

CLASS STRUGGLE

VOL. 14, NO. 9 NOVEMBER 1990 30P

DEPORTATION

NO
HERE TO STAY
WAY!

PAY
NO
POLL
TAX

CAN'T PAY - WON'T PAY

Inside

*extradition
dessie ellis on
hunger strike*

*bloody monday
in palestine
massacre at
temple mount*

*the gulf
self-determination
not negotiable?*

DEMONSTRATE

Saturday
24 th Nov
Handsworth
Birmingham

CLASS STRUGGLE

As we go to press, another crisis has hit the Thatcher government, with the resignation of Geoffrey Howe, over the issue of European unity.

This process of building a united Europe is one of the main aspects of the changes going on in the world today. The old pattern of a world dominated by two superpowers, the USA and the Soviet Union, is no longer true. In the coming period, the world will be dominated by three blocs of Europe, Japan and the USA competing for world markets and control.

Three issues covered in this 'Class Struggle' reflect different but connected aspects of this changing world.

The expulsion of communists from the German engineering union is an important issue for all of us. The Social-Democrats, who have done a complete about-turn on Europe, promise us benefits in the form of the Social Charter and increased employment rights. But, at the same time, they expel those most committed to the defence of the interests of the working class in the unions.

The role of the EEC in the Gulf reflects the external aspect of European unity. The USA is no longer strong enough to act as sole policeman for the interests of western imperialism, in the Middle East or other parts of the world. While upholding the right of the people of Kuwait to self-determination and demanding Iraqi troops out, our main emphasis is to oppose the growing threat of an imperialist war in the Middle East.

The threatened deportation of Sonia Malhi is one more example of the internal aspect of European racism and national oppression. While this is nothing new in Britain, there is increased coordination within the EEC of immigration controls, internal policing and surveillance of black people.

While opposing all these aspects of European unity, we do not support the Thatcher anti-European position. The Thatcher position can only represent a little Englander stand which has no place in the world today or subordination to the USA rather than Europe.

The only solution is to build solidarity with people both in Europe and in the Third World, in the immediate struggles for workers' rights, against deportations and against imperialist war, as well as in the long-term struggle to destroy the imperialist system itself.

POLITICAL PAPER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST LEAGUE

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SONIA IS HERE

In the October issue of 'Class Struggle', we reported on three campaigns against deportation in the West Midlands. For one of the women fighting deportation, Sonia Malhi, events in October moved fast. At the beginning of the month, Sonia was served with a deportation order. After a cliff-hanging three weeks, Sonia was finally given the hope of a possible reprieve.

THE BACKGROUND

Sonia came to Britain seven years ago to visit her family, her sister and brother, who were settled in the West Midlands. After three years, she got married to a British citizen. Subsequently, this marriage broke down as a result of her husband's cruelty and physical violence towards her. After enduring this situation for a long time, Sonia actually tried to kill herself out of desperation and was hospitalised. It was only after this that she admitted that the marriage was at an end and left her husband.

For the last four years, Sonia has been living with her sister who has been supporting her.

Like many other black women, Sonia found herself threatened with deportation because, according to the Home Office, she has lost her right to stay here because this was dependent on her marriage.

Over the last three years, Sonia has gone through all the legal procedures to apply for the right to stay. In particular, since she came to England both her parents in India have died and she has no close relations with other family members to whom she could return.

The Home Office however insisted that Sonia must go back. They said that they have reached their decision after fully considering her case. But, in fact, they have not even bothered to interview her.

DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

As the right of black people to appeal against decisions of immigration officers has been progressively eroded, Sonia began a public campaign for her right to stay one year ago. At a meeting held in September (see last month's 'Class Struggle'), Sonia appealed for public support alongside other black women.

Since that meeting local support has grown. The Tamworth Council (Sonia's local council) passed a unanimous resolution in support of her right to stay, on compassionate grounds.

However, nationally deportations are increasing and a recent House of Lords decision has affirmed the power of immigration officers to order deportations with only minimal investigations. As a recent Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants report said, the government is pursuing a policy of 'Shoot First, ask questions later' in relation to deportations.

On Saturday, 6th October, just as Sonia's relatives were thinking of closing up their shop, three immigration officers arrived. They took Sonia to the family flat and served the official notice of deportation. This order was signed by an immigration officer as long ago as October 1989. They threatened Sonia that legally they could send her back any time. When her solicitor contacted them later, they suggested that she had a fortnight to sort out her affairs.

For the next two weeks, Sonia, her family and members of the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign have been visiting local community and religious organisations to build up support for Sonia.

Because of the lack of right to appeal, the role of a local MP in intervening to stop deportation, can be crucial at this stage. Sonia's MP, David Lightbown had said publicly that she should go home. However, widespread publicity in the local press supporting Sonia's right to stay, he agreed to a meeting. He made promises to Sonia at this meeting that he would assist her.

Lightbown, who had publicly resisted the efforts to help Sonia stay, criticising the Tamworth Council, the campaign and her solicitor, changed his line when he found how strong the support for her was. In the meeting, he agreed he would put a stop to any plans for deportation until he spoke to the Minister.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

It is vital that we all show our support for Sonia's right to stay, particularly in the next few weeks. The campaign is calling for your support!

1. Support the demonstration to be held on 24th November, in Birmingham, in support of three black women, Sheila, Sonia and Prakesh, currently fighting deportation.
2. Sign a petition and collect signatures.
3. Write to the Home Secretary, Queen Annes Gate, London, asking him to stop the deportation. Quote reference number S 653846.
4. For more details, contact the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign, c/o 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham 19.

Despite his promise, the Immigration officers decided three days after the meeting with Lightbown, to send Sonia back on 31st October. Lightbown had done nothing to block the deportation.

It was not until the day before the deportation was due, 30th October, that Immigration officers were eventually told to hold off while the Home Office considered a medical report provided by her MP.

Now Sonia waits again for the decision which could destroy her life or save it.

TO STAY!

CAN LABOUR BRING CHANGE?

by Joe Steel

Whatever the pros and cons of the policies adopted at their conference, the Labour Party is rapidly becoming openly what it has always been in practice: another bosses' party competing for the chance to run the imperialist system.

This change in appearance is a good thing. By claiming in the past to be a socialist alternative, it diverted people away from the necessary struggle to overthrow imperialism and devalued the real nature of socialism.

An increasing number of people are disillusioned with the Labour Party. But there are still those within the Labour Party, in the trade unions and in left-wing organisations, who peddle the line that the only hope for real change must come from the Labour Party. This is a false view.

FALSE ARGUMENTS

The argument is used that Lenin was in favour of the Labour Party. It is true that, 70 years ago, he favoured working in and with the Labour Party, but only as a tactic because workers had no experience of a Labour government. Lenin was clear that from the outset Labour was a capitalist party.

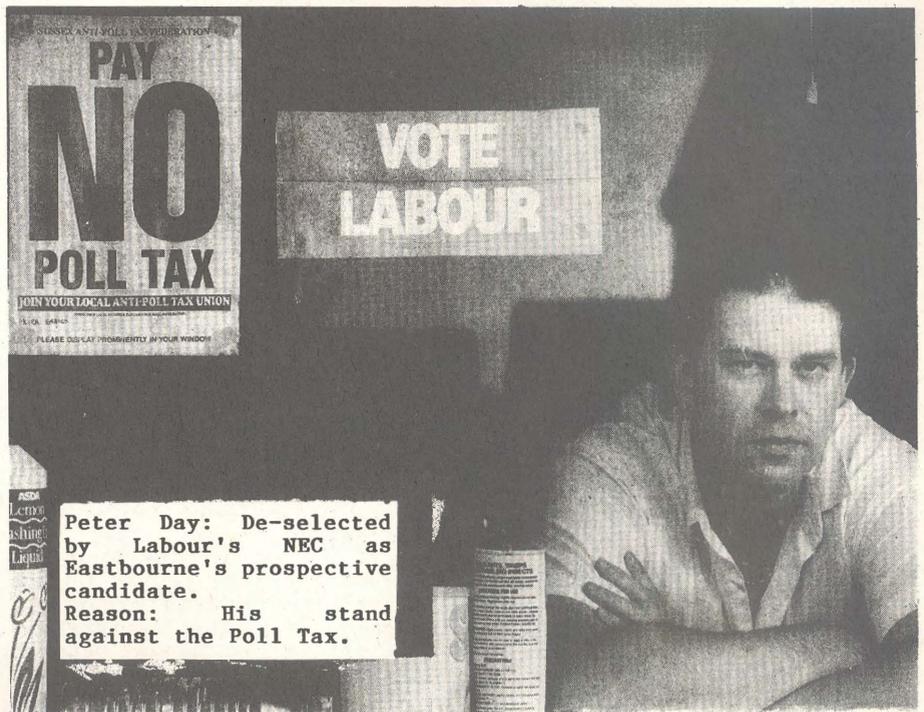
Secondly, it is argued that people have forgotten, or never knew, what a Labour government was like. They need, it is said, to experience one for themselves.

Of course people have to learn political lessons from their own experience. But the point is to sum up those experiences and provide real political leadership. There is a vast history of political lessons to be learned from past Labour governments. If combined with the ongoing experience of people in struggle, they will see for themselves the true nature of the imperialist system and see that Labour has no real answers.

Labour must be attacked. It does not serve the people's interests to spread illusions in Labour and its false promises. We have more than half a century's experience of Labour governments. They have got us nowhere.

THE LESSER EVIL

The third argument is that when compared with the Tories, Labour is the lesser of two evils. An examination of history shows that this is not true. Internationally, Labour governments have been just as



bloody, in their furthering of Britain's interests as the Tories have. Their role in the Malvinas' invasion, military occupation of Ireland and their position on the Gulf are but three recent examples.

At home, they favour incorporating the trade union movement into the state. Nationalisation has bailed out failing capitalist industries at the workers' and taxpayers' expense. They try and minimise and contain the just demands of the peace movement and women's struggle. They were responsible for drafting and implementing the racist nationality and immigration laws.

Labour provides a useful safety valve for imperialism to divert real opposition into the narrow safe confines of parliamentary politics.

Whichever party wins the election, what decides the outcome of its policies is whether it meets the needs of the system of that time. Real power, class-based power, lies outside parliament. Sometimes, Labour puts forward policies which meet the strategic needs of the dominant section of the ruling class and their system. Sometimes, the Tories meet these needs better.

A DIFFERENT STRATEGY

There is still much to do to expose the Labour Party and to convince the majority of people that their only hope is to overthrow the imperialist system.

A different type of politics has to be built, independent of parliamentary politics. It is not just a matter of developing an all-round criticism of the nature of imperialism, although that is important. A clear break has to be made from the type of so-called left-wing politics that dominate today.

Real links have to be made with people in their everyday struggles and the slow, painstaking work has to be done to help them learn from their own experience. They have much that we can learn from.

It is wrong to concentrate on winning positions in committees. Or flitting from one campaign to another trying to boost newspaper sales or membership figures. All show an arrogant attitude to the people and cause disillusionment and confusion in the struggle.

The new politics must be based on true internationalism, be anti-racist and non-sexist and be based among the people. It is the only formula which can beat imperialism.



Landowner: Duke of Westminster



Banker: Evelyn de Rothschild



Entrepreneur: Richard Branson



Businesswoman: Anita Roddick

The Rich get richer.....

Last month in the article 'Jobs Galore in the City', we referred to a recent investigation into who owns most of the wealth in this country. This investigation involved nearly ten years' work by the former associate business editor of the 'Sunday Times'. This month we look in a little more detail at what he discovered.

Over £54 billion is the combined wealth of the top 400 richest people in Britain. One third of the country's wealth is still held by the large landowners, although it is not necessarily in the form of land.

OLD BRITAIN

Many of those in this group could be described as representing Old Britain, aristocratic families who have been able to hand down their riches to their children. They include people such as the Duke of Westminster, rated number three in the Top Fifty and worth £4,200 million; Earl Cadogan (£450 million); Viscount Portman (£400 million); the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury (£300 million) and the Marquess of Bath (£200 million).

The next biggest group is made up of property developers and builders, 66 out of the top 400, and retailers, 32 in number. Best known names in this lot include Lord Sainsbury, rated number seven and worth £1,568 million and John Moores with extensive income from the Littlewoods Pools and his retailing business.

Among the top fifty are seven who have interests in hotels and property, including Gerald Ronson, currently detained at the Ford open prison for his role in the Guinness affair. There are five from the field of banking and finance, including Sir Evelyn de Rothschild, three publishers and two international traders. Also in the list is John Paul Getty II, who in the column 'What They Do' is described as a philanthropist and the ex-Beatle, Paul McCartney, at number 24.

CHANGING FORTUNES

According to the author of the study, Peter Beresford, the list is by no means a static one. In these days of high interest rates, currency fluctuations and wheeling and dealing on the Stock Exchange, some have experienced great change in their fortunes. Alan Sugar, the man behind the Amstrad electronics company, saw his accumulated wealth go down in 1989 by over £300 million. However, there is no need to feel sorry for him, he still has around £118 million left.

Few women occupy positions among the top 400. After the Queen, number one in the list, there are only 22 others, including Anita Roddick, founder of Body Shop; Vivien Duffield, daughter of Charlie Clore and the singer Sheena Easton.

One other interesting feature is the absence of most descendants of the large industrial families who had their fortunes made for them during the 19th century in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. Only Anthony Pilkington, whose family started the largest glass-making company in the world in St Helens, is listed. There are no Arkwrights, Stephenson, Brunels, Dunlops or Colmans. The nearest equivalent to an industrial millionaire would appear to be Lord Arnold Weinstock who made thousands redundant in the process of merging GEC, English Electric and AEI.

THE SOURCE OF WEALTH

There have been many studies over the years into how the wealth of the country is divided up. What is rarely

highlighted in them is an explanation of how the present day rich come to be so rich. Inheritance is usually trotted out as one answer, although how the wealth and the possession of land and property first came into the family is usually ignored. Reference is often made to those who started with nothing and became millionaires.

Defenders of the capitalist system, and others who know no better, often put this down to the individual's personal drive and ambition, to initiative and enterprise or sheer hard work.

The real answer is, of course, something quite different. The source of the wealth of today's rich in Britain, however it is handed on or shared between them, in the final analysis comes from the dual exploitation on the one hand of the peoples of the Third World, over the centuries and on the other hand from the working class within Britain. Fundamentally, that is the only way to understand just why the rich are so rich.

THE POOREST

A study that ought to be carried out would be to discover who are the country's poorest 400. One problem, however, would be that so many feel that they qualify. An idea of just how widespread poverty is in Britain today is reflected in a recent study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

From their investigations for the years 1979 to 1987, they discovered that over six million families were living on or below the poverty line. In 1987, 4.3 million were on social security and a further 1.9 million were living on income lower than the safety net social security level, many of these failing to obtain the state benefits to which they were entitled.

Since 1987, the situation has only got worse. There is indeed a link between the riches of the top 400 and the poverty of the bottom twenty million. If only the latter knew just why this was so, and were prepared to change it.

Low Income Families

Year	On Benefit	On an Equivalent Income or Less	Total
1979	2,590	1,420	4,010
1983	3,010	1,610	4,620
1985	4,110	1,830	5,940
1987	4,330	1,910	6,240

Figures are in thousands. Until 1983 the figures were based on government statistics. After that, the publication of statistics was scrapped as it was becoming too embarrassing.

Who is hostile to this unity

We print on this page a statement from the MLPD - the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany, about the expulsion of Stefan Engel from the main engineering union in Germany.

It is clear that the Single European Market of 1992 is essentially a process of unity between European capitalists in order that they can compete more effectively with the USA and Japan for world markets. On the company level, this process is taking the form of mergers and takeovers, leaving the European economy dominated by an even smaller number of giant companies.

35
Stunden-
woche bei
vollem
Lohn-
ausgleich

*in einem
Schritt!*

MLPD

In manufacturing, German companies lead the field. Of the top 25 companies in Europe, nine are German with Daimler Benz being the biggest. Among the other eight are Volkswagen, Thyssen and Mannesmann, all important engineering companies.

The German engineering union, IGM, can play an important role in defending workers' interests. They won a 38 and a half hour week after a strike in 1985. Within IGM, the MLPD has actively supported the fight for shorter working hours with the slogan '35 hour week now! With no Loss of Earnings'.

We can see from this the importance of solidarity between workers and between Marxist-Leninists in Europe, both at the level of our organisations and in work in the unions.

CONDEMNED FOR DEEDS NOT COMMITTED!

Scandalous verdict of German Federal Supreme Court: Stefan Engel expelled from the union of metalworkers:

Stefan Engel is a trained mechanic and chairman of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD). In 1986, after 12 years of membership, he was expelled by the board of the union of metalworkers (IGM), which claimed that he was taking part in "activities hostile to the union". Stefan Engel went to court for his self-evident, democratic right as a worker to be organised in a union; he demanded proof of his alleged hostility to the union. This, however, could not be proved. On the contrary, the courts emphasised that they could "not be blamed at all for any specific hostile action".

In spite of that, the Federal Supreme Court passed a judgement against Stefan Engel on October 16th, and confirmed his expulsion from the IGM. This is a clear case of political justice.

What crime was Stefan Engel found guilty of by the high court? The programme of the MLPD, in which the party declares its faith in socialism, is said to be a "danger for the future". For this reason, the IGM board is being allowed "to defend itself against enemies". Whose future is being spoken of? Stefan Engel is being punished because he does not recognise the alleged "superiority of capitalism" but stands up for the abolition of the capitalist system of exploitation. Now what is anti-union about this?

Indeed, the question must be asked the other way round: who is it who is hostile to the unity of the German unions in reality? Steinkuhler, chairman of the German metalworkers' union, complains in words that "the national union of the two Germanies was followed by a social division". In practice, the IGM leadership is taking an active part in the introduction of different wage agreements for West and East Germany. Obviously, the unions are to be rid of Marxist-Leninists as well as active colleagues because they are definite enemies of any politics of dividing the workers against each other.

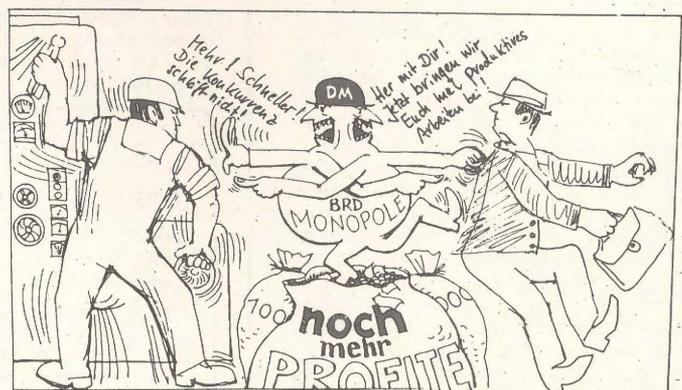
This scandalous verdict against Stefan Engel concerns everyone!

According to this logic, anybody who fights capitalism can arbitrarily be deprived of their basic rights. In whose interests is it, in this country, to turn every critic of the system into fair game?

The workers' movement fought for the right to have their own unions against the capitalists, not to submit to the interests of capital but to organise the struggle for the improvement of working and living conditions. In the interests of the workers' unity, Marxist-Leninist workers should be just as much a part of them as Social-democrats, Christians and independent workers. The Federal Supreme Court's judgement is a judgement against the unity of the working class and against united unions. It follows the will of the employers' federations, who have long been demanding the "cleanup" of the unions. They intend to realise their offensive for profit and power without any resistance - or so they would like!

No witch-hunting in the unions!

**Solidarity in the struggle against the Supreme Court decision!
Abolish the decree against radicals in the metalworkers' union!
Contribute the the legal aid fund!**



Mandy's Diary

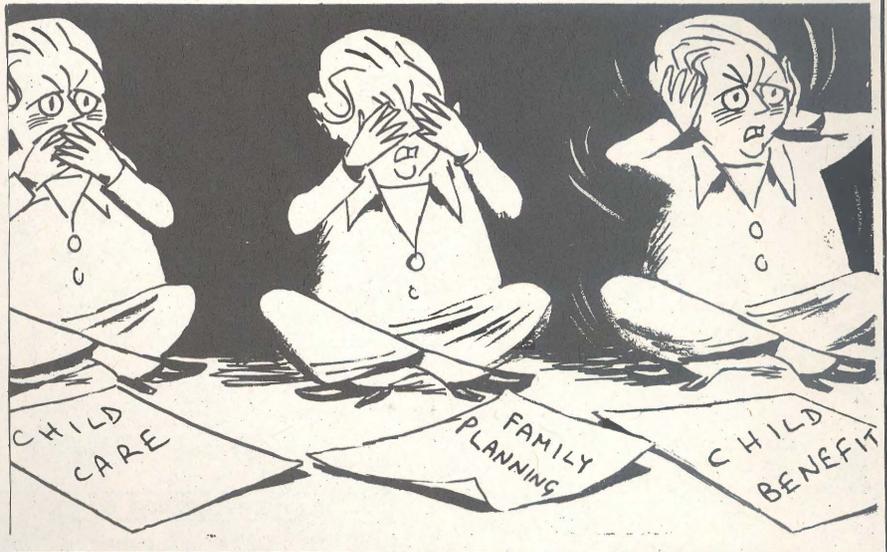
October 19th: There is a new contraceptive for men. They get it in the form of an injection once a week. 157 of the 271 men on whom it was tested stopped sperm production within six months, and in only one case was there a pregnancy. The study claims a high success rate. But I'm not so sure. As with other forms of contraception, the assumption seems to be that as long as it prevents pregnancy, other aspects are unimportant.

As many as 27 men dropped out because of medical side-effects (including increased aggression). That still leaves a substantial number who did not stop producing sperm. In a study, there is a high motivation to test them for sperm production. But if this method of contraception becomes widely available, will men know whether they are producing sperm or not? And how many men would be motivated enough to be injected every week if it was six months before the injections had any effect?

October 22nd: My little son started nursery today. He's three years old and it's time he starting mixing with other children. We were lucky to get a place. It's a private nursery, of course. In order to qualify for a Social Services nursery, you have to be a one-parent family or your children have to be at risk of abuse.

There was a good article yesterday on childcare in the 'Telegraph' magazine, of all places. It stated what we women have been saying for years - but isn't it nice to see someone taking notice! - that childcare is the main obstacle preventing some women going out to work, and mothers going out to work is beneficial both for women, and for their children, provided the children are well cared for. But, while other European countries have taken this on board, and see childcare as a state responsibility, in Britain it is seen as a purely private matter.

The article describe the situation in three European countries where "childcare is seen as the right of working mothers and their children. That right is underlined by public funding which gives families access to quality childcare regardless of their income - not just as a carrot to get women back to work, but



because it is beneficial to the development of pre-school children".

Our government hasn't even begun to care about what is in children's interests. When it's a question of saving money, children's interests go out of the window every time. They have the nerve to ask why there is so much truancy from school and so much juvenile crime. Well, isn't it obvious? If society doesn't give a damn for its children, why should children give a damn for society?

Children are being short-changed all along the line: free school meals restricted to those on Income Support; Child Benefit frozen; school-leaving age raised in order to make the unemployment figures look better than they are; benefit stopped to 16 and 17 year olds; newborn babies dying unnecessarily because maternity services aren't good enough.

It goes on even before birth: there has been a rise in the number of abortions as a direct result of cuts in family planning services. The Family Planning Association is calling for an end to the cuts, which it fears could intensify under the NHS reforms. How short-sighted can the government get? In financial terms alone, family planning does not cost money, it saves money. Evidence from the United States shows that family planning services there save tax-payers 1.8 billion dollars a year in terms of medical, welfare and nutritional services required by law for poor women who have unplanned births. They prevent 1.2 million unintended

pregnancies, half of which would end in abortions.

October 24th: I'm going to be £1 a week better off. Wowie! Still, it's better than a kick in the teeth. It's quite amazing to see the Tory government scurrying like rabbits trying to improve their image after the Eastbourne bye-election. Pathetic, isn't it? They really think that they can buy 6 million women's votes with £1 a week, after all they have done! Well, the writing is on the wall. No longer can Thatcher tell us to eat cake. If they want our votes, they will have to start throwing crumbs. Who knows? Perhaps the IRA will kill off some more of them, and we'll have a few more pounds in our pockets. Seriously, I think that's what saved Child Benefit. The only benefit automatically paid to mothers, all mothers. The only income some women can be certain of. Not all men spend their wages on their wives and children. Many spend it on drink, or gambling, or drugs.

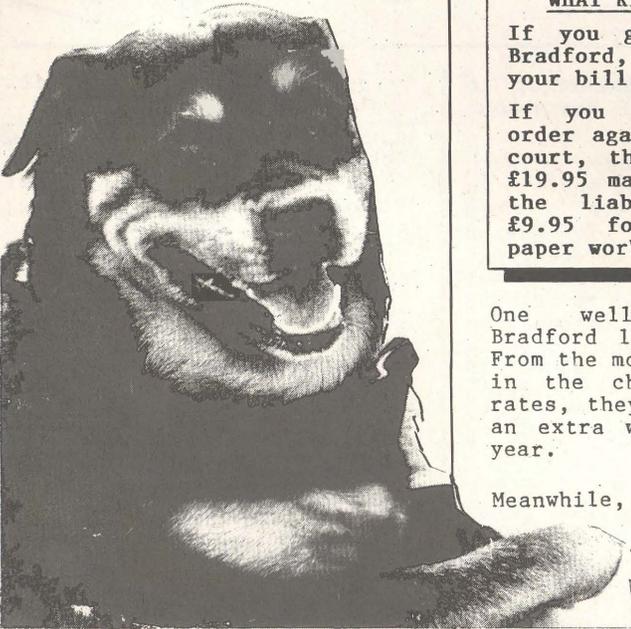
As for the hypocritical suggestion that the Tories want to restrict Child Benefit in order to target the poorest families, are they so out of touch that they don't even know that people on Income Support don't get Child Benefit? Well, they get it. But then it is taken away from their Income Support. What the government gives with one hand, it takes with the other. Since when did the Tories have poor people's interests at heart? I suppose that's why they made the Social Security cuts in 1988. Pull the other one!

ANTI-POLL TAX

**There is mass opposition to the Poll Tax.
But that is not to say that there is a
campaign of mass opposition.**

Bradford:

October 8th was the day the first hundred non-payers of the poll tax were summonsed to the court in Bradford. Anyone who turned up was allowed to speak. But only about the specific details of their own case. But this did not include trying to prove that you simply could not afford to pay. As far as the magistrate was concerned, that was something to be taken up with the council. His aim was to prove that you were liable.



McKenzie's Friend

The magistrate indicated right from the outset that although there could be no objection to the use of a McKenzie's Friend, he would have to remain inconspicuous. As a result, he was forced to sit right at the back of the court room and was able to make little impact on the proceedings. Thus, for most of the twelve people who turned up, the overall setting of the court room was quite intimidating. Liability orders against them went through quite easily.

Of those who did not turn up, some had already paid up or reached some agreement with the council, who seem quite keen, even desperate, to get some more money in. Some had their cases thrown out on technical grounds (wrong name, wrong address, rebate calculations incorrect).

However, a sizeable number just decided that going to court would be a waste of time. Some had been contacted by the local anti-poll tax groups who encouraged them to go to the court. But for many, the issue was simple. They were just not going to pay. One old woman told us that if the bailiffs come to her house, they would have to get past her dog. And, with a smile, she went on to say it was a Rotweiler!

WHAT RESISTANCE COSTS

If you get a summons in Bradford, they add £10 to your bill.

If you get a liability order against you from the court, they add a further £19.95 made up of £10 for the liability order and £9.95 for the council's paper work.

One well-off family in Bradford likes the poll tax. From the money they have saved in the changeover from the rates, they are going to have an extra week's holiday next year.

Meanwhile, pensioners have

An Ally in the Struggle?

been ringing up the anti-poll tax campaign hotline, telling how they are considering cutting back on their hot meals in order to pay.

In general, it would appear at this stage that there is mass opposition to the poll tax. But that is not to say that there is a campaign of mass opposition.

How things will change when the council sets in motion its next move, to issue one thousand summonses on the same day, is as yet unclear. But one thing appears sure, judging by what is being said, there are a lot of people in the city who are very determined not to pay the poll tax.

Leeds:

In Leeds, the city's Labour Council began its legal action against non-payers on October

10th. Each Wednesday since then, around 250 people have been summonsed.

Reports of what actually happened in the courts are not easy to get hold of. This is because very few of the public can get in to hear the proceedings. Secondly, the Council's plan seems to be to take on people from the outlying areas of the city, where the anti-poll tax campaign is not as well organised.

TURN UP TO COURT

One lesson that is emerging from the first few weeks is that if you turn up and defend yourself, you have a fair chance of getting an adjournment. As a result, many will have to re-appear at a hearing scheduled for 21st November.

But the odds are generally stacked against the public. You are expected to wait around until you are called and this could be a long time. We heard of one woman who went off to get a drink of tea, and when she returned, twenty minutes later, found that she now had a liability order.

It is also rumoured that in early November 2,500 will be summonsed to a special hearing, and after that, the court will be operating twice a week.

As far as campaigning is concerned, there are inevitably strong and weak areas. We talked to one active member from the Hyde Park group. He spoke of a lot of activity in the Hyde Park and Burley areas: leafletting, regular meetings and other events. But just down the road at Belle Vue, nothing seemed to be happening.

From his experiences, things were quite predictable. One week there would be a good response. Next week, nothing. But generally, he always found when knocking on doors and talking about the poll tax, people soon became very angry. "The funny thing is, I think, a lot of people will just not pay the tax. But they will also not have anything to do with the campaign."

When we asked about the involvement of the Labour Party, the reply we got was short and to the point: "There is no connection."

One interesting point from the court hearings in Leeds: it would appear that computer material cannot be used as admissible evidence.

CAMPAIGN



Clash between police and poll tax demonstration in Hackney in March.

Bristol:

Bristol has one of the best organised campaigns, with groups organising on a street by street basis. It also has a broad membership, not dominated by any one left group.

The results of this broad-based organising were apparent on Friday, 26th October when over 2,000 people demonstrated against the poll tax outside the courts where non-payers' cases were being heard.

Three people were arrested as the protestors attempted to storm the court room.

Around 100,000 people in Bristol, about one in three of those eligible to pay the tax, have not paid. 2,300 summonses have been issued so far.

Birmingham:

Birmingham City Council's labour leadership started to try and force people to pay the poll tax on 10th September. Their plan was to take 300 people to court every week. On the council's own estimates, there are 44,000 non-payers, so clearly there will be a long process. However, we have now heard that they are stepping things up and that 2,000 summonses have been issued for 30th

October.

If that is true (and information is scarce due to the secrecy with which the council shrouds these matters) then the reason for it will be the success with which the courts are steamrolling the cases through. On the first day, they used the expedient of not telling people that their cases were being dealt with. A lot of people had turned up intending to defend themselves and most of them were waiting outside the court for their names to be called. The ushers, in league with the clerks, simply did not announce the names. Since the defendants were not in court, the liability orders went through on the nod.

The public were excluded from the courts. But a few defendants managed to slip in and were there when their cases were called. Many were able to make their protests and in some cases to obtain adjournments. But the clerks refused all applications for McKenzie friends to assist the defendants.

The result of the steamrolling tactics was that full liability orders for the whole poll tax of £406 and costs were made against people on Income Support and people who had applied for rebates. These cases have been referred

to High Court and will cause embarrassment and cost to the council.

A TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE

In subsequent weeks, things have gone from bad to worse. One regular attender on behalf of the anti-poll tax union referred to the proceedings as a travesty of justice. The clerks are refusing to let people make representations on their own behalf, let alone through McKenzie friends. And the lists of the names of defendants, which should be displayed publicly in the court foyer, are now being withheld so no-one knows who is in court.

It is unfortunate that the Birmingham Federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions and most of the local unions are in the hands of the Militant Tendency. Most of their effort appears to go into manipulating to retain all the positions on the Federation. When it comes to organisation for defendants, they are pathetic. Nor are they organised to leaflet the local areas and seek out non-payers to give them support and strengthen their resistance.

The latest from Birmingham's Labour boss, Sir Richard Knowles, was a final warning to non-payers: pay up, or we'll send in the bailiffs!

THE REAL 'TEMPLE

by David Evans

17 Palestinians were shot dead by Israeli police in Jerusalem on October 8th. No Israelis were killed, or even seriously injured. A few reporters showed some scepticism towards Israeli official accounts of events, the bloodiest day of Israel's occupation of the West Bank. But most were only too ready to repeat the version of events given out by Israeli officials and politicians. They did not take them to task over the unbelievable tales they told. Nor did they go to talk to Palestinians who were on the spot at the time of the massacre to get their account.

According to the Israeli government, and those who give reporters "unofficial" briefings, the day's events went like this:

THE OFFICIAL VERSION

A large crowd of "Arabs" (typically not called Palestinians), gathered at the mosques of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa. Their excuse was that they were coming to repel an attempt by a Jewish group known as the Temple Mount Faithful to lay the foundation stone of the Third Temple, which they want to build in place of the mosques.

However, the authorities had already banned the Temple Mount Faithful from going into the area of the mosques, so that it was obvious that the "Arabs" were gathering with other intentions in mind. Indeed, they had gathered barrels of stones to throw, and, without provocation, they started stoning Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall, below one side of the mosques, and they attacked the police in a mob. The police had to fire back in self-defence, and that was how the "Arab" casualties occurred.

The action was staged by the PLO, possibly inspired by Iraq, to take attention off the Gulf Crisis and revive the Intifada (the Palestinian uprising).

I spoke to people who were present, at the time of the massacre, at the Haram ash-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary - the name Palestinians give to what most Israeli Jews call the Temple Mount). I spoke to people in Britain who had themselves spoken to friends and relatives in Jerusalem when the massacre took place.

I examined the reports prepared by Palestinian organisations in Jerusalem and the West Bank as a whole, and found that the reality was very different from what most reports published here stated (with two honourable exceptions).

THE REAL STORY

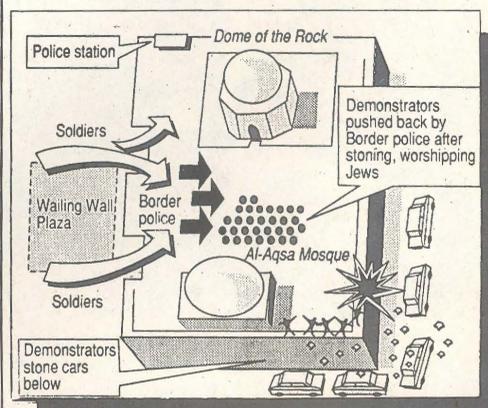
Palestinians came to the Haram ash-Sharif that day because they did indeed believe that the fanatics of the Temple Mount Faithful intended to come and lay a foundation stone for their temple. They knew that an Israeli court had issued an order against the stone-laying ceremony. But they also knew that it had rejected a police request to ban the Temple Mount Faithful from entering the Haram ash-Sharif that day. Furthermore, their experience of "Israeli justice" did not inspire them with any degree of confidence that the court's ruling would be enforced.

Tension built that day as the morning wore on. The Israeli court had ruled that the Temple Mount Faithful could only enter the Haram area between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m., so that as the minutes ticked by, the crowds at the Rock became increasingly certain that the Zionist religious fanatics would arrive at any moment.

However, the Muslim religious authorities tried to prevent any violence breaking out. They said that it was the duty of Muslims to defend the mosque, but otherwise urged restraint upon the crowds. They also went to the Israeli Border Guards who were standing by the entrances to the mosque precinct and tried to reason with them to avoid behaving in a provocative and high-handed way towards the worshippers. But to little avail. One of their officers commented, at different times, according to the testimony given to the West Bank human rights group 'Al Haq': "Today, we are not playing, not joking!" and "If stones are thrown today, we will soak this place in blood."

Trouble broke out between 10.30 and 10.50 a.m., although there are different accounts of what exactly happened. One says that some youths threw stones at Border Guards after they were very abusive towards a woman coming to pray, and then the Guards responded with tear gas. Another report says

that a group of Border Guards entered the Haram area and began firing tear gas. 'Al Haq''s report says that, most probably at 10.45 a.m., women gathered at the Dome of the Rock were tear-gassed. All Palestinian accounts suggest that the Israeli action was unprovoked or was a massive response to a minor incident. There was no "howling mob" attacking the Israeli security personnel and compelling them to open fire in self-defence.



The tear-gassed women shouted: "The army has come". A large group of men moved towards the gate through which they expected the Temple Mount Faithful to try and enter, unaware that they had already been turned back by the police. Without any warning, the Border Guards at the gate opened fire with live ammunition, and the men responded by throwing stones. Although over 20 men were wounded, they continued to advance on the Border Guards. The latter were not trapped. They eventually fell back through the gate which they had been guarding. The Palestinians then locked the gate and barricaded it.

EYE WITNESS

It was as these incidents were occurring that two young Pakistanis who were taking part in a black delegation from Britain made their way out of the Haram area by another gate and headed southwards, towards the area of the Western Wall. To their amazement, they saw Jewish people still praying at the wall, apparently oblivious to the shooting going on above them, just shouting distance away.

MOUNT' STORY



Bullet marks on a marble column near the scene of the killings.

The testimony of these two young men supported Palestinian claims and the analysis of events made in a 'World In Action' programme which was broadcast on 18th October. No stones were thrown into the Western Wall area at the beginning of the clashes on October 8th, and Israeli security forces opened fire well before any such stoning took place.

Stones did start to fall into the Western Wall area at around 11 o'clock. Shots had been fired at the men who had driven the Border Guards through the Magharbeh Gate from a building standing near the top of the Western Wall, and they responded by throwing stones at it, many of which dropped over the wall onto the Jewish holy site below. Even on the television pictures shown here, of the stones coming over the top of the wall, it was quite obvious that the stones were arching up into the air, not being aimed or dropped deliberately on worshippers below.

Meanwhile, the Border Guards fired off large amounts of teargas and used live ammunition to shoot at the crowds within the area of the Magharbeh Gate. Many of the dead were killed over the twenty minutes after 11 when the Border Guards had retreated to safe positions and the worshippers at the Western Wall were running for cover or were already sheltered.

"PROTECTING HUMAN LIFE"

Having brought up reinforcements, the Border Guards stormed the Magharbeh Gate. Although the people within ran from their attack, they pursued them, shooting at people as they fled and beating others, including wounded people who had fallen to the ground. Medical personnel who had rushed to the scene to help the injured were not spared. A nurse was shot twice in her arm, and another nurse and a doctor were also badly injured. The wounded were not even left alone when they were evacuated

to the Palestinian-run Makassed Hospital: Border Police entered it and fired off teargas, making it necessary to evacuate parts of the hospital. 17 Palestinians were killed in the Haram as-Sharif that day, the youngest of whom was 14 and the oldest 70.

Israel and its apologists should not be allowed to get away with their version of events. Nor should the bulk of the western media be allowed to escape criticism for lending credibility to the lies of Israeli leaders. Not only do these lies absolve Israel from blame, but they also serve to legitimise further repression against the Palestinians - all in the name of Israeli self-defence. They reinforce the mentality widespread in Israel, which allowed one police officer to justify the Border Guards' shooting dead of 17 Palestinians and wounding of 150 by saying that it was necessary "in order to protect human life". ■

Contributed

I read with interest October's editorial on the Gulf. There was much I agreed with, but not the assertion that the principal contradiction was "between the Arab masses on the one hand and imperialism by the United States on the other".

In the absence of armed hostility, I think the situation in the Gulf has not yet developed whereby the main issue is opposition to imperialist intervention. That remains, to my thinking, secondary to the defence of Kuwaiti sovereignty.

For me, the nature of the main contradiction will change in the event of the war preparations being used to resolve the dispute by force:

While oil is the sole reason for the Western response to Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait, is this the sole factor communists should consider in assessing the issue? Saddam Hussein is not moved by Pan-Arab aspirations to re-unite the Arab nation under Iraqi leadership.

WHOSE CLASS INTERESTS?

The Ba'athist national bourgeoisie of Iraq wants accommodation in the "new world order". Saddam wants for Iraq the role of regional power in the manner that South Africa operates in Southern Africa.

Iraq, far from jeopardising the reactionary alliance, wants to enhance its own role within that imperialist-imposed settlement. The Western powers want compliant



Uphold the right to Self-determination

there can be no 'international policeman' be it self-appointed or UN sanctioned.

Without condoning the hypocrisy and barbarism of the intervention in the region, the initial reaction of the RCL has not fallen into the error of other left groups of calling for imperialist forces out of the Gulf without addressing the issue of Kuwait's self-determination. This was, I believe, a more correct position than that taken in the October editorial which acknowledges (but undervalues) the arrogant militarism and aggression of Iraq, as secondary to the intentions of the Western imperialists now encamped in the region.

In correctly arguing that imperialism has long sought to suppress the Arab anti-imperialist movement, not least through the aggression of the expansionist Zionist state, the editorial does not point to important changes in the balance of power within imperialism.

US imperialism needs to orchestrate a show of support through a multi-national presence because of its own weakness. The US cannot do it alone. To safeguard the fragile alliance of forces that have been constructed in the Gulf, Washington has taken the unprecedented action of criticising its Israeli client at the UN. This may not be terribly significant in terms of the Palestinian national liberation struggle. But it exacerbates inter-imperialist tensions. The US cannot force military action without consulting those it has long regarded as "junior partners", specifically Britain and France.

clients, like the feudal monarchy of Saudi Arabia. On no account should defenders of the restoration of Kuwait's independence give a gloss to imperialist intentions. The Western powers are there for their own reasons, not in defence of the rights of a "small, helpless nation".

The actions of Iraq cannot be condoned. But the danger of making the issue of self-determination for Kuwait a side issue is part of the 'shadow text' of the argument that moves the focus to the presence of the American, British and French troops to the primary position.

The argument that while Iraq's actions provided the pretext, it is the presence of Western troops (by Saudi invitation) that should be the main focus, loses sight of the fact that the necessary principle of self-determination is the primary concern, that Iraq's intervention and annexation of Kuwait ought to be opposed in defence of that right.

Iraq's leadership may adopt the nationalist mantle against Western troops, without mentioning the free Kuwait troops, Saudi Arabian, Gulf Co-operation Council, Syrian, Egyptian, Moroccan, Pakistani and Bangladeshi contingents. But their invasion of Kuwait and past actions display naked regional ambitions at the expense of their fellow Arabs.

Iraq's anti-imperialist credentials are threadbare: chemical warfare on the Kurdish people; the slaughter of Iraqi communists; intervention in the internal

affairs of the Palestinians, and, as Noriega was supported so long as he toed the line, so was Iraq in the fight against Iran.

There have been a number of red herrings used in excusing Iraq's actions. The two most obvious concern firstly the historical origins of Kuwait (granted independence in 1961). This is not a factor in whether one defends the right of sovereignty. The vast majority of the world's nation-states have been arbitrarily drawn. Iraq's own boundaries emerged after the defeat of Ottoman Turkey at European convenience.

Secondly, Kuwait under the ruling al-Sabah family was a reactionary entity. Which state is not? Is it now a matter of to what degree, where on the spectrum of reaction a state lies, that dictates whether it is "deserving" of support when subject to aggression.

Communist support for the right to self-determination is not determined by internal constitutional arrangements. Whilst imperialism may cynically use the language of self-determination, communists should not waver in their support for national liberation. Formal independence is the beginning point for the defeat of imposed neo-colonial exploitation. We should also continue to defend the integrity of Third World nations, even when it is a neighbouring Third World state that is the aggressor.

FREEDOM FOR IRELAND

Desmond Ellis, an active Republican from Dublin, has been on hunger strike in Portlaoise Prison since October 10th. He is protesting against attempts to extradite him to Britain. A broad campaign is being built to stop the extradition and save Dessie Ellis' life.

In May 1981, Desmond Ellis, was arrested and charged with possession of electronic units which, the prosecution alleged, were used in IRA timing devices. During his trial it became clear that he had been under constant Gardai surveillance for some time before his arrest.

Some months later, he was granted bail, one condition being that he surrender his passport and report to the police three times a week. But in early 1982, shortly before his trial was due to start, he jumped bail. On February 6th, he was arrested while attempting to cross illegally into the United States from Canada and held in custody pending deportation proceedings.

Because he faced charges in Dublin, he fought deportation and lodged an application for political asylum. His battle against his deportation lasted over a year during which he remained in custody. Eventually he was deported and, on arrival at Dublin Airport on March 3rd 1983, was re-arrested. He was subsequently convicted at the Special Criminal Court and sentenced to eight years' imprisonment.

TWO EXTRADITION WARRANTS

On 27th April 1989, just twenty four hours before Dessie Ellis was due to be released, he was informed that he was to be re-arrested on the basis of two extradition warrants issued by a London magistrate's court. They alleged that (1) he had control of explosive substances within Britain during the period from January 1st 1981 to October 27th 1983 and (2) that he had conspired with others to cause explosions in Britain during the same 34 month period.

These warrants were similar to the vague charges made against Father Ryan for his extradition which both the Belgian and Irish governments refused to grant.

As a leaflet from the Irish Anti-Extradition Committee has argued: "It is actually physically impossible for Mr Ellis to have had control of explosives in Britain, or to have conspired to cause explosions in Britain, because he was in custody, or otherwise under Gardai

SAVE DESSIE

surveillance throughout the entire period covered by the extradition warrants.

"The only explosions that occurred in Britain during the period in question were in the autumn of 1981 and the summer of 1982. At both these times - and inbetween - Dessie Ellis was in prison or reporting to Gardai as required by his bail bond."

CONSPIRACY CHARGES

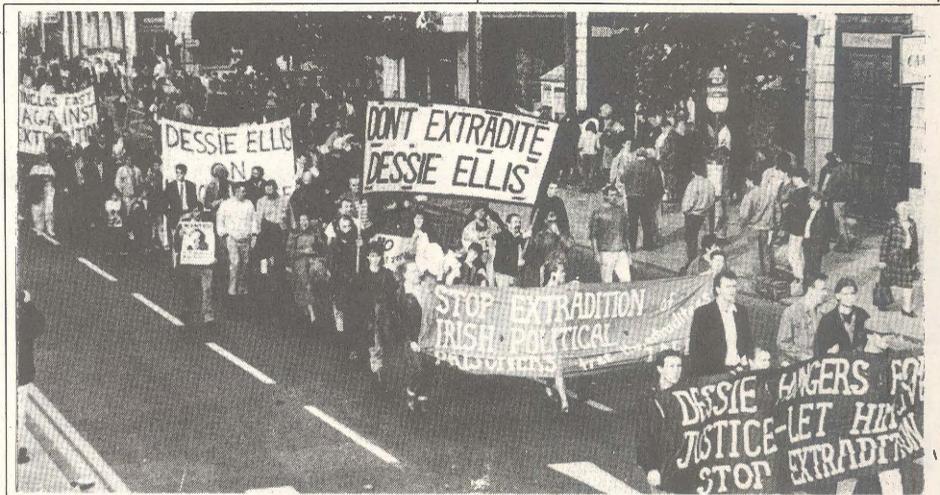
In Irish prosecution practice, the use of conspiracy charges is practically unknown. But to use such charges in a British court in order to convict Irish nationalists has clear advantage for the authorities. It allows the prosecution to introduce all sorts of evidence that is extraneous to the case and places the onus on the accused to prove their innocence.

I now appeal with my life to you, the Irish people."

Three days later, outside Dublin's GPO, a rally of over 2,000 people demanded that the Twenty Six County Justice Minister act to prevent Ellis' extradition.

One of the speakers was Owen Carron, whose own extradition to the Six Counties had, last April, been refused by Dublin's Supreme Court.

Carron told the rally: "Friends, at this moment, an Irishman and a Republican lies in Portlaoise Prison on hunger strike. He is not there because he is a threat to the state, for he is not. He is not there because he has broken any of the laws of this state or offended any of the statutes of the Constitution. He is there today simply and solely on the foot of a warrant issued in London



Dessie Ellis is now in grave danger of being the first citizen of the Twenty Six Counties to be extradited to England on political charges. Although he was never in Britain at all during the time under question, conspiracy charges are by their very nature impossible to disprove. Moreover, with the experience of what happened to the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven, he knows he would never stand a chance.

HUNGER STRIKE

On October 10th, Dessie Ellis issued a statement from Portlaoise Prison in which he stated: "I am going on hunger strike to the death, if necessary, to prevent my extradition to Britain. The government has it in its power to stop my extradition and only the Irish people can force the government to act.

signed by the British Attorney General, and which as an indicator of its intent, bears the words "God Save the Queen", showing without equivocation that the Queen's writ still runs in the Twenty Six Counties, seventy years after people like Sean Treacy fought and died in this city."

Carron went on to say that Dessie Ellis' extradition would not only be a betrayal of national and political rights but would be one of the greatest acts of immorality ever perpetrated on a citizen by his own government.

"People must act now and act quickly for soon it may be too late, too late for Dessie Ellis, too late perhaps for others who may follow."

Information from 'An Phoblacht/Republican News' and the Irish Anti-Extradition Committee.

book review

Trial and Error

On 19 October 1989, the Guildford Four, wrongly convicted of the pub bombings in Guildford in October 1974, were released after fifteen years imprisonment.

During their trial in 1975, Sir Michael Havers, Crown Prosecutor, stated:

" Accusations of the most appalling kind have been made against the police during this trial. If true, there has been a really gigantic conspiracy between two police forces - the Surrey police and the Bomb Squad - through officers of all ranks If the allegations are true there has been a most appalling perversion of justice."

Robert Kee's precise and tightly argued book uncovers this "perversion of justice".

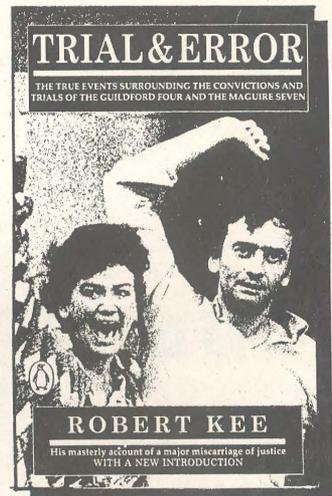
First published in 1986, it describes how the police used force to get confessions from the Four; how circumstantial evidence against them was very thin; how unlikely a previously unconnected group of small-time crooks, squatters and drug users could carry out the bombings; and questions why, after two imprisoned IRA members admitted the bombings and said the Four were not involved, the case was not re-opened.

Kee also demonstrates how flimsy the forensic evidence which convicted the Maguire Seven (who supposedly handled explosives, and assisted in the bombings) really was.

The story Kee uncovers is made all the more devastating by the fact that Kee is a respected 'Establishment' journalist, and not a supporter of the Nationalist cause.

Overall, 'Trial and Error' illustrates how the British State was able to push through convictions which do not even stand up to a common sense appraisal. The collusion of state agencies, the selective conclusions of judges and the

dubious methods of police interrogators are all too familiar to Irish and other national minority peoples in this country. Much like the continuing cases of the Birmingham Six and the Tottenham Three, the cases of the Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven illustrate that the British system of justice is neither systematic nor just.



EVENTS

BLACK WOMEN FIGHT BACK AGAINST DEPORTATIONS

Saturday, 24th November,

National Demonstration

Stop Deportations Now!

Assemble 12 Noon,
Handsworth Park, Holly Rd,
Handsworth,
BIRMINGHAM

Sheila, Sonia and Prakesh, three black women in Birmingham are currently fighting against their deportations.



Saturday, 10th November,

DEMONSTRATE

US AND BRITISH TROOPS
OUT OF THE GULF

Assemble 11.30 a.m.
Sparkhill Park
Stratford Road
BIRMINGHAM

STOP RACIST ATTACKS

DEFEND BLACK COMMUNITIES

Saturday, 1st December,

National Demonstration

Joint Committee for Palestine

3rd Anniversary of Intifada

Assemble 12 Noon,
Malet Street,
LONDON

Sunday, 11th November,

Demonstration

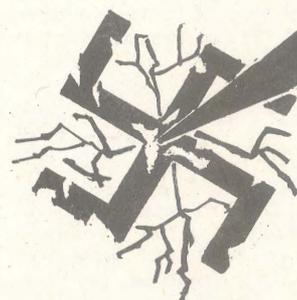
Anti-Fascist Action

Remembrance Sunday

Assemble 2 p.m.
Parliament Square,
London SW1.

Stop the Race Attacks!

Get the Fascists off our
backs!



Why settle for a new book when you can have a whole

NEW ERA

Handicrafts

In addition to the books, there is also a wide selection of goods in our handicraft section. Best known are the Chinese papercuts and the greetings cards.

The shop is open on Tuesdays to Fridays, from 11 to 5.30, and on Saturdays, from 11.30 to 4.30. If you are travelling any distance, it is always safer to ring and check that someone will be there. Just in case.

For those who live outside London, it will probably be easier to make contact first by phone. Books can be sent to you through the post. The phone number is: 071-272-5894. You can also ask the person from whom you buy your copy of 'Class Struggle'.

Journals

Frontline Worker, Journal for a Socialist Movement in Azania (South Africa).

People's Voice, Organ of the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

TAPOL, Campaign magazine of the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign.

Inqilab South Asia Solidarity Group quarterly magazine.

You can buy a range of other journals from the shop, including 'An Phoblacht/Republican News', 'Troops Out', Palestine Solidarity.

Marxist Classics

'Wage Labour and Capital', 'Wages, Price and Profit', (A basic exposition of Marx's economic theory, 50p each).

'The Poverty of Philosophy' Marx's polemic with Proudhon on political economy - £1.

If any of our regular readers are thinking about Christmas presents, then for some gifts, they can do no better than call in to see what is available at New Era Books, in London.

Situated in Finsbury Park, five minutes walk from the underground station, directly opposite the Rainbow Theatre (once known as the Astoria), New Era Books is more than just another radical bookshop. Because of the material it carries, it is perhaps unique, for many of the books in the shop are not readily available elsewhere. Similarly, there are magazines and newspapers from many national liberation movements and other progressive organisations, informing readers here of what is going on in other parts of the world.

The range of progressive books is broad. It covers the fields of ecology, history, women's liberation, Ireland, peace and the anti-war movement, language, art, geography, music etc. In addition, there are the obvious areas of politics,

political thought, political struggles and philosophy. Under this heading, is the whole range of Marxist classics, starting with the famous 'Communist Manifesto'. Most of the books in this range are in paperback and are very cheap. For example, Lenin's 'State and Revolution' will cost you only 80 pence; 'Five Essays on Philosophy', in which Mao Zedong explains the theory of contradiction, will leave you with change out of a pound.

MANY FAMOUS NAMES

There are many well-known, and less-known writers to demonstrate the choice before you. To name but a few, there is Gramsci, Amin, Frank, Fanon, Upward, Angela Davis, A.L.Morton, Adams, Harrison Salisbury, Wal Hannington, Cauldwell, Cornforth and Hoang Van Hoan, the Vietnamese revolutionary.

There is also a small section for children of all ages: 'Weighing An Elephant', 'The Seven Clam Sisters' and 'The Magic Deer' are three typical titles.

By Engels:

'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific' - 50p.

'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy' - 70p.

By Lenin:

'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism' - 70p

'The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism' - 30p

'What Is To Be Done' - 90p

By Mao Zedong:

'Selected Writings' - Volumes 1 to 5. Each £3.50 in hardback.

Latest Additions

India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising, by Sumanta Bannerjee, £7.95.

The World Labour Market: A History of the Migration of Labour, £9.95.

Recommended

Origin of African Civilisation by C.Diop, £8.95.

Staying Power: History of Black People in Britain, by Peter Fryer, £9.95.

By Any Means Necessary, Malcolm X, £7.95.

Common Fate, Common Bond: Women in the Global Economy, by Swasti Mitter, £4.95.

Lowest of the Low, by Gunter Wallraff - the daily reality of a Turkish worker in what was West Germany, £4.99,

The Monocled Mutineer by Allison and Farley, £2.50.

A Fate Worse than Debt, by Susan George, £4.50.

PUBLICATIONS

In the new 'October, we are pleased to reprint an English summary of a book by a leading comrade in the Norwegian Marxist Leninist-Party (AKP-ML). The AKP(ML) has for many years been active in the Women's Front in Norway. The contribution by this comrade, Kjersti Ericsson, is therefore based firmly in a combination of theory and practice.

The article on Feminism and the Left in India and Sri Lanka also shows how active women have been. The article makes it clear that the role of women and the women's movement is being debated and discussed at many different levels within the Left.

The basic position of the RCL is that we have to apply the scientific method of Marxism to the question of women but that many of the positions held by the Left on women are a crude economist version of Marxism.

In this issue of 'October', we try to take this debate forward by looking at some of the arguments around the basis of women's oppression, an important question if we aim to build a society which removes the basis for oppression as a pre-condition for moving to full liberation. We look at the question of reproductive rights, a key aspect of women's oppression. And we try to put the struggle for women's liberation within the context of the overall struggle against imperialism.

We hope that this journal will take the debate forward. We look forward to hearing the views of our readers and receiving contributions from you.

OCTOBER

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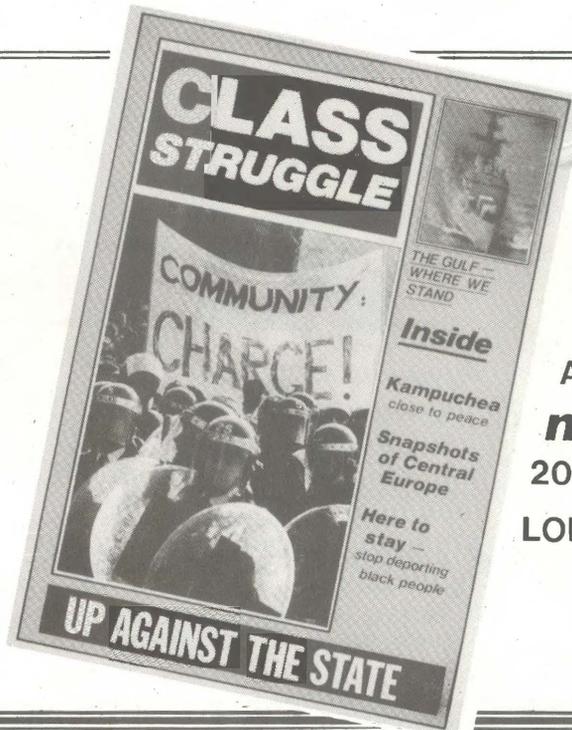
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