessness and often sought refuge in romance.

The gradual "de-skilling" of women's paid jobs is partly due to a restriction in the sort of work women are allowed to do, and partly due to the category "skilled work" being applied to men's jobs. The many demanding, fiddly and exhausting jobs that women do like machining or electronic assembly, are classified as unskilled. This process historically has not only involved capitalism maximising profits but also the connivance of the male-dominated labour movement. The Equal Pay Act has made little impression mainly due to this de-skilling of women's work and struggles to regrade work have proved difficult to win in the present system.

FACTS AND FIGURES

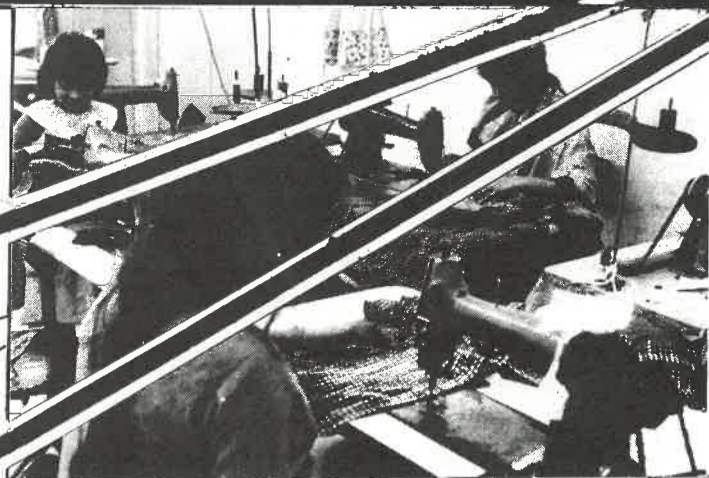
Official facts and figures on women's employment are extremely misleading because of the huge sector of women working part-time below the National Insurance threshold, working as casual labour, homeworking, or working in small workshops or family concerns. None of these women form part of the official statistics. Many women do two or more "little jobs" such as cleaning. Many do not register as unemployed but would like to work if it was available and possible. Statistics also take no account of women working to care for elderly relatives, handicapped family members etc. all of which is hidden labour.

However, for what they are worth, statistics show that in the UK, the percentage of women in paid employment has increased from 46% in 1960 to 57% in 1980 (a period when male employment was falling). Part-time work has increased: in 1971 only one job in seven was part-time, and by 1984 the proportion had become one in five. The majority of part-timers are women. Between 1984 and 1986, 60% of women were officially "working" and about half of these were full-time and half part-time. The service industries employ 81% of all working women.

LOW PAY

The gap between men and women's pay on official statistics has narrowed over the last 15 years but is still great. Average gross hourly earnings in 1970 were 67p for men and 42p for women, and in 1977 were 1.77p for men and 1.33p for women. However, men do more overtime which widens the gap.

These figures highlight the trend of imperialism in the 1980's which is to increase exploitation of part-time and casual, usually female, labour in the rich industrial nations. This, to a certain extent, reverses the trend of the 1970's when production was exported to the cheap Free Trade Zones



DOMESTIC SLAVERY

While women labour for low pay out of the home, they labour for no pay at all within the home. The vital task of reproducing and maintaining the workforce is carried out for the capitalist system completely free of charge. But this is not only a class question: there are very few men who do not gain tremendously by women's labour in the home. This question will be discussed more in the next article which will deal with the family. But no writing on women's work should end without a clear statement that for most women, their paid work is only one part of their daily labour, the rest of which is domestic slavery.

1940's

THE GIRLS BACK HOME

of working women at this time. In the early 1900's, women trade unionists, especially in the textile unions, became actively involved in the long and bitter struggle for the vote.

THE GIRLS BACK HOME

The period of the two world wars, of course, saw dramatic but temporary changes in women's work and unions' attitudes. Suddenly, women were encouraged to be engineers, drivers, and do heavy work of all kinds. Millions of women today can describe their experiences of this period. Basically, unions made agreements that women would leave their jobs at the end of the war, and equivocated about equal pay because they did not want to admit that women were as capable of the work as men.

Towards the end of the Second World War, the beginnings of the welfare state were set up. The Beveridge Report which formed the basis for many of the plans, stated: "In the next thirty years, housewives as mothers, have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and of British ideals in the world."

Consequently, women were sent back to their homes and the labour shortage solved by importing workers, firstly from Europe, as in the case of Italian workers recruited to work in the cotton mills, and later from the Third World.

Immigration to Britain in the post-war years was carefully planned. Initially, Caribbean Immigration to Britain in the post-war years was carefully planned. Caribbean people, many of them women, came in search of jobs and money that they could send back home to their families. Later, people were also recruited from the Indian sub-continent. Most did not plan a long stay and their children were often left behind at first until the grim reality of extreme exploitation and state racism hit home. Many black women were employed in the new National Health Service, and continue to be employed there today, and suffer oppression as the lowest paid workers, as national minority people and thirdly as women. National minority women brought with them their long history

hour with no expenses paid, no benefits or legal rights.

MODERN UNIONS

Women in trade unions these days face many of the same problems they always have. The TUC passes progressive resolutions but these signify a token commitment only. The same applies to the separate unions. For example, the Transport and General Workers Union has recently set up regional Women's Advisory Committees and been more active on women's issues. But it remains to be seen how much priority this will be given: with a 15% female membership, only 1 out of the 40 strong Executive Committee is a woman and only 14 of the union's full-time officials are female.

On the shop floor, women's involvement in union affairs is held back by both practical and ideological difficulties. Half of women workers are part-time, often with two or more jobs, and then have all their work with children and the home to fit in and organise. Attending bureaucratic union meetings, out of working hours, is just not possible for most women.

Several recent local studies by women have emphasised again the degree of segregation and discrimination for women at work:

WOMEN'S WORK

Nicola Charles interviewed and studied 160 women and union representatives in different industries in Sheffield in 1980. Most of the women did "women's work" which was separate and lower-paid than the men's. This was not seen as a problem by the unions. Union reps upheld the idea of a family wage and considered women's pay as a secondary wage. They had strong views on women's shifts so that their work at home was not interfered with; and some saw women as a cause of male unemployment. All these views were echoed by women themselves and equal pay was not supported by the majority. They were keen on the union as such, but very critical of local unions, and many said they would be union reps if they were asked to.

Ruth Cavendish worked and studied on a car assembly line in London, in 1977. She also found strict divisions between men and women, and black and white workers, in the way they were employed. The women saw themselves primarily as house-

THIRD WORLD WOMEN: SWEATSHOPS IN THE SUN

WOMEN IN THE THIRD WORLD

The impact of capitalism and imperialism on women in Third World countries was necessarily very different and very varied. It depended on the social organisation which had developed in that society before imperialism, on the nationality and stage of the colonial power and on many other factors. It is also a continually changing pattern depending on maximising profits for imperialism, at any one time. This article can only touch on one or two examples. But knowledge and understanding in this area is vital to our better understanding of women's oppression and the struggle against it.

Broadly speaking, the colonial period involved the extraction of raw materials from the colonies, manufacture "back home" and then forcing these products onto the markets in the colonies. This involved women as slaves; women working directly on plantations; women being left behind with family and poor subsistence land while men were forced to work the rich cash crops; and women losing both land rights and their own handicraft industries as was the case with the Indian textile industry, destroyed by English factory-made cloth. Women were raped, used as prostitutes and the whole social and family structure destroyed.

Thus at the same time as capitalists were withdrawing their own women from the labour force and instituting the family at home, they were destroying it in the Third World. (This is something we will explore in greater detail in future articles.)

SWEATSHOPS IN THE SUN

In the 1970's, Third World women were to a certain extent re-

discovered by international capital in their search for higher profits and many labour-intensive industries were relocated in the Free Trade Zones. For example, between 1971 and 1983, 1.5 million workers, mostly women, lost jobs in the clothing and textile industries in Europe and the USA, and over 2 million new jobs were created in the Third World.

The computer "revolution" was made possible by the super-exploitation of Asian women in Free Trade Zones, who make up 80% of the workforce. The factory conditions these women work in are appalling and also continue the ideology that women are women and housewives before workers.

Besides this exploitation of women by low wage labour, there has also been a growth of the sex and sex-tourism industries. Sex tours provide the second or third most important source of foreign exchange in Thailand and the Philippines. Women continue to do the majority of agricultural work: a recent study in Southern India found that women were doing all the housework and 80% of the agricultural work, and that modernisation and 'aid' programmes made this worse.

RESOURCES

The following books have been used to compile much of the information in this article: *Hidden From History*, Sheila Rowbotham.

Waged Work, A Reader, edited by Feminist Review.

Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale, Maria Mies.

Common Fate, Common Bond, Swasti Mitter.



FREE

THE SHARPEVILLE SIX

Only hours before they were due to be hanged for the alleged murder of the deputy mayor of Sharpeville, six black Azanians (South Africans), the Sharpeville Six, won a one month stay of execution on March 18th. Their lawyer had successfully sought a reprieve on the basis that one of the witnesses for the state prosecution had admitted how he had been forced by the police to provide untruthful evidence. Joseph Monete told the judge that he had been punched and assaulted by South African policemen and forced to say that two of the six had been present at the scene of the "crime".

At the time of the original trial in December 1985, the same judge, Paul Human (a rather unusual surname for any official of the apartheid regime) had refused the defence lawyers permission to cross-examine Monete. Clearly since then, the enormous international pressure that has been building up over the issue, has had no small effect.

The trial itself was marked by a number of features which typify what passes for justice for black people in South Africa. For example, Theresa Ramashamola had her arm broken; Mojalefa Reginald Sefatsa's jaw was broken and along with Reid Malebo Mokoena, he was subject to electric shock treatment.

Some of the accused were not even present at the scene of the incident for which they were sentenced. Francis Don Mokhesi, a first division footballer in the National Professional Soccer League, was recovering at home from an injury on the day in question.

STRUGGLE AGAINST RENT INCREASES

The background to the incident was that during August 1984 rent increases were authorised by the local authorities. Given the very high rate of unemployment, inflation at around 14% a year and the large number of black people just on or below the breadline, the increases of about £3 per house and a one-off levy of £25 on tenants of council houses in some areas, were intolerable.

In addition, the increases had been imposed by councillors who were seen as agents of the apartheid system within the townships. At large anti-rent increase meetings, it was decided that there would be a stay-away from work if the proposed increases were not dropped and shortly after, many residents marched on the local development board offices to demand an explanation for the increase.

In a number of incidents, the marchers were fired on by local councillors. As a result, the



houses of a number of councillors came under attack, including that of Jacob Dlamini, who was later killed in the incident in which the Sharpeville Six were alleged to be involved.

There was widespread feeling that Dlamini was likely to profit from the rent increases. At the time, the local paper, the Sowetan, had noted how some councillors were believed to have formed the "puppet institution" not in order to represent the residents but to gain business.

This was the background to the general unrest which was not simply the work of a few agitators. Whole communities were involved, and any incident

was an expression of the grievances and the anger of the majority of the black residents of the area.

Clearly, the violence had been offered in the first place by the councillors, who had used guns, and the police who broke up the protest march to the administration office. In fact, the Sharpeville Six were used as the scapegoats for all the black residents of the Vaal area of Sharpeville in particular and the black majority of Azania as a whole.

It is essential that the pressure is kept up on the apartheid regime, to free the Sharpeville Six and all other political prisoners and South Africa's jails.

OUT IN THE COLD! TOWER HAMLETS' RACIST ACT

The Tower Hamlets Homeless Families Campaign is continuing to campaign against the council's policy of forced repatriation of Bangladeshi residents in the area. A recent leaflet from the campaign, outlined the situation:

CHILDREN ON THE STREETS

Tower Hamlets Council has decided to throw over 70 families out of bed and breakfast accommodation. This is an unprecedented attack on the Homeless Persons Act, which for the last ten years has prevented homeless families from living rough.

VICTIMS OF RACISM

The Council claim that they have no duty to house these families because they left homes in Bangladesh. It is an openly racist and unfair decision, based not on housing need or humanitarian considerations but on the Council's determination to save money by attacking the most vulnerable sectors of the community. All these families are legally resident in Britain: the men have lived and worked here for over twenty years. Our immigration laws give them an unqualified right to be re-united as a family in this country, and a right to housing under the Homeless Persons Act. In the majority of cases, delays in processing the 'Entry Clearance' demanded by the Home Office have led to these families being cruelly divided for years at a time. The Council's claim that they have made themselves "homeless" by exercising their rights under the law, and that they therefore have no duty to house them, is ludicrous.

RACE AND HOUSING IN TOWER HAMLETS

Successive Council administrations in Tower Hamlets have refused to recognise the needs of divided families on the housing waiting list. So when the wife and children come to join the man in the UK, they end up as homeless and are placed in hotels: 95% of families in hotels from Tower Hamlets are Bangladeshi. As homeless families are ninth down the list for re-housing, they wait longer and the numbers in hotels increases. Furthermore, central government has cut by three quarters, money

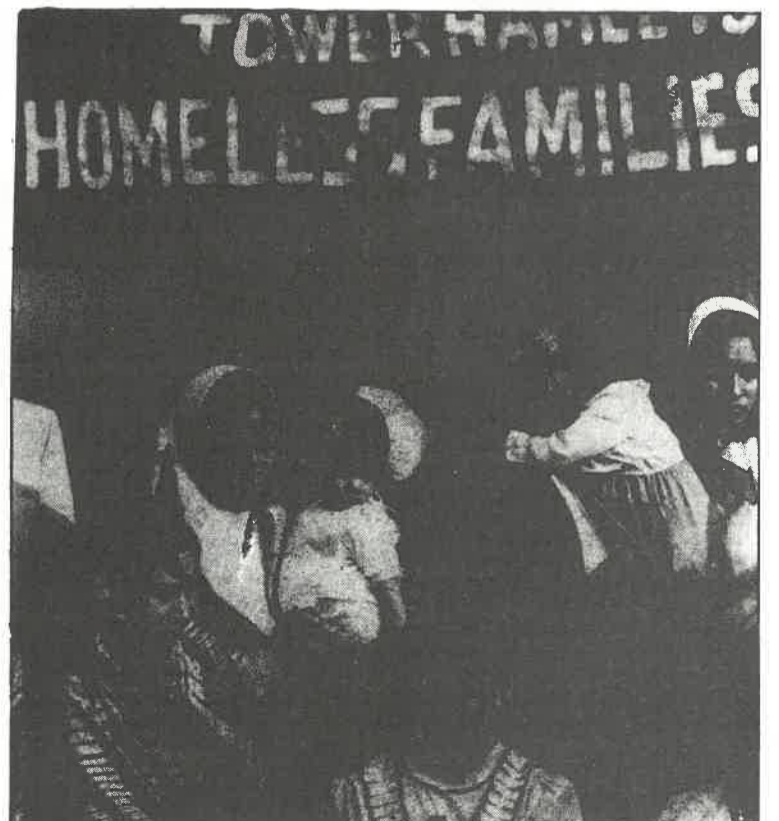
for public housing, and successive Council administrations have added to the problem by selling their housing and land in a way that depletes the amount of housing affordable by the homeless. To deal with the problems it has, in part, created itself, the Council tries to cut its hotel bills by evicting families.

A JUDICIAL WASHING OF HANDS

In a deplorable judgement, the High Court agreed that it would, indeed, have been "reasonable" for the wives and children of the families being evicted to have stayed in Bangladesh. The fact that some of the children spoke English only as a second language was seen by the High Court as evidence supporting the view that they should not have come here in the first place.

The court went further even than the Council, by declaring that these families, once they have been thrown on the streets, would have no recourse to other forms of assistance, such as that provided by Child Care legislation. The two judges said that this safety net would not apply to these children. Their parents, having been found "intentionally homeless" lose the right for the children to live in safety. The judgement will effectively take away the right of many families to be re-united in this country, and will deny access to decent housing to thousands of people every year.

The government has now joined this attack on those families who are divided by Britain's racist immigration laws. In the new Immigration Bill before parliament it proposes to amend the 1971 Act to take away the right enshrined in law that the wives and children of Commonwealth citizens settled in this country before 1973 should have an absolute right to live as a family in the UK. These moves are a blatant attempt to stop families being re-united in this country. If unchecked they will prevent thousands of families ever again living together under the same roof. This vicious assault on the homeless seeks to solve the problems created by years of neglect and lack of investment in housing by turning our backs on those most in need.



Without your help, 1988 will be the year in which families with children are to be put "out in the cold". For more information, contact: The Tower Hamlets Homeless Families Campaign, The Brady Centre, Hanbury Street, London E1. Tel: 01-377-5185.

MORALE HIGH, CONDITIONS TOUGHER

Within a couple of weeks of the beginning of the Uprising in the West Bank and Gaza, in December, the Unified Command of the Uprising was formed. The underground organisations of four PLO member groups - Al Fatah (AF), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and Palestine Communist Party (PCP) - established this leadership, along with Islamic Jihad (IJ).

This is a powerful combination. Fatah is the largest organisation in the PLO, with more support inside Palestine than the other member groups. The PFLP, DFLP and PCP account for the forces which can loosely be described as being to the left of the mainstream of Fatah, and significant mass organisations inside Palestine support their political lines.

Islamic Jihad's main strength is in Gaza: elsewhere, it is weak. It wants an Islamic state established in the whole of Palestine. But, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood, a larger fundamentalist trend, it believes in fighting the Israeli occupation now, not in waiting until it has made all Palestinian Muslims share its outlook. (This outlook has historically led the Brotherhood to attack PLO supporters, which made Israel tolerate its activities.) Islamic Jihad takes part in the United Command on the basis of supporting its agreed immediate demands, which involves accepting the PLO, with its secular programme, as the representative of the Palestinian people.

The Unified Command has put out statements regularly almost since it was formed. They are produced in leaflet form, and contain specific actions and forms of protest. The Israeli army and Shin Bet (internal security service) have tried to hunt down both the Unified Command and the presses where the leaflets are printed, but have had little success. On one occasion, a man with bundles of newly printed leaflets was captured, and the printing press from which he had just come, was traced and seized. The authorities were pleased with themselves. But their triumph was short-lived: the leaflet was reproduced on other presses. The Shin Bet really gets to work on an area when it quiets down a bit. So the Unified Command keeps it hopping by making sudden switches in the focus of action.

RESIGNATIONS

Leaflet No.9 appeared on March 1st; No.10 came out on March 10th. They called on

Palestinian policemen and others working as part of the administrative machinery of Gaza and the West Bank to resign from these Israeli-controlled institutions. Over half the police resigned within days of the call, including nearly all the police in Gaza. Particularly popular was the resignation of many of the Palestinians employed in tax collection, including the whole staff of the Gaza tax department.

One of the worst problems faced by Israel in suppressing the Uprising, is that it has lost many of its eyes and ears in the West Bank and Gaza. Over the last twenty years, a mixture of rewards, threats and intimidation was used to build up a network of informers and collaborators. The Uprising has unravelled much of that network, and with little violence. Only two collaborators have been killed. The first was put to death after shooting dead a Palestinian boy and wounding a dozen people in the village of Qabatiya, on February 24th. Israeli troops reacted by arresting a number of people, blowing up four houses, closing off the village and cutting off its electricity. This did not deter inhabitants of Aqabat Jaber refugee camp from killing a notorious collaborator who worked for the police on March 8th.

But the main factor in making collaborators and informers give up working for Israel was the total opposition of the rest of the people to their activities, which became more intense as Israel became increasingly vicious in its efforts to put down the Uprising. To end their isolation, those who had served the occupier have generally announced their decisions to stop doing so, in a public way. For example, on March 4th, the headman of Am'ari refugee camp announced after prayers in the local mosque that he was resigning and cutting all his ties with the Israelis. Next day, he told reporters that as a result, he had his best night's sleep for years!

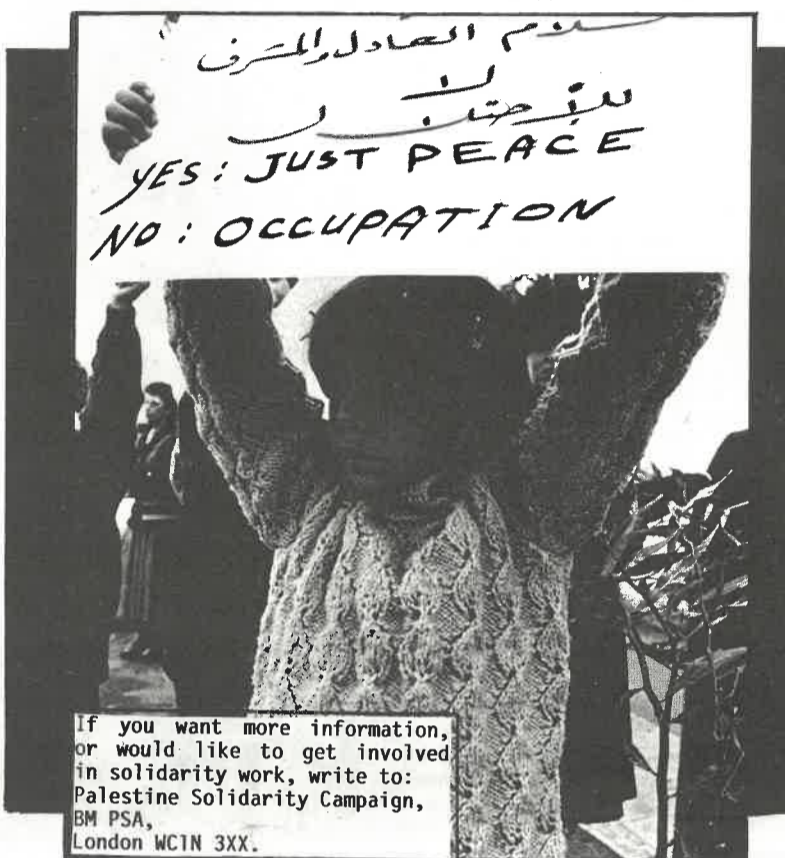
Informers and collaborators are allowed by the Israeli authorities to carry guns to protect themselves. But it has been reported that some of those who have given up working for the enemy, have handed over their weapons to the popular committees which organise the Uprising at local level.

CENSORSHIP

One myth dear to much of the Israeli political leadership

is that Palestinians have only risen up in order to get the attention of the western press, and if the press is curbed, the rising can be brought under control. Because Israel wants to keep its image of being "the only democracy in the Middle East", it has so far refrained from banning the press completely from Gaza and the West Bank, but instead, it has used press bans from specific areas to limit news coverage to the outside world. This practice has been used more and more in the last month.

of repression which are likely to attract less attention from abroad. Palestinians travelling into their country after visits abroad are now severely restricted in the amount of money they can bring in with them, in order to increase the economic pressures on the population to give up. Telephone links between the outside world and the '67 occupied territories have been cut, and so have those between Gaza and the West Bank. Travel between the two has been banned. Petrol supplies to these areas



If you want more information, or would like to get involved in solidarity work, write to: Palestine Solidarity Campaign, BM PSA, London WC1N 3XX.

It is true that the presence of the press has an influence on the level of violence in the West Bank and Gaza, but not in the way that certain Israeli politicians have suggested. The presence of foreign journalists has made Israeli troops behave in a more restrained way than they would otherwise have done. People who have seen television pictures of Palestinians being beaten up may doubt this. But the fact remains, that no cameras have been on hand when any Palestinian was killed during this Uprising, although even according to the statistics used by the BBC, the death toll reached 100 on March 20th. (In fact, it was around 130.)

MORALE

Morale remains high among the Palestinians, although conditions have got tougher. Israel is using new techniques

have been cut off, supposedly to prevent people from making petrol bombs. But this will obviously affect private transport there, as supplies run out. It will also cut water supplies, as many villages and towns rely on water being pumped out of wells with the assistance of petrol-fired generators.

The recent decline in media coverage of the Uprising means that Israel now feels it has a freer hand to suppress the Palestinian struggle. The disappearance of pictures of beatings and violent arrests from the television screens should not be allowed to convince anyone that all is now well in Palestine. The repression has been stepped up. But the Uprising goes on.

See Diary of Events for details of demonstration on Sunday, May 15th, in London.

WE FEEL THE NEED TO WALK ALONE

CLASS STRUGGLE CORRESPONDENT

A truly internationalist celebration of Women's Day, organised by Anadolu Kultur Merkezi (Anatolian Cultural Centre) was held in London last month.

A lively question and answer session followed the contributions on the history and experience of the Turkish women's struggle from Selma Altun and Pervin Ulusoy, both on a visit from Turkey. The discussions were interspersed with cultural contributions from a Turkish poet and a West African Dance Group. Also contributing, was an Irish speaker from the Stop the Strip Search Campaign.

"THE NEED TO WALK ALONE"

The two main speakers are active in Turkey's first independent

women's organisation established a couple of years ago. Working in a Campaign Against Beatings, support is provided to those who suffer from violence within the family. Members of the campaign came together from various fields of activity and resent the subordination of women's oppression as secondary in the radical movement.

In response to a suggestion that women's struggles ought to be subordinated until a change in society is brought about, the speakers replied that socialism alone is not enough, if we are to judge from existing socialist societies. There is the need to address women's concerns now, as an

autonomous movement, as the Turkish left has failed to educate its own male members. As way of illustration, one woman said that her husband, the head of a progressive organisation, had forbidden her to join a women's group. There was a general murmur of agreement when Selma observed that there was still a lot of work to do.

When one man from the floor said that he felt excluded from the problem of violence against women and suggested that "We must work together", the speakers pointed out that in the circumstances of a violent attack upon women, it was very difficult to get women to talk of such violence in the intimidating presence of men. "We

feel the need to walk alone", she said but added that they encouraged men to examine themselves.

The speakers pointed out that Turkish women have had civil rights since 1924 (voting rights). But still there were only six women MPs. The problem was partly in the male-dominated nature of society as there were many formal rights in Turkish law which, as practical rights, remain unfulfilled. Progressive men have not been immune from seeing women in a supportive role in campaigns. The Campaign Against Beatings represents an assertiveness of Turkish women that seemed to strike a chord amongst women in the audience.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION



THE MAKING OF THE BLACK WORKING CLASS IN BRITAIN

Ron Ramdin

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Exeter Anti-Fascist Action

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Information on Ireland

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(Ed.) Peter Anyang' Nyong'o

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FREEDOM FOR IRELAND



FUNERALS ATTACKED

The last month has seen many tragic events in the north of Ireland. There are also many unanswered questions about what has happened. However, the two strands of British policy are clear: a military strategy of repression and shoot-to-kill, along with a political strategy which attempts to isolate the Republican Movement through an alliance with Dublin.

On Sunday March 6th, SAS units of the British army shot dead, in a carefully planned operation in Gibraltar Republicans, Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Dan McCann. A barrage of publicity was put out about gun battles and car bombs placed near a parade ground. But these stories turned out to be untrue.

The Republican Movement stated that the three were on active service. It was clear that the British army had implemented a shoot-to-kill policy, once again, and no attempt had been made to take the three alive.

The best known of the three was Mairead Farrell. She stood as a H-Block/Armagh candidate in the 1981 general election in the 26 counties while serving a 14-year sentence in Armagh Prison, where she went through the no-wash protest and the 1980 hunger strike. She was the first woman to be jailed after the withdrawal of political status in 1976. As Officer in Command in Armagh Prison she won the respect of other women prisoners and became known as their spokeswoman around the world. On her release in September 1986, she worked on the Stop the Strip Searches Campaign, speaking at meetings all over Ireland.

Mairead Farrell was a committed Republican woman who did not separate the struggles of the people. She once said: "I'm a socialist definitely and I'm a republican. I believe in a united Ireland: a united socialist Ireland, definitely socialist. Capitalism provides no answer at all for our people...." She linked these struggles with her struggle as a woman: "I'm oppressed as a woman but I'm also oppressed

because I'm Irish. Everyone in this country is oppressed and we can't successfully end our oppression as women until we first end the oppression of our country. But I don't think that's the end of it. It happened before where women took the back seat. But women today have gone through too much, no way will they allow that to happen and I hope I'm alive because I certainly won't allow that to happen. Once we removed the British, that isn't it. That's only the beginning."

FUNERALS ATTACKED

Thousands of people lined the route and marched behind the coffins of the three when their bodies were flown back to Ireland on Monday, March 14th. In Belfast, the procession was attacked and hijacked by the RUC. The British army saturated areas of Belfast in an attempt to intimidate the families of the dead. Another Volunteer, Kevin McCracken was shot dead by the army on that Monday night.

Over the past months, Republican funerals have been constantly attacked by the RUC and British army. This has been part of a general policy of intimidation of the nationalist people and may well reflect a fear on the part of the British government that press pictures of mass support for the Republican Movement give the lie to the British version of events: that the Republican Movement has become increasingly isolated.

However, at the funeral of the three killed in Gibraltar, there was a change in policy. The British army and the RUC maintained a distance from the thousands of people who came to the funeral, although maintaining constant surveillance over the crowds.

As the coffins were being interned in Milltown Cemetery, a lone gunman attacked the crowd with grenades and gunfire. Three young men were killed and over 60 people injured. The gunman was chased by young Republicans, who eventually captured the man who was rescued from them by the RUC.



Mairead Farrell

Sean Savage

Dan McCann

The official version of this attack is that the man was a lone, crazy, loyalist gunman. But there are many unanswered questions. There are indications that the attack was carefully planned, with a possible getaway van and there has been no official explanation as to why the army or RUC did not stop the attack, even though they had the events under surveillance from helicopters.

Thousands turned out the following day, at the funeral of Kevin McCracken, showing their refusal to be intimidated.

The following Saturday, March 19th saw the funerals of those killed at the Cemetery, Thomas

McErlean, John Murray and Kevin Brady. Again, thousands came to the funeral and it was not surprising that they reacted with anger when two British soldiers drove fast into the funeral procession, drove up to the hearse on the pavement and then tried to back away. They were hemmed in with black taxis, dragged out of their car and later killed.

While there has been a predictable outcry in the British press about the deaths of the two soldiers, there has been no reasonable explanation about what they were doing there in the first place. It has been denied that they were members of the SAS. But it seems likely that they were involved in one of the army's dirty tricks. The official explanation that they were simply travelling from one army base to another, is not believable.

COME OFF THE SIDELINES

As these tragic events unfolded, the British government has been mending the fences with Dublin. It has now been announced that their military strategy will be accompanied with a programme designed to overcome the social problems in the north of Ireland.

Programmes to win "the hearts and minds" of an occupied people are not new. Neither is the violence of the last few weeks. 'An Phoblacht/Republican News' commented:

"The most recent events focussed dramatically on the death and injury, the heartache and bereavement that is everyday life for the victims of British rule."

It went on to comment on the courage of the people: "They have never and will never give up. They want peace more than anyone because they have suffered in this war more than anyone else. That is not to diminish the suffering of others. It is to recognise that it is a war of oppressed against oppressor. The nationalist people are the oppressed and their army is the IRA."

"...Sooner rather than later the cameras will focus on the beginning of the end of this tragedy, when Britain is forced out. All who genuinely seek to reach that end must stand with the oppressed and come off the sidelines now."

EVENTS

EUROPE UNITES AGAINST RACISM AND FASCISM
National Demonstration, London
Saturday, April 23rd, 1988.

Assemble 12 noon at Home Office, Petty France. March to French Embassy, Knightsbridge - Rally in Hyde Park.

Racism, Fascism and Resistance Rally, 4 pm, Southall.

For details, contact: Anti-Fascist Action, PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7.
Tel: 01-387-2531

CONCERT FOR A FREE CHILE

QUILAPAYUN

In concert for Chile!

Friday, April 22nd, 10 pm.

Hackney Empire, Mare Street, London E8.

Tel: 01-985-2424

Of Presidents and Present Dangers

US IMPERIALISM IN 1990's

A Major International Conference in Sheffield

22-24 April 1988

For more details contact:

Ankie Hoogvelt,
The Conference Organising Cte.,
Department of Sociological Studies,
302 Western Bank,
The University,
Sheffield S10 2TN.

WAKEFIELD PRISON

Saturday, April 30th.

MARCH AND RALLY

Repatriate All Irish Political Prisoners in English jails to prisons in Ireland.

An immediate end to the harassment of all Irish political prisoners.

Assemble 2.30
Wakefield Prison

ANNUAL IRISH HUNGER STRIKERS COMMEMORATION

March and Rally
May 14th, Birmingham

Assemble to move off prompt at 12.30 from Sparkhill Park, Birmingham.

Rally at Birmingham Central Library, Exhibition Hall, City Centre
2.30 - 5 pm

Speakers invited: Sinn Fein, Republican POW relative; Relative of INLA hunger striker; Tamil-Eelam; EPLF (Eritrea); PLO; El Salvador.

For more details, posters, leaflets etc., contact:
IHSCC,
PO Box 540,
Sparkhill,
Birmingham B11 4AU

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF PALESTINIAN UPRISING

SUNDAY, MAY 15th

To mark the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine.

Assemble 1.30 pm
Thames Embankment.

Organised by the Interim Joint Committee for Palestine

NOTEBOOK

London

JUSTICE FOR THE IRISH COMMUNITY

'Class Struggle' correspondent.

On March 20th, despite hasty arrangements and constant drizzle, 3-400 people marched to demand justice for the Irish community, in a protest that ended in Kilburn, a predominantly Irish area of north London.

The march, organised by the Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG), had been subject to disruptive objections by the authorities, who altered the day and conditions of the march, after publicity had been distributed.

Ironically, while the march highlighted the injustice done to the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four, among its vocal demands for justice and troops out of Ireland, one of the organisers, Camden IBRG, has been on the receiving end of Camden's Labour Council's sense of justice.

POLICY OF REPATRIATION

Camden IBRG has previously received grants from the Council for its work amongst the borough's large Irish community. In defence of that community, Camden IBRG vigorously protested at the ruling Labour groups's adoption of a policy of assisted repatriation of homeless people of Irish origin.

The Council's response was to withdraw the grant funding to Camden IBRG for bucking its patronage politics by refusing to agree to a 'loyalty clause'.

The injustices done to the Irish community are many: from the racist Prevention of Terrorism Act, that considers you are a suspect if you are Irish, to the denial of resources for Irish people to preserve their culture and civil rights. Camden's caring Labour administration refused to provide a hall, so the march ended with an outdoor rally.



Durham

PICKET IN SOLIDARITY WITH REPUBLICAN POW'S

A crowd of about 400 people gathered outside Durham Jail on 12th March, to mark International Women's Day and express their solidarity with Irish Republican political prisoners Ella Ni Dhnibhir (Ella O'Dwyer) and Martina Nic Aindrea (Martina Anderson). The demonstration called for an end to strip-searching and for Irish self-determination.

After a minute's silence in honour of the volunteers recently killed in Gibraltar, Angela MacAndrew of the Irish Republican POW Campaign, addressed the crowd. She described the appalling conditions inside Durham Jail. In addition to an oppressively strict regime and continued strip-searching, the two women daily face cockroaches and mice overrunning their eating and sleeping areas, and overflows of effluent into the area where they are expected to eat prison food, which is inedible.

In a message to the rally, the two women said: "No matter how long we remain behind bars, we shall always remember with pride who we are and what we represent. Being in prison only reinforces, to quote our comrade Bobby Sands, "the thought which says we're right".

Messages of solidarity came from Republican prisoners in Maghaberry and in English prisons. On strip-searching, the Maghaberry women said:

"This obscene and humiliating practice cannot under any circumstances be justified. It must be seen for what it is - another blatant attempt to break the spirit of Irish prisoners of war. It is another attempt that will not succeed."

To conclude the rally, Martina Nic Aindrea's sister delivered a tribute from Martina and Ella to volunteers Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Dan McCann.

From An Phoblacht/Republican News.

