

CLASS STRUGGLE



Political Paper of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain

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GIBRALTAR INQUEST



BACK PAGE

CANCEL THE DEBTS!

IMF AND
WORLD
BANK
SENTENCE
50 MILLION
TO DEATH



"IMF - BLOOD MONEY" read some of the banners held by thousands of protestors in the streets of Berlin, in the first week of September. A broad alliance of groups, including church and ecological organisations, had come together in opposition to the meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

In East Berlin, smaller numbers of people also gathered to protest against the Eastern bloc's treatment of the Third World.

The annual meeting of the West's financiers (with Japan allowed into the club) was dominated by the question of Third World "debt".

The IMF and World Bank, along with the International Development Association (IDA) have a long history of promoting the interests of western imperialism, under the guise of "aid". They have always acted as an important weapon of neo-colonialism, dictating conditions in return for loans and grants.

In addition to tying Third World countries to imperialism, both politically and economically, repayment of the original loans together with the interest, often leaves a country worse off than before, and needing to borrow more, in order to meet the payments.

IMPOVERISHMENT

The end result of this cycle may have been the enrichment of a tiny elite in Third World countries and increased power for Western banks. But such "aid" has brought further impoverishment for the majority of people.

A recent review of the United Nations' Africa Recovery Programme in 1986 revealed tragic figures:

At least 30 countries adopted programmes along the lines proposed by the World Bank and

IMF for "reform". Per capita income is falling.

Infant and child mortality has increased as governments have cut back on social services.

Africa is the only area in the world where child deaths are increasing. UNICEF predicts these deaths will total 50 million between 1985 and 2000.

Debt has grown from \$175 billion in 1985 to \$220 billion in 1987.

Africa is the poorest continent of the Third World. But the pattern is not so different elsewhere.

UNITY AGAINST IMPERIALISM

The countries of the Third World, in spite of the many differences between them, have a common interest in standing up to the West. The debt burden has now become a weapon that they have turned back to use against the West's financial

interests. The simple refusal to pay threatens the stability of the Western financial system.

It is this that has caused splits in the ranks of the West. The UK, the USA and West Germany have been taking a hard line, opposing more "radical" solutions put forward by World Bank President, Barber Conable, who said at the recent meeting:

"Poverty on today's scale prevents a billion people from having even minimally acceptable standards of living. To allow every fifth human being on our planet to suffer such an existence is a moral outrage.

"... It is more: it is bad economics, a terrible waste of precious development resources. Poverty destroys lives, human dignity and economic potential."

The demand for the cancellation of all Third World debts is a just demand which we should support. The demonstrations both sides of the Berlin Wall reflect the growing anger of people in the West and a realisation of the need to unite with the peoples of the Third World, who have led the fight against our common enemy, imperialism.



IRAQ LAUNCHES POISON GAS ATTACKS SIX

PAY
NO
POLL
TAX

CAN'T PAY - WON'T PAY
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CLASS STRUGGLE



EDITORIAL...EDITORIAL...E!

39 YEARS OF SOCIALIST CHINA

October 1st is the anniversary of the Liberation of the Chinese people and the setting up of the People's Republic of China. On that date, in 1949, the Chinese people formally marked the end of the old system and began the struggle to build a society free from oppression and exploitation.

Ma Zedong said that the people had taken the first step in a thousand mile long march. He did not underestimate the problems still facing the Chinese people in building a society free from poverty and injustice. The last 39 years have proved him right. But, although new China still faces many difficulties, there is no comparison between life for the majority of people now and before Liberation.

1949 was the turning point in the long struggle of the Chinese people to take control over their own destiny, to throw off both feudalism, and more importantly imperialism.

For more than four hundred years, the European powers, and in the later period the USA, had extended their plunder and control of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Although there had always been resistance to this process, the twentieth century has seen the tide of history turn in favour of liberation and independence for the people of the Third World.

When the Chinese people "stood up", a quarter of the people of the world announced the end of imperialism. It was a trend reflected all over the Third World, in the struggles in Vietnam, India and elsewhere and continuing today in Nicaragua, Palestine, Eritrea and Tigray, Azania and elsewhere.

AFRICA TODAY

But 400 years of domination and exploitation cannot be thrown off overnight. The imperialist powers knew full well the significance of the victory of the Chinese people and attempted to isolate China. At the same time, they found new ways to continue their exploitation while appearing to "grant" independence.

The clearest example today is the continent of Africa. Over centuries, Africa has been robbed of its people (through the stealing of people to be sold as slaves) and its wealth. The result is that today, millions of its people are starving and the profits from the exploitation of its vast mineral and agricultural resources continue to be sent back to the heartlands of imperialism.

Most African countries had already won their independence. But now the people are continuing the fight for a true

independence from poverty and need. At the same time, in Azania the days of the racist apartheid regime are numbered even though there is a long and bitter struggle ahead.

BRITISH IMPERIALISM

It is clear that communists in Britain today must take a stand with the oppressed peoples and countries of the Third World. Britain was for hundreds of years the biggest imperialist power and our society was built on the exploitation of nations and people around the world.

Imperialism has also profoundly affected internal class relations and struggle within Britain. While it still rests on the exploitation of the working class, it has been able to blunt the edge of this struggle.

For many people in Britain, particularly since the Second World War, their exploitation has been hidden by a screen of reforms and concessions.

At the same time, over many years, the organisations who claim to represent the interests of the working people have become part of the system itself. The Labour Party and the trade union leadership are no longer able to deliver reforms and have been exposed as unable to defend people's basic interests at a time of increasing poverty and inequality.

For others, the true nature of British imperialism and the state has always been clearer. National minority people, both black and Irish, have experienced its ruthlessness and violence at first hand. The majority of women have never been truly equal in spite of better living standards and political and social reforms. More and more working class people have also seen the true face of British imperialism, for example, during the miners' strike.

APPEAL TO PATRIOTISM

But imperialism has also had a deep effect on people's thinking. In this season of party conferences, from all sides we will hear appeals to the unity of the nation. This is always the last-ditch call made to blind people to the realities of class and national oppression.

There is much to be proud of in our history. But we have to be clear that our history is one of struggle and sacrifice and is different from the history of our ruling class. Nationalism of an oppressed nation is a progressive force which can unite people in the fight against a common enemy, imperialism. Nationalism of an oppressor nation like Britain can only blind us to the tasks ahead.

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Although I agree in general with the RCL solidarity message to the 12th anniversary of the Soweto Uprising meeting in June, I feel the views on establishment exploitation of Azanian culture need a broader interpretation.

It is true that there are those in the West who, consciously or unconsciously, use and abuse revolutionary culture and revolutionary struggles to their own ends. But I think the acceptance and positive promotion of the music and struggles of oppressed peoples can and does have a positive knock-on effect amongst young people. The recent Mandela Birthday

Concert and the current Amnesty International tour, are examples of this. I believe there is no current cultural phenomenon which reaches young people world-wide like rock music. Many young people now know who Nelson Mandela is, what apartheid is, because of the Birthday Concert. Similarly, the Amnesty International world tour is promoting the 40th anniversary of the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights to a potential audience of millions, in countries such as Hungary and Argentina. I for one did not know, for example, that one fundamental human right agreed by the Charter, is the right not to be unemployed.

I think we should remember that revolutionary struggles takes place on many levels - be it uprisings by Azanian youth, or the raising of awareness of apartheid or human rights by rock musicians. I'm sure many people will have gone away from these concerts and will begin to look more deeply at the issues raised. The creation of a consciousness amongst young people that the world can and will be changed, is heightened, and not dispersed by these types of concerts. Although we must be aware of the pitfalls of the exploitation of oppressed people's culture, we must also not be afraid to accentuate the positive.

A Bradford reader

BIKO REMEMBERED

C.S. CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania (BCM-A) held a meeting in London on September 12th, to mark the 12th anniversary of the death of Bantu Steve Biko. The platform speakers were from the BCM-A, Tigray People's Liberation Front, Eritrean People's Liberation Front, All-African People's Revolutionary Party, Black Action for the Liberation of Southern Africa (BALSA) and the RCL.

The BCM-A spoke about Biko's achievements, and also about how it saw the situation today. Mentioning a number of countries in which African people live today, Molephe Pheto of the BCM-A said: "We see through out black consciousness that in all the countries I have named, we have natural allies." Stating the standpoint which the black consciousness trend in Azania has always held to, Molephe said: "We are not non-racist or multi-racialist, but anti-racist."

Molephe said that the Azanian people would really be on their way when they were able to make their enemies suffer at least as much as they did. Even though the BCM-A had made no official announcement to that effect, press reports of statements by speakers for the racist South African army have spoken of fighters belonging to the BCM-A "infiltrating South Africa". The BCM-A had not just prepared to make a few gestures of defiance against the racist South African regime, and then hope for the best: "There is no point in us starting action and then not being able to defend our gains."

Jenako Arts and the BALSA choir performed in the course of the evening, to a very warm response.



Platform of the Sept.12th Meeting, addressed by Molephe Pheto of the BCM-A (Photo: Alan Naldo)

Resist, Defend, Advance

The following statement was issued by the BCM-A, on their leaflet advertising the Sept. 12th meeting:

"When the illegal, minority, Apartheid regime killed Biko, they thought they were killing the revolution. Eleven years later, the country is still in turmoil. Now the White areas are even more unsafe, despite the military might of the regime, the support of its stooges inside the country and the international power-brokers.

"The impending so-called 'local government elections' have been disrupted by the elimination of puppets and stooges despite the state of emergency.

"The Boer settler regime is having to retreat from Angola with their collective tail between their legs. Their 150 years anniversary of the 'great

trek' is turning out to be a sick joke.

"The Botha-Malan junta's strategy of trying to neutralise the front-line states, including the heinous murder of the hero of the Mozambican revolution, Samora Machel, is bound to fail. Similarly their killing of Biko, Tiro, Timol, Mohapi, Mdluli and many, many others did not and will not quench the fervour of the revolution.

"On this day we salute all these heroes and heroines who laid down their lives in the struggle to rid us of the shackles of oppression. They did not die in vain. There is no struggle without casualties!"

OUR TIME WILL COME!
THE FUTURE IS BLACK!

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CLASS STRUGGLE

We regret that we find it necessary to raise the price of 'Class Struggle' to 30p. We have held the price at 25p since February 1985 and, although the labour of those RCL members and friends who write articles for, produce and sell the paper, is given freely, there are still many other things such as postage, transport, telephone and printing bills that have to be paid. Perhaps this is an appropriate time to ask our regular readers to consider how they can help. We are, of course, always pleased to get donations, however small they may be. Just as useful is the person who buys an extra copy to give to a friend or workmate, in the hope of maybe winning a new regular reader. Taking out an annual subscription for someone or just letting us know of others who may be interested, are all of use in our task of maintaining both the quality and regularity of 'Class Struggle'.

MI5 - Who are they watching ?

CLASS STRUGGLE CORRESPONDENT

During the course of their long, bitter struggle in 1984 and 1985, the miners had to contend daily with the full force of the law. Openly, in what was described as the biggest police mobilisation since 1926, thousands of uniformed and plain-clothes officers were directed from the National Reporting Centre at Scotland Yard, at an estimated cost of around half a million pounds a day.

But this was only part of the story. For, behind a well-maintained wall of secrecy, other parts of the British state machinery were at work to ensure that the government's plans to further rationalise the coal industry would not be halted.



The state at the roadside. A police roadblock, preventing miners getting into Nottinghamshire.

It was around the height of the strike that two journalists, Nick Davies and Ian Black, produced for 'The Guardian', the results of their investigation into the structure and role of MI5 and the Special Branch. This appeared in a three-part series called 'The Watchers', only a few days after the then Home Secretary, Leon Britton, had denied that there was any under-cover police operation against the miners.

Last month, 'The Guardian' printed extracts from a new book called 'Black List, The Inside Story of Political Vetting' by Mark Hollingsworth and Richard Norton-Taylor. This book further raises the lid on what the British security service is up to and at the same time corroborates much that had been made public four years earlier.

"THE WATCHERS"

In the first part of 'The Watchers', Davies and Black noted that the state monitoring of political activity in Britain had, by 1984, been on the increase for a long time. It was organised from the headquarters of the Security Services in Mayfair's Curzon Street, which they described as an extremely secretive organisation with a staff of around two thousand.

According to Davies and Black, there were six branches to this key part of the state machine. Of particular concern to the thousands of people who were in any way active in the trade union movement, or broad organisations such as CND and Anti-Apartheid, was F Branch. This was responsible for all political surveillance.

At the time it was split up into at least eight sections. F1 investigated the revisionist Communist Party of Great Britain. F7 investigated all the other left-wing groups and would also appear to hold responsibility for keeping an eye on right-wing extremists, MP's, teachers, lawyers and journalists! F2 was responsible

for the surveillance of the trade unions and had to play a particularly important role during major industrial disputes. At such times, it would co-operate closely with the Civil Contingencies Unit inside the Cabinet Office. F2 and F7 were both assisted by FX which had the job of organising long-term infiltration into the various organisations that the department as a whole considered to be necessary.

'TOTAL SECRECY'

From what Davies and Black discovered, the immense power of MI5 came mainly from its freedom to determine who and what were the principal enemy. It made its decision with the minimum of interference from parliament or Downing Street and was able to preserve its independence by insisting on the necessity for absolute and total secrecy.

The second report detailed some of the methods used by the state to listen in on the unsuspecting public. Phone-tapping, opening of mail, use of agents, scrutiny by computer and access to so-called confidential information were all given as examples. Finally, in their third report, they described who were the actual targets for surveillance

and pointed out how many trade unionists were becoming increasingly concerned by the extent of Security Service and Special Branch monitoring of their activities.

"WHAT PAPERS DO YOU READ?"

During 1984, one aspect of police work appeared to be the questioning of arrested miners for their political opinions and affiliations, the papers they read and their knowledge of other miners' political activities. At the time, this seemed to be something quite new, although now it would appear that all that was new, was that political surveillance was for a time much more out in the open.

"BLACK LIST"

Much of what was covered in 'The Watchers' is substantiated in 'Black List'. From the investigation of Hollingsworth and Norton-Taylor, it would appear that MI5 began to carry out its monitoring of what it considered to be subversive organisations in the early 1970's. Within a few years, it soon amassed hundreds of thousands of files on individuals and groups. Around the same time, the Special Branch also began to build up its own political records.

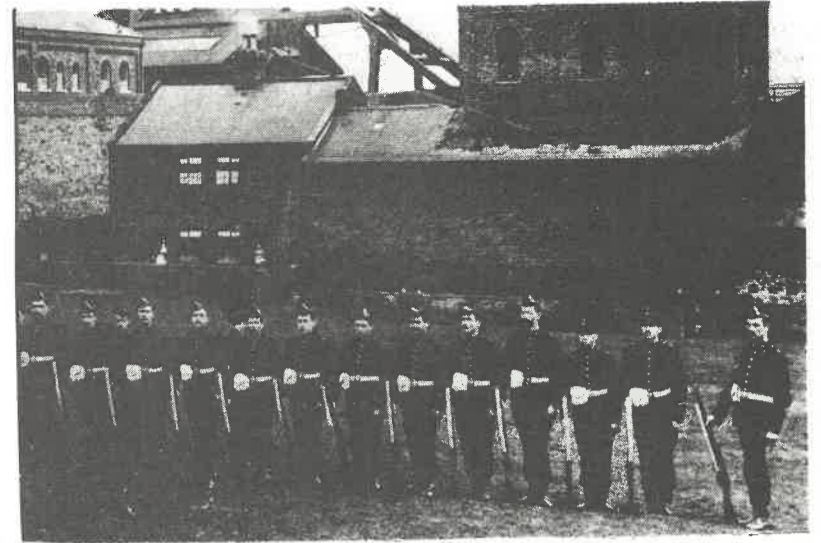
According to 'The Times', last February, Scotland Yard had refused to say whether it was true that two thirds of the names on the biggest section of their records were of 'suspects' and 'associates'. A further article in September said that the names of tens of thousands of those 'suspected' by the Special Branch 'for reasons of national security' were to be fed into the computer.

* * * * *

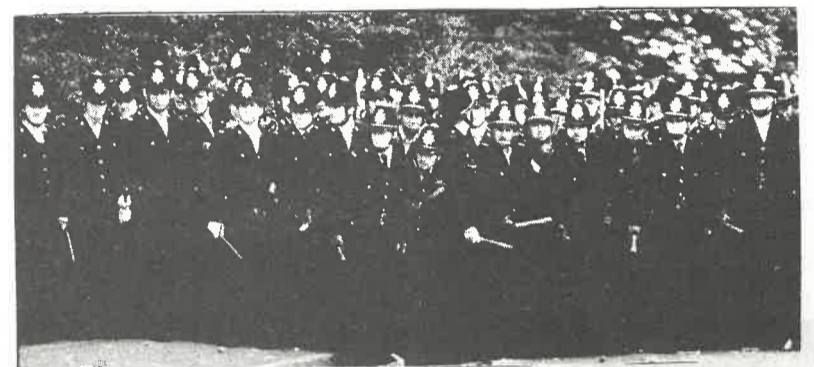
In a factory occupation at the Greenwich Reinforcement Company (part of the British Steel Corporation), workers discovered just what the police do in the name of "national security". Files marked "strictly private and confidential" revealed a network of spying on the workers. It involved the BSC, the reactionary Economic League, Special Branch local police and certain sell-out trade union officials.

- From 'Class Struggle', June 1978.

The quote in the box above gives some indication what the authorities were doing ten years ago in the name of national security. However, it would appear from 'Black List' that it was not only rank and file trade unionists or members of political groups who were under political surveillance. The process seems to have been going on at all levels.



The state at Orgreave: then and now. Above: in 1893 at Orgreave colliery when the military were brought in during a lockout. Below: in 1984 at Orgreave coke depot, scene of some of the worst violence by the police.



"THE TERRIBLE TWINS"

For example, two of the best-known trade union national leaders whose movements were continually being monitored during the sixties and seventies were Hugh Scanlon, former President of the engineering workers' union (AUEW) and Jack Jones, former General Secretary of the transport workers' union (TGWU). From 1966, MI5 ran a secret campaign against them. This included forwarding security reports on their political activities and views to 10 Downing Street, tapping their phones and attempting to prevent their appointment to top jobs under Labour governments.

Security Services were doing in the past though there is little doubt that there has been any change.

To bring things a little more up to date, it is worth noting Mrs Thatcher's comments in January this year about the defining of national security. Speaking in the House of Commons, she said: "The term is generally understood to refer to the safeguarding of the state and the community against threats to their survival or well-being. I am not aware that any previous administration has thought it appropriate to adopt a specific definition of the term."

THE STATE

The state is, of course, not some neutral force in society but rather the machinery by which the most dominant class maintain its power and wealth over all the other classes. Thus any moves to change things are in the eyes of authority seen to be - subversive.

Finally, it is essential to note that previous administration, and particularly Labour governments, have either gone along with or been unable to do anything about the activities of MI5, even when it was spying on some of the Labour Party's most prominent members.



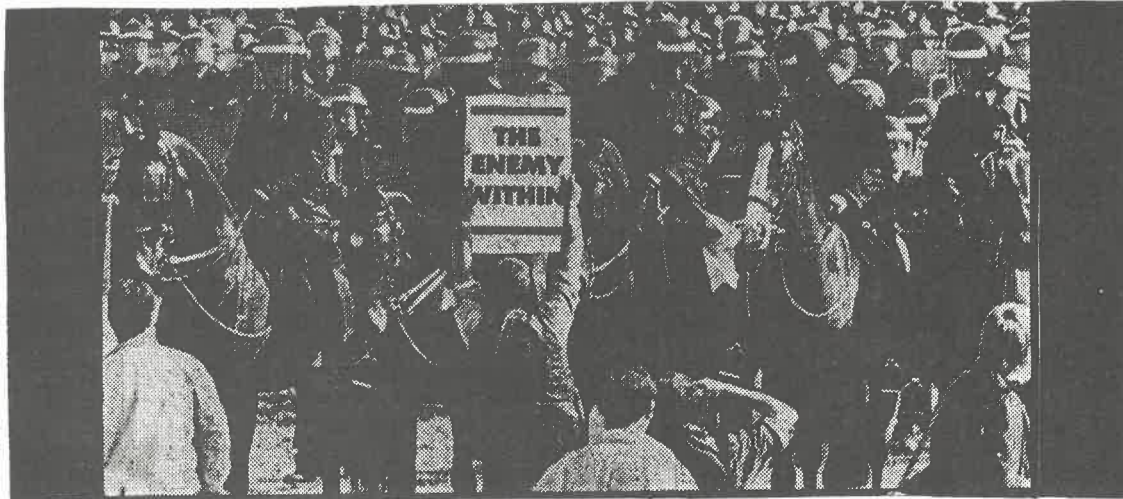
All smiles. Jack Jones and Jim Callaghan.

Altogether, around 40 volumes of surveillance material was built up on both Jones and Scanlon. But they were not the only ones to get such treatment from the Security Services. One of the many tasks of MI5 was to maintain surveillance on all the trade union leaders. This was highlighted by Barbara Castle, one time Employment Secretary in Harold Wilson's 1964-1970 Labour government. In May 1968, she recorded in her diary that "one of my discoveries in my new job is that the Minister of Labour has always been furnished with security reports on the trade unions".

Much of the material in 'The Watchers' and in 'Black List' deals with what MI5 and the

In 1967, Tony Benn, as Minister of Technology, had wanted to make Jack Jones a member of his top advisory council. But MI5 successfully prevented the appointment by refusing security clearance for him.

In 1977, Hugh Scanlon was proposed as the new Chairman of British Ship-Builders. Again, this appointment was blocked by the Security Services because he was not allowed to have any access to certain confidential documents and information. In his place, during the time of Callaghan's Labour government, Sir Anthony Griffin, an admiral in the Royal Navy, was considered much more suitable.



The state on horseback.

ARE UNIONS RELEVANT?

CLASS STRUGGLE
CORRESPONDENT

Many important issues were debated at the Trades Union Congress (TUC), held in the first week of September. These ranged from long-term questions such as the role of trade unions in Britain of the 1990's and co-operation with unions in Europe as we approach a single European market in 1992, to more immediate issues such as health and safety at the workplace and the unions' attitude to the government's new so-called training scheme (ET).

The Congress had its comic side. Norman Willis is reported to have said that the TUC would need to have a meeting to "decide what we decided" on ET. Neil Kinnock's appeal to the TUC not to boycott ET was put on the agenda in between debates on noise and repetitive strain injury, implying that he is just another hazard in the workplace. His denunciation of an economy and society living on credit followed close on the heels of Norman Willis' statement that the TUC would be introducing its own credit card, as one way of becoming relevant in the 1990's.

CLASS ISSUES

On the serious side, however, many of the issues covered touch on the everyday lives of millions of working people. The future course of the NHS, for example, is an issue of

and organisationally into imperialist society. In the early days, the unions were at best defensive organisations to protect their members' economic interests. Over a long historical development, they have become more and more incorporated into the system, not least through a partnership between top union leaders and Labour governments. The basis for this incorporation has been the fact that imperialism has been able to give ground at least to a section of relatively skilled, while male workers.

Over many years, they have advocated a collaborationist approach which has been unable to represent the interests of the working class as a whole, including all its different groups, let alone taking up the cause of workers and oppressed peoples in the Third World, or elsewhere.

DIFFERENT TRENDS

Eric Hammond represents one trend among union leaders. With the increasing use of electronics, computers etc. in industry, the EEPTU represent a section of the workforce that have important skills which they can sell at a relatively high price. They have used aggressive tactics, as at Wapping, to break the gentlemen of the TUC's agreement and encroach on territory tradition-

ally occupied by other unions, in this case the printers. But other unions are little better when it comes to defending the interests of the vast majority of working people (or unemployed people). It has often been pointed out that they reflect the dominant racism and sexism in Britain today and that they can do little for the growing army of casual, part-time or temporary workers. There is little basic democracy at the workplace and most unions prefer to negotiate with big employers rather than to listen to their members, let alone encourage any action by them.

FIGHT AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Do we then abandon the unions as reactionary bodies that are

now only an obstacle in the fight to mobilise the working class? In our opinion, this is not the way to deal with the problem and only looks at the negative side of the present day unions. In the first place, there are exceptions to these general points. The most obvious is the recent example of the National Union of Mineworkers and the miners' strike. Whatever criticisms can be made about the leadership of the strike by the NUM, there is no doubt that the majority of miners supported their union when it attempted to take up the fight for their class interests against the capitalist logic that wanted to destroy jobs and whole communities.

Secondly, there are positive views about the unions as well as hostility and apathy. Many people recognise that whatever their weaknesses or problems with the hierarchy, working people have no other means of defending their basic interests at work. Black people, for example, in spite of the deep racism within the unions, have a record of higher union membership than white workers.

WORK AT THE BASIC LEVEL

The answer to these two aspects of the unions for us as Marxist-Leninists has to be to work

within the unions, from the bottom upwards, making a distinction between base work where it is possible to maintain a close unity with ordinary workers, and higher levels.

At the present time, when the unions are dominated by opportunism, both left and right, it is useless and probably counter-productive to concentrate on branch, regional or national level. We have to work at our workplace - factory, office or hospital - and use the mass line as our method of leadership in uniting the vast majority of people at work to fight for their own class interests.

We also need to look at how to build unity beyond the workplace on other issues: anti-racist struggles, housing, the unemployed, to mention a few.

We need to take a stand against both left and right opportunism in all its forms. Those who call for a General Strike at every opportunity are as dangerous as those who preach that we should keep our heads down and wait for the election of a Labour government.

There is no quick solution. We have to be patient and work at the pace that the majority are prepared to go. At times too, we will be isolated and the struggle will be an uphill one. But it is a necessary struggle and one that will bring success in the end if we put our faith in ordinary working class people, to whom the TUC and its debates have little to offer.

WILLIS & KINNOCK TRYING TO DECIDE WHAT WAS DECIDED AT THE TUC



great concern. Nuclear disarmament affects us all. Recent legislation on industrial action restricts anyone organising at the workplace and the poll tax will penalise many working class people.

The media, of course, concentrated on the expulsion of the electricians' union (EEPTU) and Kinnock's support for ET. But for most ordinary people, the TUC was not a very exciting event and many would even agree with Eric Hammond, the electricians' leader, when he said: "The problem is not so much that our members support or oppose the TUC as that they see it as wholly irrelevant to their needs."

HOSTILITY AND APATHY

How then should Marxist-Leninists approach the question of the TUC and working in the separate unions today?

The number of trade union members is dropping. If you talk to ordinary people, many are either critical of the unions or see them as irrelevant. This is particularly true for younger people, black people and women whose interests the unions have generally failed to uphold.

You only have to look at the composition of the TUC, or other official trade union meetings. The number of women, black or young people will be tiny in comparison with their numbers in the workforce.

People's hostility or apathy to the official unions reflects the fact that they have become, at the higher levels, at least, institutionalised, politically



One of Britain's 9 million trade unionists - but is she adequately represented?

SAFE AT SEA

Earning your pay at sea has always been a dangerous occupation. The recent Ocean Odyssey fire was the latest in a long list of dramatic examples of risks that workers at sea run. Whether it's the numerous fishing trawler tragedies, Zeebrugge or Piper Alpha, they all highlight how the mad scramble for private profit puts workers and the public at risk.

On land, workers have the formal protection of the Health and Safety at Work Act (H&SWA) with the right of union safety representatives to call in experts from the overstretched and underfunded Health and Safety Executive. This independent body has the legal right to stop dangerous work practices. The H&SWA does not apply to oil rigs and shipping.

Successive governments have done nothing to make work out at sea safer. Indeed, policies have on occasions encouraged employers to skimp on safety.

The weaknesses of the trade union movement have been highlighted.

For the last eight years, unions such as MSF have been campaigning for the extension of the H&SWA. Such a demand is obviously progressive but a one-sided emphasis on legal safeguards is a weakness.

Strong union organisation should not wait for, or rely on, minimum legal regulations. It is difficult to organise workers out on oil rigs with the workforce split amongst different employers, isolated out at sea and divided amongst different shifts. But despite the difficulties, trade union membership is growing. The magnificent struggles of the P&O ferry crews show how difficult it is to take on the big companies.

Behind the headlines, there is evidence of how companies and governments have colluded to cut back on safety. Also, there are other moves planned which will cut back further on marine safety.

OIL RIG SAFETY

In the British sector of the North Sea oilfield, there are 125 drilling platforms employing 25,000 workers.

In the 1960's, there was strong government pressure to get the oil out quickly. The drilling platforms that were built were based on designs based on rigs used in the different conditions of the Middle East. Conditions in the North Sea are much more dangerous.

In 1986, the price of crude oil fell from 30 to 10 dollars per barrel. Competition increased. Operating costs had to be cut. There was a 10-15% cutback in maintenance. Safety priorities were reduced. This was at a time when the average age of the platforms was increasing significantly.

There are only seven inspectors to cover all of the 125 rigs. At best, they can spend two days on a rig once a year. Those inspectors are part of the safety division of the Department of Energy, whose primary responsibility is to maximise oil production. The inspectors can only get to the platforms using the owners' transport - no chance of surprise inspections. The Authority which certifies a rig only does a full survey once every five years.

This year's rig disasters are not the first. In 1984, there was an explosion on Piper Alpha, injuring four employees. The report on that incident has never been made public.

Only 24 hours before the 1988 Piper Alpha tragedy, there was an emergency shutdown on the Brent Alpha platform. Also,

the owners of Ocean Odyssey knew they had problems weeks before the fire. Gas pressures were well above the level at which an explosion is likely. They ignored the warnings.

Occidental Oil, owner of Piper Alpha, actually wanted to sell off its special MSV Tharos fire fighting emergency support platform. Between October 1987 and March 1988, the 102 million dollar platform was anchored in the Cromarty Firth, far from its operating area. Most of the crew had been dispersed and there were moves to sell it to a Mexican oil company.

Although the Department of Energy has been forced by recent events to propose measures to tighten up rig safety, there are strong pressures to limit their effectiveness. The oil companies are trying to argue that the proposals are untried or unreliable.



Of course, increased safety costs money, perhaps running into hundreds of millions of pounds. Energy Secretary Parkinson, still argues that running the rigs is the companies' responsibility.

There are also other economic pressures which are likely to limit increased safety. Falling production and world currency upheavals have resulted in a slump in the value of North Sea oil production from £30.7 million a day to £18.8 million a day in recent months. Because the Piper Alpha platform was at the centre of a network of oil pipes, its destruction resulted in a £3 million a day revenue loss. The effect on the balance of payments figures may be as much as £500 million over a year. With the tax loss to the Treasury running to £250-300 million a year.

There already exists the know-how to make drilling platforms safer. Something called "Risk

?

C.S. CORRESPONDENT

Analysis", which assumes that rigs could be completely destroyed and tries to find ways to prevent it, could be used. This was not used on any of the older rigs built in Britain and is still not widely used. Living quarters can be built as far away as possible from gas or oil production processes. A series of blastproof walls can be built between the two areas. Life boats can be situated below the living quarters for immediate access. All these are standard on rigs built in some countries (like Norway) where safety is taken more seriously. Of course, all these add about 20% to the cost of building a platform.

FERRY DANGERS

In a previous article in 'Class Struggle', we have already exposed how cut-throat competition created the situation leading

P&O European ferries may have lost £25 million as the result of the seamen's strike but it expects to save something like £10 million a year by forcing through reduced manning levels and changes in working practices. These changes may help P&O's profits but they increase the dangers for the passengers and crews on the ferries.

On the new staffing arrangements, if the Herald of Free Enterprise sailed now, it would have only 65 crew members instead of the 80 it had when it capsized. The members of the crew would have worked longer hours and have had less sleep. They would have no right to belong to a trade union.

On other ships, they may not have fewer crew members but fewer of them would be what is called certified seafarers. Being certified means you have spent two years being trained in, amongst other things, rescue and firefighting techniques.

P&O's other approach has been to invest in the companies involved in building the Channel Tunnel. P&O have already a 10% ownership of Taylor Woodrow and there are rumours that they intend to increase their holding.

P&O have donated £100,000 to the Tory Party. The company chairman, Sir Jeffrey Sterling, is a government adviser. On the other side, are the families hit by the Zeebrugge ferry disaster still fighting for compensation. The 1,000 sacked seafarers also continue their struggle. They did not strike for more pay but because they opposed the new work practices that endanger passengers and crew.

COASTGUARD SERVICES TO BE AXED

The Department of Trade has plans to stop the coastguard radio service. This service allows pleasure craft to contact the coastguards. If it is axed, coastguards will not know where boats are going. There will be no way of finding out if there are any rapid weather changes. May Day calls may not be heard. People's lives will be put at risk.

These plans come from a departmental review of Coastguard services. The report also contains plans to close three coastguard stations in North Devon, Isle of Man and at Peterhead, a move which will also endanger shipping.

PRIVATISATION OF MARINE SAFETY

Vital marine safety inspections are to be handed over to private companies, according to the Ships Officers' union. Already marine inspectors are overstretched and underfunded. The fear is that private companies whose main motivation is to make money will either not do the job properly, or will charge so much for inspections that shipowners will try harder to get round the regulations.

SAFETY OR PROFITS?

193 passengers and crew died unnecessarily at Zeebrugge.

167 dead on Piper Alpha.

A seafarer is 35 times more likely to be killed at work than a factory worker and four times more likely than a miner. It is clear where the imperialist system's priorities lie.

to the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster. Behind that competition amongst ferry companies, is the new competition they will face from the Channel Tunnel.

Brittany Ferries has committed £70 million to expand and renew its fleet. It hopes to displace P&O and Sealink as the main Channel ferry operator in the next decade.

Top shipping groups, including Shell, BP, Cunard and P&O are shifting to overseas ship registration to avoid paying taxes. Many companies have made seafarers redundant and then hired them back using agencies based outside the UK or replaced them with cheaper foreign labour, cutting crew costs by up to 24%.

CAN'T PAY - WON'T PAY!

CLASS STRUGGLE CORRESPONDENT

'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' was the clear message from the Scottish Anti-Poll Tax campaigners who recently spoke at a meeting in Leeds, on September 15th. The meeting, organised by the Direct Action Movement, highlighted how important and potentially effective a mass, united campaign against the poll tax could be both in Scotland and the rest of Britain.

The main speaker, from the East of Scotland Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Campaigns, told how the campaign against the poll tax has gathered momentum, particularly since registration began on April 1st this year. A broad-based campaign has developed, with a firm commitment to united, mass community action to resist the poll tax. The speaker told of how the Labour Party, despite the supposed commitment to fight the poll tax in Scotland, is adding little to the community action. Only a handful of MP's and councillors have pledged themselves to resist the poll

3. Remember; send only one question at a time, as you can repeat this. In every instance you will have 21 days to complete it.

4. Another tactic is to use another name as this is not illegal in Scotland. If you have registered under another name, then you can, after two months or so inform the registration officer that you have recently moved in and you can start all over again. It would also get the officer wondering where the other person has gone to.

5. Return the form to the registration officer marked 'not known at this address'.

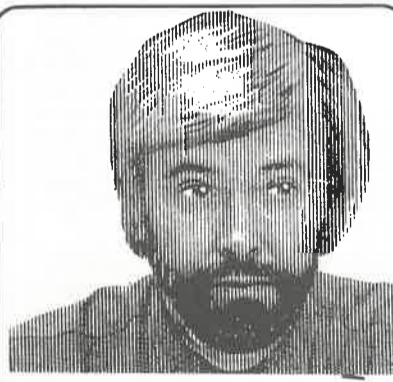
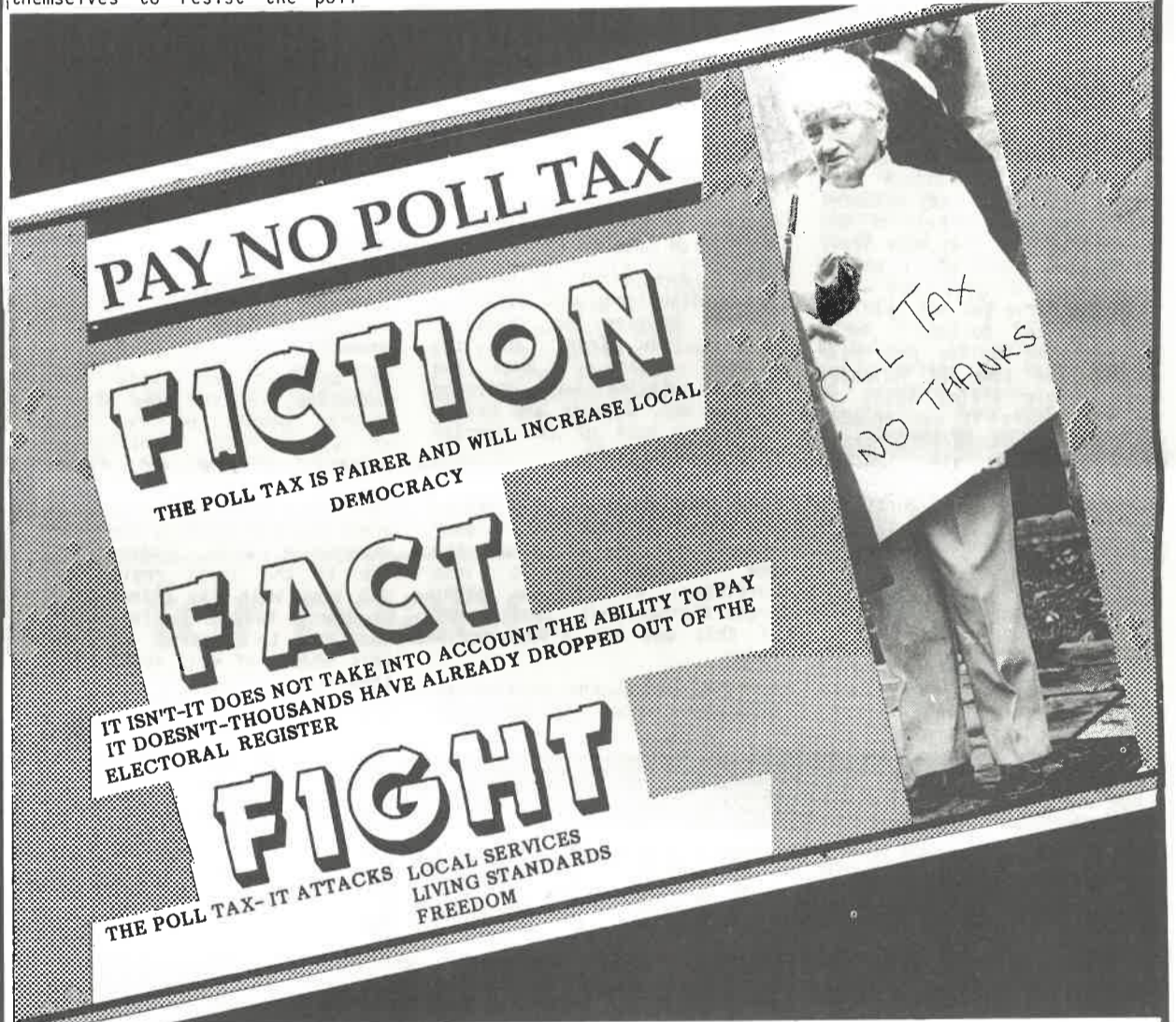
6. Claim you never received the questionnaire. The burden of proof is on the registration officer, not you.

These are only a few suggestions. The important thing is to make the act unworkable. The end result will have to be 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay!'.

NON-PAYMENT

If, after a mass non-registration campaign, the government still pushes ahead with the poll tax, non-payment is the next tactic. Fines and ultimately jail, could be the penalty for non-payment. But non-payment is only a civil, and not a criminal offence under the existing legislation in Scotland. Mass non-payment would obviously be a large spanner in the works for the government trying to enforce the poll tax.

The speaker also emphasised that the anti-poll tax campaign had to start as soon as possible in England, Wales and Northern Ireland so that action can have the greatest effect. A leaflet from the Leeds Claimants Union illustrates how the Scottish resistance is hampering the administration of registration:



The Labour leader of Scotland's second largest local authority is quitting local government because of Labour's role in the opposition to the Poll Tax.

John Mulvey recently stated that he was deeply unhappy with the national party's 'timid stance' towards Poll Tax opposition. "Labour has not been prepared to take on the issue and see the political potential in leading an extra-parliamentary campaign of civil disobedience. It seems to be more concerned with keeping the lid on protest rather than help it grow".

Ruchazie, Glasgow: Residents in one street returned all their registration forms together blank to the registration office.

Dunterlie, Barrhead: Tenants' Association members dumped almost all the area's poll tax forms - still blank - back at Paisley Registration Office along with a query about the meaning of a 'responsible person'.

Pollkshields, Glasgow: Poll tax snoopers have needed police protection. In mid-May a poll tax canvasser was attacked. Widespread hostility from the public led to a spate of resignations by poll tax registration officers in May.

These actions highlight how effective self-sufficient and self-reliant community-based campaigns are proving in Scotland. The need to build broad-based campaigns in the rest of Britain is clear. The poll tax can and will be pushed back if such campaigns can be built and they must be built now!

Kurdistan

KURDS FACING GENOCIDAL ATTACK *by David Evans*

In the last issue of 'Class Struggle', we welcomed the ceasefire between Iran and Iraq, but pointed out that one very negative result of it was likely to be an attempt by each state to crush opposition forces within their borders - in particular, the Kurds. Just a few days after that was written, on August 26th, the Iraqi army launched a full-scale attack on the liberated areas of Iraqi Kurdistan.

They also form large minorities in Iran and Iraq, and small numbers of Kurds also live in Syria, the USSR and Lebanon.

The Kurds have inhabited these areas (except Lebanon, where they are recent arrivals) for at least 2,500 years, and for much of that time have been able to keep a large measure of control over their own affairs, even though they have usually been incorporated into larger states. The best known

of Iraq to have that status because of the oilfields it contained (around Kir Kuk and to its north and east). For the past 30 years, the Kurds have had an off-and-on armed conflict with the central Iraqi government for self-rule within the Iraqi state but have had no strong allies who would stand

by them through thick and thin. The great powers are more interested in business with the Iraqi regime than in the rights of the Kurds.

Part of that business has been the supply of arms. The facilities for making poison gas are at Samarra, north west of Baghdad, the Iraqi capital. Much of the equipment and raw materials were supplied by West German firms, supposedly for an insecticide plant.

SELF DETERMINATION

Every people must have the right to decide their own future. The whole world over, people show they want to exercise that right. In launching its genocidal campaign against the Kurds, the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein has shown that it knows that all the people of Iraqi Kurdistan want self determination. That is why it is waging war on the entire population.

Using poison gas on towns and villages is the ultimate counter-insurgency tactic, the ultimate recognition of the mass support of a liberation movement.

It deserves world-wide condemnation, for the sake of the Kurdish people and for that of other peoples fighting for national freedom and social progress, for there must be many repressive rulers in other areas who are watching the Iraqi experience with interest to see if the Iraqi regime can get away with its crimes. If it does, they will feel more inclined to develop and use this weapon of mass destruction themselves.



Every people must have the right to determine their own future.

Iraq brought up battle-hardened elite units from the south of the country to attack the Kurdish areas. As they advanced into the rugged terrain of the liberated zones, they made heavy use of gas, much of it apparently mustard gas, but also including nerve gas and cyanide, the deadliest poison. Nerve gas was used earlier this year against the town of Halabja: every single living thing in the area where it was dropped was killed. It is this horror which has made over 100,000 Kurds flee over the border into Turkey during the past month.

The Kurds are one of the largest nations in the world without a state or autonomous area for themselves. They number 18-20 million. The largest concentration is in Turkey, whose government has always refused to recognise their existence, calling them "Mountain Turks".

Kurd historically was Salah ad-Din (Saladin), who liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders and fought England's King Richard I to a standstill in the twelfth century.

Before the First World War, the Kurdish lands were basically divided between two states - Persia (now Iran) and the Ottoman Empire. When the Ottoman Empire was defeated in the war, Britain and France carved up most of its territories between them.

Schemes for a Kurdish state under imperialist domination came to nothing when Kemal Ataturk led the forces of the new Turkish republic into Kurdistan, as well as other areas further west. The upshot of this was the divisions of today.

Britain wanted the portion of Kurdistan which became part



POISON GAS

Poison gas was used by Germany, France and Britain during the First World War. It was banned by international conventions in the 1920s. But most powers still produced gas. Germany had large stocks of nerve gas during the Second World War but they were not used, as Hitler mistakenly believed that the Allies would be able to strike back with worse results for Germany itself: in fact, none of the Allies had nerve gas stocks.

Production of deadly gases

has become simpler since they were first used. It was always difficult to make and transport such gases without endangering the producers' own populations and soldiers in the past, but more recently binary systems have been developed. The components of a nerve gas shell, for example, will be relatively harmless before they are mixed, so the manufacturers produce shells with two compartments for the different contents. They then mix at the moment of impact, creating a lethal gas.

Pakistan

ZIA PAYS THE PRICE OF DICTATORSHIP

C.S. Correspondent

The explosion which scattered the Pakistan dictator, General Zia al-Haq, together with the US ambassador and a number of Zia's top generals, across the Pakistan countryside, give rise to surprise and speculation but little sadness.

US investigators were called in to find out how the explosion actually happened. But no-one seriously believed it was an accident. Candidates for the assassination include the secret service of the Afghan ruling clique, the Indian secret service, the KGB, possibly in collaboration with India or Afghanistan, dissident Pakistan army generals and Shiite Muslim fundamentalists.

A State of Emergency was declared in Pakistan and an elaborate state funeral. But journalists reported little sign of any genuine grief. And in major cities there were reports of rejoicing, with people handing out sweets in celebration.

MILITARY DICTATOR

Zia was a brutal cold-blooded murderer. He arranged the hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's former Prime Minister and went ahead with it despite world-wide appeals for clemency. Zia proceeded to jail and flog

hundreds of Bhutto's supporters and others opposed to the Zia dictatorship. Hundreds, if not thousands, were killed, particularly those fighting for democracy or the rights of Pakistan's minority nationalities, such as Sind and Baluchistan. The repressive system of extreme Islamic laws backed with military might resulted in destruction of human rights, particularly the rights of women.

Zia's death is especially worrying to the US imperialists, for whom he was an important puppet in the South Asian arena. Pakistan is second only to Israel as a recipient of US military and civilian aid.

Zia came to power in 1977 in the wake of widespread political unrest after the election of Bhutto's People's Party with a clear majority. Vote-rigging was alleged, probably accurately but observers were agreed that Bhutto would have won the election without it. Zia staged a military coup with the claimed purpose of restoring peace and holding new elections.

No elections were held and two years later, Bhutto paid with his life for the electoral excesses of his party. There followed an increasing strang-



ulation of civil liberties. An election promised for 1979 was cancelled and political parties banned.

In 1983, Zia again promised elections. A broad alliance of political parties, the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) demanded that they be held immediately under the old constitution. Zia imprisoned thousands of MRD supporters and sent the army into Sind. In March 1985, an election without political parties was held, and was boycotted by the opposition.

AFGHANISTAN

Zia's continuing power was guaranteed by his manipulation of the Afghan situation. As the US government began to take the Soviet invasion seriously, they found an ally in Zia. He used the three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan to ensure that billions of dollars were poured in the coffers of the Pakistan military regime. In addition, this helped build up huge networks of arms and heroin gangsters within Pakistan.

There are suggestions that the dictator's death will prove a setback for Afghan liberation. It is possible that the Soviet Union and their puppets in Kabul

may attempt to delay the withdrawal of Russian troops to take advantage of the changing diplomatic climate. But the major victory in Afghanistan has already been won by the freedom fighters themselves and the Soviet Union has admitted defeat, like the Americans in Vietnam. Zia's removal will only be a minor hiccup in the process of liberation.

So far as Pakistan itself is concerned, there may be a real prospect of an improvement for the people. It is not yet known whether the army will allow free elections, based on political parties. If they do, and if Benazir Bhutto leads the People's Party to victory, she will have great difficulties in implementing a programme of economic, national and social reforms, even if she were seriously to try.

The future for the people of Pakistan is bound to involve long and hard struggle. Zia's death is no easy solution. But, as with his neighbour Mrs Indira Gandhi before him, there can be some satisfaction that Zia paid the price for the countless innocent lives which he sacrificed.

HOMWORKING: WOMEN AND LOW PAY

AS Correspondent

Book Review: 'Homeworking: Myths and Realities' by Sheila Allen and Carol Wolkowitz, published in the series Women in Society, by Macmillan Education, £7.95.

The September issue of 'Class Struggle' carried an article 'Invisible Workers', about women doing paid work at home, often for scandalously low wages. For anyone who wants to know there is plenty of evidence of the exploitation of thousands of women, black and white, in Britain today through this kind of work.

It is also clear that this is an issue that governments, of whatever party, are not prepared to act on, unless forced to by pressure from a mass movement. It is now one hundred years since the first Select Committee was set up to investigate the "sweated trades". And it was following a campaign in which the Federation of Women Workers played a central role, that legislation was brought in, in the early part of the 20th century, to lay down a minimum wage for women working at home (outworkers) and in small workshops.

It would be useful to consider the fact that it was an organisation of women workers, with support from other forces, that succeeded in taking up this issue and winning reforms. There are obviously lessons for today in relation to women and the trade unions. But in this review, I want to concentrate on other points raised in a recent book 'Homeworking: Myths and Realities'.

Although the book includes material from a survey on homeworking carried out in West Yorkshire in the early 1980's, its main purpose is not to give a descriptive account of the

facts and figures but to argue for the need to see homeworking as an important and long-standing part of the capitalist (and international) economy and to put it in the context of women's work in general, paid and unpaid, at home and outside.

EXPOSING THE MYTHS

The authors expose the various myths surrounding homeworking: that as a form of production it died out after the 19th century; that it is only done by exceptionally poor and pathetic women tied down by many young children; that homeworkers are in some way different from the vast majority of women; that homeworking is only a problem within the Asian or other national minority communities; that it is restricted to small clothing firms that sell their goods on market stalls among other frequent assumptions made about homeworking.

The authors also show that because homeworkers have so often been "invisible", there is little analysis of the part that this form of production plays in 20th century Britain.

In the 19th century, it was recognised as an integral and important part of the production process. Marx, for example, wrote: "Besides the factory operatives, the manufacturing workmen and the handicraftsmen, whom it concentrates in large masses at one spot, and directly commands, capital also sets in motion, by means of invisible threads, another army: that of the workers in domestic industries, who dwell in large towns and are scattered over the face of the country."

In terms of the 20th century, however, there has been more analysis and discussion of the situation of women in the Third World who are involved in the production of commodities

through paid work at home, for example, women in Bangladesh making cane objects, in India making jewellery or others making shoes or components for new technology.



This useful book gives a good overview of the different material on homework and backs up its arguments and criticisms with their own material from West Yorkshire. In this review, I will not attempt to summarise all this material which readers can study for themselves. But, I want to pull out some more general points that seem particularly relevant as we develop a strategy for women's liberation.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES?

The book criticises categories of work used in traditional analyses. One of the most common concepts underlying much theory about work, social relations and consequent legislation or policy, is the division between work and home, and consequently the 'public' and 'private' spheres of life.

Such ideas were based on an analysis that with the process of industrialisation, work moved outside the home and the roles of individuals within the family were separated into a (family) wage-earning husband and a woman responsible for the care of the children and house.

There are many problems with this view. It hides the unpaid domestic work of women (reproduction and maintenance of the workforce) in the home. It is not an accurate reflection of actual pay levels: for the majority of working class families, it has never been true that the man's wage was sufficient to support a family. Even in areas outside those where women traditionally worked full-time as in the woollen and cotton industries, married women were forced to do paid work to help to support the family (where there was a male wage-earner). And women were often the sole wage earner in other families.

This book does not deal with the history of the trade unions on this issue. It is important to note the role of the male-dominated unions in the 19th century who generally argued for women to be excluded from paid work on the basis that their proper place was in the home. They demanded the exclusion of women from employment rather than support women's right to work and equal pay.

DOMESTIC WORK

Feminist critics of this traditional view have concentrated on pointing to the importance of the unpaid, unrecognised domestic work of women to the capitalist system. They have also shown how women's paid work outside the home is important to the economy and its low pay and low status related to women's domestic role. However, this analysis too often leaves out the paid work that women do at home.

WHO PROFITS?

The book raises many other important points. These include the need to understand how homework is used by, and contributes to the profits of big firms, particularly retailers, who are rarely the direct employers but work through a chain of sub-contractors. The authors expose the myth that homework is confined to national minority communities. They do not, however, go into this in detail. But other writers have pointed out the importance of homework as within national minority communities such as the Bangladeshi or Cypriot communities in London.

The book is also scornful of official statistics and a current view that confuses badly paid women homeworkers with the computer analysts or freelance professionals who work from home, a confusion that helps promote the view of the new and fashionable trend towards home-based work.

But the relation of women to work and the family is central.

As the authors say in their introduction: "Women's struggles to establish their rights as workers, including the right to equal pay, come up against interpretations of work still dominated by the myth of the male family breadwinner, in which women's waged work is assumed to be temporary, intermittent and of secondary importance to individual households and the economy as a whole. In documenting homeworkers' position as permanent members of the waged labour force making a critical contribution to production, we are pointing to many aspects of women's waged work more generally. Many women who are not themselves homeworkers will recognise much about their own situation in the accounts which homeworkers have given of their working lives."

Women still working for peace

Greenham Common women's peace camp is still active and remains a focus for much of the women's peace movement.

Cruise missiles are still parading out in the countryside despite all the recent ballyhoo about removing them. An accident on the A303 on September 18th, involved a 15-vehicle convoy and closed the road for some hours. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) refused to confirm or deny that the convoy was carrying nuclear weapons, saying only: "There was absolutely no danger to the general public."

STRIP SEARCHES

In July, an important victory was won in the courts by Stella Mann Cairns, who had been strip searched by MOD police at Greenham in 1983.

Stella was awarded £200 damages and all costs, a total of £15,000. This is the first time damages have been awarded in a strip search case and may help other claimants such as Republican prisoners, Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer.

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

On October 22nd and 23rd, there is a women's gathering at Greenham, with the theme 'One World, Many Women'. Its purpose is to further the links already made between different parts of the nuclear chain: the worldwide exploitation, repression and injustice which underpins it, and with patriarchy. It will be about both sharing information and encouraging action.



The group 'Women Working for a Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific' (NFIP) which arose out of Greenham some years ago, is increasingly active and organised.

NFIP's September bulletin gives information and news of campaigns around a whole series of related struggles. It gives further information on the United States' cover-up of medical evidence of severe plutonium poisoning in the Rongelap people in the Pacific Marshall Islands. The Islanders are fighting for compensation from the USA at the same time as the new Star Wars testing programme threatens a huge increase in missile tests there.

The bulletin also covers the struggle in East Timor for independence from Indonesia who invaded in 1975 when East Timor was on the brink of independence from Portugal. There are reports of speaking tours of women from Belau and Kokotha people of South Australia, and information of networks and the weekend gathering of the group in October. (More details of NFIP from 52 Salisbury Road, Crookes, Sheffield S10 1WB.)

In the USA, Kayta Komisaruk is appealing against her five-year jail sentence for 'damaging government property'. She had hitched into the Vandenberg base, drilled holes into the satellite dish, painted slogans on the walls and danced on the microchips of the NAVSTAR guidance computer, thus taking out one third of the US nuclear first-strike capabilities!

She then left flowers and biscuits for the soldiers, hitched back to San Francisco and held a press conference. Her support group can be contacted through Youth CND, 22 Underwood St, London N1 7JQ.

Women in Malta were at the forefront of the successful action in June which prevented the British nuclear fleet from entering the Grand Harbour at Valletta. In a joint action with the unions, the harbour was barricaded by a tanker and mass demonstrations took place in the town. In radio communication, the Captain said that he would not enter because

"it is no honour for Her Majesty's Navy to be insulted or ridiculed by a crowd."

National CND's big demonstration of the year is coming up on October 15th. The theme for the day is 'Stop Trident and the Transfer of Cruise from Land to Air and Sea'. It is to be held in conjunction with a mass demonstration of the West German peace movement at the site of the new NATO command centre there. In Britain, demonstrations will take place

at three sites: USAF Upper Heyford; Faslane Naval Base in Scotland and Portsmouth Naval base.

The struggle against nuclear weapons is part of the bigger struggle for peace with justice. Not only do they threaten our planet with destruction that will last for milleniums, but they are poisoning us here and now, and are intimately bound up with the oppression and genocide of many Third World peoples.

Subscriptions or single copies of the following journals can be obtained from New Era Books:

Cameroon Monitor - bulletin of the Committee for Human Rights in Cameroon	25p
Eritrea Newsletter - newsletter of the Eritrea Support Committee	20p
KASAMA - newsletter of the Philippines Support Group	40p
Liberation - journal of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines	80p
TAPOL - the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign newsletter	40p
TOM - monthly paper of the Troops Out Movement	30p
Tiocfaidh Ar La - bulletin of the Irish Hunger Strike Commemoration Committee	50p
Links - quarterly magazine of Third World First	£1.95p
Palestine Solidarity - news bulletin of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign	40p
People's Voice - magazine of the Tigray People's Liberation Front	£1.00
News From Colombia - newsletter of Colombian Committee for Human Rights	30p
Nicaragua Today - magazine of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign	60p
REST Bulletin - newsletter of the Relief Society of Tigray, UK Support Committee	25p

FREEDOM FOR IRELAND



LAWFUL KILLING?

The inquest on the killings of three Irish volunteers in Gibraltar in March of this year, came to an end on Friday, 30th September. The jury's verdict of "lawful" killing came as no surprise to most people. The only unexpected feature was that the jury were for many hours deadlocked and only arrived at their decision by a majority verdict of nine to two.

He went on: "What little evidence existed... showed that the SAS had been chosen in Gibraltar for an operation that was conceived to be an arrest procedure. Arrest was essentially a police matter.

"It was wholly unreasonable and led to a lot of what happen-

The SAS soldiers and their superiors, who all gave evidence from behind a screen, denied however, that they shot the three after they had fallen to the ground. As AP/RN commented: "First came the officers with upper-class accents and a studied contempt for McGrory. They were followed by the four ordinary soldiers who packed 27 bullets into the bodies of three unarmed people. Their cruder stories often sounded like the British war comics in which the regiment often figures and their lies stood out in greater clarity."

The story was contradicted in court, however, by a civilian witness, an electronics expert. Dr. Michael Scott testified that a radio signal sent from where the three were killed could not possibly have detonated a bomb in the car. Dr Scott had carried out tests in Gibraltar which proved his case. He also said that if the police or security services had been worried about the car bomb (which turned out never to have existed) that they could have rendered it useless by unscrewing the aerial on the car by which it was to have been detonated.

oe pursued as soldiers and their superiors refused to answer questions "in the interest of national security". Their political masters remained hidden behind this smokescreen.

As APRN predicted: "From the beginning, the entire inquest was weighted in favour of the British government and its agents who carried out the killings. It was the British government which set the agenda and decided what should and should not be known. From day one the only things to emerge will just be what suits the Thatcher administration to reveal."

GIBRALTAR INQUEST



At the beginning of the inquest, Patrick McGrory, the lawyer for the families of those killed, had requested that the inquest be heard without a jury. He argued that the "trial by the media" would already have influenced the attitude of most Gibraltarians to the events and to important civilian witnesses. His request was turned down.

Many people have argued that the limited powers of an inquest would not permit the real facts of what happened to come to light. This was borne out in the court.

At the heart of the matter, was the question of why the three, Sean Savage, Dan McCann and Mairead Farrell, were not arrested, instead of being shot down in cold blood.

RULES OF WAR OR RULE OF LAW?

The case of the British government and of the lawyer for the SAS soldiers who carried out the operation was that they were acting according to the rule of law.

As Mr McGrory said in his closing speech: "It may be that the three who were dead may have said 'C'est la guerre', because they regarded themselves as Irish soldiers. But we are lawyers, and we must keep foremost in our minds that we are not interested in the rules of engagement but in the rules of law....."

ed afterwards. It started a whole chain of unreasonableness which, in the end, led to three killings, which I will be submitting were criminal killings. Indeed, I would submit that they were contemplated at the inception when the SAS were chosen."

WITNESSES

The arguments in the court rested on whether the SAS used "minimum force" or whether they undertook their operation with the intention of "shooting-to-kill".

It was clear from the evidence given, both by the soldiers themselves and by other witnesses, such as the pathologist, that warnings were hardly given, if at all and the three had had no chance to surrender.

The state pathologist, for example, described the shooting of Sean Savage as a "frenzied attack". Under cross-examination, Soldier A (who shot Farrell and McCann) said that his "warning" was little more than "a grunt, a sound, the beginning of a word." Carmen Proetta, who saw the shootings from her flat, testified that McCann and Farrell had put up their hands in surrender just before they were shot.

The most important question, however, which the inquest did not tackle in any depth, was the "justification" given by all the soldiers and their superiors for shooting the three rather than a peaceful arrest.

They were unanimous in claiming that they believed either that the three were armed or that they carried with them the means to detonate a bomb parked in a square about a mile and a half away by Sean Savage.

The facts of the matter were, of course, that the three turned out to be unarmed and carried no equipment for detonating a bomb.

However, this was the briefing given to the SAS in advance and was justified in the court by statements that surveillance had lost track of the three before they crossed into Gibraltar.

This version could not be tested in court because the Spanish government would not allow their security services to appear. However, a statement given to a journalist, Harry Debelius by Agustin Valladolid, chief spokesman for Spanish security, in March, flatly contradicts this view. He affirmed that the three had been under surveillance by Spanish security all the time and that the British security service had been working with them.

Mr McGrory further pointed out that if the main concern of the security forces had been the protection of lives, their first step should have been to clear the area where the car bomb was supposed to be parked. When he questioned Mr Charles Colombo, acting deputy commissioner of police in Gibraltar, along these lines, Colombo came up with the unconvincing reply that: "We simply did not have the manpower to deal with the situation when it happened."

There were many other points where the case made out in court by the British security forces were thin and easily contradicted. But these could not

WITHDRAW BRITISH FORCES

The truth of the matter is that Britain is fighting a war in Ireland. The SAS, as Thatcher herself admitted, operate on rules of engagement similar to those operated in the Malvinas war. The nationalist people of Ireland know that this is the case. But it is a truth that the British government refuses to acknowledge.

The only solution to the situation in Ireland, is a political solution that recognises the right of the Irish people to self-determination. Britain has been forced to withdraw its armed forces from its former colonies all over the world. In Ireland too, Britain's oldest colony, the first step must be to withdraw the army of occupation.



State stooge: Michael Hucker, counsel for the SAS.

CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK

In the first week of September, the United Campaign Against Strip-Searching was launched at its first annual general meeting in Manchester. Speakers at the meeting stressed that strip-searching is being practised on many different women by the British authorities. The strip-searching of Irish Republican women prisoners has been highlighted by a strong campaign. Other women have also been humiliated by this form of torture: during the trial of Stella Cairns (see page 7) it emerged that there were up to 750 strip-searches at the women's peace camp every year. Black women have also often been strip-searched. One recent example was the forcible strip-search of Olive Todd James by Gatwick customs officials for drugs. She was the only person from her flight treated this way and she was also the only black person on her flight.

The Time To Go Charter was launched in Scotland on Friday, 2nd September.

The Charter calls for British withdrawal from Ireland and the meeting brought together a wide range of Scottish politicians, trade unionists, entertainers, academics, professionals and clergy members.

One of the speakers was Jim Friei, of the print union SOGAT and chairperson of the Connolly Association in Scotland. He stressed that the Charter did not lay down detailed plans but aimed to raise the level of debate "above that of slogans and the politics of the last atrocity."

Other speakers from the National Union of Students in Scotland (NUS) and Scottish Trade Union Congress Youth Committee welcomed the Charter. The Scottish NUS is to make the issue of British withdrawal its main

international campaign in the coming college year.

The Time To Go campaign aims to build a mass campaign in particular to mark the 20th anniversary of the British army's occupation of the six counties next summer. 'Class Struggle' hopes to report on its activities in England in future issues.

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Ban Plastic Bullets is the theme of a demonstration organised by the West Yorkshire Campaign Against Plastic Bullets for Saturday 8th October. The march was to be held in Huddersfield to protest against the use of plastic bullets in general. But it was also aimed at the Huddersfield firm, Standard Fireworks, who recently took over Brocks Fireworks who manufacture the plastic bullets in Scotland.

Standard Fireworks recently announced that they were stopping manufacture of plastic bullets. A member of the West Yorkshire Campaign against Plastic Bullets explained: "The campaign exists to condemn the use of plastic bullets all over the world. It's an issue that should be constantly brought into the open."

A member of the Leeds Troops Out Movement pointed out that: "Plastic bullets have caused the deaths of more than 16 people in Northern Ireland. More than a quarter of these were children and the deaths can be horrific. And thousands more have been maimed."

"The plastic bullet is far from being a riot control minimum fire weapon - all the child deaths happened in non riot situations. They are vicious weapons."

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DIARY OF EVENTS

CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Saturday, October 15th
No More Nuclear Weapons!

FASLANE NAVAL BASE
Site of new Trident submarines

Assemble Faslane Peace Camp
1 pm for march to the base
1.30 pm
BLOCKADE/WHITENASH/DECORATE THE FENCE

US AIR FORCE UPPER HEYFORD
Demonstration 12 noon - 4pm
Around perimeter and all gates

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL BASE
Focus on Sea-launched Cruise Missiles

12 noon - 1.30 pm
Surround dockyard
3pm Rally Guildhall Square