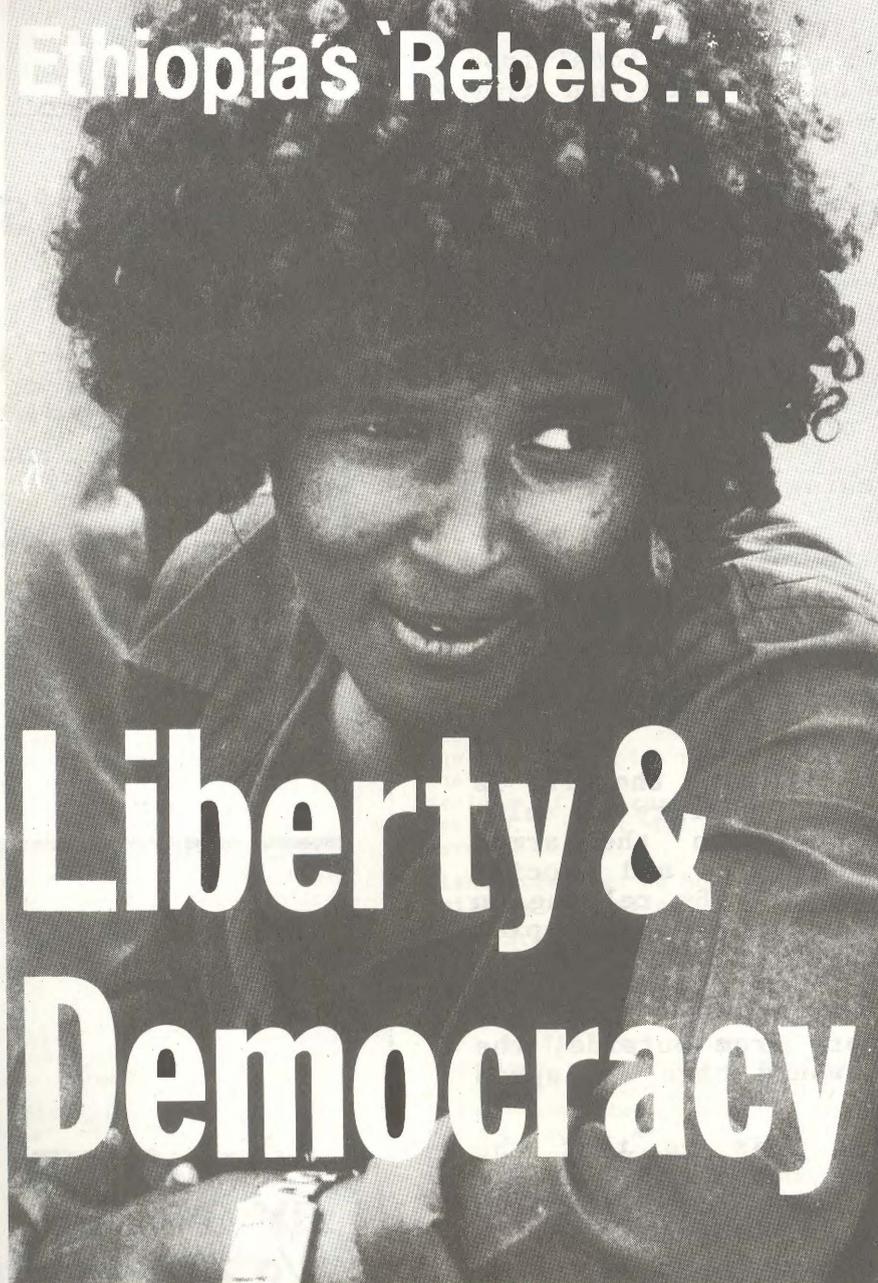


CLASS STRUGGLE

VOL.15 NO.5 JUNE 1991

30P

Ethiopia's 'Rebels'...



Liberty & Democracy



PEOPLE POWER &
THE PHILIPPINE
REVOLUTION

INSIDE

NHS —
A Fighting
Option

Here to Stay

Ireland's
Hunger
Strikes

MENGISTU FLEES ADDIS ABABA...

New dawn for stricken country

CLASS STRUGGLE

All progressive people will welcome and salute the recent victories of all the liberation forces in Ethiopia, both the different organisations within the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).

The hated regime of Mengistu has finally been overthrown and the peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea now have an opportunity to overcome the short-term problems of hunger and drought, as well as determining the shape of their future.

The legacy of war and repressive government has left Ethiopia with many urgent short-term needs, particularly international food aid. The new governments need aid from international organisations and governments. We should demand that the British government plays its part by giving aid and finance for the reconstruction of the country.

It seems that the USA belatedly recognised the reality of the situation in Ethiopia: the bankruptcy of the Mengistu regime and the inevitability of victory by the people's liberation forces. But there is always the danger of interference from Western imperialism at a later stage, particularly by attaching conditions to aid to the new government.

The EPRDF is committed to setting up a broad-based democratic government including different parties and forces. The EPLF will hold a referendum to determine the future of Eritrea. The peoples have the right to determine their own future without outside interference.

The liberation forces, of which the EPLF is the oldest, have pursued a policy of self-reliance in developing both the armed struggle and the economic and social revolutions that they led. By relying on the strength and resources of the people, they have resisted and defeated successive Ethiopian governments, supported up to the hilt, first by one superpower, then the other. Without support from outside, the Ethiopian government would have collapsed many years ago.

The positive side of this is that the liberation forces have had many years to develop their policies within liberated areas. They have years of experience of working with the people to bring about change, experience which they can now bring to the whole of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

POLITICAL PAPER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST LEAGUE

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SELF-GOVERNING TRUST?

A HEALTH WORKER'S VIEW

East Birmingham Hospital plans to become a Trust next April. We asked a shop steward there about the campaign to oppose the opt-out.

Class Struggle: Why should these trusts be opposed?

Shop Steward: At the moment the hospital has to provide a full range of services to the local community. As a trust, it won't have to. So the community will suffer. They will find that they have to travel to other hospitals for some treatments.

Although treatment will remain free, there is the possibility that the number of private beds will increase and there will be more arrangements with private hospitals. The General Manager openly talks about moving into the market for heart surgery in Europe.

It's a sort of halfway house to privatisation. It breaks up the NHS. It weakens planning for healthcare needs.

This hospital has long been underfunded and serves a poor community with a very high national minority population. We have had a series of ward closures in recent years. Most of the first wave trusts got no extra money and had to make cuts. We have had a lot of new building work here so it is unlikely that there will be any new money. Indeed, the trust may have to pay interest on that work.

There are only two ways a trust can make money. One is to restrict services to those that other parts of the NHS or the private sector will buy - that is at the expense of the patients. The other is to squeeze the staff. We know that the NHS management board nationally is advising trusts on how to attack employees' conditions of service and that this is happening already. This attack on the staff will also affect morale. An unmotivated staff don't give patients a good service.

Class Struggle: What are the problems in building a campaign against the opt-out?

Shop Steward: Obviously even massive action against the first wave of trusts which started this April did not succeed. However, we can learn from those campaigns. Also, we can show that the worries about the first wave have come true. We are saying what is happening not what might happen. Also the NHS is high profile in the mass media now.



Guys Hospital

One problem is that all the information about a proposed trust is in a glossy propaganda document which is put out for consultation. The real facts are in the secret business plan which only the trust board sees. The consultation process is a joke. The regional health authority just collects all the comments and sends them to the Secretary of State, who decides if a trust should be set up. Staff and community have no real say.

Class Struggle: So how are you building a campaign?

Shop Steward: The campaign has two parts: groups in the community and the joint staff organisation.

The staff are quite well organised. Trade unions affiliated to the TUC are in a joint committee with other groups such as the Royal College of Nurses. We are doing a series of leaflets to staff, organising a public meeting for staff and intend to hold a ballot of all staff in July.

We have taken the initiative to coordinate with community groups. Since all the publicity about Guys Hospital, staff are getting very worried. We have to turn that into organised opposition. Already the consultants have

voted to oppose the trust. We still have to find ways of getting doctors involved in the campaign.

In the community, the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, the local pensioners' organisation and the Community Health Council are working with us. Already petitions have been organised and a public meeting is planned. We are planning an exit poll of patients and visitors.

One area we are weak on at the moment is in building links with national minority organisations. In some parts of the community one third of the people are Asian, mainly from Pakistan. We are looking at ways of linking up with them.

Our aim is to spread our activity throughout the three-month consultation period to build an ongoing campaign and maximise the opportunities to get media coverage. We hope to flood the regional health authority with a large number of opposition letters and statements.

In this sort of campaign, you have no industrial muscle. You have to win the propaganda war. It's a fight we have to win not only to safeguard jobs but also to maintain the healthcare available to the local community.

Justice for Bengali family



In the May issue of 'Class Struggle', we reported on the victories of two black women in the West Midlands in their fight against deportation. The article - The Fight Goes On - also carried the stories of other black people still fighting the immigration laws. We now have details of two more campaigns taken up by the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign:

JUSTICE FOR BENGALI FAMILY

Ambor Ali has been settled and working in Birmingham since 1963. In 1973, he applied to

bring his wife, Alekjan Bibi, and their five young children to join him in this country.

After interviews and delays, Alekjan Bibi and the three young children came to the UK in 1976. The family were however refused permission to bring the two other children, Monuhar (10) and Hiron (14) and they remained in Bangladesh. The reason for the refusal was given as 'they were not related to their parents'.

The family appealed against this decision and made a fresh application in 1980. These were turned down.

In 1986 the two boys came to England to visit their family. Monuhar Ali and Hiron Miah have stayed on and live in Handsworth, Birmingham.

DNA TEST

The family have also taken the famous DNA genetic fingerprinting test which showed that the two boys, Monuhar and Hiron, are the sons of their parents.

The Home Office, however, now says that even if they are the children, they can no longer be counted as dependant children as they are both over 18.

In the campaign leaflet, the WMADC points out: "Since the 1971 Immigration Act, hundreds of thousands of black families have been divided just like this Bengali family... Now

JUSTICE FOR BENGALI FAMILY CAMPAIGN



Ambor Ali and Alekjan Bibi with their sons Monuhar and Hiron. Home Office threatening to split them.



STOP DIVIDING FAMILIES

these families are able to prove their relationships using DNA testing, the Home Office has shifted the goalposts.

In 1989, the Home Secretary announced in the House of Commons that children now grown up must prove dependence on their parents. No-one has been able to do this in the last two years."

VINESH MUST STAY

Vinesh Chudasama came from Bombay, India, as a visitor and met and married a British woman in September 1985. Two years later, as a result of error and delay at the Home Office, he was granted an extension of twelve months on the basis of his marriage. After almost three years of living together as a married couple, Vinesh's wife left him, taking their new-born daughter with her.

Vinesh's daughter is now almost three years old and has never been allowed to see her father. He has made every effort to get to know her but this has always been prevented. He finally applied to the magistrate's court for access to her. But Vinesh lost the right to stay in

Britain on the breakdown of his marriage and his immigration status has been used to continue to deny him access to his daughter. The court welfare officer appointed to decide whether access was in the child's best interests decided instead to contact the Home Office. His action prompted the Home Office to tell Vinesh once more that he must leave Britain. The welfare office has since attempted to prevent the access application going ahead.

Vinesh's daughter is a British citizen but the possibility of her forming a relationship with her father may still be taken away from her by the Home Office, which accepts no responsibility for the delay

in giving Vinesh permission to stay in Britain after his marriage.

Vinesh now lives with his brother, sister-in-law and their two boys in Solihull, West Midlands. He wants to stay with them and to have the chance to see his daughter. Vinesh is employed as a moulder with a car manufacturing business in Birmingham and is a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union.

Britain's racist immigration laws continue to break up black families.

Support Vinesh's fight to stay in Britain!

Mandy's Diary

April 16th: It has long been known that manufactured baby food and baby milk is a killer for babies in the Third World because of the unhygienic water supplies in many of these countries. But a report by the Food Commission today indicates that the majority of manufactured baby foods also fail to meet nutritional standards set by the European Society for Paediatric Gastro-Enterology and Nutrition.

In order to receive the required daily calorie level of 600 calories, besides a daily intake of milk, the average 8 to 10-month-old baby would have to eat seven tins of baby food a day, at a cost of £15 a week.

Further tests showed that the meat content in the average baby food meat dish is usually below 20%, and in the case of Heinz Turkey dinner, as low as 3.9%. Heinz did not take this news well. A spokesman said: "The article is misleading and will undermine the confidence of mothers."

But at the end of the day there is yet more pressure on individual mothers to ensure that their babies are getting the right sort of food. The conclusion of the report is that home-made baby food is cheaper and more nutritious. This is undoubtedly true. But it isn't as easy as it sounds. Frequently the kind of meals you cook for the rest of the family are not suitable for babies (no spices, no salt!) - and even if they are, all that chopping, mincing and mashing can become a chore, especially when the baby spits it all out again because she or he prefers the taste of manufactured food.

May 7th: Judge James Pickles has done it again! He allowed a man who admitted two charges of indecent assault to go free so that he could learn how to behave towards women. The judge said: "He is too shy to approach women in the normal way, so I suppose one could say these appalling attacks are his way of approaching a woman sexually."

Well, I've heard some excuses in my time! I don't suppose that will be any comfort to the women he attacked.

May 8th: The number of women being remanded in custody increased by 27% between 1979 and 1987. 30% of women prisoners have no previous convictions compared with 9%

of men. While men are most likely to be imprisoned for violent offences, 52% of women were jailed for theft, handling stolen goods, fraud and forgery. A large proportion were jailed for drug offences. Women overall get a worse deal than men for the same offences, and this is especially true of black women.

May 13th: What kind of mentality is it that thinks women are not fit to be seen without make-up? Teresa Fischette, a ticket agent for Continental Airlines, USA, was sacked because she refused to wear make-up under a new policy introduced on May 1st to improve the airline's image. She plans to go to court to get her job back. I wish her every success.

May 14th: At last we have news of a judge who made a sensible decision. He allowed

a 12-year-old girl to have an abortion, against her mother's wishes. It is heartening to note that the wishes of the girl herself were taken into consideration, not just that people were acting "in her interests". Childbirth may be a natural process, but it is not a pleasant experience at any age. In the case of a 12-year-old girl it could well leave her scarred for life, physically as well as mentally, because her body would probably not be developed enough to give birth naturally and would require a Caesarian operation.

The anti-abortion organisation, 'Life', reacted as expected. Its director said: "That poor little girl is being hustled into an abortion by overmighty social workers."

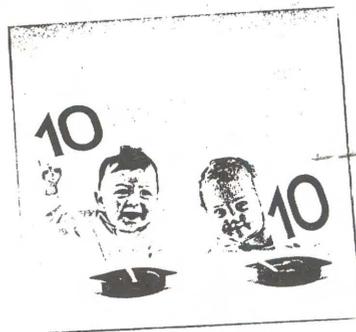
But it's O.K. to be hustled into childbirth by overmighty parents! Isn't it amazing how often men, who have never experienced childbirth, and never will, think they have the right to decide on behalf of women and girls?

The director of British Pregnancy Advisory Service said: "We regard the views of the patient concerned, whatever her age, as paramount, although in the case of someone so young, we would want to ensure that she had sufficient maturity to understand what was proposed."

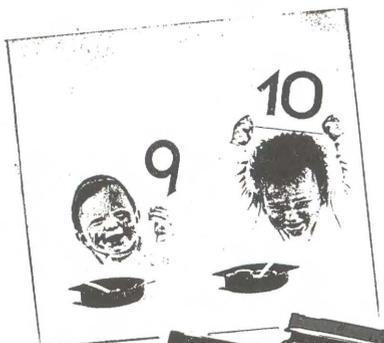
But what if she didn't? Or if they thought she didn't? You need maturity for abortion, but you don't need it for childbirth!

There was another piece of news today worth mentioning. St James Hospital, Leeds, has developed a blood test to detect Down's Syndrome very early in pregnancy. Until now the only test was amniocentesis at about 18 weeks of pregnancy. This in itself involved a risk of miscarriage. If the result was positive, the decision then had to be made, whether to have a late abortion or to give birth to a mentally-handicapped child.

But this blood test is not available on the National Health Service. St James Hospital is a self-governing trust. The technology to improve people's lives is available but they cannot have it unless they pay for it.



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TASTY - BUT HEALTHY?

'UNBROKEN SPIRIT'

Dear Class Struggle,

Not everything is reactionary in our media. Very occasionally, a beaming light shines through, perhaps a play, or film, a talk programme or music and poetry, an so on.

One such example was a most moving and memorable recounting of the history of South Africa (Azania) through the eyes of black people, narrated by Soweto poet and musician M.Mbuli. The programme traced developments over the last four hundred years, from the pre-colonial period, through the settlement of their land by the Dutch and British from 1672 onwards.

The colonists destroyed the African way of life and culture, enslaved the people and eventually brought about the creation and development of the present apartheid state.

The programme was broadcast on BBC Radio One, at peak mid-afternoon listening time, for one hour, on May Day Bank Holiday... a programme about "what life could have been ... without imperialism"!

Immediately prior to this

programme, millions of kids would have been tuned in to the bank holiday roadshow from Derby. So, hopefully, most of them stayed tuned in to learn a lesson in the real history of people, and to be inspired by the 'unbroken spirit of a risen people'.

'Unbroken Spirit', interspersed with music and poetry of the black people's struggle, eye witnesses accounts and on-the-spot recording of events such as the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, and the Soweto Uprising of 1976. There were also reports on prisons and prisoners, death row and executions. There were graphic interviews with many people, especially women, who had either witnessed or experienced being tortured.

The programme pointed out that apart from arms, Britain is also one of the world's largest exporters of the implements of torture.

All who listened to 'Unbroken Spirit' could not fail to learn a tremendous lesson of real history, and become thoroughly incensed and enraged by what they heard.

'Cultural Reader'

deliberately set out to see how quickly they could get rid of staff. I lasted six months, and that was longer than most others. The officers-in-charge were a married couple who lived on the premises. They dedicated their lives to the job.

The fact that anybody who walked in off the street, with no qualifications and no experience, could get this job (in fact - experienced people wouldn't touch it with a barge pole!), shows just what low priority was, and still is, given to residential work with children. The fact that it is residential means that it is very difficult to do the job if you have your own children. It is poorly paid, it involves working unsociable hours, there are never enough staff, no status, no resources, no recognition for what goes right, only criticism for what goes wrong.

Over the last twenty years, most of the changes which have taken place in Social Services have made the job of childcare workers even more difficult. In order to save money, there has been a policy of closing down children's homes and sending children home wherever possible. The children who remain in care are those who have no homes, those who are beyond control or committing serious offences. Unqualified social workers are expected to wave a magic wand and turn them into well-behaved law-abiding citizens where parents and court systems have failed.

In some areas of the country some good preventive work is being done with delinquent youngsters. For example, there is a project in my town to introduce young offenders to the victims of their crimes (if the victims are willing) so that they can tell the young people what it feels like to have your car stolen or your house burgled! Young people get the opportunity to think about what they have done and face up to the consequences of their behaviour. But this is a project with a limited timespan and the funding runs out in six months.

As with other aspects of the welfare state, there is no money or resources or commitment to long-term effective solutions to difficult issues. No money for preventive work, no money for training of staff. No money to pay good foster parents the rate for the job and support them in their work. Children are our future. They have a right to better treatment.

Midlands Reader

Children are our future

'There is no money or resources or commitment to long-term effective solutions to difficult issues.'

Dear Class Struggle,

Like many other people I was very angry and saddened to hear about the most recent abuse inflicted on children in care in children's homes in Staffordshire. Whatever

children have done and whatever problems they have, it is wrong and inhuman to lock them up in solitary confinement in their nightclothes for days or weeks on end. Children in care need more love and help than other children, not less. They are in care precisely because there is no-one to look after them, or because they have already been ill-treated or neglected.

But as a social worker myself, I have experienced some of the reality which prevents children getting the help they need. Twenty years ago, straight out of university, with no qualifications and no experience, but idealistic about "wanting to help people", I contacted the local Social Services Department for a job. The only job I could get was as a childcare officer in a children's home. The Assistant Director of Social Services himself told me: "These are the most difficult kids in Berkshire. These are the kids that no-one else can control."

The turnover of staff was tremendous. The children

The Unworkable Tax

Fearful of being electorally pole-axed by the Tories' tarnished flagship, the Poll Tax, John Major has pragmatically given it the kiss of death. The Poll Tax is to be replaced by a property-based arrangement that goes some way to accommodate the popular feeling that the Poll Tax was unfair as it did not take into account the ability of people to pay.

The dropping of the Poll Tax (but not until 1993), far from solves the bureaucratic nightmare that has engulfed local councils.

The Poll Tax was ill-conceived and, as predicted, proved to be uncollectable. Originally introduced under the excuse that it was the means of ensuring council accountability, its anti-democratic and arbitrary nature was clearly seen when the government first imposed limitations on how much councils could charge and then arranged a £140 discount to sweeten this year's bills. We print below the copy of a letter forwarded to us by a reader, explaining his particular Poll Tax nightmare!

Dear Welfare Rights Officer,

I have been referred to you by the Recovery Section in reference to my outstanding community charge - Poll Tax.

I registered for the community charge while a full-time student at college in 1990. At that time, I included the proof of student exemption supplied by the college and awaited the relevant charge in light of my circumstances.

**PAY
NO
POLL
TAX**

CAN'T PAY - WON'T PAY

There was the confusion about how much was due because of the poll tax capping saga, so when I left last summer, I wrote to the relevant office informing them of the change in my circumstances, expecting a revised poll tax demand.

I was then registered unemployed for a couple of months, signing on at the local unemployment benefits office. As I was not claiming for housing benefits... I was not informed of the need to approach the Neighbourhood Office for exemption from the full community charge. I only found out this procedure later... By this time I was in full-time employment.

After I found full-time work, I wrote informing the Community Charge section of

the change in my circumstances. When following this up with a personal visit... I was then told that my student registration had been lost. I acquired another copy from the college authorities and hand-delivered it to the offices.

The next communication I received was a summons for non-payment in December. I attended that magistrate's court, along with a hundred others... My explanation was ruled as inadmissible. Within two weeks of this date, I moved out of London to my present address. There remained the discrepancy between what was demanded and what I felt should be established as the true charge due.

I informed the council of my move and the next letter I received was in early April: notice of liability for unpaid community charge. In the intervening period I had tried to get written proof of my period of unemployment. After a letter and follow-up telephone calls, I received official confirmation.

I made a personal visit to the Recovery Section only to be informed that the Notice of Liability was incorrect as it did not include my period of exemption as a student - proof of which had been submitted twice - and that it would have to be corrected to take into account my period of unemployment once that had been ratified... The Notice also contained an error as my date of leaving the borough was incorrect.

I enclose documentary evidence of my claims and a copy of the statement made to the recovery section to assist the argument for these circumstances to be retrospectively acknowledged and my correct revised community charge calculated.

A would-be Poll Tax Payer

WHERE WAS LABOUR?

Dear Class Struggle,

Whilst it is good to see the National Health Service (NHS) changes getting the publicity they deserve, Labour's style of work does make me sick.

Where were they when the bill was going through parliament? Where were they when health workers and communities were fighting local battles to stop their hospitals opting out? Where were they when the

British Medical Association (BMA) was running a public campaign against the White Paper?

They were certainly not the noisy, aggressive, persistent force they seem to be now. Now - when they use the NHS problems as an electioneering platform. Now they have the government on the run.

If they had put the NHS and ordinary people's demands

really top of their agenda when it mattered, perhaps they could have built an alliance and stopped the legislation.... But that didn't suit the Labour leadership's only real objective: to get into power using any bandwagon they can climb onto.

A Somerset reader, (where both main hospitals have opted out.)

NEW DAWN FOR ETHIOPIA'S P

The last days of May saw the final collapse of the government of Ethiopia, the Dergue. The head of the government, Colonel Mengistu, had fled the country, and on 28th May, the liberation army entered Addis Ababa and took control with little opposition. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) assumed state power in Addis Ababa. On 29th May, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) announced that it was setting up a provisional administration within Eritrea and would be holding a referendum to determine the future of Eritrea.

The present phase of struggle for liberation and resistance to oppression has lasted for the last thirty years. Opposition to the government of Haile Selassie began to develop as early as the 1950's and 1961 saw the first armed resistance, led by the Eritrean Liberation Front.

In 1974, a section of the armed forces led a coup against Haile Selassie, and this regime, known as the Dergue, continued the ruthless oppression of the people. The resistance grew and developed, in Eritrea led by the EPLF and in Tigray by the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

In January 1989, the EPRDF was

set up to unite the different forces within Ethiopia fighting against the Dergue. The two founding organisations were the TPLF and the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement. Other organisations that have joined since then include the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation and the Ethiopian Democratic Officers' Revolutionary Movement. In January 91, when the first Congress of the EPRDF was held, much of northern and central Ethiopia had already been liberated. 20 million people already lived in the liberated areas.

The governments in Ethiopia relied on support from the superpowers to defeat the

liberation forces, with the USA initially supporting Haile Selassie and the Soviet Union supplying arms and other military support to the Dergue. More recently, Israel have been giving military help to the government. The EEC has also helped to prop up the Dergue through programmes of economic support.

The liberation forces, on the other hand, have developed a policy of self-reliance. Their armies are equipped with weapons supplied to the Dergue. They have won the people's support because they have, over the last thirty years, developed policies on the political, economic and social fronts as well as in the armed struggle. Land reform, women's liberation and democratic government have been at the heart of their programmes.

The drought and subsequent famines that have devastated Ethiopia have been the direct result of the war and government policies in

London Peace Conference

Meles Zenawi, EPRDF:

As you know, the London Peace Conference has now come to a successful conclusion. The parties at the conference have agreed to hold a follow-up conference within one month. This was agreed upon in order to include other parties and interests in the discussion on the transitional period in general, and the form of a broad-based provisional government in particular. In the meantime, the EPRDF is assuming state responsibility in Addis Ababa pending the formation of a broad-based provisional government.

I am pleased to inform you that peace and order have now been re-established in Addis Ababa. We feel confident that foreign embassies and international organisations in Addis Ababa will resume their normal duties over the next few days.

The priority of the interim EPRDF administration will be to ensure law and order, facilitate the distribution of relief aid and maintain essential services.



Conference

Saturday 22nd June
10am - 6pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square
Holborn
Buses: 7, 8, 19, 22, 22B, 38, 55,
68, 77A, 188



Workshops on
AID & DEVELOPMENT
MEDIA IMAGES
PEACE
WOMEN

Creche provided

Ethiopian food

Panel discussions on FAMINE AND DEVELOPMENT
and ETHIOPIA'S POLITICAL FUTURE

Guest speakers include journalists, academics, aid workers and representatives of the Relief Society for Tigray, the Ethiopian Relief Organisation and the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front.

For further details, contact the Ethiopia Solidarity Campaign
on 071 738 4019



The EPRDF look forward to participating in the proposed conference in a constructive manner. At the conference, the EPRDF will work for an agreement on the formation of a broad-based provisional

government, the peaceful and democratic resolution of the problems in our country and the holding of an internationally supervised election to form an elected government.

PEOPLES

agriculture. The new transitional governments in Ethiopia and Eritrea have experience of working with international aid agencies as well as developing their own programmes for agriculture.

For the first time, the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea have the opportunity to tackle the immediate problems of hunger and lack of food as well as implement a longer-term programme for re-building their country in peace. It will be no easy task overcoming the years of devastation and war. But the liberation organisations have tested policies in the liberated areas and have detailed programmes for the transitional period. We should continue to give our solidarity and support and demand that our government and the international aid agencies give assistance without interfering in the internal affairs of the Ethiopian and Eritrean peoples.

In other words, the EPRDF still stands by its transitional programme. Now that we are well underway to resolving all our political problems and defining a democratic future for our country, we hope those who have been providing relief and other assistance to the Ethiopian people will not only continue to do so but also augment their assistance.

Press release:

The EPRDF had desisted from entering Addis Ababa in order not to jeopardise the London Peace Conference, hoping that there would not be a breakdown of law and order in the meantime. Unfortunately, there has been a complete breakdown of law and order in Addis Ababa. The EPRDF has therefore been forced to send in its troops to restore peace and order. This was done in consultation with the representatives of the US government during the peace talks. The EPRDF advises all residents of Addis Ababa to be off the streets until further notice. It also advises all foreign embassies and international organisations to close their doors and fly their flags in a conspicuous manner.

Supreme Council EPRDF,
28.5.91.

EPRDF Program of Change

At its first Congress held in January of this year, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) adopted a programme for the future direction of their country. 'New Ethiopia', the bulletin of the Ethiopian Solidarity Campaign in Britain, reported on this as follows:

".... The programme addresses the fundamental problems of the country, namely peace and democracy, the Eritrean question and the question of nationalities, and the prospects of the direction of the future economic and social progress of the country in a revolutionary and democratic manner.

This was a programme drawn not from a social blueprint existing in the minds of some group of people planning to mould the rest of society... It was drawn from rich experience already gained, from principles and ways of doing things already being practiced, and from an intimate knowledge of and reflection of the views and concerns of the Ethiopian people.

The programme states that the central political aim of the EPRDF is to guarantee and safeguard the democratic rights of the peoples of Ethiopia. The basic democratic rights of the people to free speech, freedom of the press and of movement; the right to make peaceful protest and the right to strike; and the right to form independent political and social organisations must all be guaranteed. It also states that all organs of state power must be fully responsible to the people. It stresses the need for full grassroots participation by the people in discussing and deciding upon all matters affecting their lives and welfare.

The Congress delegates debated and concluded that, as a manifestation of the right of the people to freely organise there should be a multiplicity of political parties and organisations initiated by the people.

On the question of nationalities, it held that it is only on the basis of democracy and the free will of all the nationalities that a

truly united and democratic Ethiopia could exist. All the peoples should have the right to their language and culture, should be able to decide all matters relating specifically to their locality themselves and at the same time should have the right to decide country-wide issues together with the other peoples of Ethiopia, on the basis of full equality and brotherhood. The congress reiterated the conviction of the EPRDF that the unequivocal enforcement of the right of self-determination of the various peoples concerned is an essential element of the peaceful and democratic resolution of the national problem. This must include, if wished by the majority, secession.

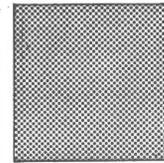
The question of the future economic system was discussed in detail and at length by the congress. It reiterated the aim of building a revolutionary democratic economic system based on the utilisation and combination of state ownership, (especially of the essential industries and the land), foreign and local private capital and petty proprietors. It stressed that the economy should be such as to guarantee the speedy economic and social development of the country, while at the same time enhancing its economic and political independence, and avoiding the accumulation of affluence and poverty at opposite ends of the scale, which would in fact derail the whole process of democratisation and progress....

The transitional programme would involve the present government (the Dergue: Ed.) being replaced by a provisional government in which all political trends in the country are represented. This government must then restore all the democratic rights to the people, allow all political forces or groups to operate legally and openly, and conduct a free and fair election for a people's government under international supervision...."

The Ethiopian Solidarity Campaign can be contacted at:
Secretary ESC, 211 Clapham Road, Stockwell, London SW9.

Five years ago, in February 1986, the hated dictator of the Philippines, Marcos was flown to safety by his American masters and Cory Aquino came to power, as a result of growing opposition to Marcos, particularly the massive protests that became known as the parliament of the streets and culminated in the crowds that blocked the tanks and provided the final push to Marcos.

The fall of Marcos was attributed to people's power and the new president made many promises to improve the life of the people. Yet now, with elections coming up in 1992, there is growing disillusionment. Many people say that things are even worse now than under Marcos.



NO

The statistics are horrifying: 70% of the people live below the poverty line. 60% have tuberculosis. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation counts the Philippines among the five worst countries for malnutrition. In 1989, one million Filipinos went blind because of vitamin A deficiency.

In a general way, the poverty of the people is a result of the long history of control of the country, firstly by Spain and then by the USA, initially as a colony and more recently as a neo-colony. Although the Philippines is a fertile country, with many mineral resources, it has been kept underdeveloped and forced to export raw materials and import finished goods. More recently, it has been burdened with a massive foreign debt which drains the country of its wealth.

The government of Cory Aquino has done nothing to reverse this situation. In many ways it suited the USA, to replace Marcos who had been thoroughly discredited throughout the world with a new ruler, who could claim to be more democratic. After some initial moves such as freeing political prisoners however, the Aquino government has disappointed those who thought that it could bring real change.

It is worth looking in some detail at three key issues and how the government has dealt with them to understand the true record of the Aquino regime. Aquino came to power making many promises on these issues, among others. She said she was opposed to the presence of American bases on Filipino soil. The bases are still there and negotiations are continuing. She promised land reform. Legislation has been passed after many delays with few results. The Aquino family's own massive sugar plantation is still intact. She also promised to bring peace to the Philippines. But the war against the New People's Army and its illegal front organisations continues, with renewed ferocity, based on American theories of low-intensity conflict.

We could, of course, look at many others aspects of the government's record. But these three interlinked issues reflect some of the main demands made by the Filipino



TIME FOR TEARS

people. The American bases remain a symbol of the lack of national independence and an insult to a country's true sovereignty. The demand for genuine land reform is also basic for a country in which over 80% of the people still live on the land. The strength of the revolutionary anti-imperialist movement in the Philippines and the government's response to it is also of fundamental importance.

OUT WITH US BASES

The US bases in the Philippines have been a target for popular protest for many years. There are five major US bases, of which Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Base are the most important, with at least 20 minor military communications facilities. Local researchers also think that the US maintains secret facilities of its own as well as others jointly used by the US and Philippines armed forces.

Clark Air Base is the headquarters of the US 13th Air Force and is the largest US base in Asia. Subic Bay is the largest US naval installation west of Hawaii. It is thought that nuclear weapons are stored at both these two. The bases have been used in attacks on Indonesia and Korea well before they played a central role in the US attack on Indochina and have also been used to launch attacks on Filipino resistance at different points in history.

The bases are not only a symbol of foreign control. Clark alone occupies 137,500 hectares of fertile land. About 22,000 civilians work on the bases and a massive 'hospitality' industry has grown up, for example, in Olangapo, to cater for the two million Navy personnel who 'pass through'. It is estimated that there are 9,000 'hospitality women' registered in Olangapo and in total 16,000 working as waitresses, bar staff or dancers.

The movement against the US bases has focused on different aspects - from the early protests in the 1970's to the role in the war against Vietnam to the corruption and degradation brought about by the sex industry accompanying them. So strong was the feeling against the bases that

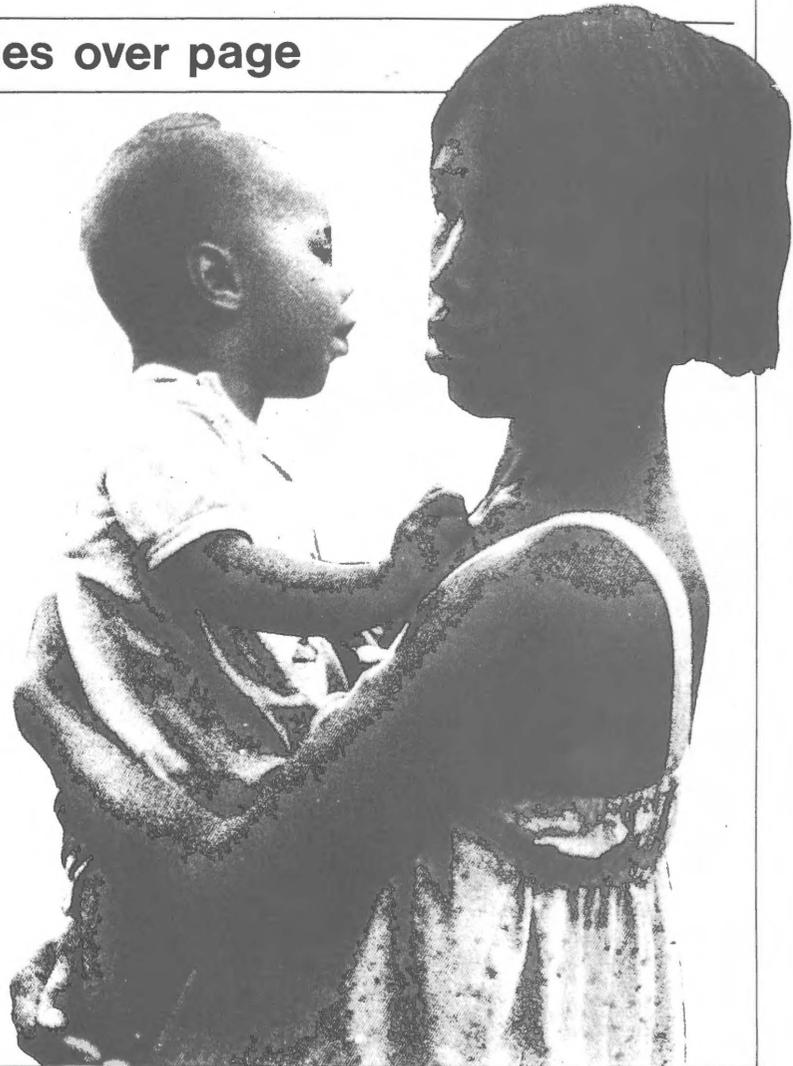
before she became president, Cory Aquino promised to work to have them removed. Since she was elected however, she has renegotiated the lease up to this year and her government is currently negotiating for a further extension with the US.

Up to now, Aquino's government has concentrated on trying to get a higher rental for the bases. But in the current climate of defence cuts in the USA, there is speculation that the US will withdraw many of its personnel from Clark while holding on to Subic. It is likely that these moves, designed to suit US policy, will be concealed under phrases such as 'Joint US-RP Use', with cash payments being transformed into outdated military supplies. Either way, the movement against the bases will continue and the prevarications of the government further expose their dependence on the US.

LAND TO THE TILLER

If the US bases are the strongest symbol of external control, ownership and control of the land is the key internal issue. The Philippines is an archipelago of tropical islands, with fertile land where rice is the staple crop and many fruit and vegetables grown. Food is the country's main produce. Yet most is exported. The majority of its people do not have enough to eat and cash crops for export dominate the countryside. Ownership of agricultural land is highly concentrated. According to government figures, 20% of the population owns 80% of the land. Much of the most fertile land has been transformed into plantations owned by rich Filipino families, such as Aquino's, or by American or Japanese agribusinesses.

continues over page



In the final years of the Marcos regime, opposition came from all but a small section of the elite, known as Marcos' cronies. It included peasants' and workers' organisations, the middle class, women's groups, sections of the wealthy landlord and business groups opposed to Marcos and the Catholic Church. But the Armed Forces of the Philippines had been fighting a war against the most consistent opposition, led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).



The new CPP was set up in 1968, strongly influenced by the Chinese Communist Party and one year later set up the New People's Army (NPA). It is estimated that when Marcos declared martial law in 1972 the NPA had no more than 200 members. When Aquino came to power it numbered over 20,000.

Although the strategy of armed struggle and protracted war based on the countryside has been the fundamental strategy of the CPP, it has also worked through a number of united front organisations, some legal others illegal. In 1974, the National Democratic Front (NDF) was set up on a broad anti-imperialist, democratic platform. The NDF is still illegal and includes underground organisations from different sectors as well as Christians for National Liberation.

A provisional revolutionary government has also been set up in areas controlled by the NDF, estimated by the government

itself to be at least 20% of the villages of the Philippines.

Under Marcos, the issues were clear: the CPP analysed the Philippines as a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country and the main enemy as US imperialism and its local agents and dependants. The NPA fought a classic guerrilla war and managed to survive and expand all attacks on it, while other organisations led popular resistance in many different areas and round a variety of issues.

Initially under Aquino, there were some changes. Political prisoners were released; negotiations took place with the NDF and the economic situation improved. But it gradually became clear that there would be no real change. Aquino has now declared total war on the revolutionary forces, with full support from US "low-intensity conflict" experts. Human rights organisations have reported the level of abuses -

disappearances, killings and 'salvagings' - is now higher than under Marcos. Aquino has vowed to destroy the NPA and CPP by 1992. Leaders of supposedly legal organisations such as the union KMU have been assassinated and peasant leaders demonstrating peacefully for land reform were shot down in cold blood.

The revolutionary movement in the Philippines has always maintained its ability to defend itself and will expand its base and popularity as the true nature of the Aquino regime becomes clearer. The ability of the government to pursue its counter-insurgency strategy depends to a large extent on US backing. International opposition to the role of the USA in the Philippines can play an important part in this. That is why it is vital that we too have a clear understanding of the thoroughly anti-popular character of the Aquino government and any possible successors.

P11 Continued

In the last twenty years, the concentration of land ownership has been intensified by the export strategy dictated by the IMF and World Bank. The Philippines was also used as the hothouse for the Green Revolution. New 'miracle' brands of rice were developed which were dependent on expensive imports of seeds and fertilizers and overall increased poverty and landlessness in the countryside.

In the early days of the Aquino government the need for land reform was widely

accepted. The debate centred on what form this would take. Instead of using her law-making powers, Aquino chose to delegate land reform to the landlord-dominated Congress, which eventually passed a bill - the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL). This law, like other phoney land reform measures before it, has been denounced by the broad-based Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform which has called for a genuine 'land-to-the tiller' programme.

The history of the Aquino-Conjuangco family's own sugar plantation, Hacienda Luisita which the family held onto in spite of a long dispute with Marcos, shows how easy evasion

of genuine land reform has been. Far from dividing the land among the farmers, the family is holding onto most of it, expanding the sugar production and developing an industrial site alongside. The few wealthy land-owning families may compete with each other but they will not give up their land or profitable relationship with the USA, Japan or other Western countries.

In the meantime, the chairman of the militant peasants' movement, Kilusan ng Magbubukid sa Pilipinas (KMP) who have been leading a movement for genuine land reform, has been jailed on trumped-up charges. ■

DEATH OF A MODERATE?

On Tuesday, May 21st, Rajiv Gandhi, leader of India's Congress (I) Party was assassinated while on the election campaign in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

The assassination took place in the middle of the election, which Rajiv Gandhi was predicted to win, with Congress (I) coming out as the party with the largest number of seats, if not a clear majority. The remaining part of the election was postponed until the middle of June.

The Congress Party offered the leadership of the campaign to Rajiv's widow, Sonia, in a bid to cash in on the sympathy vote, as Rajiv himself had, after the assassination of his mother, Indira Gandhi in 1984. Italian born Sonia, however, refused and a interim leader was appointed, PV Narasimha Rao. Meanwhile, the cremation of Rajiv's body and the spreading of his ashes have been made into a huge spectacle and 35 other urns, containing his ashes, are being sent around the country to be spread in different rivers, as part of the continued electioneering.

The western press is fond of calling India the world's largest democracy. It sees no problem in saying this at the same time as pointing out that members of the Gandhi family, or dynasty as they call it, have ruled India almost continuously since independence. They point out how rivals have been eliminated and even how little democracy there has been, particularly at times like the State of Emergency, brought in by Indira Gandhi. In the current situation in India, they are saying that for all the lack of democracy, in this the world's largest democracy, Rajiv Gandhi was a moderate, secular leader, who alone was capable of holding India together. The lack of an obvious successor from the Gandhi family, leaves the way open for the growth of communalism, particularly the electoral victory of the growing right wing Hindu party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP was not previously expected to win this election, although widely predicted to be on course for a majority next time round.

This analysis presents the unity of the Indian state as all-important and the state itself as a neutral, secular



force which can play a moderating role between warring communities, or extremists in India. Rajiv is portrayed as a moderate, secular leader. This view also goes back to the history of the struggle for Indian independence from Britain and the role of the Congress Party historically. Leaders such as Nehru, Rajiv's grandfather and Mahatma Gandhi are portrayed as the true freedom fighters and even glamourised as such in epic films.

Many people have questioned this view. Historically, the Congress Party played at best an ambivalent role in relation to the struggle for independence and the British handed over power to a neo-colonial India, which had little to offer its people in terms of real national independence or liberation. More recently, it has been the Indian state and the ruling Congress Party, that has met the demands of the different nationalities and national minorities within India with violence and fascist repression. The struggles of the people of Kashmir and the Sikhs of the Punjab, for example, come up against repression from the Indian state.

FASCIST STATE

This is not to argue that the growth of the BJP is not in itself an alarming and reactionary development. Many progressive groups have been warning about the dangers in this. For example, the Indian People's Association in North America (IPANA) organised a public meeting round the issue of the assault on the Babari Mosque. IPANA noted:

"The assault on Babari Masjid is not an isolated thing. For

almost ten years, starting with the calculated and divisive policies of the Indira Gandhi government and her Congress Party, a process of Hinduization of the Indian state, and of the polity, has been going on. We all know what happened to Punjab in June 1984, and to the Sikhs in November 1984 and has been happening all the way since then. How can one forget the systematic massacre of thousands of Muslims in Assam in 1983, and many large-scale mob killings in city after city of India? How can one forget Meerut of 1987 when the state's own police force indulged in an orgy of mass killings of Muslims there? The list is endless.

"While all this was happening under the state's auspices and that of the Congress Party, organisations like Vishwa Hindu Parishad, RSS, Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal, etc. were patronised to grow and to escalate their propaganda based upon falsehoods and distortions of history...."

The day of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, one paper here reported an incident which reflected the reality of India's elections more closely than the miles of newsprint comment afterwards. "In the village of Nizamuddin, a few Untouchables had turned up to vote for the Indian People's Front candidate, Krishna Dev Yada. A high-caste Brahmin from Congress (I) took exception to their audacity..." He proceeded to shoot dead four members of the offending family, including a child of ten.

Rajiv Gandhi was no moderate. He led the Indian state in its repression of nationalities and oppressed classes and castes within Hindu society.

Remembering the Hunger Strikes



On May 5th, Belfast saw one of its largest demonstrations in recent years when over 10,000 marched to commemorate the 1981 Hunger Strike on the tenth anniversary of the death of Bobby Sands.

Gathering in the Twinbrook Estate where Bobby Sands used to live, the march made a historic six-mile parade through West Belfast, down the Falls Road and on to Dunville Park where marchers were addressed by a number of speakers, including Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams, who said:

WHERE IS MAGGIE NOW?

"In 1981, Margaret Thatcher declared that the IRA was playing its last card. Where is Margaret Thatcher today? Every political development and relationship between Britain and Ireland can be traced to the hunger strike ten years ago, including Peter Brooke's talks process. Today the objectives of the British government are the same as during the hunger strike, to undermine the Republican Movement. But we are still demanding our freedom."

On the talks currently being organised by Peter Brooke, Adams went on: "The British government has excluded Sinn Fein because it wants a cosy little process where arrangements could be made to govern Ireland in British interests." Adams told the crowd that it was claimed that there could be no guns "on, under or beside the table", but "Sinn Fein couldn't get near the table for British guns."

"The SDLP has accepted the legitimacy of the RUC and British crown forces. Ian Paisley, that great pacifist, is no stranger to force. Neither are Molyneaux, Robinson or especially Peter Brooke who is responsible for over 30,000 British terrorists occupying Ireland."

NO PARTITIONIST SOLUTION

Adams finally dismissed the possibility of any partitionist solution to the conflict and finished by

saying: "There is no way we will accept any settlement short of Irish self-determination. This is not because Republicans are uncompromising, or inflexible, but because nothing else can work, will work or has worked."

REMEMBERING BOBBY SANDS

1991 was not only the tenth anniversary of the death of the hunger strikers. It was also the 75th anniversary of the Easter Uprising. As Jake Jackson, the Six County editor of 'An Phoblacht/Republican News' noted, 1991 also marks the beginning of a determined British effort at stabilising their rule in Ireland and involving the representatives of so-called constitutional nationalism in underwriting and propping up British policy and the partition of Ireland.

Jackson was giving the Bobby Sands Memorial Lecture and chose as his title the quote "Out of the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations". These words were spoken by Patrick Pearse at the graveside of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, less than nine months before the Easter Uprising.

In the lecture, Jackson dealt in detail with the background and context in which the death of the ten hunger strikers came about. He showed how one of the effects of the hunger strike was to force the British government into adopting the new strategy - the Hillsborough process. This aimed at two primary objectives: one to give the illusion of change and movement and the other to contain and undermine the Republican struggle.

"In pursuit of the second objective, the British set in train a whole series of measures aimed at containing the armed struggle and constructing a legal framework within which they could contain the political activity of Republicans. Our analysis of the situation was correct at the time and remains so now. But ten years on from the hunger strikes and six

years on from Hillsborough, we face another major challenge in Peter Brooke's Hillsborough Mark II. Its aims are identical to Hillsborough Mark I. So, ten years on from the hunger strikes, where stands the Republican struggle?"

TASKS FOR THE FUTURE

Jackson then went on to deal with the tasks facing Republicans in the coming year: the first that of confronting British rule in Ireland. The aim of this had to be to re-awaken the community's anger at the injustices inflicted upon them.

Secondly, there was the task of reclaiming the spirit of 1916: "We must work to re-awaken the nationalist spirit and to assert our pride at being Irish and our determination to be free."

Finally, there was the task of drawing on the lessons of the H-Block and Armagh campaign. "This is not an easy struggle but by way of encouragement, especially at times of doubt, we can look to the words of Bobby Sands. On the twelfth day on hunger strike, he said:

"I have decided to mass all my energy and thoughts into consolidating my resistance. That is most important. Nothing else seems to matter except that lingering constant reminding thought 'never give up'. No matter how bad, how black, how painful, how heartbreaking, 'never give up', 'never despair', 'never lose hope'. Let them bastards laugh at you all they want, let them grin and jibe, allow them to persist in their humiliation, brutality, deprivations, vindictiveness, petty harassment, let them laugh now because all of that is no longer important or worth a response. I am making my last response to the whole vicious inhuman atrocity they call the H-Block, but unlike their laughs and jibes, our laughter will be the joy of victory and the joy of our people, our revenge will be the liberation of all and the final defeat of the oppressors of our aged nation."

GERRY ADAMS SPEAKS IN LONDON



On the weekend of May 11th to 13th, Sinn Féin President, Gerry Adams, MP, addressed a series of meetings in London.

One of these meetings was the annual James Connolly-Bobby

Sands Commemoration meeting, organised by the Wolfe Tone Society, as part of the Hunger Strike Commemoration, and held in the Conway Hall, London. The meeting was filled to overflowing and many were turned away.

In addition to Gerry Adams, there were speakers from the Indian Workers' Association, Troops Out Movement, London Irish Women's Centre and the Glasgow Republican Coordinating Committee. Martha Ellis, sister of Dessie, spoke, as did a Korean priest and Jeremy Corbyn, MP.

Gerry Adams told the rally: "When Thatcher declared in 1981 that the hunger strike was the IRA's last card, Sinn Féin predicted that the freedom struggle would outlast her regime. Eleven years after Thatcher came to power, the demand for Irish freedom and its supporters have outlived Thatcher's arrogant and dogmatic reign.

MAY DAY RALLY

Gerry Adams also addressed a

May Day rally, held by the Indian Workers' Association, in Southall. To the crowd of three hundred, he pledged Sinn Féin's solidarity with the Indian community and opposition to racism and fascism.

The other main speaker was Shev Varma, an 87-year old veteran of India's freedom struggle, who himself had been jailed for twenty years for his political activity. He paid tribute to those struggling for Irish freedom and explained how the Irish struggle had long been an inspiration to those struggling in India for justice and freedom.

PRESS CONFERENCE

On the Monday, Gerry Adams held a press conference for journalists from all over the world. He exposed the sham of Brooke's latest attempt at a so-called peace conference and outlined Sinn Féin's views on what the real issues were and how real peace could be achieved. Needless to say, the British media did not report these views.

WORLDWIDE SUPPORT

This year is the tenth anniversary of the death, on hunger strike, of Bobby Sands and his nine comrades. This year, as has happened every year since then, their struggle and example will be commemorated by all those who support the struggle of the Irish people to liberate their country from British imperialism.

The 1981 hunger strike exposed the true nature of British involvement in Ireland to the whole world. Those the British condemned as terrorists were seen throughout the world in their true role: as legitimate national liberation fighters.

It is worth recalling the extent of that international support ten years ago:

*** In Poland, Lech Walesa called Bobby Sands: "a great man who sacrificed his life for his struggle".

*** The East German ambassador in London protested to the Foreign Office and compared the situation in Northern Ireland with that in South

Africa.

*** About 5,000 people marched through Milan demanding 'British Out of Ireland'. The rally at the end of the march burned the Union Jack.

*** In Florence, fire bombs were hurled into British car showrooms.

*** The Portuguese Parliament observed a minute's silence and sixty MP's signed a document denouncing the British government.

*** A leading Portuguese daily paper's front page headline declared 'Hunger for Freedom Killed Bobby Sands'.

*** A bomb damaged the Royal British Club in Lisbon.

*** The 120-strong Socialist Group in the European Parliament sent a protest telegram to Thatcher.

*** In Paris, there were massive demonstrations on eight successive evenings.

*** Similar demonstrations occurred in Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Holland, Spain, Greece and Switzerland.

*** In the USA, there were demonstrations in every major city. Dockers boycotted British ships. Workers in British-owned factories downed tools.

*** There were demonstrations in many parts of Australia.

*** The Indonesian 'Observer' newspaper carried the headline 'Bobby Sands, A Modern Martyr'. Throughout Africa, including South Africa, many newspapers took a similar line.

*** In India, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sent a message to Thatcher interceding on behalf of Bobby Sands.

*** In Tehran, Iran, the street where the British Embassy is, was renamed Bobby Sands Street by the Iranian Parliament.

*** There was support for the hunger strikers from Russia and China.

*** National liberation movements throughout the world supported the hunger strikers.

PUBLICATIONS

In the current '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 both theory and practice.

The article on 'Feminism and the Left in India' 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.

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