

CLASS STRUGGLE



Political Paper of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain

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FIGHTING FAMINE

"Founded in 1978 by Tigrayans inside Tigray, the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) is a non-profit humanitarian organisation that has over 800 members working with people in Tigray and among Tigrayan refugees in Sudan to coordinate relief and development efforts.

"To compensate for the lack of governmental aid, REST has established practical programmes in public health, education, agriculture and cottage industry with a minimum of basic equipment and supplies.

"Working with members of the locally-elected village committees, REST also coordinates emergency relief programmes in the drought-swept areas to bring assistance to famine victims. These victims are subsistence-level farmers whose lives are increasingly threatened by a rapidly-escalating war and the repeated failure of the annual rains."

This description is taken from an appeal for support from the REST UK Committee. REST works among the 90% of the Tigrayan people who live outside the control of the Ethiopian government in areas administered and defended by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

EMERGENCY RELIEF AND LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT

Tigray is one of the poorest nations in the world. Infant mortality, for example, is high and life expectancy is 35 years. In the seven years since it was created, REST has achieved much:

"...REST and local village committees have cooperated to build over 60 public clinics, one hospital and 60 schools for a population that for decades knew no doctors and had an illiteracy rate of over 90%. Soil and water conservation programmes including irrigation and terracing projects are also coordinated by REST to improve crop yields in the drought areas and train farmers in new techniques.

"Among new initiatives in Tigray are women's ploughing programmes, artisans' co-operatives and resettlement programmes aimed at combatting the long-term effects of drought and war.

"By working with the people and the local authorities, REST has helped to establish local relief committees which can effectively distribute emergency famine assistance in their own communities."

Many independent sources have testified to the fact that giving aid for both short term relief and long term development to REST, and dealing with the TPLF direct, would be the most effective way to reach the vast majority of the people of Tigray.

FAMINE: USED AS A WEAPON OF WAR BY ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT

Many journalists and relief workers have told of the ways in which the Soviet-backed Ethiopian government is using famine as one more weapon in

its war against the Tigrayan people. They have supported REST's claim that in the face of the growing emergency, only 5% of the needs of the people of Tigray are being met.

The effects of these policies are tragic: Tigray now faces its fourth year of drought. The TPLF's 'Disaster Monitor' of April 1985 reported: "Several hundred people die in Northern Ethiopia (Tigray, Eritrea and Wollo) each day; 150,000 have fled to Sudan from Tigray in search of food and the 'unofficial famine' affecting more than 5 million people continues to receive little or no constructive international attention."

Yet governments, the EEC and the UN continue to channel aid through the Ethiopian government. 'War on Want' and 'Christian Aid' are the only large charities to deal with the TPLF and the other liberation movements in Ethiopia.

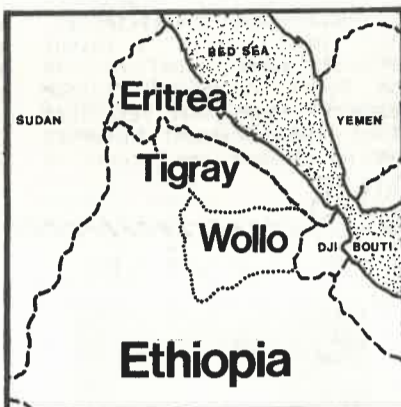
This is in spite of the fact that it is now widely known that the Ethiopian government is carrying out a full-scale war against the Tigrayan people, has refused aid to peasants not in government-sponsored peasant associations and is using food relief to force mass migrations from Tigray to the south of Ethiopia.

IMPERIALIST INTERESTS

Both the Soviet Union and the Western powers are looking after their own long term political and economic interests at the expense of the people of Tigray and other parts of Ethiopia.

The present government in Addis Ababa, has had Soviet-backing since the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974. The SU supplies most of the military equipment and advisers used against the popular movements. It also signed an economic cooperation agreement in September 1983.

The US and other Western powers at first refused aid to Ethiopia after 1974. In recent years, however, their policies have been to increase economic aid



and support directly from governments and through institutions like the World Bank and the EEC, complementing that from the SU. Ethiopia is now the largest recipient of EEC aid and, in 1984, Britain re-started a programme of training for the Ethiopian army.

Both the SU and the West are looking to maintain a foothold in this strategic area of Africa. The financial 'aid' given, mainly builds dependence on outside powers through state industrial development and growth of cash crops. It only impoverishes further the majority of the people.

It is this deadly game that guarantees the flow of famine relief to the corrupt Dergue at the expense of thousands of lives. It guarantees that the organisations most able to deal with the massive problems of drought and famine only receive 5% of their needs.

REST is the relief organisation in Tigray. In Eritrea, its equivalent is the Eritrean Relief Association and in Wollo, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement has recently set up the Ethiopian Relief Organisation. The relief work done by these organisations is only one aspect of a wide range of social policies implemented by the liberation fronts.

TPLF: 10TH ANNIVERSARY

The TPLF this year celebrated its tenth anniversary. With popular support and participation it has carried out land reform, policies on women, health, education and on the five nationalities within Tigray. This year, the liberation armed forces have already defeated two phases of a massive attack by the Ethiopian army and now face the third in Western Tigray. The Dergue is clearly using famine as one more weapon in this war.

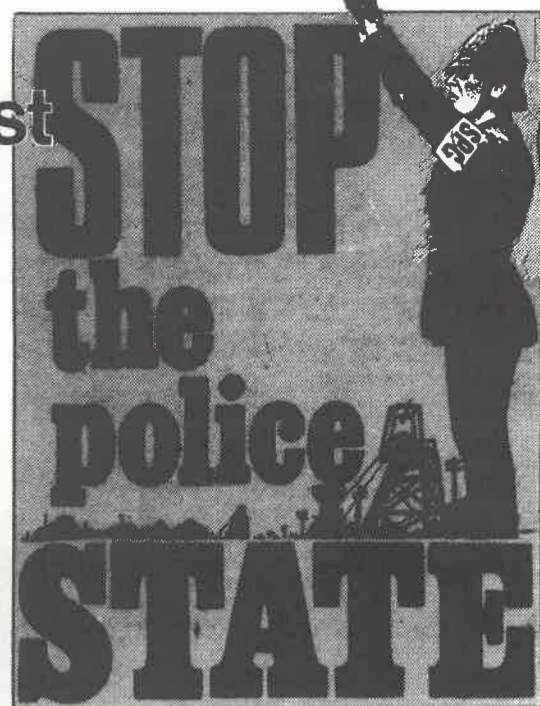
All progressive people and organisations in this country should demand that relief and support be given direct to REST, ERA or ERO, and that the British government and charities end their policies of support for the criminal Ethiopian regime.



Miners' Strike Up Against the State

P.4.

No Labour Solution



Election Success Sinn Fein Consolidates

P.8.



Sinn Fein councillors speak to the press (left) then leave Belfast City Hall in triumph (above). (Photos: AP/RN)

Colonialism and Eurocentrism

P.6.

Africa is Making History



WARNING! LABOUR IS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH

PRIVATISATION



services out to tender, East Birmingham adopted a wide ranging hit list that went well beyond what Fowler ordered. Those same labour movement members did not even force a vote on the list. They sat there and agreed to a large part of the work-force being put under the threat of privatisation. Nor did they oppose the management when it smashed trade unionism amongst the gardeners, and then used privatisation to force through 70% redundancies.

preventing hospital or ward closure or preventing privatisation. Even when the 'in house' work-force win contracts, this is usually at the expense of jobs, pay and conditions. For example, the cleaners at the Children's Hospital in Birmingham took 25% pay cuts to keep their jobs.

The defeat inflicted on health workers by the state in the pay dispute a few years ago, left the unions in an even weaker position. The state was quick to press its advantage home using privatisation. The unions have never really faced up to that situation. The state was able to destroy their growing unity by dividing the work-force by introducing a pay review body for some sections of the work-force. In the current pay negotiations the old inter-union rivalry and sectional interest approach dominates. Underlying the unions' half-hearted defensive strategy was the vague hope that the Labour Party would win the last general election and somehow put everything right. When Labour lost, their policies received a further setback.

Of course, there will be those who try and argue that the Labour movement members at East Birmingham are opportunist and not typical. Certainly, they are opportunist. But that's not the main point. No worker

A HEALTH SERVICE FOR THE PEOPLE?
in his or her right mind relies on "sympathetic" bosses to keep their jobs. Also, a recent national survey published in the April issue of 'Labour Research' shows that less than 7% of labour movement Authority members claimed any success in

ILLUSIONS IN LABOUR
Underlying these events are the central weaknesses common to all the trade unions: illusions in the Labour Party being different from the other parliamentary parties; illusions that somehow the welfare state is something other than part of the bosses' system; and a union movement flabby after decades of compromise and subservience to the bosses. These all lead

to the false idea that the existing system can somehow be gradually reformed into a more humane and workable system.

LABOUR'S RECORD
The Labour Party has always contained and diverted the struggles in this country and furthered the interests of British imperialism abroad. It was the last Labour government that oversaw the beginnings of the expansion of private hospitals and began the cuts in the NHS. Low pay and bad conditions forced NHS ancillary workers onto the picket lines during the "winter of discontent". Any party in government is there to administer the system not to fundamentally change it.

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE: NOT AN ISLAND OF SOCIALISM
The NHS was set up to meet the changing needs of the system. Without the exploitation and oppression of the peoples of the Third World, the system couldn't afford it. Although it provides some security against the worst aspects of ill health, it has done nothing to reduce class differences in health care and sickness. The ordinary people have never had any say in its running. It is no different from the coal industry or any other state intervention in the economy. The slogan "Save Our NHS" only hides the enemy. There can be no islands of socialism in an imperialist system. We should struggle against the state to demand adequate health care in the same way we fight any employer to get better pay and conditions.

FROM THE TUC DOWNWARDS, THE WHOLE UNION STRATEGY AGAINST PRIVATISATION (WHICH MEANS JOB LOSSES AND SPEEDUPS FOR HEALTH WORKERS) HAS BEEN GEARED TO TAKING ON THE BOSSES, ON THE BOSSES' OWN TERMS, BY TRYING TO ACCEPT REDUCED WORKING CONDITIONS SO THAT THE IN HOUSE WORK-FORCE WIN THE RIGHT TO CONTINUE TO DO THE JOBS THEY DID PREVIOUSLY. FOR EXAMPLE, RATHER THAN TRYING TO RALLY ACTIVISTS TO TRY AND MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE FIGHT BACK, THE WEST MIDLANDS TUC AND FULL-TIME UNION OFFICIALS HAVE ORGANISED MEETINGS TO EXPLAIN HOW THE WORKERS CAN COMPETE FOR THEIR OWN JOBS. FOWLER HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO DICTATE THE BATTLEGROUND. NOT SURPRISINGLY, ATTENDANCE AT THESE MEETINGS HAS DWINDLED UNTIL, AT THE MOST RECENT ONE, NO ACTIVISTS TURNED UP. ALTHOUGH UNITY BETWEEN DIFFERENT UNIONS AT LOCAL LEVEL WAS BEGINNING TO BE BUILT DURING THE PAY DISPUTE, NO REAL WAY HAS BEEN FOUND TO DEVELOP THIS INTO THE BASIS OF A FIGHTING UNITY AMONGST HEALTH WORKERS. ACTIVISTS HAVE BEEN DEMORALISED BY THE LACK OF NATIONAL LEADERSHIP. THE SOUL-DESTROYING GRIND OF ATTENDING ENDLESS JOINT UNION-MANAGEMENT MEETINGS TO DISCUSS HOW THE IN HOUSE WORK-FORCE MIGHT SOMEHOW CUT THEIR OWN THROATS TO TRY AND SAVE SOME OF THEIR OWN JOBS, IS DESTROYING LOCAL ACTIVISTS. HEALTH WORKERS ARE LEFT TO GO BEGGING TO SO-CALLED SYMPATHETIC LOCAL BOSSES AND THE VAGUE HOPE THAT COME THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, LIKE THE 7th CAVALRY, BENN AND KINNOCK WILL APPEAR OVER THE HORIZON TO SAVE THEM.

It is common for a significant minority of Area Health Authority members (local NHS bosses) to be members of trade unions or the Labour Party. They are either directly nominated by those organisations or indirectly by being members of other organisations e.g. Community Health Councils.

East Birmingham Health Authority is no exception. Recently those labour movement members were faced with a stark choice: the financial needs of the Authority or the jobs of the workers. At issue was whether the existing work-force should continue

to clean part of the hospital or whether the work should be privatised and be done by a private contractor: Crothalls. The voting was close but Crothalls won the contract; 84 health service cleaners' jobs were lost. Had all the labour movement members voted against privatisation on principle, those jobs would have been saved. They acted as bosses at the expense of the work-force.

HIT LIST
When Fowler originally told Health Authorities to put

STRUGGLES IN THE NHS ... Against Racism... Against Sexism...

"It may well be that the chief medical laboratory scientific officer at Ashford would have preferred a consultant from Roedean or Westminster School rather than from Sri Lanka."

This was one of the reasons given in a report by an industrial tribunal in London which looked into why Dr Malila Noone was not appointed to be consultant microbiologist at Ashford Hospital, Middlesex.

The tribunal, which met in April, awarded Dr Noone £5,000 damages for racial discrimination, and asked the authority to find another post for her. It found that Dr Noone had been turned down for the post at Ashford even though she had better experience and qualifications than other candidates.

MARK PONNAMPALAM

Such racism will come as no surprise to many black health workers and patients of the NHS. Mark Ponnampalam is one black doctor who has faced consistent discrimination. In a leaflet put out by the Mark Ponnampalam Support Campaign, and supported by Hackney Asian Association, Newham Asian Association, Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff and the Medical Practitioners Union, Mark's experience is described:

"His experience of racist attitudes within the Health Service is typical of what many other black health workers at

all levels have encountered in their working lives. Mark Ponnampalam trained at St Bartholomew Hospital where he gained his medical degree. He eventually built up a body of experience together with the appropriate qualifications which should have enabled him to work as a hospital surgeon. Instead he has spent 10 years unable to find other than temporary employment."

Of the general situation for black people as regards the Health Service, the leaflet points out:

"Racism denies the black population of the United Kingdom adequate medical care, and also deprives them of the necessary education and skills to practise as health workers. ... In the fields of gynaecology, family-planning and obstetrics, virtually no Asian or Afro-Caribbean specialists can be found in London, and this even in areas with ethnic minorities constituting up to 60% of the population. ... The fact is that the health and welfare agencies in this country are now further pawns in the hands of the racist state to control, subjugate, render powerless and exploit black people. Hence the rigid stand taken by the medical hierarchy against allowing black health workers into the decision-making processes of the medical services, even in those units serving communities with a majority of black residents, thus leaving black people exposed to the ravages of racism."



REINSTATE DR WENDY SAVAGE

'Class Struggle' correspondent.

Dr Wendy Savage is the consultant obstetrician at the London Hospital, Mile End. She has been suspended by her employers pending a disciplinary hearing to consider an accusation of gross malpractice; an accusation Dr Savage strongly denies. It is thought that the more traditional, usually male, doctors are trying to get rid of her.

The real issue behind the scenes is the medical profession's attitude to pregnant women. Dr Savage strongly supports the approach which says that decisions on care during pregnancy and the birth should be something in which the mother-to-be has a right to say what she wants. After all, pregnancy is not an illness. Medical experts should be available to help when necessary; not to take over the woman completely and treat her as a set of symptoms.

Dr Savage is the only obstetrician to go to GPs' surgeries to save women the long trek to the hospital ante-natal clinics. She supports women wanting home deliveries and the Domino scheme by which a woman can come into hospital with her midwife, who delivers her there and goes home with her afterwards. Women under her care are not routinely induced just because they are overdue. The use of forceps deliveries is kept to a minimum. Dr Savage does not have a private practice.

Women who have given birth under Dr Savage's care have rallied to her support. 67 of the 83 GPs in Tower Hamlets wrote to her employers to pay tribute to her work and saying they were eagerly awaiting her reinstatement.

SUPPORT

At 2.30 p.m. on Thursday, June 13th, there will be a protest march in support of Dr Savage from the London Hospital to Whitechapel.

WENDY SAVAGE

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CLASS STRUGGLE
Political Paper of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain

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FIGHTING RACISM...

'Class Struggle' correspondent.

Up and down the country, black people are fighting back against the racism that permeates this society. They are taking on the immigration laws, the education, health and judicial systems, discrimination in jobs, racist attacks by white racists and the police.

VICTORIES

In April, the Campaign to Free Iqbal Begum won an important victory when she was freed by the Appeal Court after being unjustly imprisoned for four years (see May 'Class Struggle'). Another campaign based in Tower Hamlets, London, recently won another victory when Shahida Zubair Ali won her right to stay.

Shahida Zubair Ali, a Pakistani woman, has lived in East London for eight years. She had married here, and her three children were all born here. But the Home Office only gave Shahida work permits for one year and in February of this year, refused to renew the permit. Now the campaign in support of Shahida's right to stay has forced the Home Office to back down.

Indian sub-continent for entry clearance were a matter of deliberate policy to discourage people from applying to come. Families are normally divided for years by this policy and often permanently, when entry clearance is finally refused.

The Bishop of Birmingham, Hugh Montefiore, pointed out that the immigration rules are directly contrary to the principle of "innocent until proven guilty". He was supporting the Divided Families Campaign who, together with the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) and others, estimate that there are 17,000 men settled here who are at present separated from their wives and families.

Reverend Montefiore pointed out: "It should be accepted that a man was telling the truth about wanting his wife and children to join him, not that a person is lying unless he can prove he is not."

Even the UK Immigration Advisory Service (UKIAS), a government funded body not well known for being radical, joined in. In oral and written evidence, the UKIAS told a Select Committee how black people faced "police-style interrogation and an inquisitorial attitude". Mrs Shiela Stevens, UKIAS senior

of British imperialism's oppression of nations and peoples around the world. Racist oppression is a form of national oppression and cannot simply be reduced to class oppression, although it interrelates with it.

Black national minority people here were the first to come forward to support the miners and other just struggles of the national majority working class. Will they now receive similar support in their struggles against racism?

Such reports are, of course, only partial and often do not tackle the fundamental question of immigration control itself or the racism built into the immigration laws.

LABOUR RACISM

However, in some ways even they are in advance of others who do not begin to see the separate oppression of black people but insist on treating them as 'all working class'. This is the argument behind the current row in the Labour Party whose leadership wants to see black sections stopped. It is also the attitude of the 'Militant' Liverpool Council who since they won control have come into sharp conflict with black organisations in the city.

There are by now many such reports gathering the dust, and there has been plenty of evidence available for years testifying to racism in all the main institutions of Britain. In the absence of a broad, mass-based campaign against the immigration laws, or other aspects of racism, it is still single campaigns that are doing most on the ground to change things.

CAMPAIGNS AGAINST DEPORTATION

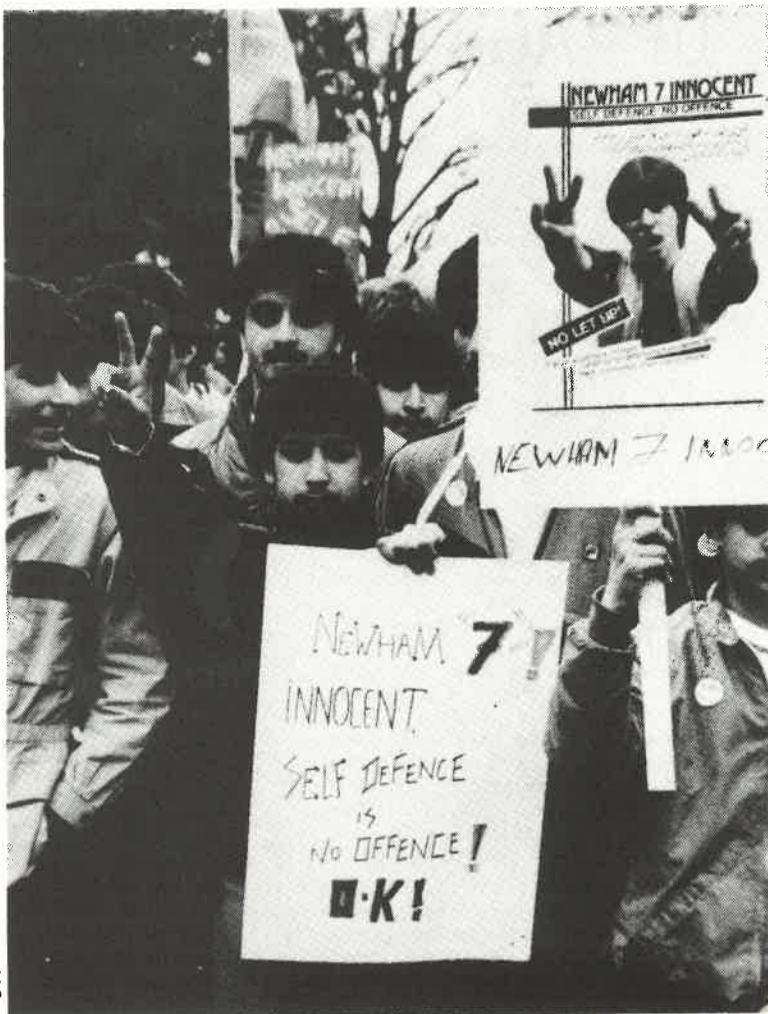
More and more black people have lost faith in the "justice" of the immigration courts and tribunals, and Home Office decrees. They have turned to mass support to win their right to stay.

Shahid Ali Syed, his wife, Nasreen and their baby daughter are one such family. Shahid has worked for British Gas since 1979 but the Home Office has now refused to extend his work permit and is threatening deportation to Pakistan.

Another family under threat in London is Pina Manuel and her son Arman, who was born here and is a British citizen. Pina, who is from the Philippines, has lived here for nine years, working in different hotels and as a 'resident domestic'. She was told to leave by March 15th of this year and her appeal was refused. Pina and her son, Arman, have now taken sanctuary in a church in London.

Another couple have also recently taken sanctuary in a church in Paddington, London. They are Katerina and Vassilis Nicola, who lost their home in Cyprus when Turkish troops invaded the island in 1974. They have been refused refugee status by the Home Office and have taken sanctuary not only to highlight their own situation but also that of hundreds of other Cypriots who have made their home in this country and have now been told to leave.

Ayse Halil Korkunal is another Cypriot woman who has already been deported with her three-year old daughter, Sebnem, in January 1985. She was forced to leave behind her two British-born sons with her British parents. The campaign which fought to stop her deportation is now demanding 'Bring Ayse Home'.



'Class Struggle' photo.

As 'Class Struggle' goes to press, the trial of the Newham 7 is under way. The main issue for them is the right of black people to defend themselves against racist attacks. One of the Seven faced such an attack on the first day of the Old Bailey trial when he was beaten up by warders during the lunch break. Seeing his black eye and swellings about the face, the judge commented that: "It may have to be investigated."

Following the police attacks on a previous Newham 7 Defence Campaign march, another was organised for May 11, a fortnight later. It was joined by 2,000 people. Once more, the police waded in, making 15 arrests, mainly at the end of the march in Plashet Park, where a rally had been planned. It was the provocative behaviour of the police which led a large number of young people in the park to hit back by hurling rocks and sticks at them.

☆ UPFRONT ☆

I see that according to latest opinion polls, Margaret Thatcher's popularity on the home front is at its lowest ebb since the Falklands' War - or Britain's re-invasion of the Malvinas, to give it its proper title. The Tory Party now appears to be third in the parliamentary stakes behind Labour and the Alliance who are neck and neck.

Another court saga hit the news, or rather crept into one or two papers, when Rachael Hogg was sent down for a week for contempt of court by Judge Gerald Butler at Southwark. Brave Rachael had shouted from the gallery: "You are the most biased judge I have ever come across. You are a racist judge." The totally unbiased judge decided to hear the contempt of court case himself, and, being unbiased, decided that the accusation that he was a biased racist was totally without foundation.

Getting back to Thatcher's troubles: she was relieved to hear at the end of May that the Tory majorities on the parliamentary committee checking out the Special Branch had decided that they had heard no evidence that the Branch had exceeded its powers. Labour MP's on the committee, however, were not too keen on the fact that the committee had voted not to hear evidence from witnesses who had been harassed in the first place. Unfortunately for us the loyal Labour opposition, whilst laudably protesting against Special Branch attention to CND and trade union leaders, have also made it clear that they will back to the hilt Branch operations against anyone suspected of being a commie, or of consorting with terrorist (i.e. anti-imperialist) organisations.

While we are on the subject of the state's repressive machinery, there were one or two interesting details that arise from the case of the poor SAS colonel who got court-martialed for keeping secret documents at home. 'Class Struggle' has previously reported the SAS presence in Oman and, just guess where he had been for the past couple of years. It was also noteworthy that in his possession were details about previous SAS operations in the north of Ireland. Now I thought that the government were claiming that the SAS were sent in to the north only after some of the Tory ministers and hangers-on made a rapid descent through several storeys of a Brighton hotel.

Back to Thatcher again. (Sorry, it's an easy subject to stray away from.) Her recent problems appear also to have extended to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, who were mean enough to tell the world that the British contribution to famine relief in Ethiopia and the Sahel, of which she is so proud, was id for by cutting down other aid projects.

At the same time, we at last hear more criticisms of the government's attacks on Third World students in Britain. It appears it now costs a Third World student £11,000 a year to be educated in a British university, as opposed to £6,000 in, say, Belgium, or £2,000 in Bangladesh. Here is a good example of racism for the Labour Party to latch on to. But, what is the basis of the criticisms we hear? Margaret Thatcher is condemned for damaging British imperial interests. If these Third World students go to other countries for their education, the critics say, Britain won't have Third World friends in the future. How sad.

Labour's new-found anti-racism was also expressed in a letter to 'The Guardian' by Alex Lyon (I wonder if it's the same one) who roundly condemns the racist operation of the anti-immigration laws. Relief from all when he 'proves' that this racism is only recent. Labour's anti-immigration laws, our readers will be pleased to know, were OK. It's only since 1980 they've been racist.



Members of the Pryce Family Campaign march with the Newham 7 demonstration. 16-year old Eustace Pryce was killed in a racist attack in Newham last November. His brother was subsequently arrested along with the alleged murderer.

In Bradford, a year long campaign by parents and anti-racists at Drummond Middle School has forced the racist headmaster, Honeyford, out of his job, although the government may still intervene.

MORE REPORTS

It has always been the mass actions of the black community that has exposed and challenged racism. Some individuals and institutions have learnt from their struggles, and the last few months have seen a new layer added to the pile of existing reports (mainly ignored) that document aspects of racism.

In February, the much-delayed Commission For Racial Equality's report, called "Immigration Control Procedures", was delayed by opposition within the CRE, by the Home Office and the courts. After systematic investigation, it has added new evidence of the racism of official attitudes from the highest to the lowest level of immigration control, under both Tory and Labour governments, but does not examine the laws themselves. Ian Martin of the Fabian Society, wrote about it: "The CRE report is a powerful indictment of a whole area of public administration, and it rightly makes clear that it is not junior staff at whom its fundamental criticisms are directed."

'The Guardian' recently quoted from confidential papers which showed that long queues in the

counsellor at Heathrow, said she had never known this happen to whites. UKIAS also criticised long delays. People are detained in cells which do not meet minimum standards as there is no natural air or light. The Home Office has also been trying to deport Thelma Jackson, a 69-year old woman from Jamaica, who has been living with her daughter Pat, in Longsight, Manchester. Thelma's supporters won a partial victory recently when the adjudicator at a tribunal recommended that Thelma be allowed to stay.

The struggle against the immigration laws is particularly sharp because these laws threaten the rights of all black people here, through both external and internal controls. In other areas the fight goes on, too. In May the trial began of the Newham 7 whose only "crime" was to defend their community from racist attacks.

The Roach Family Support Committee is setting up their own independent inquiry in their search for the truth about Colin Roach's death in Stoke Newington police station. On 3rd May, a picket was held outside Wandsworth prison to protest against the drugging and continued imprisonment of Cirus Noor, one of the black youth victimised by police during the campaign to find out the truth about Colin's death.

Black people will continue to resist the racist oppression they face in this country. This oppression is tied by a thousand threads to the history

UP AGAINST THE STATE

When the miners came out on strike in March 1984, some people thought that the National Union of Mineworkers' (NUM)

victories of the 1970's would be repeated in the 1980's. At that time the miners were united among themselves, they got massive support from powerful unions such as the engineers and the railway workers and they moved fast to implement a highly successful tactic of mass picketing.

Many probably knew that it was going to be a tougher battle. First the Labour government and later on the Tories, had taken on the car workers and the steel workers and won important battles in the fight to 'modernise' and 'rationalise' these industries. Unemployment had grown massively and the organised working class was in no mood for a fight. Most importantly, the 1970's had seen the miners in a strong bargaining position because of the OPEC oil price rise. The 1980's saw a world recession with the prices of oil and coal at a record low.

Few would have predicted either the length of the strike or the characteristic features that emerged from it: the involvement of whole communities in the fight, particularly the role played by women; the confrontation with paramilitary police; the mass criminalisation of ordinary miners or the type of support and links that grew in the course of the strike.

STRATEGY FOR REPRESSION

At each stage of the strike, the miners confronted in the strategy of the National Coal Board (NCB) and the Thatcher government, a carefully thought out plan. The Tories were determined to beat the miners, whatever the cost. The miners confronted the police, the courts, the media as well as the NCB and government. They had to come to terms with a lack of support from the organised working class and the growing solidarity from other sections of people: the unemployed, women, the national minorities and from Irish people.

In the early part of the strike, a substantial minority of miners, mainly in the Midlands, had refused to join. Mass picketing was used to try and stop this strike-breaking. The police had anticipated this tactic and used a carefully-planned strategy to stop striking miners effectively picketing.

Later, the miners concentrated on power stations and stopping the supply of coal. The most dramatic confrontation was seen at the Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire. The police were well-prepared. In Nottinghamshire, they had used road blocks to turn men back before they ever got near to the pits. At Orgreave, they escorted the miners to the plant. Once there, they used newly-developed tactics with horses, dogs and riot police, sparking off scenes of a fully-armed paramilitary force using extreme violence against unarmed pickets.

The government chose a strategy of mass criminalisation of striking miners rather than an

"This has been a wonderful dispute for making miners and mining communities realise what has happened to other people.. We're now seeing a situation where the policing of Britain was learnt by the policing of the Irish people."

outright legal attack on the NUM. At the same time, they skilfully used the media to encourage the 'back-to-work' movement whose centre was in Nottinghamshire pits. The miners received no strike pay yet had assumed strike pay deducted from social security payments. Faced with this propaganda campaign and growing hardship in the pit communities, men began to drift back to work even in some Yorkshire pits. The NCB and the police went to totally 'uneconomic' expense to escort handfuls of strike-breakers into work. The pickets shifted back to these pits to stop the drift back. It was at this stage that the police began their systematic attacks on the mining villages such as Armthorpe, Maltby and other Yorkshire villages. Sometimes they focussed on picket lines at pit gates but often made a more generalised attack, like that of an army of occupation on hostile villagers.

Throughout the strike, the government and NCB used negotiations to raise hopes about a settlement, but they came to nothing. Substantial concessions were made to rail-workers to avoid solidarity action and to NACOD, the pit deputies' union to stop them joining the strike. The Labour Party and TUC conference conferences saw many fine speeches but were followed by little real solidarity action in support of the miners' cause.

ORGANISED RETURN

After Christmas, the drift back to work gradually increased. By March it was clear that more and more men would go back to work as the hardship in mining communities grew with no settlement in sight. The government showed no sign of backing down and had gone to great lengths to avoid power cuts and deny any serious impact on the economy. At that point, there was little alternative to the organised return to work which took the men back to work with their heads held high to fight another day.

The miners were defeated in the short term. But they can be proud of the battle they fought. Both the spirit of resistance

they showed and many of the positive aspects of the strike should be lessons for us all.

SELF-RELIANCE

In the first place, the miners depended on themselves. The demand raised by the NUM to stop the pit closures had popular support in the majority of the coalfields, not just among the miners and their families but in the wider community as well. Thousands of miners travelled around the country to join the mass pickets, confronted the police, and many were injured, went through the courts, and were fined and hundreds imprisoned for what they believed to be a just cause. The NUM relied on, and to a great extent, encouraged this mass involvement as opposed to relying on labour lieutenants of the TUC or the Labour Party

SUPPORT

Within the communities, the women's support groups played an active and important role. In the first place, they often got together to deal with the practical problems faced by mining families, to organise food parcels or food kitchens, benefits to raise money or help for single miners who received no social security payments at all. In the course of this work, they developed the basis for a whole alternative to the welfare state, relying on donations from supporters and working collectively, and autonomously, even in support of, the NUM. They went on picket lines and travelled round the country building support among sections of people often outside the organised labour movement.

In Wales, the support from the community took the form of the Welsh Council, which brought together a broad range of people in a kind of United Front. But, throughout the coalfields, people other than miners understood the devastation brought to whole areas by mass unemployment. Local traders and publicans, for example, gave considerable support to the struggle.

Outside the mining communities, support networks grew and developed. Solidarity action by other trade unionists in key industries did exist, particu-

arly on the railways and in the docks. But it did not become widespread. For example, there was little support from the power stations. This was partly a question of leadership of other unions and partly because the government had laid careful plans, for example, to bypass the railways with road traffic

and the large docks with small boats. More importantly, the organised working class which grew strong on the "boom" of the 1950's and 1960's, is in no state to fight at a time of crisis of imperialism. Support came instead from a much more varied set of people, including white-collar workers, health workers, women's groups and the unemployed. Black national minority people gave generously and made their support clear. Delegations from the black community in this country included representatives of Third World liberation movements.

International support came from many places, including Ireland. Collections were made by the nationalist people in the six counties and miners and women from mining communities who went on delegations to Belfast and Derry in the course of 1984 were welcomed and supported. Messages of support came from around the world, including El Salvador and from Solidarity in Poland. Practical support in the form of money and food came particularly from Europe where many workers have faced similar threats to their jobs and living standards.

However, the government played a game of sitting and waiting. In the end, the miners lost their struggle for jobs. Since the end of the strike, already 12 pits have closed. 700 miners have been imprisoned and

12 pits have closed. Over 600 men have been sacked by the NCB and there seems little hope of the NUM getting their jobs back. A new aggressive management policy is being implemented in the pits.

When the miners went back to work, many said that although the battle was lost, the war was just beginning. They have learnt over a long, hard year that British imperialism does not listen to reason. There is no justice that is not fought for by the working class and oppressed people. It is this, together with an understanding of who are their friends, and who their enemies, that show us the basis for an alliance to be built between the working class and oppressed national minorities in this country to take on the struggle against British imperialism. Such an alliance must be based not only on support for the just struggles of the working class but also an understanding of the national oppression on which British imperialism has been built.

"Like thousands of other women who've played an active part in this strike, we won't be content to be behind the kitchen sink when this is over... It's made women aware that they can do other things besides their housework and perhaps bring about a better community for our kids."



All quotes on this page are thanks to Banner Theatre's 'Miners' Support tape: Here We Go'.

THE M STR

1984- BRITISH IM IN CF ..EDITORIAL..

The miners' strike of 1984-85 was the longest, most bitter and most violent industrial dispute of recent British history. It brought to the surface the open clash of interests between the working class and the bourgeoisie, and to a great extent broke out of the confines which have limited workers' economic struggles since the Second World War. It was fought at a time when western imperialism is in deep crisis.

This crisis of British imperialism is part of an international crisis. For centuries, the countries of Western Europe, and more recently the USA and the USSR, have built up their economies and industries on the basis of the exploitation of the peoples and countries of the Third World. The great wealth and power of the ruling classes, the banks and companies, of Europe, and the relatively high living standards of its people have come about as a result of the 'underdevelopment' of the Third World.

The twentieth century has seen the beginning of the end of imperialism's control and domination of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. After four centuries of imperialist and colonialist expansion, the basic tide of history has been reversed. The revolutionary struggles of the Third World are now the motive force of history. In response, imperialism has altered its forms of control and exploitation and in many cases, intensified them. But it has not been able to change the basic trend. Whether in the form of national liberation movements or countries that have successfully won their

INTERNATIONAL

The coal industry in this country ca rest of the world. British imperial on buying cheap in many parts of the deeply implicated in the exploitati workers in mining and energy-related

The expansion of British indust based on buying oil cheap from Thi period, the domestic coal industry countries united to demand a fairer many countries, including Britain, production of coal. Coal was "er companies began to move into coal, bot and in the Third World.

The third option developed in re Apart from its obvious safety proble involves the exploitation or uranium, occupied by the South African regime.

During the miners' strike, som Azania (South Africa) where British through its companies and investments half of all foreign investment in Az favour minor reforms of apartheid, maintaining the present power structu

Another example is the Philipp companies are expanding. Shell is i and marketing oil through its own su other companies.

These are typical examples of financial interests that form the ba around the world. The people of the l risen up in struggle against this syst union rights or higher wages.

For the people of Azania and the class exploitation and oppression revolutionary national struggle agai must be based too, on an understandi World, the first stage of their independence. British imperialism sta and oppression of nations. We must their revolutionary struggles.

MINERS' STRIKE

1985 IMPERIALISM CRISIS

.....EDITORIAL.



THE LABOUR PARTY: NO ANSWER FOR WORKERS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE

In their struggle for jobs, the miners challenged the government's plans for restructuring industry and came up against the power of the state. The appointment of MacGregor to head the NCB was a clear sign that the government intended to take on the miners. The NCB's strategy for dealing with the strike and with negotiations was clearly directed by Whitehall. The police force was used as the armed fist of the state to prevent effective mass picketing and generally intimidate the people of the mining communities. The courts and the legal system generally backed the police and government ensuring the criminalisation of striking miners, and to keep many activists away from the strike by bail conditions. The reduction of social security benefits was used to starve the miners back to work. The media campaigned extensively round the strike, generally against the miners, by highlighting the back-to-work movement and generally influencing public opinion.

"There's never, ever, been any justice in this country. We still get the same justice as we got when we got the lords of the manor. There's never been any democracy in this country, not unless you can afford it."



of bad leadership and betrayal of working class interests. This understanding is no doubt encouraged by the fact that many rank and file Labour Party activists worked hard in support committees. For many, the solution is to join the Labour Party and make it more militant. The problems of bad leadership and class betrayal are, of course, real problems. But they are only the right face of social-democracy which is itself, essentially a politics of compromise with imperialism. And it is the working class that makes the most compromises. Historically, the Labour Party has served the interests of imperialism as effectively as have the Tories. The left forms of social-democracy are only the other face of this compromise and do not challenge the basic rule of imperialism.

police which was exposed during the strike so clearly as an anti-working class force is seen by the Labour Party to be neutral, or indeed to serve the people. Thus Gerald Kaufmann only in May criticised the new Public Order proposals as "threatening the independence of the police". What independence? One of the most positive lessons of the strike to many people from mining communities has been the links made with people from black communities and from the north of Ireland. Black people here, and the nationalist people of the six counties, have for many years already felt the open violence and disregard for the "law" of the British police and army, and know that this iron fist can be used by either party in power.

The importance of the miners' strike was that the actual practice of the struggle opened many people's eyes, in the first place to the fact that British imperialism is, when necessary, prepared to defend its class interests with force, using the law as a tool to justify that force. But many also began to see beyond their own immediate cause as well. Although women have traditionally supported the struggles of men in mining communities, their activities were of key importance in this strike and have brought about a change in attitudes. Time and time again, miners said that they would never have been able to hold out so long without the work the women were doing. In many areas, the women's support groups are continuing and women will go on to take part in struggles ahead.

For the real lessons of the miners' strike to be learnt, so that a strategy for the way forward can be built, it is necessary to root out social-democratic ideology in whatever form it appears.

The Labour Party does not, and never has, represented the long term interests of the vast majority of working class people in this country. Historically, its base was among middle-class socialists and a skilled, relatively privileged section of the working class. It thus grew strong because Britain was an imperialist society that could afford to make some concessions to some sections of the working class. But in an imperialist society, the basis of which is the exploitation of people in the Third World, such ideas have sunk deep roots within all the working class and reflect the fact that the whole of our society has benefited, to some extent, from the 'underdevelopment' of the Third World.

Many people identified for the first time with black people and with the nationalist people of the north of Ireland. They realised that the policing techniques used to attack their communities and pickets had been developed against black people and in Ireland. Such an understanding can be built on to a higher level of unity based on an understanding of the fact that British imperialism rests on two pillars: that of the exploitation of the working class, but even more fundamental the exploitation of the people and nations of the Third World.

Some people cannot admit that the miners were defeated. They see the year of struggle as having simply acted as a pre-election publicity stunt for the Labour Party. Now, they argue, more people are opposed to the government's policies of unemployment and will elect a Labour government next time. This is to use the hardship and bitter struggle of the miners quite cynically in a bourgeois parliamentary game. It is to encourage the illusion that the working class can win justice within the present system, if only they have the sense to elect a Labour government. Labour's record on pit closures contradicts these arguments. In the period since the Second World War, both Labour and Tory implemented policies of closing pits and destroying miners' jobs. It is true, of course, that Labour's economic policies are different from the present government's. Labour, for example, stands for continued nationalisation whereas the Tories may consider privatisation of certain pits. But these differences are secondary: both are strategies for a way out of the crisis for British imperialism. Neither party can in the long run guarantee the right to work or a higher standard of living to the working class. Labour's policies of 'The Plan for Coal' of the 1970's, resulted from the world situation and the increased price of oil brought about by the just struggles of the OPEC countries not from a desire to preserve jobs in coal.

As imperialism goes into deeper crisis, the politics of compromise and moderation are obviously not working and even if a Labour government were elected tomorrow, could not solve this crisis. But many of the underlying ideas continue and appear in different forms.

In relation to the Third World, the Labour Party stands firmly and squarely behind its continued exploitation and dependency on the imperialist countries such as Britain. In some cases, the policies of Labour are even worse than those of the Tories, for example in the Middle East. The Labour Party historically has opposed revolutionary struggles as firmly as the Tories: in Ireland, in Malaya, in Zimbabwe and many other places in the world. Labour Party MP's such as Roy Mason (NUM sponsored) have a particular responsibility for developing and intensifying the repression of the nationalist people of the north of Ireland.

Another common myth is the idea that the miners suffered at the hands of 'Tory' police, 'Tory' judges and 'Tory' courts. Again, history of the recent period contradicts this view. Plans for the development of a paramilitary riot force have been underway for over ten years now, under both Labour and Tory. While there may be particular openly political appointments under the present government, the judicial and legal institution does not change with a change of party in power in the House of Commons. The role of the

BREAK WITH IMPERIALISM
In this way, working class people see it as their responsibility to work in the interests of British industry, to save 'our' coal industry 'for the sake of the nation'. Many support the Labour policy of import controls to 'protect 'our industry'. But for the working class to fight in its own interests it must first break with imperialism and make common cause with those most oppressed by imperialism, both in this country and around the world. Support for import controls only strengthens the social-democratic alternative for imperialism. The working class has to make common cause with workers and peasants in the Third World, and not support this social-chauvinist and racist call.

The seeds of a new awareness on all these issues have begun to take root in the course of the miners' strike. If they develop further and are built on, we can begin to build a powerful, revolutionary alliance between the working class and national minority people in this country. Such a force would see that the revolutionary forces of the Third World, and in Ireland, are its strongest allies in the fight against British imperialism and would hold no truck with the rotten social-chauvinism of the Labour Party.

People in the mining communities have learnt these lessons through their own bitter experience. Many have said they will never see the police again as friendly, village bobbies. Miners have been imprisoned when their only crime has been to fight for a job. Hundreds have lost their jobs, some for the simple act of coal-picking: coal they themselves dug out. Many understand now, if they did not before, that there is no justice for the working class in this system.

Many people also understood through the year of hard struggle, the role of the Labour Party and the TUC. Welsh miners displayed a noose before Norman Willis when he spoke in South Wales, condemning both the police and miners for violence on the picket lines. It did not go unnoticed, either, that Neil Kinnock kept away from the picket lines until the strike had been defeated or that Bill Sirs and other union leaders were less than enthusiastic about the miners' cause.

POLITICS OF COMPROMISE

However, many still see these positions as a problem simply



of the huge network of business and on the basis of the system of imperialism of the Third World, including miners, have this system. Their fight goes beyond trade and the Philippines, the struggle against repression is closely interrelated with the struggle against imperialism. Our solidarity understanding that for the people of the Third World their struggle is one for national liberation stands for the continued exploitation of the Third World. We must take a clear stand in support of

"To us now it's a war... If something isn't done in the immediate future to safeguard our pits, we are only next door to civil war in this country. It's in the next room. It only takes someone to open the door."

independence and have gone on to build socialism, or Third World states demanding a new and fairer international economic order, this trend has undermined the foundations of the world-wide imperialist system.

As the oldest imperialist power, Britain is in deep crisis. In order to maintain its profitability, it needs to re-structure its economy. Part of this process involves attacking the wages and living standards of the working class at home. Unemployment is used to force down wages and new technology is introduced to make industry more productive.

The present Tory government understood that it was essential to take on and defeat the miners to push through their particular strategy to achieve these ends. It was important to 'modernise' and 'rationalise' the coal industry itself, and also take on politically what they saw as a key section of the working class.

The miners responded to this challenge. They and their communities fought a year-long battle in defence of their jobs and the right to work. In the end they were defeated. But an understanding of the reasons for this defeat and of the true nature of imperialism drawn from the experience of their struggle may be the most important outcome of the struggle.

As communists, we give our wholehearted support to the miners in their just struggle against their exploitation and oppression as working class people. At the same time, we try and learn lessons from their experiences and understanding to take the struggle forward.

NATIONAL SOLIDARITY
The country cannot be seen in isolation from the imperialist's policies on energy are based on the exploitation and oppression of Third World related industries. The coal industry after the Second World War was run down. During the 1970's, when the OPEC price for their oil in the 1970's, Britain, reconsidered their plans for the coal industry as "economic" again. Many major oil companies, both within the imperialist countries and in recent years has been nuclear power. The problems and links with military use, this uranium, particularly in Namibia, illegally regime. Like, some of the coal imported came from British imperialism amasses huge profits investments. British investment accounts for a large part in Azania and, although it may at times be apartheid, its basic interests lie with the structure. Philippines where British oil and mining is involved in manufacturing, refining and its own subsidiaries and through control over the huge network of business and on the basis of the system of imperialism of the Third World, including miners, have this system. Their fight goes beyond trade and the Philippines, the struggle against repression is closely interrelated with the struggle against imperialism. Our solidarity understanding that for the people of the Third World their struggle is one for national liberation stands for the continued exploitation of the Third World. We must take a clear stand in support of

AFRICA IS MAKING HISTORY..... AFRICA'S HISTORY IS LIVING!.....

On March 21st, a League representative spoke at a meeting in the Africa Centre, London, to mark the 25th anniversary of the massacres of Sharpeville and Langa. 'Class Struggle' is printing it now because its major theme has a long term and wide significance, given the fact of the thinking, analyses and strategies of the British 'left' being dominated by Eurocentrism. The RCL will produce more material arguing this point, and hopes it will become widely read and discussed.

We are proud to speak at this historic anniversary. Sharpeville has a deep significance first of all to the people of Azania, but also for all those fighting oppression.

Africa was the birthplace of the first human life, and later of civilised life as well. But the evil colonial system tried to dehumanise Africans, rob them of their history, sever their connection with their own land.

Why? The colonisers wanted to lay their hands on the produce of that land, and turn the people into cultureless slaves. But on the basis of this act of robbery, colonialism also needed an ideology.

IDEOLOGY OF COLONIALISM

Europe used to be just one corner of the world, and a fairly peripheral one in historical terms. Its philosophies, technology etc., drew heavily on the influence of Asia and Africa. But in the colonial era, Europe set itself up as the centre of the world and put together an exploitative system in which other areas were treated as its periphery.

This is an unnatural state of affairs, a brief episode in history which the progressive movement will put an end to. But in order to present this situation as natural and eternal, European and later American society developed a racist myth.

According to this myth, Europe had always been the active force in history and would continue to hold the rest of the world in its orbit, and use it as it saw fit. Hitler did not invent any ideas which had not already been dreamt up by English colonial 'thinkers'.

Any movement to overturn this Euro-American dominance in practice must also, at an ideological level, question the system of ideas which presents this dominance as natural and eternal.

HISTORIC STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PASS LAWS

In this respect, the events leading up to Sharpeville - the formation of the Pan Africanist Congress, Mangaliso Sobukwe's thinking, the Positive Action Campaign - reflect a whole process which is of enormous historical importance. The Pass Laws (the target of that campaign) reflect in a very immediate way how Africans were treated as strangers in their own land, as though it naturally belonged to the coloniser. There was a firm break with the sterile approach of begging concessions from the oppressor. Above all, the Azanian liberation struggle emerged clearly as a movement with its own intrinsic historic logic. It doesn't need to ask for approval from any outside authority, and the popular masses themselves have the absolute right - which nobody else can grant or take away - to create and develop their own organisations, strategy and tactics in conformity with that historic logic.

This current of struggle has been secure among the Azanian masses through the Soweto uprising and beyond, and has scared the hell out of the reactionaries. So one might expect it to be welcomed enthusiastically by the left movement abroad.

Unfortunately in the industrialised world, and in Britain particularly, the contrary has happened. All too often the Sharpeville experience has been distorted, marginalised and hushed up.

This is disgraceful, but not too difficult to explain. The left movement here exists within

an overwhelming imperialist climate of ideas. The colonialist view which sees the West as the centre of the world finds its reflection among English

leftists, who see themselves in the same light.

MARX AND LENIN

This perspective is very deeply rooted. To recognise this does not mean denying the relevance of Marxism. Karl Marx described how exploitation takes place through the appropriation of surplus value, how dead labour - worked up into vast means of production - exercises tyranny over living labour, the sharpening antagonism between a handful of exploiters and the direct labouring masses who are driven deeper and deeper into poverty, how the only way forward is for the oppressed to rise up, smash the chains of this system and create a new, socialist mode of production which really serves the interests of the people.

If we look at today's world we can see that this same pattern is expressed a hundred times more sharply and on an infinitely greater scale, in the vampire-like system which bears down upon the labouring masses in the oppressed nations of the Third World. Lenin already showed how necessary it is to take this wider view, if we are to understand where the fundamental forces for change are located.

EUROCENTRIC VIEW-POINT IN COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

But there is also a certain conception of communism which goes back a very long way in the movement and which embodies a colonialist Eurocentric view-point within it. This trend will need to be rooted out.

It basically does three things. It firstly treats European society and history as a point of reference in imposing external definitions of other societies, so that they are considered 'backward' or 'stagnant' if their history doesn't contain specifically European features, like feudalism. Secondly, it obstinately deals with political economy as though the most important processes are those within or among the industrialised nations, instead of between them and the oppressed nations. It neglects the role played by colonialism and the slave trade and still today played by factors like unequal exchange as an essential and fundamental fact of the capitalist mode of production.

Thirdly, this negative trend peripheralises the oppressed nations politically, treating them as so-called 'reserves' of the revolution and subordin-

ating their struggles to the supposed interests of the proletariat in the 'advanced' countries.

This Eurocentric trend turns its back on both the humanity and the scientific spirit which should characterise communism, and shuts its eyes to the realities, to the living essence of human history as a whole.

REVOLUTIONARY THEORY

This Eurocentric trend is a dead weight which needs to be overthrown if we are to make progress in this country. Even if the weight of imperialist ideology is so strong that we could not do this by our unaided efforts, fortunately in the field of revolutionary

theory the situation is very healthy. An outstanding body of thinkers and leaders whose names are interwoven with the mass movement has come out of the Third World struggles, thus restoring the universality which should belong to a movement for socialism, and overcoming the alienation of part of humanity from itself which occurred due to colonialism and the slave trade.

'LEFT' RACISM

But the white 'left' in this country mostly refuses to recognise all this and persists in its illusions of seeing the world revolving around it - a position where it is in fact peripheralised, at the coat-tails of the imperialist bourgeoisie.

Left-wing racism is a systematic thing: it dictates conditions to the Republican Movement in



Ireland and refuses to support the orientation it itself has chosen; it assesses the black uprisings and other black struggles in this country through externally-imposed criteria which are in essence a leftist form of the analyses created by bourgeois sociology. The Azanian question shows this situation with particular clarity. Imperialism not only controls the oppression of the Azanian people but also - here in Britain at least - strongly influences the ideology of the protest movement against that oppression. How convenient!

In the past, political movements in the colonies often used to be led by remote control from the metropolitan countries. Nostalgic for this situation, the left groups are very unhappy about a movement being led by the black people of Azania, and in conformity with their interests. The authentic leaders of the struggle like Sobukwe and Mthopeng are hushed up so that their names are scarcely known over here, and even Steve Biko, one of the great figures of the twentieth century is reduced to a harmless icon and depicted as a victim rather than a maker of history.

Liberal opinion could play a positive role in opposing some abuses, but the 'left', instead of giving leadership and struggling against the shortcomings of the bourgeoisie, in fact reinforces these weaknesses, and insists on imposing their own labels on the Azanian movement. And this in turn creates conditions where the protest movement can be manipulated by those outside forces who also distrust and fear an authentic popular struggle, and whose opposition to western colonial dominance is mainly a reflection of their own great-power ambitions for southern Africa's rich resources.

The height of this absurdity of this reversal of history, is well illustrated by what happened in London a year ago, when the PAC were prevented

themselves had initiated and led. What racist arrogance!

This attempt to distort the history of Sharpeville reflects an inherent colonialist need to appropriate or destroy African history. It is part and parcel of the same trend expressed in the attempts to deny the essentially African character of ancient Egyptian civilisation, to invent a mythical group of whites who built the monuments of Great Zimbabwe, or to pretend that southern Africa was empty when the settlers moved in.

AFRICA'S HISTORY IS LIVING!

But after all, history is stubborn. The best answer to the distortions can be found in the mass movement in Azania, through Soweto and up to the present. Africa's history is living! This is a mighty force against racism, for the creation of a truly all-embracing revolutionary movement in which the oppressed peoples play the central creative role. A great storm is brewing, and those who side with the colonisers and express their ideology in a 'left' form will end up being swept away by it.

Movements for Independence from France Meet



● Marchers condemn the recent murder of Kanak leader Eloi Machoro.

France is still a major imperialist power. In April, a historic conference was held in Le Moule (Guadeloupe) between representatives of independence movements in the remaining direct French colonies: the Comoro Islands, off East Africa (part of which is still occupied by France); Reunion (near Madagascar); New Caledonia (to the east of Australia); Guyane, Guadeloupe and Martinique (all in the Caribbean). The conference went ahead despite all sorts of government harassment.

France has, on the whole, tried to switch to neo-colonialism, especially in Africa. But it also maintains direct rule in these particular territories. They are called Overseas Departments and Territories, a subterfuge whereby they can be struck off the United Nations' list of non self-governing territories on the grounds that they are "part of France".

The emphasis in these colonies has shifted away from the old-style sugar plantations, etc. France is more concerned with strategic issues: great power status and raw materials, including those beneath territorial waters. Through its colonies, France controls eleven million square kilometres of ocean and seabed within its economic zone.

In addition, France has a satellite-launching station in Guyane, and a nuclear testing base at Mururoa (south east of Tahiti) which gravely threaten the Pacific region. French Chief-of-Staff, General Lacaze, recently remarked that: "Anyone calling into question the status of our territories and departments in this area could oblige France to undertake an increased and prolonged air-land and naval deployment in these two theatres." Not surprising, then, that President Mitterand enthusiastically backed Britain over the Malvinas, as well as on the Irish question!

There was no change in French colonial policy when the Socialist Party came to power in 1981, and any hope of a positive initiative from France has now evaporated. What brought things to a head has been the inspiring anti-colonial struggle of the Kanak people in New Caledonia.

Because its interest is mainly strategic, France has been able to offer certain economic 'carrots' in order to divide and weaken the independence movement. But the mounting popular struggle has shown that the people cannot be bribed to accept a situation where they are rotting in a culture-less limbo. The most precious thing is to control their own destiny.

The political declaration adopted by the conference, puts it clearly: "... the right to independence and national sovereignty is not negotiable ... colonialism has no right to determine the content of our independence on our behalf..."

The conference also received a report on the economic situation which poses the following vital questions: "To build an independent national economy, our peoples have to make a wise choice concerning the future development of our lands. The alternative is this: are they to perpetuate the extravertered and unbalanced character of our national economies, the fetishisation of the West and of the industrialised countries in general, and carry on imitating these countries in their manner of being, thinking, or producing and consuming, carry on relying on 'aid' etc.? Or are our peoples, on the contrary, to change the focus of our national economies in making them autocratic, in giving them a balanced character, in other words in deciding by themselves to conduct the work of development from the starting point of what they ARE, of what they DO, of what they THINK and BELIEVE, that is, starting from our deep realities and the backgrounds of our respective societies?"

These are, indeed, historic, revolutionary questions which all peoples oppressed by colonialism and neo-colonialism are coming to ask.

WAR & THE PEACE MOVEMENT

FINAL PART: THE STRUGGLE FOR WORLD PEACE

This article is the last in our contributed series on 'War and the Peace Movement'. Forty years after the end of the Second World War, the question of the struggle for world peace is as urgent as ever. The continued development, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons only adds to this urgency. We hope that readers will write in with their views on this important issue.

THE WORLD STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

Peace is a fundamental need of people all over the world. Although a few European countries have seen a relatively peaceful period since the Second World War, the world generally is full of death and destruction. The increasing danger and horror of a nuclear war, and the damage already done by nuclear tests and dumping, has made the matter so urgent that anti-nuclear peace movements are involving more and more people never previously active in such an organised and political ways.

AVOIDING PACIFISM

Previous articles have argued that the root cause of war in our world is imperialism, especially the two superpowers; and that therefore the main force against war, the main force for peace, is the struggle of the Third World peoples against imperialism. Many of these struggles are bound to be violent revolutionary struggles. If we understand the difference between just and unjust wars, we can avoid the trap of pacifism, and will wholeheartedly support such revolutionary wars as steps towards a peaceful world.

COUNTRIES FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Many countries in the world are standing up against the superpowers on the question of nuclear war, both in such bodies as the United Nations (UN) and in individual anti-nuclear stands. The UN has held two special sessions on nuclear disarmament when countries all over the world showed their commitment to disarmament, their concern over the effects of nuclear weapons, the economic and social consequences of the arms race, and the effect it is having directly on their countries. Any progress was, of course, blocked by the small

but powerful, imperialist lobby, and the voting of the British government (see box) sums up its real commitment to disarmament (even "multilateral").

Outside the UN, anti-nuclear policies of individual countries are hindering the war plans of the two superpowers. New Zealand has stood by the pledge of its new Labour government that no nuclear-powered ships, or ships carrying nuclear weapons, would be allowed to visit its ports; and of even more concern to the USA, was Australia's recent withdrawal from an agreement to cooperate with testing its MX missiles in Australian waters.

The true stand of the government on nuclear disarmament has been exposed in recent votes in the UN relating to nuclear weapons. On 13 occasions, votes have been taken on questions such as establishing nuclear-free zones in Latin America, the Middle East and Africa; on test bans; on a freeze on nuclear weapons and other related issues. Out of 13 votes, the UK has only twice voted in favour. It has abstained 4 times and voted against for the remaining 7 times. On each occasion, when it has abstained or voted against, the UK has been part of a tiny minority who have managed to block the demands of the majority of the countries of the world.

Australia is of vital importance in America's war plans as it has two large communications bases code-named Merino and Casino, and the largest of the three main American nuclear submarine transmitting stations in the world. Without it, the nuclear armed subs, on which America's plans partly rest, could not operate in the Pacific. The Pacific is of extreme military significance

to the superpowers (as can be seen on the map), and many countries and people there are beginning to fight back against nuclear destruction.

Besides the struggle in the Philippines (the site of huge American military bases), other struggles have recently been highlighted by a visit to this country of two representatives of the indigenous people of the Pacific islands. The two women, Chailang, a Chamorro woman from the Marianas in the north Pacific, and Titewhai Harawira, a Maori woman from Aotearoa (New Zealand), have been on a speaking tour organised by the Greenham women. They have told of the horrors that nuclear weapons have already brought to their areas and how people there have linked their call to take nuclear technology away from their waters with a call for national independence.

URANIUM, A LINK BETWEEN NUCLEAR BOMBS, POWER AND OPPRESSION

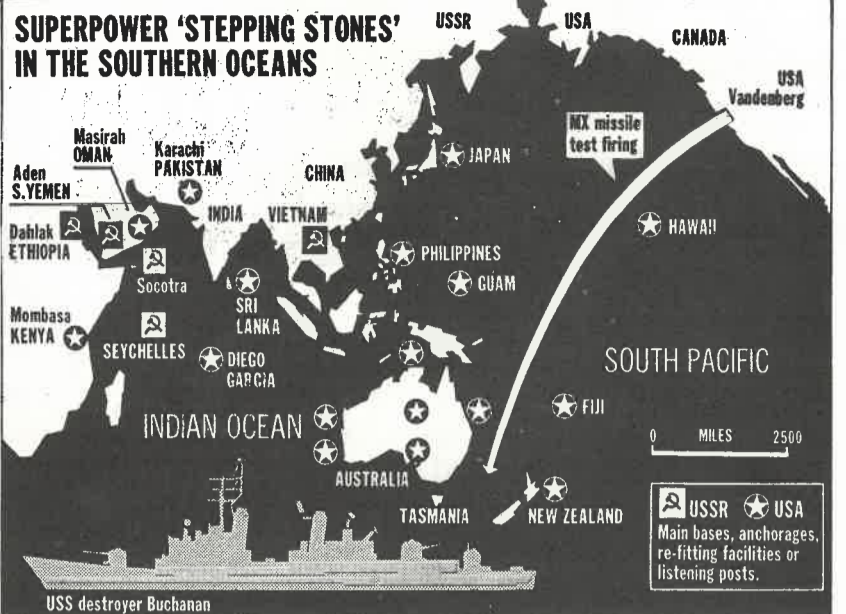
Other nations are differently affected by nuclear technology, for example Namibia, the site of one of the world's richest uranium deposits. Uranium oxide is extracted at Namibia's Rossing mine nearly half owned by Rio Tinto Zinc, a British-dominated transnational. Since 1974, the UN has recognised the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), as the sole legitimate representative of the Namibian people and declared the exploitation of the country's resources as illegal whilst it is occupied by South Africa. Despite this, successive British governments, Labour and Tory, have imported Namibian uranium since 1978. Thus the continued rape and plunder of Namibia by South Africa is backed up to the hilt by Rio Tinto Zinc and such buddies as Britain, USA and Israel.

This uranium trade also illustrates the close link between nuclear weapons and nuclear power. British Nuclear Fuels does not disclose which uranium is for military and which for civilian use. Plutonium, used in nuclear weapons, is produced as a by-product of the civil nuclear reactor programme. Uranium fuel in the reactor produces fuel elements which are reprocessed to extract plutonium 239. Or alternatively uranium can be simply enriched to form uranium 239 which can be used militarily. All these processes leave radioactive products, or waste, which now amounts to over 30,000 Kg per year in the world. And there is no known way to dispose of this safely!

ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENTS IN IMPERIALIST COUNTRIES

In contrast to other countries around the world, the imperialist powers, such as USSR, USA, Britain, France and Germany, all speak of peace but do not move towards it. In those countries the growing peace movement and anti-nuclear movements are in direct conflict with the state. The proposed siting of American Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe have intensified the European anti-nuclear movements and encouraged a certain amount of unity between them. In West Germany, the Green party has been particularly successful in publicising the issue. In Holland the government put off its final agreement to Cruise for years

SUPERPOWER 'STEPPING STONES' IN THE SOUTHERN OCEANS



because of public opinion. There have been many massive rallies often with a strong line against both superpowers. Groups such as the Greenham women have supported many actions against Cruise in other countries, as at Comiso in Italy, and received many solidarity visits in exchange.

In this country both national CND and many other anti-nuclear groupings have growing support. CND has a membership of about 300,000, with many more people involved in other organisations such as Greenham women support groups, trade union CND, Youth CND, Scientists Against Nuclear Arms and Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons. Opinion polls show a consistent majority against Cruise missiles, and a growing minority against Trident. Throughout the country, towns and villages all have small groups of active people campaigning against nuclear weapons.

At the forefront of the struggle over the last four years have been the Greenham women who have raised the level, determination and ingenuity of struggle to take on and withstand the forces of the state in a very direct manner. Throughout the anti-nuclear movement, especially at its grassroots level, women play a leading role. The women at Greenham are supported by a web of active women's groups. The protests at Faslane, Molesworth and other bases support and broaden that at Greenham. Where the protest is fiercest, the true nature of the state forces are quickly exposed and the Greenham women have made links with other groups up against the repressive arm of the state. The miners' support groups, for example, visited Greenham and they mutually encouraged and supported each other, with the obvious link of a national energy policy as well as their experiences of police, law courts, media etc.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF IMPERIALISM

To join the struggle against nuclear weapons and for world peace is but one door of entry into an understanding of the nature of imperialism and the need to overthrow it. Not only does direct involvement lead to a questioning about the nature of the state, the farce of parliamentary democracy, the power of the ruling class; but also the way imperialism dominates the world scene, the way Third World countries are dominated and exploited for the economic and military plans of the superpowers, the relationship between the arms trade, foreign "aid" and Third World impoverishment.

SUMMARY THE ARGUMENTS FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Nuclear weapons are a force of terrible destruction, not only for the people against whom they are immediately directed, but through radioactivity and the nuclear winter, a force which threatens to destroy the world as a whole. Nuclear weapons cannot be used in a defensive manner and are not suitable for a people's war. They are being developed as increasingly accurate and devastating war-fighting weapons and are almost exclusively under the control of the superpowers. In this country, we are in effect an unsinkable aircraft carrier for the USA, and as such, would receive such a massive attack that civil defence of any sort would be almost totally ineffective. Our nuclear weapons - both Cruise and Trident - are basically part of the USA's aggressive war plans; to call Trident either "independent" or "a deterrent" is misleading. Nuclear weapons are already destroying parts of the Third World through testing and dumping of waste. The link between nuclear power and weapons is strong and direct and both produce radioactive waste for which we have no answer. The imperialists brought about the impoverishment of the Third World by plunder of its resources in the first place. Now they use these resources to develop the power and complexity of destructive weapons which pose an ever-growing threat to the whole world - a world in which poverty, hunger and disease are growing, particularly in the Third World. As communists, we stand firmly on the side of nuclear disarmament of the superpowers and also for nuclear disarmament in Britain, which merely hosts American-controlled missiles. Anti-nuclear movements around the world are made up of people with differing political views but by being actively involved in struggle over the question of nuclear weapons, and war and peace, many people are coming to a clear understanding of how imperialism works. They understand that the main force in the world for peace is the people of the Third World who stand up and oppose the superpowers, and that solidarity with their struggle is vital in working for world peace. They also understand that in this country the state is but a repressive tool of the ruling class, which is moving towards fascism as imperialism goes into deeper crisis, and can only be overthrown by force.

"We are advocates of the abolition of war, we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun, it is necessary to take up the gun."

Mao Zedong.

RADIATION AROUND THE WORLD

RADIOACTIVE LIES

On April 23rd, a large spillage of highly toxic radioactive uranium hexachloride took place at Springfields nuclear fuel factory, Lancashire. It ran into a stream on agricultural land. Two weeks later, the stream was dredged by British Nuclear Fuels and a large quantity of solid uranium, mixed with silt at the bottom of the stream, was removed. The farmer of the land was told only that it was routine dredging, despite the fact that his cows were grazing and drinking there. A week later, again British Nuclear Fuels confirmed that several kilos of uranium had leaked, and said: "There's no question of hazard arising to humans and livestock. That does beg the question why we're going to the trouble of removing the silt, and there's no easy answer to that." !!

MARSHALL ISLANDS

But this contamination is nothing compared to that suffered by the peoples of the Pacific over the last thirty years. Recently, the Greenpeace flagship, Rainbow Warrior, has evacuated 260 islanders from the atoll of Rongelap in the Marshall Islands and will take

them, at their request, to an uninhabited island in the Kwajalein atoll. Rongelap was downwind of the Bravo H bomb test (1,000 times more powerful than Hiroshima) that the Americans carried out in 1954, but were not evacuated for three days... During those days the children played in the radioactive fallout "snow".

Three years later, the islanders were returned. Since then the Americans have refused to accept that the islanders are at risk. The islanders say that radiation linked illnesses are common and that over 65% of the children under ten years old in 1954 have had thyroid tumours removed.

"We don't need scientists," says Jeton Anjain, spokesperson for the islanders. "To see our children are sick. They have heart trouble, deafness, cataract and cancer. We never had those before."

In 1979, the Americans warned the islanders not to eat fish, coconuts or other fruit because of contamination. But they have consistently refused to pay for evacuation. Greenpeace will help move the people but inter-continental missiles from California will still rain down on the water.

FREEDOM FOR IRELAND



SINN FEIN WIN 59 SEATS

In spite of all the obstacles placed in Sinn Fein's way prior to last month's local elections in the six counties - from the unionists' 'Smash Sinn Fein' campaign, to petty crown forces' harassment and new electoral laws directed at disenfranchising Sinn Fein voters, the Sinn Fein vote has emerged as a solid vote.

Sinn Fein stood candidates in 17 of the 26 electoral districts. 59 Sinn Fein councillors were elected and Sinn Fein are now represented in each of the 17 councils for which they stood. They polled a total of 75,685 votes.

Sinn Fein is making real inroads into the traditional SDLP vote. In several districts and in localised areas within other councils Sinn Fein has emerged as the major nationalist party.

RESULTS from SELECTED DISTRICTS

* In Belfast (51 seats), where the Unionists took 29 of the total seats, SF emerged as the main nationalist party and can now be more effective in tackling the daily problems of nationalists, created by decades of unionist misrule.

* In Fermanagh (23 seats), SF won a magnificent 8 seats becoming the largest nationalist party. The nationalists have now regained control of the council.

* In Cookstown (16 seats), SF took 4 seats, becoming the largest nationalist party. Their influence is badly needed in a town where, although the population is evenly balanced between Catholic and Protestants, unionist domination has traditionally been strong and extremely oppressive.

* In the overwhelmingly loyalist Lisburn district council (28 seats), SF's targets were overfulfilled with both the party's candidates winning seats.

* In Omagh (21 seats), SF emerged as the largest party bloc in the council since 1973 with 6 seats.

The two unionist parties gained a gerrymandered 54.3% majority. But they can be sure that at least in 17 district councils their oppressive rule will be exposed and countered.

LOYALIST AND BRIT REVENGE

Loyalist and crown forces were out for revenge after Sinn Fein's good results. Five newly elected councillors were arrested between May 16 and 18.

Downpatrick, County Down luckily escaped becoming the victim of loyalist assassins who smashed their way into his parents' isolated farmhouse and assaulted, gagged and threatened his sister, only to discover that he no longer lived there. After the close of polling on

and to attempt to improve the social and economic position of the nationalists;

- developing a new level of Republican leadership.

- undermining the SDLP's claim to be representatives of the nationalist people.

The electoral campaign and the ensuing council work will also contribute to combatting the British strategy of isolating certain strongly Republican areas. Sinn Fein is using its electoral effort to relieve the pressure on existing 'no' areas by trying to extend them and create a spirit of resistance the length and breadth of the six counties. Their electoral strategy has been to try and create an effective organisation and to build links between strong and weak areas. That is not something which can be achieved overnight and that explains why they did not try to contest every seat, for it is vital to build gradually rather than to spread resources thinly and not build at all. Before the elections, they wrote: "The isolation of strong 'rebel' areas has lasted too long and it is long past time that republicans in other areas put the pretenders of the IIP (CS note: Irish Independence Party) and the green-tories of the SDLP where they belong - in the dustbin of history." The election results show that this process is well under way.

THE CUTTING EDGE

Nonetheless, in the front page article of the first issue of 'An Phoblacht/Republican News' appearing after the election results, the Republicans point out: "There is a limit to what electoral success can achieve... Even if Sinn Fein were to overtake the SDLP and force a Dublin government into respecting the republican mandate, the combination would still not be enough to move the British government. Tragically and unfortunately, it is landmines and ambushes and the sustaining of an armed struggle - the cutting edge - which will eventually inflict upon British thinking the conclusion that they have to withdraw."



Loyalists held a band parade in Newtownstewart, County Tyrone, playing 'The sun, my father wore' outside nationalist homes and smashing the windows of nationalists who refused to be intimidated into donating money to them. A combined force of British army and RUC smashed up a Sinn Fein cultural and advice centre in South Derry on May 18. On Thursday May 16, thousands of pounds worth of damage was caused to around 40 graves in a British army attack on the Republican Plot in Milltown Cemetery, Belfast; their acts of destruction and desecration included pulling out a bush planted on the grave of Bobby Sands and smearing earth on the grave's inscription as well as pushing over a nearby INLA memorial. On May 22, a Sinn Fein election worker from

May 15, the RUC opened fire at point blank range on a 16 year old Derry youth striking him just above the right eye with a plastic bullet.

REPUBLICAN STRATEGY

The forces of the British crown and their loyalist mainstay in the six counties, have every reason to be upset about the election results. Sinn Fein's success has contributed to:

- undermining the British propaganda that the Irish Republicans are an isolated group of terrorists with no support from the Irish people;
- instilling confidence in the nationalist people;
- giving Republican representatives the authority to defend

Demonstration

On May 11, a demonstration against the PTA and strip searches took place in Birmingham. While there were only 150 people on the march, those who attended felt that it made a good impact and was successful.

It was the first march on an Irish political question to go through the centre of Birmingham since 1974. Speeches were made by representatives from the Organising Committee, from IRSP, and from the Kashmiri Workers Association.

Meeting

England, Scotland and Wales Campaign Against the PTA.

The third meeting of the Campaign Against the PTA initiated in Birmingham, took place on May 18. The campaign is to

be known as 'England, Scotland and Wales Campaign Against the PTA'.

The principles and method of work agreed at the previous meeting were adopted, affiliation and delegate arrangements agreed, and coordination and administration arrangements agreed.

It was agreed that only Irish and Kashmiri organisations can affiliate directly to the campaign. Other organisations can affiliate locally. Delegate meetings will be held every two months.

Affiliation (£5 per annum) from local areas is on the basis of one group per geographic area, and up to three delegates from the area group. Individuals are invited to affiliate (£1).

In the coming weeks local groups are to be asked to concentrate on building in their areas. The next delegate meeting of the campaign will be held on Saturday 13 July (venue to be arranged).

One new Sinn Fein councillor generated special enthusiasm - Gerry Doherty, representing Shantallow, and already the focus of media attention for his previous political connection with the Guildhall, carrying in bombs in 1972 as an IRA volunteer... Asked how he felt about sitting as a councillor in the same building he was convicted of bombing, he replied: "In 1972, I made a political statement by carrying a bomb into this building, and today, as a Sinn Fein Councillor, I am making the same political statement!"

THE "CUTTING EDGE" IN ACTION

Only a few days after the great success of Sinn Fein in the elections, the IRA also dealt a great blow against British rule in the six counties.

On 24th May, a 1,000 lb IRA bomb killed four members of the loyalist RUC by blowing up their armoured car.

This is the only language the British imperialists understand and, coming only a short while after the attack on Lisburn barracks in which eleven RUC members were killed, it underlines Republican determination to continue the armed struggle until the last British soldier leaves Ireland.

DIARY OF EVENTS

Saturday, June 8th,
FREE IQBAL BEGUM CAMPAIGN SOCIAL

8 p.m. - 11.30,
Tindal Street School,
Tindal St., Balsall Heath,
Birmingham.

Sunday, June 9th,
ORGANISING AGAINST DEPORTATION CONFERENCE

10 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.
Conference Hall, County Hall,
London SE1.

Thursday, June 13th,
SUPPORT DR WENDY SAVAGE DEMONSTRATION

2.30 p.m.
from London Hospital to
White Chapel.

Saturday, June 15th,
PHILIPPINES SUPPORT GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

All supporters welcome.
11.00 - 4.00
County Hall,
London SE1.

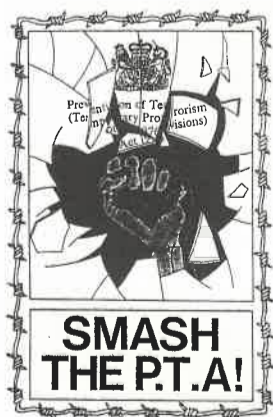
Sunday, June 16th,
NO TO APARTHEID!
NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

Assemble 12 - 1 p.m.
County Hall, York Rd,
London.

RALLY 3 p.m.
Trafalgar Square.

Sunday, June 16th,
SOWETO ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Organised by Black
Consciousness Movement.
Watch out for details.
LONDON



Committal Hearing

Committal proceedings began on May 10 in the trial of the remaining Liverpool defendants. An application for bail for one of the defendants was refused. (Maire O'Shea is the only defendant released on bail to date.)

At the commencement of proceedings, the defence counsel were presented with a large folio of documents relating to the prosecution's case.

An adjournment of the committal hearing was, therefore, made until Monday July 1st. The hearing is expected to last at least two days.

Campaign

A National Campaign to Repeal the PTA has been formed involving various organisations including the Irish in Britain Representation Group and the Troops Out Movement. In addition, Troops Out is supporting the work of the Maire O'Shea Support Committee.

UP AGAINST THE STATE

When the miners came out on strike in March 1984, some people thought that the National Union of Mineworkers' (NUM)

victories of the 1970's would be repeated in the 1980's. At that time the miners were united among themselves, they got massive support from powerful unions such as the engineers and the railway workers and they moved fast to implement a highly successful tactic of mass picketing.

Many probably knew that it was going to be a tougher battle. First the Labour government and later on the Tories, had taken on the car workers and the steel workers and won important battles in the fight to 'modernise' and 'rationalise' these industries. Unemployment had grown massively and the organised working class was in no mood for a fight. Most importantly, the 1970's had seen the miners in a strong bargaining position because of the OPEC oil price rise. The 1980's saw a world recession with the prices of oil and coal at a record low.

Few would have predicted either the length of the strike or the characteristic features that emerged from it: the involvement of whole communities in the fight, particularly the role played by women; the confrontation with paramilitary police; the mass criminalisation of ordinary miners or the type of support and links that grew in the course of the strike.

STRATEGY FOR REPRESSION

At each stage of the strike, the miners confronted in the strategy of the National Coal Board (NCB) and the Thatcher government, a carefully thought out plan. The Tories were determined to beat the miners, whatever the cost. The miners confronted the police, the courts, the media as well as the NCB and government. They had to come to terms with a lack of support from the organised working class and the growing solidarity from other sections of people: the unemployed, women, the national minorities and from Irish people.

In the early part of the strike, a substantial minority of miners, mainly in the Midlands, had refused to join. Mass picketing was used to try and stop this strike-breaking. The police had anticipated this tactic and used a carefully-planned strategy to stop striking miners effectively picketing.

Later, the miners concentrated on power stations and stopping the supply of coal. The most dramatic confrontation was seen at the Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire. The police were well-prepared. In Nottinghamshire, they had used road blocks to turn men back before they ever got near to the pits. At Orgreave, they escorted the miners to the plant. Once there, they used newly-developed tactics with horses, dogs and riot police, sparking off scenes of a fully-armed paramilitary force using extreme violence against unarmed pickets.

The government chose a strategy of mass criminalisation of striking miners rather than an

"This has been a wonderful dispute for making miners and mining communities realise what has happened to other people.. We're now seeing a situation where the policing of Britain was learnt by the policing of the Irish people."

outright legal attack on the NUM. At the same time, they skilfully used the media to encourage the 'back-to-work' movement whose centre was in Nottinghamshire pits. The miners received no strike pay yet had assumed strike pay deducted from social security payments. Faced with this propaganda campaign and growing hardship in the pit communities, men began to drift back to work even in some Yorkshire pits. The NCB and the police went to totally 'uneconomic' expense to escort handfuls of strike-breakers into work. The pickets shifted back to these pits to stop the drift back. It was at this stage that the police began their systematic attacks on the mining villages such as Armthorpe, Maltby and other Yorkshire villages. Sometimes they focussed on picket lines at pit gates but often made a more generalised attack, like that of an army of occupation on hostile villagers.

Throughout the strike, the government and NCB used negotiations to raise hopes about a settlement, but they came to nothing. Substantial concessions were made to rail-workers to avoid solidarity action and to NACOD, the pit deputies' union to stop them joining the strike. The Labour Party and TUC conference conferences saw many fine speeches but were followed by little real solidarity action in support of the miners' cause.

ORGANISED RETURN

After Christmas, the drift back to work gradually increased. By March it was clear that more and more men would go back to work as the hardship in mining communities grew with no settlement in sight. The government showed no sign of backing down and had gone to great lengths to avoid power cuts and deny any serious impact on the economy. At that point, there was little alternative to the organised return to work which took the men back to work with their heads held high to fight another day.

The miners were defeated in the short term. But they can be proud of the battle they fought. Both the spirit of resistance

they showed and many of the positive aspects of the strike should be lessons for us all.

SELF-RELIANCE

In the first place, the miners depended on themselves. The demand raised by the NUM to stop the pit closures had popular support in the majority of the coalfields, not just among the miners and their families but in the wider community as well. Thousands of miners travelled around the country to join the mass pickets, confronted the police, and many were injured, went through the courts, and were fined and hundreds imprisoned for what they believed to be a just cause. The NUM relied on, and to a great extent, encouraged this mass involvement as opposed to relying on labour lieutenants of the TUC or the Labour Party

SUPPORT

Within the communities, the women's support groups played an active and important role. In the first place, they often got together to deal with the practical problems faced by mining families, to organise food parcels or food kitchens, benefits to raise money or help for single miners who received no social security payments at all. In the course of this work, they developed the basis for a whole alternative to the welfare state, relying on donations from supporters and working collectively, and autonomously, even in support of, the NUM. They went on picket lines and travelled round the country building support among sections of people often outside the organised labour movement.

In Wales, the support from the community took the form of the Welsh Council, which brought together a broad range of people in a kind of United Front. But, throughout the coalfields, people other than miners understood the devastation brought to whole areas by mass unemployment. Local traders and publicans, for example, gave considerable support to the struggle.

Outside the mining communities, support networks grew and developed. Solidarity action by other trade unionists in key industries did exist, particul-

arly on the railways and in the docks. But it did not become widespread. For example, there was little support from the power stations. This was partly a question of leadership of other unions and partly because the government had laid careful plans, for example, to bypass the railways with road traffic

and the large docks with small boats. More importantly, the organised working class which grew strong on the "boom" of the 1950's and 1960's, is in no state to fight at a time of crisis of imperialism. Support came instead from a much more varied set of people, including white-collar workers, health workers, women's groups and the unemployed. Black national minority people gave generously and made their support clear. Delegations from the black community in this country included representatives of Third World liberation movements.

International support came from many places, including Ireland. Collections were made by the nationalist people in the six counties and miners and women from mining communities who went on delegations to Belfast and Derry in the course of 1984 were welcomed and supported. Messages of support came from around the world, including El Salvador and from Solidarity in Poland. Practical support in the form of money and food came particularly from Europe where many workers have faced similar threats to their jobs and living standards.

However, the government played a game of sitting and waiting. In the end, the miners lost their struggle for jobs. Since the end of the strike, already 12 pits have closed. 700 miners have been imprisoned and

12 pits have closed. Over 600 men have been sacked by the NCB and there seems little hope of the NUM getting their jobs back. A new aggressive management policy is being implemented in the pits.

When the miners went back to work, many said that although the battle was lost, the war was just beginning. They have learnt over a long, hard year that British imperialism does not listen to reason. There is no justice that is not fought for by the working class and oppressed people. It is this, together with an understanding of who are their friends, and who their enemies, that show us the basis for an alliance to be built between the working class and oppressed national minorities in this country to take on the struggle against British imperialism. Such an alliance must be based not only on support for the just struggles of the working class but also an understanding of the national oppression on which British imperialism has been built.

"Like thousands of other women who've played an active part in this strike, we won't be content to be behind the kitchen sink when this is over... It's made women aware that they can do other things besides their housework and perhaps bring about a better community for our kids."



All quotes on this page are thanks to Banner Theatre's 'Miners' Support tape: Here We Go'.

THE M STI

1984 BRITISH IN EDITORIAL

The miners' strike of 1984 was the longest, most bitter and most violent industrial dispute of recent British history. It brought to the surface an open clash of interests between the working class and bourgeoisie, and to a great extent broke out of the confinement which have limited work, economic struggles since Second World War. It was fought at a time when imperialism is in deep crisis.

This crisis of British imperialism is part of an international crisis. Centuries, the countries of Western Europe, and recently the USA and the USSR have built up their economic and industrial on the basis of the exploitation of the people and countries of the Third World. The great wealth of the ruling class, the banks and companies, Europe, and the relatively high living standards of its people have come about as a result of the 'underdevelopment' of the Third World.

The twentieth century has seen the beginning of the end of imperialism's control and domination of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. After four centuries of imperialist and colonial expansion, the basic trends of history have been reversed. Revolutionary struggles of the Third World are now the main force of history. In response, imperialism has altered its forms of control and exploitation and in many cases intensified them. But it has not been able to change the basic trend. Within the form of national liberation movements or count-

The coal industry in this country is the rest of the world. British imperialism on buying cheap in many parts deeply implicated in the exploitation of workers in mining and energy.

The expansion of British imperialism based on buying oil cheap in the period, the domestic coal industry, countries united to demand a reduction in production of coal. Coal companies began to move into other parts of the world.

The third option developed apart from its obvious safety involves the exploitation of land occupied by the South African

During the miners' strike in Azania (South Africa) where through its companies and investment half of all foreign investment favour minor reforms of apartheid maintaining the present power.

Another example is the expansion of the oil companies and marketing oil through its other companies.

These are typical examples of financial interests that form the basis around the world. The people are rising up in struggle against imperialism, union rights or higher wages.

For the people of Azania, the class exploitation and oppression revolutionary national struggle must be based too, on an understanding of the first stage of imperialism, the first stage of independence. British imperialism and oppression of nations, their revolutionary struggles

MINERS' STRIKE

1985

IMPERIALISM

CRISIS

...EDITORIAL.



THE LABOUR PARTY: NO ANSWER FOR WORKERS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE

In their struggle for jobs, the miners challenged the government's plans for restructuring industry and came up against the power of the state. The appointment of MacGregor to head the NCB was a clear sign that the government intended to take on the miners. The NCB's strategy for dealing with the strike and with negotiations was clearly directed by Whitehall. The police force was used as the armed fist of the state to prevent effective mass picketing and generally intimidate the people of the mining communities. The courts and the legal system generally backed the police and government ensuring the criminalisation of striking miners, and to keep many activists away from the strike by bail conditions. The reduction of social security benefits was used to starve the miners back to work. The media campaigned extensively round the strike, generally against the miners, by highlighting the back-to-work movement and generally influencing public opinion.

People in the mining communities have learnt these lessons through their own bitter experience. Many have said they will never see the police again as friendly, village bobbies. Miners have been imprisoned when their only crime has been to fight for a job. Hundreds have lost their jobs, some for the simple act of coal-picking: coal they themselves dug out. Many understand now, if they did not before, that there is no justice for the working class in this system.

Many people also understood through the year of hard struggle, the role of the Labour Party and the TUC. Welsh miners displayed a noose before Norman Willis when he spoke in South Wales, condemning both the police and miners for violence on the picket lines. It did not go unnoticed, either, that Neil Kinnock kept away from the picket lines until the strike had been defeated or that Bill Sirs and other union leaders were less than enthusiastic about the miners' cause.

POLITICS OF COMPROMISE

However, many still see these positions as a problem simply

"There's never, ever, been any justice in this country. We still get the same justice as we got when we got the lords of the manor. There's never been any democracy in this country, not unless you can afford it."



independence and have gone on to build socialism, or Third World states demanding a new and fairer international economic order, this trend has undermined the foundations of the world-wide imperialist system.

As the oldest imperialist power, Britain is in deep crisis. In order to maintain its profitability, it needs to re-structure its economy. Part of this process involves attacking the wages and living standards of the working class at home. Unemployment is used to force down wages and new technology is introduced to make industry more productive.

The present Tory government understood that it was essential to take on and defeat the miners to push through their particular strategy to achieve these ends. It was important to 'modernise' and 'rationalise' the coal industry itself, and also take on politically what they saw as a key section of the working class.

The miners responded to this challenge. They and their communities fought a year-long battle in defence of their jobs and the right to work. In the end they were defeated. But an understanding of the reasons for this defeat and of the true nature of imperialism drawn from the experience of their struggle may be the most important outcome of the struggle.

As communists, we give our wholehearted support to the miners in their just struggle against their exploitation and oppression as working class people. At the same time, we try and learn lessons from their experiences and understanding to take the struggle forward.

CLASS SOLIDARITY

cannot be seen in isolation from the imperialist policies on energy are based on the world, and British companies are the main cause of the exploitation and oppression of Third World oil industries.

After the Second World War was run down. During this time the price for their oil in the 1970's, reconsidered their plans for the "economic" again. Many major oil companies both within the imperialist countries

recent years has been nuclear power. Links with military use, this is particularly in Namibia, illegally

Some of the coal imported came from British imperialism amasses huge profits. British investment accounts for Azania and, although it may at times aid, its basic interests lie with the

mining where British oil and mining companies are involved in manufacturing, refining subsidiaries and through control over

of the huge network of business and industry on the basis of the system of imperialism in the Third World, including miners, have been undermined. Their fight goes beyond trade

in the Philippines, the struggle against imperialism is closely interrelated with the struggle against imperialism. Our solidarity with the people of the Third World struggle is one for national liberation and stands for the continued exploitation of the people. We take a clear stand in support of

of bad leadership and betrayal of working class interests. This understanding is no doubt encouraged by the fact that many rank and file Labour Party activists worked hard in support committees. For many, the solution is to join the Labour Party and make it more militant. The problems of bad leadership and class betrayal are, of course, real problems. But they are only the right face of social-democracy which is itself, essentially a politics of compromise with imperialism. And it is the working class that makes the most compromises. Historically, the Labour Party has served the interests of imperialism as effectively as have the Tories. The left forms of social-democracy are only the other face of this compromise and do not challenge the basic rule of imperialism.

For the real lessons of the miners' strike to be learnt, so that a strategy for the way forward can be built, it is necessary to root out social-democratic ideology in whatever form it appears.

Some people cannot admit that the miners were defeated. They see the year of struggle as having simply acted as a pre-election publicity stunt for the Labour Party. Now, they argue, more people are opposed to the government's policies of unemployment and will elect a Labour government next time. This is to use the hardship and bitter struggle of the miners quite cynically in a bourgeois parliamentary game. It is to encourage the illusion that the working class can win justice within the present system, if only they have the sense to elect a Labour government. Labour's record on pit closures contradicts these arguments. In the period since the Second World War, both Labour and Tory implemented policies of closing pits and destroying miners' jobs. It is true, of course, that Labour's economic policies are different from the present government's. Labour, for example, stands for continued nationalisation whereas the Tories may consider privatisation of certain pits. But these differences are secondary: both are strategies for a way out of the crisis for British imperialism. Neither party can in the long run guarantee the right to work or a higher standard of living to the working class. Labour's policies of 'The Plan for Coal' of the 1970's, resulted from the world situation and the increased price of oil brought about by the just struggles of the OPEC countries not from a desire to preserve jobs in coal.

Another common myth is the idea that the miners suffered at the hands of 'Tory' police, 'Tory' judges and 'Tory' courts. Again, history of the recent period contradicts this view. Plans for the development of a paramilitary riot force have been underway for over ten years now, under both Labour and Tory. While there may be particular openly political appointments under the present government, the judicial and legal institution does not change with a change of party in power in the House of Commons. The role of the

police which was exposed during the strike so clearly as an anti-working class force is seen by the Labour Party to be neutral, or indeed to serve the people. Thus Gerald Kaufmann only in May criticised the new Public Order proposals as "threatening the independence of the police". What independence? One of the most positive lessons of the strike to many people from mining communities has been the links made with people from black communities and from the north of Ireland. Black people here, and the nationalist people of the six counties, have for many years already felt the open violence and disregard for the "law" of the British police and army, and know that this iron fist can be used by either party in power.

The Labour Party does not, and never has, represented the long term interests of the vast majority of working class people in this country. Historically, its base was among middle-class socialists and a skilled, relatively privileged section of the working class. It thus grew strong because Britain was an imperialist society that could afford to make some concessions to some sections of the working class. But in an imperialist society, the basis of which is the exploitation of people in the Third World, such ideas have sunk deep roots within all the working class and reflect the fact that the whole of our society has benefited, to some extent, from the 'underdevelopment' of the Third World.

As imperialism goes into deeper crisis, the politics of compromise and moderation are obviously not working and even if a Labour government were elected tomorrow, could not solve this crisis. But many of the underlying ideas continue and appear in different forms.

BREAK WITH IMPERIALISM

In this way, working class people see it as their responsibility to work in the interests of British industry, to save 'our' coal industry 'for the sake of the nation'. Many support the Labour policy of 'import controls to protect 'our' industry'. But for the working class to fight in its own interests it must first break with imperialism and make common cause with those most oppressed by imperialism, both in this country and around the world. Support for import controls only strengthens the social-democratic alternative for imperialism. The working class has to make common cause with workers and peasants in the Third World, and not support this social-chauvinist and racist call.

The importance of the miners' strike was that the actual practice of the struggle opened many people's eyes, in the first place to the fact that British imperialism is, when necessary, prepared to defend its class interests with force, using the law as a tool to justify that force. But many also began to see beyond their own immediate cause as well. Although women have traditionally supported the struggles of men in mining communities, their activities were of key importance in this strike and have brought about a change in attitudes. Time and time again, miners said that they would never have been able to hold out so long without the work the women were doing. In many areas, the women's support groups are continuing and women will go on to take part in struggles ahead.

Many people identified for the first time with black people and with the nationalist people of the north of Ireland. They realised that the policing techniques used to attack their communities and pickets had been developed against black people and in Ireland. Such an understanding can be built on to a higher level of unity based on an understanding of the fact that British imperialism rests on two pillars: that of the exploitation of the working class, but even more fundamental the exploitation of the people and nations of the Third World.

In relation to the Third World, the Labour Party stands firmly and squarely behind its continued exploitation and dependency on the imperialist countries such as Britain. In some cases, the policies of Labour are even worse than those of the Tories, for example in the Middle East. The Labour Party historically has opposed revolutionary struggles as firmly as the Tories: in Ireland, in Malaya, in Zimbabwe and many other places in the world. Labour Party MP's such as Roy Mason (NUM sponsored) have a particular responsibility for developing and intensifying the repression of the nationalist people of the north of Ireland.

The seeds of a new awareness on all these issues have begun to take root in the course of the miners' strike. If they develop further and are built on, we can begin to build a powerful, revolutionary alliance between the working class and national minority people in this country. Such a force would see that the revolutionary forces of the Third World, and in Ireland, are its strongest allies in the fight against British imperialism and would hold no truck with the rotten social-chauvinism of the Labour Party.

"To us now it's a war... If something isn't done in the immediate future to safeguard our pits, we are only next door to civil war in this country. It's in the next room. It only takes someone to open the door."

