

CLASS STRUGGLE



Political Paper of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain

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Great Victory of the Lebanese People

February opened with an all-out attack by the Lebanese Army on West Beirut at its height. It ended not only with the army reeling from a crushing defeat, but the US-dominated Multi-National Force also in retreat.

The MNF allegedly went into Beirut to "keep the peace," but it rapidly became clear to all that it was not a neutral force, but one which, as a whole, was there to prop up the Lebanese Government. This was eventually made explicit by President Reagan himself last autumn after the Lebanese Government's attempt to occupy the Shouf area, south-east of Beirut, had been ignominiously defeated by fighters of the Progressive Socialist Party and other nationalist forces. As the Lebanese Army battled to keep its last toe-holds in the Shouf, US warships and planes bombarded the advancing opposition forces as well as civilian centres and Reagan announced that the MNF was there to uphold the Lebanese government's authority.

US PLANS

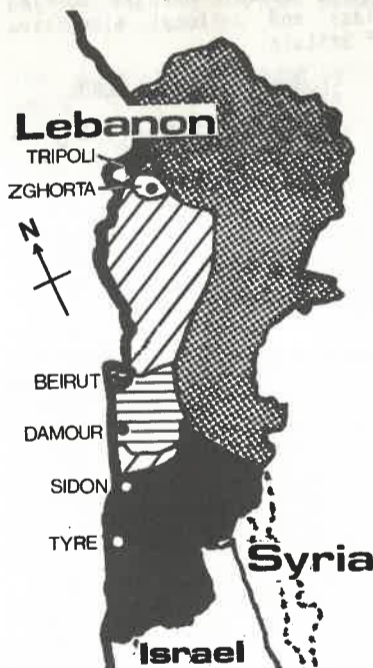
This announcement caused irritation in the Italian contingent of the MNF—the only one that could be said to be attempting to fulfil a peace-keeping role. It was clear that the US regarded the contingents from Western Europe as a cover for an essentially US enterprise. To have sent US forces in on their own would have made US designs clear from the start; to go in with allies (whatever their own purposes) made the US role less obvious. The Thatcher government went along with the US' plans completely; France had its own designs on Lebanon, and put its bet on developing its own close relations with the Lebanese Government.

It has been the mass of the Lebanese people in and around West Beirut who have suffered most as a consequence of the direct western intervention. French troops helped the Lebanese army to round up leftists and progressives when it was first able to move back into West Beirut. The US launched a massive training and re-arming programme for the Lebanese Army, and later backed it directly with its own fire-power, including the guns of the battleship "New Jersey," which in one day in February fired over 200 of its one-ton shells onto towns, villages and positions of the Lebanese patriotic forces killing and maiming many.

PHALANGISTS

The Lebanese Government and army have always been dominated by members of the Maronite Christian religious group, whose status in Lebanon is similar to that of the Protestants in the north of Ireland in many ways. But since September, 1982, power has effectively become concentrated in the hands of the dominant Maronite political and military organization, the Phalangists, a fascist organization. In name, the Lebanese Army represents the whole of Lebanon, but the fact is that it is totally under Phalangist domination.

At the end of December, French MNF forces pulled back from



- Israeli-occupied.
- ▨ Syrian-dominated.
- ▧ Phalangist/Government held.
- ▬ Held by patriotic forces.

Tripoli is dominated by the Islamic Unity Movement (Tawhid). Zghorta is held by the right wing Maronite but anti-Phalangist Frangieh family.

some positions in West Beirut, including some in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, scene of the September, 1982 massacres. Despite fierce opposition from Lebanese patriotic forces, the Lebanese Army managed to take over these positions, and immediately began arresting local people. The Phalangists were given a free run of the area, and there was an immediate rise in "disappearances."

On January 30th, the Lebanese Army began an all-out push to take over the whole of West Beirut. The patriotic forces responded by attacking the Army-Phalangist forces wherever they could, and appealed to soldiers to desert. Thousands of non-Maronite soldiers did so: to date, it is estimated that over one-third of the army has deserted, bringing its brand-new US weapons with it.

VICTORY

The army's advance was halted within days, and joyous nationalist fighters drove it from West Beirut. It was a great victory. The Lebanese people had crushed the US plan to impose Phalangist rule upon them.

A range of patriotic forces have put demands on Lebanese President Gemayel. They oppose Phalangist dictatorship and Maronite domination; they call for Lebanon to fully identify with the Arab world; they demand the abrogation of the treasonous May 17th "peace agreement" with Israel. The government will not be able to resist all these demands. Gemayel told a Saudi peace mission in February that he was prepared to accept the cancellation of the agreement with Israel, which has been opposed even by extreme right-wing Maronites who have not seen eye-to-eye with the patriotic forces on anything else.

There are still many problems confronting the revolutionary forces in Lebanon. Syria has supported the patriotic forces up to a point, but only in order to improve its bargaining position with the USA in the overall situation in the region. It does not want a total victory for the patriotic forces, not least because they would be far less open to Syrian pressure. Israel and the US want a rapid stabilization in central Lebanon which could lead to a sectarian fragmentation of the country, leaving it vulnerable to their attentions in future, even if, for the present, they're compelled to stand to one side and lick their wounds (Israel has now lost around 550 dead since the start of its invasion of Lebanon, one-third of them since it pulled back from West Beirut: it can't afford to become more heavily involved for now).

But whatever happens now, the fact remains that the Lebanese people have stood up to the greatest military power in the world—and others besides—and won a great victory on the road to a free, democratic and united Lebanon.

International Women's Day

"WE STRIKE FOR JUSTICE FOR ALL WOMEN!"

This was the slogan of the women garment workers when they came out on strike on March 8th 1908. Today around the world, March 8th is celebrated as a day to remember the courageous struggles of women in the past and to highlight those of today.



As communists, we give our full support to struggles for women's liberation. In this issue of 'Class Struggle' we carry general articles on women as well as specific reports on the struggles of women in Eritrea and Ireland, and in this country within what was National Abortion Campaign and at Greenham Common. See centre page and p.7.

Sinn Fein Prisoners Campaign

Sinn Fein has launched a new campaign centring on the demand for the right of Irish Prisoners of War to be returned to Ireland to serve their sentences. See back page for details.



- 41 Irish Republican P.O.W.s in English gaols.
- 13 innocent people framed.



- Remember Sharpeville: On March 21st, 1960, thousands of black people who had gathered at Sharpeville to protest against the Pass Laws of the racist South African regime were fired upon by the police. 69 were killed and 180 wounded. In 1976, massive uprisings took place in Soweto and elsewhere, and were again met with the violence of the racist state. But the Azanian people fight on. Remember Sharpeville on March 21st. (A number of activities to mark Sharpeville Day are planned in London, including a public meeting. Watch out for details.)

editorial

On International Women's Day it is right that in the first place we pay tribute to the courageous women of the oppressed nations of the Third World who are at the forefront of the struggle against imperialism. In Eritrea, in Palestine, in Azania and many other places, women are mobilising to fight for their own liberation and that of all their people. In the socialist countries of China and Korea, women play a full part in the life of their country, an inspiration to women all over the world.

For it is in the Third World that the contradiction between imperialism and the people of the world is sharpest. Women in the oppressed nations face drought and famine; they see their children without food, water, basic health and education needs. And it is in the Third World that the powerful armies of the two superpowers particularly, have poured down death and destruction: bombs and napalm, anti-personnel weapons disguised as toys, chemical and gas weapons and so on. It is women in the Third World that assemble the new technology and make the clothes sold here, working long hours without unions and for slave wages.

But where there is oppression, there is resistance. Whether by armed struggle as in Afghanistan or El Salvador, in strikes against working conditions in the Philippines or southern Korea, or by defying martial law and marching in the streets in Pakistan. We, in this country, have been



Women are playing a full part in building socialism in China in all the different fields of work - political, social and economic. In this picture, women doctors from the People's Liberation Army, visit national minority people in Sinkiang.

taught to see these women as "backward", "ignorant" and "superstitious" but it is they who are leading the way.

The struggle of the peoples and countries of the Third World is the root cause of the present crisis of imperialism in the First and Second World. Here too, contradictions are sharpening and women are fighting back. Particularly in the struggle against the threat of nuclear war, brought close by the competition between the two superpowers for world hegemony, women have taken a leading role in the struggle for peace.

Yet there are still those who dismiss women's struggles and the women's movement as "backward", "bourgeois feminist" or "diversionary" and tell the women of Greenham to take their struggles to the factories. The women's movement has raised again the whole question of women's oppression in our society and has generally worked outside the traditional channels of the trade unions and parliamentary parties. They have taken their struggles into the streets and communities seeking grassroots support. They are ahead of the opportunist 'left' who criticise women

as backward.

In Britain, an imperialist country with a long history of exploitation and oppression of other nations, the standard of living, welfare state, education and health services have been won on the backs of the peoples of the Third World. This is an essential truth that most of the 'Left' has not even begun to understand. But the growing links between the women's movement and women of oppressed nations, particularly of Ireland and with national minority women in this country has challenged the priorities

and chauvinism of a movement that still consists of a majority of women of the national majority. We can see the question of the direction of the movement being raised in the struggles round abortion and reproductive rights, in the different opinions within the peace movement and in the growing support for black nationalities minorities in their fight against racism.

Because women have fought long and hard for their right to organise autonomously without interference, they have also begun to recognise the need to give unconditional support to those fighting national oppression. Of course, the women's movement is diverse and complex and to a large extent divorced from the struggles of white working class women against their class oppression and exploitation. But solidarity with women of the oppressed nations and national minority women is growing and is expressed particularly in the growing support for the fight against racism and the struggle against British imperialism in Ireland.

To celebrate International Women's Day, a delegation of women from England, Scotland and Wales will go to Belfast and Derry to attend the annual picket of Armagh jail in support of the women Republican prisoners. This is a fitting way to express solidarity and learn from the courageous women of Ireland. We too, pay our tribute to the Republican women prisoners and all those who have resisted every weapon that imperialism can use against a risen people.

In the past month the issue of the Trade Unions' "Political Levy" has been in the news. Few people, including Trade Unionists, know what the Political Levy is, or what it is used for.

Normally, when you join a Union you automatically pay a political levy when you pay your contribution. If you don't want to pay it you have to ask for a special form to "contract out" of the political levy. The difference in your Union subscription is usually between 50p and £1 per year.

The Political Levy is used to raise money for a Trade Union's political fund. By law a Union must keep its Political Fund separate from its other accounts. Supposedly this money should be used to support political parties and campaigns which are in the interests of the membership of the Union.

FINANCING THE LABOUR PARTY

In practice, the political fund is used almost entirely to finance the Labour Party and its campaigns. In many Unions, even if the members are opposed to this or want to support campaigns which are not backed by the Labour Party, there is little they can do. The EETPU rule book, for example, says: "expenditure from the fund must be in conformity with the Constitution of the Labour Party". The AUEW rule book states that support can only be given to election candidates who "accept the policy and programme of the Labour Party".

On top of this, just to ensure that the Union membership don't have a direct say in the use of the fund, in most Unions the bulk of the fund is controlled by the national leadership, and a small part by the District Committees. Rarely do local branches have a say.

The Political Levy is normally therefore a levy to the Labour Party; and this, of course, is how the main political

Political Levy



Hospital workers had to fight against both Tory and Labour governments for decent pay and conditions of work.

parties, the press and most of the so-called left see it.

TORY CAMPAIGN

For party political reasons the Tory Party is keen to see the finances of the Labour Party reduced. So the government was intending to change the law so that instead of paying the levy automatically and trying to get, and sign a form to "contract out", trade unionists would only pay the levy if they specially asked for and signed a form to "contract in". The 'left' have put up a clamour about this solely because it would indeed reduce Labour finances. They know that working class support for Labour is not as committed as they like to pretend.

Certainly we should oppose the Tory proposals. We are against state interference in the way unions are run. We know the Tories, who derive their funds from companies who pay part of their profits screwed out of their workforce, are hypocrites. But, at the same time, we should also oppose the undemocratic way the funds are administered and we should

oppose their use to finance the Labour Party.

LABOUR GOVERNMENT

When the last Labour government was in office it presided over a massive cut in living standards through the social contract. It saw unemployment treble, and made cuts in education and the NHS.

It maintained the colonial domination of northern Ireland, where it ended political status for prisoners of war. It fought the prisoners who campaigned through the "blanket" protest. It sanctioned the use of torture against suspects. It introduced no-jury courts.

It continued and developed the racist oppression of national minorities. It fought against anti-deportation campaigns. It proposed the racist ideas of Nationality and Citizenship that the Tories later introduced. It watched its police force, and its own creation, the SPG, attack national minorities and anti-racists in the streets. It introduced random searches in factories and communities, harassing national minorities in a search for so-called "illegal immigrants".

It fought the "cod war" with Iceland after Iceland, alongside many Third World countries, declared a 200 mile limit, and continued support for South Africa and Rhodesia. In international affairs, in general, it administered British imperialism every bit as faithfully as the Tory Party.

It strengthened the state in Britain through the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Suppression of Terrorism Act, and through its support for proposals to strengthen the police, many of which are now being incorporated into the present government's Police Bill.

Since it was rejected at the last election, the Labour Party, whether in Parliament or in the Unions, can hardly claim to have led any active resistance to the Tory Party's continued assault on the working class and national minorities of Britain!

CONTROL OVER OUR FUNDS

So how should we view the political levy? We should have funds at our disposal in the unions to fight for our interests. In the long run we should fight the laws that prevent us using all our funds, which we contributed, in any way we see fit. This would mean the abolition of a separate political level.

Meanwhile, we should demand an end to the union rules that restrict the use of the fund to the Labour Party. We should fight to support those campaigns that are in the interest of working class and national minority people in Britain and which give international support to those fighting imperialism.

CONTRACT OUT

At the same time, we should be prepared to lead campaigns to contract out of the Political Levy, whenever such a campaign can highlight opposition to the Labour Party and to those people who pretend that it is a party that acts in our interests, and whenever it can be used as a lever to force Labour to support particular campaigns. This is not a new idea. During the last Labour government, many lorry drivers in the TGWU contracted out when they campaigned against the introduction of the spy in the cab. In a number of factories, workers contracted out during campaigns against the social contract. The tradition can be built on and broadened into community struggles at a local level. It can be used not only against Labour's attacks or failure to support economic class struggles, but also against Labour opposition to the struggles of national minorities, to the struggles of women, and to the struggles of the people of Ireland and other oppressed nations.

Worker's Notebook

- An organisation calling itself the "Campaign for the Feminine Woman" is doing its bit to increase women's oppression.

"A woman should expect punitive correction from her husband if she is disobedient or non-submissive," says an article in the group's newsletter "Vive la Difference". It goes on: "There is nothing more destructive to a marriage than a wife who knows she can act in any way she likes without fear of punishment."

- "These Days Money Does Grow on Trees" claim the ads encouraging private buyers of national forest lands. The Forestry Commission has been instructed by the government to sell off 10% of its forests to make the Exchequer £82 million by 1986. Despite desperate efforts by conservation charities to save some of the most important ancient woodlands, most of the land is being bought up by City syndicates who can use such an investment to save paying tax. It is estimated they will dodge tax to the tune of £25 million. Not only will our children fail to find money growing on trees, they will fail to find trees at all if the profiteers have their way.

- What ideas was the 'Daily Mirror' reflecting in its report on the Winter Olympics' cross-country? In praising the achievements of "Britain's tough servicemen", the Mirror reported that "Mark Moore the fastest Briton home in 50th place" and "other Britons Andrew Rawlin, Falklands veteran John Spotswood, and Stephen Daghish finished in the top 60 beating many Orientals and Argentinians."

Defend Vinod Chauhan

from a member of the
Defence Campaign

After a delegation to the Home Office on 15 February, Vinod was told that the Minister for Immigration, David Waddington, would make his decision on whether Vinod is to be deported "within a week". That time limit has already passed, and not a word has come out of the Home Office. It is now nearly four months since the deportation order against Vinod Chauhan was signed and over two months since Waddington agreed to take further "representations" on Vinod's behalf and grant a "stay of execution" on the deportation order.

As we reported in "Class Struggle" (No.7.11), Bob Sheldon the local MP, put forward a request for Waddington to see a delegation. Eventually, after long unexplained delays, that delegation took place on Wednesday, 15 February.

Vinod excluded from Delegation

When the Home Office agreed to the delegation, the only reservation they made was a general one about not having too many people. The Defence Campaign decided there should be four people on the delegation - Vinod himself, Paul Weller, the Chairman of the Defence Campaign, Paul Smith, the Mayor of Tameside County Council who back the Campaign, and Bob Sheldon, the MP. Then, just two days before the delegation, Sheldon was informed by Home Office civil servants that Waddington would see only him and the Tameside Mayor. The Campaign decided that Paul Weller and Vinod would go down anyway and turn up at the Home Office. In the end, Sheldon managed to fix it so that Paul

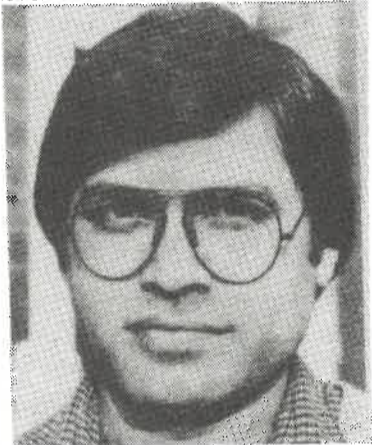
Weller was allowed in, but not Vinod.

So he sat outside while his future was discussed; others had to tell his story for him because he wasn't allowed to tell it himself.

Callous high-handed attitude

This Home Office exclusion of Vinod from the delegation is just the most striking of many examples of its callousness. To give a few other examples:-

* The Home Office has still not informed Vinod or anybody else in writing about the "stay of execution". We first heard of it on a Radio Piccadilly (local Manchester station) broadcast! They had rung up the Home Office and been given a statement over the phone. The only written verification we have is in a letter from Prince Charles' personal secretary to a Campaign member who had written to Prince Charles during the protest Sanctuary Fast in November!



* Many letters were written to the Home Office on Vinod's behalf from all sections of the community during the Fast..

Not a single person has received a reply, not even the usual cursory acknowledgement slip.

* As we said earlier, Vinod has had the menace of a signed deportation order hanging over him for nearly four months. It's taken the Home Office two months to see the delegation. This way of dealing with people as if they were faceless, emotionless lumps of meat is not surprising in the least; but puts people under incredible pressure. It is a cynical and subtle technique to harass national minority people, wear them down, make them give up and "voluntarily" leave England so the State won't have to deport them. But Vinod, like many others, will not be worn down, will not give up or go away. And we're proud of him.

* The latest example of this "casualness" in messing up people's lives is that the Home Office has even let its own deadline go by without a word of explanation, let along apology.

So, after six years fighting the Home Office, Vinod Chauhan will soon get a decision. Vinod's future matters a lot to a lot of people in Tameside, and to many who live elsewhere. But the wider significance of his struggle, as many of his supporters are aware, is that he is just one of the very many national minority people who suffer this particular form of racist oppression. Whatever the outcome of Vinod's campaign the struggle against racist laws and in defence of the oppressed will continue.

Contact the Campaign at:

Vinod Chauhan Defence Campaign,
18 Firs Avenue,
Ash-ton-under-Lyme,
Lancashire.



NEWHAM: RACIST ATTACKS

Contributed.

On Sunday 6th February, the Newham Monitoring Project held its AGM. The project was first formed in 1980 after the brutal racist murder of Ali Akhtar Baig in East Ham.

Space does not permit a full account of the work of the Project, but its report is available from the address below. At present, there are two GLC-funded full-time workers and a team of volunteers manning a 24-hour emergency service 365 days a year. The



● March in support of Newham 8.

Project's basic tasks are to monitor racism and racist attacks in Newham, the response of the police and local authority to such attacks, and to campaign for police accountability to the public of Newham. As well as giving advice and support to individuals, detailed information gathering on Metropolitan police activity in Newham, the Project gets involved in initiating and developing campaigns around individual cases, such as the Newham 8.

NEWHAM 8

Mr Khan, father of one of the Newham 8 defendants, gave a rousing address to the meeting in Urdu, saying that he believed that the 8 would still be in prison today had it not been for the work of the Project.

Unmesh Desai, Project leader, said that talking about "case-work" and "cases" is talking about people, often entire families and their friends whose lives are "sheer agony". He drew attention to those parts of the report which revealed a shocking catalogue of racist violence often causing very serious injury, "everyday" verbal and physical racial abuse and abuse of people's rights of every kind - also acknowledging that this was no more than the tip of a huge iceberg. In Canning Town, where fascist activity is organised, Asian

families cannot even go out shopping for fear of racial attacks.

LUKE FORDJOUR

Mr Luke Fordjour, present at the meeting, lost an eye in a racial attack. The Metropolitan police failed to prosecute his assailants who were identified. A local black woman recounted how her seven year old daughter was hospitalised after being knocked down on a zebra crossing. The white driver was subsequently "cautioned" for "failing to stop after an accident" - and this after much pressure had been put on the police.

Copies of Report available from: Newham Monitoring Project, 285 Romford Road, Forest Gate, London E7 9HJ. Tel: 01-555-8151.

BIRMINGHAM: PAN- AFRICAN SPEAKER

The Home Secretary's action in preventing Kwame Ture from entering Britain, did not prevent the message of the All African Peoples Revolutionary Party from reaching people here. Two other members of their party were sent to carry out the speaking tour, (quite apart from Kwame Ture himself being interviewed on Channel 4's 'Black on Black' via satellite link up!).

BIRMINGHAM MEETING

At a meeting held at the Mohammed Ali Centre in Birmingham, a representative of the All African People's Revolutionary Party spoke at length to an attentive and appreciative audience of about 200 people. Here are a few points from his speech:

He talked firstly of the identity and dignity of African people. He stressed that they were African - whether they lived in England, Africa, the Caribbean, USA or any other part of the world. Their identity is derived from Africa and is not the identity imposed by slavery and imperialism. He did not like the terms Afro-Caribbean, Afro-American, and asserted strongly that "we are not Afro-dash something, we are African."

He described graphically how capitalism and imperialism had been built on the backs of the African people, but also outlined the essentially evil nature of these systems and the way that they oppressed all peoples.

PAN-AFRICANISM

He talked of Pan-Africanism as a form of organisation that can unite African people all over the world, and the aim of that organisation being to fight for the liberation of Africa. This Pan-Africanism is rooted in the traditions of Marcus Garvey and Malcolm

X. A strong, free Africa is the basis on which to raise the position of African people all over the world.

The political and ideological basis of this liberation is scientific socialism - the future of Africa is seen in terms of a federation of nations within a united, socialist Africa.

PRESENT DAY AFRICA

The countries of present day Africa are broadly in three categories - those under white rule, liberated areas such as Mozambique, and those under the control of the national bourgeoisie. The speaker stressed very strongly the need for organisation, and it would appear that their own organisation is on a very high level. He also emphasised that such organisations should be independent African organisations, not dominated by other peoples. However, he saw the need to make alliances with other people oppressed by racism and with revolutionary white people who want to fight the same enemy. These alliances should be on the basis of organisational integrity and independence.

IRELAND

He recognised the struggle of the Irish people as a major struggle against British imperialism. He said that it would not make sense not to ally with them as they were fighting the same enemy. He recognised that there were contradictions between the Irish and African people here and in the USA, but that things are changing.

Whilst he was talking mainly to African people, he recognised the attempts of African and Asian people in Britain to form alliances on the common basis of their being 'black' people in Britain. In relation to Africa, he said that those

people of Asian origin who supported the African revolution were part of that revolution.

To white people, he said that they should fight racism where it is - in the white community.

The All African Peoples Revolutionary Party is based on working people, peasants and farmers, and revolutionary intellectuals. He stressed the importance of gaining knowledge to put at the disposal of the African people, of political education and organisation.

COMRADE BIJUR

It is with great sorrow that we learn of the death of Comrade G.V. Bijur, an outstanding revolutionary.

Having worked in India as an actor and film writer, Bijur came to an understanding of imperialism through his reading. He soon recognised that the way forward for the oppressed people was that indicated by China: breaking with revisionist betrayal and uniting all possible forces against imperialism.

Coming to this country, he worked in a number of low-paid manual jobs and devoted the rest of his time to propagating revolutionary Communism. He was arrested for the crime of selling the works of Chairman Mao Zedong in British imperialism's much-vaunted free-speech area, Speakers' Corner.

He then conceived the idea of a permanent outlet for revolutionary literature. The result was the shop Banner Books in Camden High Street, North London, which Bijur managed for several years. The bitter struggles to keep the shop going were only possible through liv-

ing Mao Zedong's principles of serving the people wholeheartedly without thought of self, in a kind of work which was unglamorous and often thankless.

It is significant that Bijur and his two early associates who were prepared to do this essential work were all national minority people, and he never found a young English person to be his successor as he hoped. In the early years Bijur slept on the floor of the shop between the shelves, and at no time did he pay himself more than pocket money out of the takings.

At that time there were hardly any outlets for Mao Zedong Thought anywhere in the world, and the shop was a supply source and meeting place for revolutionaries from every continent. Irish Republicans in Long Kesh were among the many who ordered stacks of books by post. Third World leaders, passing through London, often dossed down on the floor of Banner Books. Without a doubt, many of the much-thumbed copies of Chairman Mao's philosophical works or military writings which are today guiding the victorious

advance of revolutionaries in Latin America, Africa and elsewhere originated in that shop.

Bijur integrated himself deeply with the multi-national community of the area. An elderly working-class English couple who lived on the same premises were 'Mum' and 'Dad' to him. While struggling to maintain his own shop, Bijur selflessly travelled around to help people start up new shops, among them the late Comrade Jagmohan Joshi, General Secretary of the IWA. While doing the most menial work, Bijur also worked at a political level for the unity of the Marxist-Leninist Movement.

Eventually a disastrous fire, the origins of which are still unclear, forced him to close the shop. Injured in the fire, Bijur was discharged early by the hospital because they could not accommodate the throng of well-wishers besieging his ward. Shortly afterwards he returned to India. We hardly imagined that we would never see him again, but his work generated an example which will always inspire us.

Conference Report

Women's

The recent Conference held by the Revolutionary Communist League marked a step forward in our commitment to the importance of women's struggles against their oppression. The Women's Commission of the RCL had presented a statement to an earlier meeting in preparation for the Conference. Although we still have much work to do, the conference passed resolutions giving priority to this work, both in theory and practical work. The following article is based on the report from the Women's Commission.

Women's oppression cannot be separated from class and national oppression. The origins of women's oppression lie in the development of class society and it has taken different forms through slavery, feudalism, capitalism to imperialism. Today the most bitter oppression is suffered by women of the oppressed nations. Imperialism has intensified their oppression and profits by it to a hideous degree.

On a world scale, women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two thirds of its work hours, receive one tenth of the world's income and own less than one hundredth of the world's property. In a world of slavery, women are the slaves of the slaves.

WOMEN OF OPPRESSED NATIONS

As communists in an imperialist country, we have a responsibility to work in solidarity with women struggling for liberation in the oppressed nations of the Third World. In Eritrea, Afghanistan, Azania, Nicaragua and many other countries, women are playing a full part in the struggle to mobilise women in the fight for their own liberation and that of all their people. In so doing they come face to face with imperialism, particularly the two superpowers, and have to endure bitter suffering and hardships. Nearer to home, in Ireland, nationalist women have taken up the struggle for women's liberation linking it to the struggle for the national freedom of the Irish people from British imperialism. Our responsibility is to give moral and material, unconditional support to such women, in the vanguard of the world-wide struggle against imperialism.

CAPITALISM AND WOMEN

Within this country, women also face exploitation and oppression. Under capitalism, it has been women's role in the family, with the responsibility for reproducing and maintaining the workforce, that has been the basis of women's oppression. On the one hand, capitalism drew women out of the home to work in large-scale production and at the same time, women had a dual role as workers and mothers. Capitalism profits from having a flexible workforce at its disposal and by getting round the need to socialise jobs done by women in the home: child-care, washing, cleaning, cooking etc.

The jobs that women do are linked with their traditional role in the home. In industry, they work in textiles, clothing, food processing. In other industries, like printing or engineering, they are limited to the relatively unskilled and low-paid jobs. At times of war, women have been used to do more skilled work only to be pushed back in peace time. The unions have often reinforced this division of labour in fighting low pay and bad conditions, by demanding a "family wage" and opposing women's right to work, thus reinforcing women's oppression.

Among petit-bourgeois and middle strata women, the jobs they do are generally at the lower end of their profession, for example, doctors, solicitors, teachers etc.

IMPERIALISM

Because Britain is an imperialist country, to some extent the ruling class has conceded reforms bitterly fought for by the working class. But the state has turned these reforms, in the form of the welfare state, against us. This has affected women particularly both because they are employed in large numbers in the service sector - in

hospitals, canteens, local government, children's homes etc and because their role in the family they are the "consumers" of the welfare state. Women are hard hit by cuts in jobs and bear the brunt of extra work - caring for old people, children, sick family members - when services are cut.

In addition, the welfare state through the DHSS defines "the family" in which women are to be dependent on men and not treated as individuals in their own right. This leads to harassment of single mothers, snoopers checking to see whether or not they are co-habiting so they have an excuse to cut off their social security benefits.

Women's unequal position in society is at the root of their oppression. But this inequality is reflected and reinforced in a thousand inter-related aspects of our society, on the political, social and ideological levels. Women have generally been excluded from the traditional political institutions, or at best under-represented in the positions of power - whether Parliament or the trade unions. Advertising and the values of a consumer society encourage the image of women as sexual objects. In the streets and in their homes, women face assault, violence, rape and assault. Within the family, they face oppression and violence. At the root of many attitudes lies the ideas of male superiority and female inferiority, although they take many different forms.

NATIONAL MINORITY WOMEN

But even within this country, it is the women of the national minorities who suffer the most bitter oppression. They share with all oppressed women their oppression as women, and many of them as workers too. But on top of this they suffer national (racist) oppression in all aspects of their life here. Black families are divided; friends and relatives are deported by the Immigration and Nationality laws. They and their families suffer racist attack at home, in the streets and in school. They face forced sterilisation and the use of drugs such as Depo-Provera. The jobs they do are the lowest-paid in the worst conditions and the schools and housing available to them the most run-down. Their way of life, cultures and religion come under attack from the state, its various arms - schools, medical services etc - and from racism in society in general.

WALES AND SCOTLAND

Women in Scotland and Wales also suffer from national oppression. However, the Conference decided to do further study on this question rather than include Wales and Scotland in a resolution which is based on experience in England.

RESISTANCE

National minority women have shown triumphantly that where there is oppression, there is resistance. They have fought back through their communities and organisations and building black women's organisations. Women like Anwar Ditta and Nasira Begum took on the British state and won. Their fight has made them national heroines in their countries of origin, too. In struggles against police brutality and racist attacks, women are playing a leading role. Some of the sharpest industrial struggle in the last few years have been fought by black men and women.

Working class and other white women also have a long tradition of struggle but often outside the traditional political organisations. Thus it is women mainly who have formed the backbone of tenants associations and other housing struggles. Recently women have led the struggles against school closure in Croxteth (Liverpool) and Nechells (Birmingham); against nursery closures around the country and many other areas where they have come into direct conflict with the state. At work too, women have been ready to fight: in the NHS dispute women were in the forefront, and most ready to continue fighting, particularly black women.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Although women have always fought back in different ways, in the 1960's the Women's Liberation Movement grew up consciously promoting separate organisation for women. Different trends came together at this time which we have yet to understand, but one leading factor was the inspiration drawn from the Black Power movement in the US. Black people argued for the need for separate organisation and autonomy on the basis that only black people can lead and determine the fight against racist oppression. Women followed, and raised the question of autonomy and the need for separate organisation for women, too.

Since the 1960's, the women's movement has raised the question of women's oppression in all

aspects of our society. Now the movement does not exist as one organisation but in many different groups working on different aspects of women's oppression. What they all share is a commitment to solidarity with other women in struggle, and this has led to the part played by the women's movement in building links with Irish Republican women and between white women and national minority women, particularly those fighting deportation. As these women have challenged the priorities, and often the racism, of a movement made up of a majority of white, petit-bourgeois women, struggles have broken out as to the direction of the women's movement. This has also been reflected in the anti-nuclear war movement led by women at Greenham Common and the different tendencies within that movement ranging from pacificism to a clear stand with those fighting imperialism, particularly the national liberation movements.

As communists, we should unite with and learn from the women's movement and take a clear stand in support of black and Irish women and the national liberation movements. At the same time we should attempt to broaden the movement, particularly with working class women who often do not see themselves as part of the existing 'Women's Liberation Movement.'

SELF CRITICISM

The recent RCL Conference was a step forward in its commitment on the question of fighting women's oppression but there is still a long way to go. The crucial aspect we have to study and analyse is the inter-relationship between class, national and women's oppression.

It is no accident that the line on women's oppression within a communist organisation usually follows or reflects the stand on the national question, for the movements of national minority people and women are related in real life. Within the RCL, the social chauvinism of its Manifesto of 1977 was accompanied by a crude economist line on the question of women, a

step back from an earlier line which had begun the development of a better understanding. This was a victory for dogmatism and vulgar economism - it had nothing to do with Marxism and dialectics. (The line of the Manifesto and its fore-runners were criticised in an article in October Vol.1.No 2, theoretical journal of the RCL). More recently there has been



REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In the last year, there has been a great upheaval in the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) which has led, in recent months, to the formation of a new group, the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign (WRRRC). The essence of the upheaval was the general feeling that it was necessary to extend the function of the campaign beyond abortion as a single issue for it has to be recognized that it is not the only right that has to be secured and that it cannot be divorced from other connected needs and rights.

The National Abortion Campaign was launched originally to fight for the right to safe, legal, sympathetic abortion whenever it was needed, without any conditions (e.g. permission from two doctors). This line in the campaign made the assumption that all women, whatever their race, class, standard of health or sexual orientation, experienced the same treatment by the medical profession, when in fact this is very far from the truth. Through the years, from information given by many women, it has been realised that Afro-Caribbean and Asian women, Irish women, working class women of any origin, and lesbian women do not experience quite the same difficulty in getting an abortion. The fight for them is over the right to

have children at all. NAC was originally set up by predominantly white, middle class women who fulfilled the dominant British concept of ideal mothers, and therefore experienced a great deal of difficulty in obtaining abortions. The woman who does not measure up to the stereotyped "British mother" has a very different tale to tell. For example, working class women of any race are more likely to be encouraged to the point of pressurisation, to accept sterilisation following childbirth and especially following abortion, as a sort of "payment" to the medical services for so "kindly" getting them out of trouble.

DEPO-PROVERA

Another example is seen in the use of the injectable contraceptive Depo-Provera, banned, or so we're led to believe, in the western world, because of its horrifying record of links with cancer, amongst other things. (It is used as a matter of course in the Third World). From information received from black women in this country, it becomes clear that it is available in this country and administered freely to those who, in the eyes of the medical profession, are unlikely to

argue, and those regarded by them as second class citizens - those who do not quite measure up to the British concept of the "ideal mother."

NAC's policies in the past must have caused several hollow laughs from Asian women who have been subject to Depo-Provera for years and from Afro-Caribbean women who have had no difficulty at all in getting an abortion, the latter case having the double irony that the Afro-Caribbean community is the only one that consistently offers support and help to any of its single pregnant women. These people are more prepared to support and care for a child than many single white (and therefore "approved") mothers, turned out of their family homes in disgrace and receiving no support at all.

So the way ahead for the WRRRC is to fight for the right to abortion and for the right to have children when and how we want them, also for safe, effective contraception, for freedom from sterilisation abuse, for reliable information on all services and freedom from racist and discriminatory practices in all these fields.

The address of the WRRRC is:

London WRRRC,
374, Grays Inn Road,
London WC1.

Liberation

'CARRY GREENHAM HOME'

'Class Struggle' correspondent.

For women, and most thinking men, this is an inspiring film and, as it tells the story of the Greenham Peace Camp since 1981, we sat enthralled at its message and its beauty. The young women film-students who made the film actually lived at the camp for many months and their picture involved us completely in all the joys and woes of their co-peace-campers.

Two threads of commitment run through the film. One - the determination to get rid of Cruise missiles. And, equally important for the women, the knowledge that the camp was about women's power. As one woman says: "We are singing for our lives."

Singing is an integral part of the film. It has become a unifying force. It uplifts the spirits and gives confidence. There is a lovely part-song: "We are Women, We are Strong"; another, sung militantly at the police: "Which side are YOU on?" the happy jazzed-up version of "We Don't Want Cruise". Also a beautiful version of "Reclaim the Night"

and finally you leave Greenham with the theme song "Carry Greenham Home". This is sung as the women dance along with brightly coloured scarves held over their heads - like a rainbow of determination and hope. In this final sequence, the film shows police erecting yet more high wire, as the state tries harder and harder to defend itself against the women's aim to make Greenham an untenable place for Cruise missiles.

BATTLE OF DISRUPTION

The singing, of course, is only a background to the purpose of the camp and all the way through the film the battle of disruption goes on. A battle to expose the danger and futility of Cruise and to protest by every positive non-violent method the women can think up. We see wonderful shots of the women, in the half-light of early morning, dancing on a bunker inside the fence; of them meeting a great phalanx of police as they parade around the fence at night making an eerie whooping noise - something they have perfected very effectively. There are scenes of arrests, of scenes outside Newbury court room, of bailiffs trying to serve eviction notices and of the tremendous fight anyone else can get out, and

noone can get in.

By the end of the hour-long film, you are almost living in it and experiencing the cold, the wet and the harsh conditions that have to be lived through day in, day out.

The film is episodic and here is its weakness. For those who really know the story and purpose of Greenham, it is fine. But it is weak on facts and would have been greatly strengthened by a clearer explanatory commentary. If this had been done, the impact of the film would have better served its purpose of reaching out to the uncommitted and uninformed.

UNITY OF WOMEN

The film, distributed by Contemporary Films, is 16mm and therefore suitable for group showings as well as the commercial cinema. One hopes it will be used widely by all progressive groups. It could be a good focal point for discussion on the whole issue of nuclear disarmament, on the courageous Greenham women and on women's liberation. It needs to be emphasised that this is a film about women's liberation as well as Cruise missiles. The confidence and unity of the women should be an example and inspiration to us all.

GREENHAM WOMEN STAND FIRM

'Class Struggle' correspondent

International Women's Day will find Greenham women strong, united and active on all the gates at the base. They are backed up by peace groups all over southern England who are preparing for the day when the missiles try to leave the base. However the Peace camp also faces its biggest threat yet of physical destruction as the Ministry of Transport press ahead with plans to widen the main gate where it joins the A339. Before Christmas, the Department of Transport, the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office and the Thames Valley Police, met to form a co-ordinated plan to get rid of the women. A brief circulated at that meeting made it clear that the road-widening was not to improve access to the base (which in fact uses other gates for heavy lorries), but to get rid of the women. The record of the women at Greenham suggests that it will need more than bulldozers to silence them.

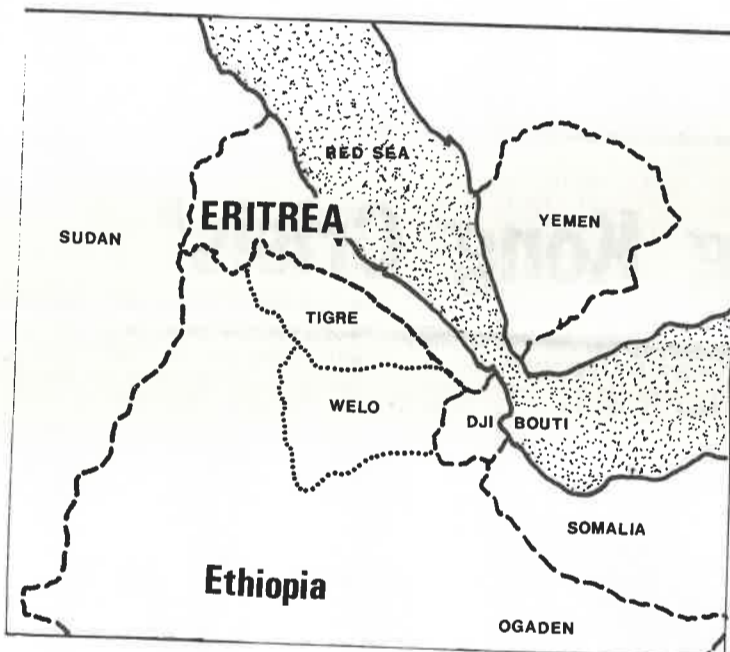
CAMPBELL

The government has been very twitchy over several aspects of the Peace movement this month. They have refused five East European trade unionists entry to the country for a one-day Conference on Peace and Disarmament. They have searched the offices of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, and, more recently, got a search warrant under the Official Secrets Act to ransack the home of journalist Duncan Campbell. They removed several of his files and still hold them.

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Women in Eritrea



ment has been arrested by the oppression and exploitation of colonialism and imperialism, the deplorable social and economic position of women has stagnated, if not worsened."

FEUDAL SYSTEM

The old feudal system, propped up by imperialism, denies women the right to own land or property. Marriages are arranged as a property transaction - with dowry or bride price, and child marriages are common. Divorce is the prerogative of men. Although they work in agricultural production and in the home, women have no voice in the traditional village assemblies and the vast majority are illiterate. Women workers in industry and on the big agricultural estates, receive less than half the pay of men. As the NUEW say: "Because of their economic position, Eritrean women hold an oppressed and down-trodden place in the political, social and cultural life of the society."

TRADITION OF STRUGGLE

The Eritrean people have a long tradition of struggle. In the 1940's women were active in peasant uprisings in western Eritrea. In 1956-58 women workers took part in the wave of strikes and demonstrations that led up to a General Strike in 1958. Women were also active in the student movement in the 1950's.

The oppression of Eritrean women is linked with the oppression of the whole of the Eritrean people by imperialism. Their liberation is an essential part of the national liberation struggle.

The NUEW like to quote Lenin: "The success of a revolution depends on the extent to which women take part in it." This basic lesson is one long-since learned by national liberation movements in the Third World. The struggle of the Eritrean people is just one example of the link between the struggle of the whole people for liberation and the particular struggle for women's liberation. It is the recognition of that vital link that has been one of the main reasons behind the power and strength of the most successful movements in the Third World.

WOMEN'S NOTEBOOK

□ A 'World in Action' programme shown on Monday 6 February, exposed the slave conditions in which Thai girls, some as young as 11, work producing sweaters, women's suits etc. These clothes are exported and are now on sale in Littlewoods and other stores, and Great Universal Stores and other mail order firms. The film showed several different workshops. The conditions in which the girls live and work, range from bad to appalling. In one, they are only allowed four hours sleep a day. In another, the doors are locked on the girls and guards posted outside. The wages in all can only be described as slave wages.

□ "The attitude of the housewife to gainful employment outside the home, is not and should not be the same as that of a single woman. She has other duties. In the next 30 years housewives have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and of British ideals in the world." Beveridge Report, 1942, on which the welfare state was founded.

□ 75% of workers in the National Health Service are women. Only 25% of doctors are women, and only 7% of consultants. These are mainly in obstetrics, gynaecology and paediatrics.

There are two and a half times as many women as men in mental hospitals. One woman in six will be admitted to mental hospital at some stage in her life. Twice as many women as men are given mood-changing drugs.

Cervical cancer kills 2,000 women every year in Britain. Only 2.5 million out of 17 million women are screened every year.

□ Kitchen staff in Hertfordshire schools will be told to accept pay cuts of up to 25% if they want to keep their jobs and stop the meals service from being scrapped. Average pay would drop by £300 a year to £1,050. And the proposals involve abolishing holiday pay, not paying a retainer and a re-negotiation of bonuses. The council claim it would "save £1.5 million a year". What they mean is they could rob the dinner ladies of that money. It also plans to save £140,000 a year by restricting the number of free school meals it gives to poor children. Nutrition, encouraging children to enjoy healthy food, making children feel good for an afternoon's work these things don't feature.

1961 was a turning point for the Eritrean people: this was the year that armed struggle was launched to bring about the national democratic revolution and rid the people of imperialist exploitation and oppression. Since then, the national liberation forces have succeeded in liberating large areas of the countryside, and have only recently recaptured the town of Tesseney, in western Eritrea.

WOMEN'S ROLE

From the beginning, women played a supportive role in the struggle. But their participation in all aspects of the work, including the armed struggle itself, has increased since the emergence of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in 1970, who consciously promoted policies against women's oppression and to mobilise them in the struggle.

In 1979, the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) was set up as the mass organisation of women, and by that year women made up 30% of the liberation army. The national democratic programme put forward by the EPLF includes women's liberation as one of the key goals of the Eritrean revolution.

In the liberated areas, land reform includes women's right to own land and women work in machine shops, electrical workshops and in weapon repair.

In 1978 a progressive Marriage Law was passed to fight feudal customs. In every aspect of the struggle: fighting, medicine, education, health etc, the NUEW is mobilising women against old habits to play an equal part.

HISTORY

Eritrea is a colonial and semi-feudal country made up of eight different nationalities. After 50 years of Italian rule, Eritrea was under British rule from 1943-1952. But in 1952 it was forced into a "federation" with Ethiopia by US imperialism. Since then, Eritrea has been systematically colonised by Ethiopia, which was initially backed by the US and later by the Soviet Union. In 1978 particularly, military intervention by the Soviet Union and Cuba, on the side of Ethiopia, forced the liberation forces into a strategic withdrawal.

IMPERIALISM OPPRESSES WOMEN

The economy of Eritrea was formerly more developed than that of Ethiopia. But in the 1920's and 1930's, land was confiscated and the industrial sector dismantled to benefit Italian colonialism. 80% of the Eritrean people are peasants and live in great poverty. As the NUEW points out: "In the Third World, and especially in Africa, where the process of social and economic develop-

Kampuchea

NEW VICTORIES

The occupation of Siem Reap, a Vietnamese military logistics centre and fall-back position during the rainy season, by the Kampuchean resistance forces on January 27th, marks a new stage in the war against Hanoi's occupying troops.

This operation, and the brief liberation in January of Kompong Thom, some 80 miles north of Phnom Penh, are strong indications of the strength of the resistance. The tri-partite coalition's operations constantly harass Vietnamese forces in all Kampuchea's provinces.

The 30,000-strong National Army of Democratic Kampuchea has born the brunt of the development and consolidation of military offensives that include the re-taking of the mountainous areas of Phnom Malai and Phnom Mak Houen in the western province of Battambang. Both had been partly occupied by enemy troops since the Vietnamese invasion in December 1978.

Resistance initiatives before the expected Vietnamese dry season attacks are designed to forestall penetration into the liberated zones near the Thai border. The destruction of military facilities and supplies at Siem Reap represents a blow for Hanoi's strategy. That the Kampuchean strategy of attrition is sapping Hanoi's ability to sustain military action, can be seen in the delayed dry season offensive. A short but concentrated Vietnamese attack, designed to cause

maximum destruction and secure world headlines to disguise Hanoi's failures, is to be expected.

Hanoi's paymasters cannot be pleased with the situation in Kampuchea. Besides tanks, other weapons and supplies that arrived in November at the Kampuchean port of Kompong Som in preparation for the planned offensive, the Soviet Union has invested over £3,600 millions and sent 7,000 advisers to Vietnam and occupied Laos and Kampuchea in the past five years according to Thailand's National Security Council.

In return they receive naval and air facilities at Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang, the US-built military bases on Vietnam's east coast. The floating dry dock for maintenance and repair of submarines and other vessels has an important role in the expansion of Soviet military capabilities in the Pacific and Indian oceans.

Democratic Kampuchea is in the forefront of the struggle against the threat to regional peace, and the world-wide struggle against hegemonism is strengthened by the Kampuchean forces gaining the initiative.

"Although we have difficulties in our anti-Vietnamese struggle," Vice-President Khieu Samphan reported recently. "The situation is developing in our favour."

SALUTE MAQBOOL BUTT

FREEDOM FIGHTER OF KASHMIR

The country of Kashmir became headline news recently with the killing of an Indian diplomat by an organisation called the Kashmir Liberation Army. The country of Kashmir is at present divided by a "cease-fire line", two-thirds being Indian occupied Kashmir, and the rest Azad Kashmir under the control of Pakistan. Kashmiri organisations in Britain such as the Kashmiri Workers Association (UK) and the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, call for the right of Kashmiri people to self-determination. How Kashmir came to be divided, and the fact that the Kashmiri people have to fight for their national liberation did not occupy much space in the newspapers. Another less "newsworthy" item is the consistent harassment carried on by the police against the Kashmiri community here. Every Kashmiri is automatically suspect and liable to be picked up and interrogated.

MAQBOOL BUTT

In the wake of the killing of the Indian diplomat, the Indian government carried out a death sentence on Maqbool Butt, a Kashmiri freedom fighter. Maqbool Butt had been sentenced to death in 1968 in Indian-held Kashmir on the charge of killing an Indian official. This was a frame-up, and his real crime was to cross from one part of his mother country to another

- from Azad Kashmir to Indian-held Kashmir, and to fight for Kashmir's independence. The carrying out of a 16 year old sentence at the time of the killing of the Indian diplomat was clearly an act of revenge.

Maqbool Butt is a martyr of the struggle for Kashmir's freedom. In a statement issued by the Kashmiri Workers Association (UK), they say: "All members of KWA salute this brave and great shaheed (martyr), son of our mother country."

Over 200 Kashmiri people held a vigil and demonstration in Birmingham on the eve of the killing of Maqbool Butt. A petition was handed in at the Indian consulate, calling on the Indian government not to carry out the sentence.

DEMONSTRATION

The All Parties Kashmir Action Committee UK, consisting of ten Kashmiri organisations in Britain, has called a demonstration in London on Sunday 26th February. In a letter to Mrs Gandhi, the committee spells out its demands:

1. The human basic right of SELF-DETERMINATION to decide the democratic future of our mother land without any

dictation.

2. The withdrawal of all foreign forces to enable the people of Kashmir to exercise their right of self-determination as recognised by the United Nations.

3. We also demand from your government the return of the remains of Maqbool Butt Shaheed to his relatives so that they could be buried in the martyr's own homeland with religious formalities.

4. The release of all political prisoners.

Maqbool Butt is a martyr of Kashmir's independence struggle. When the death sentence was originally passed on him, he said:

"The rope has not yet been made which can squeeze the life from me."

INDEPENDENCE

He is now dead, but as the KWA statement says:

"Maqbool Butt is in fact another name for Kashmir's independence and national liberation struggle and it cannot be throttled by a rope."

Kashmiri people everywhere are angered by the execution of Maqbool Butt and more determined than ever to fight for their country's freedom.

Review

"The Hong Kong Crisis"

The Hongkong Crisis: by Gregor Benton, published by Pluto Press.

This short book attempts to sum up the history of Britain and Xianggang (Hong Kong), outline the attitude of the Chinese government to Xianggang and suggest some solutions to the "Hong Kong Crisis".

The book contains useful information about the history of Britain's seizure of Xianggang and the resistance of the Chinese people. It also brings out the colonial relationship between Britain and Xianggang, effectively exposing the British government's hypocrisy when it talks about "moral responsibilities" towards people in Xianggang.

OPIUM WARS

Xianggang was seized by Britain after the "First Opium War" (1840-42) which came about as a result of Britain forcing the sale of opium on the Chinese people. Hong Kong Island was ceded in the first unequal treaty and became the centre of the opium trade. South Kowloon was ceded in 1860 (after Britain's Lord Elgin had sacked Beijing and burned the Summer Palace). North Kowloon and a large area to the north was ceded on a lease for 99 years in 1898. This last is technically the treaty that runs out in 1997 although no-one denies that the future of Xianggang has to be treated as a whole.

Other important historical events outlined in the book are the general seamen's strikes in Xianggang - for several months in 1922 and for sixteen months from 1925-26. These were part of the great anti-imperialist movement that was sweeping China at the time.

When Japan attacked, Britain "cut and ran," leaving the Chinese people to carry on the War of Resistance against the Japanese. After Japan's surrender, Britain left power in the hands of the Japanese police and sold-

iers until its own troops could reach Xianggang, to avoid Chinese forces taking power.

The book also gives a useful outline of the history of investment in Xianggang since the Second World War and the benefits to Britain. It sketches the lack of democracy and any social welfare system up to some minor reforms under the governor MacLehose.

In the section on "Beijing's Options", the writer correctly points out the relationship between Beijing's policies towards the reintegration of Xianggang with the mainland and on the one hand the Special Economic Zones in neighbouring Guangzhou and with the important task of reintegrating Taiwan into the mainland.

But underlying this useful and up-to-date information there is an incorrect political analysis. The analysis of the Chinese revolution and of events in Xianggang and the promoting of the so-called "democracy movement" in China and Xianggang to the revolutionary hope for the future are part of a Trotskyist view of the world which is presumably shared by many of the sources used by this writer.

The book starts by equating Britain and the People's Republic of China and says, "If the various governments and parties think they have a defensible point of view on it (Hong Kong), let them put it for scrutiny" and ends with the view that "Hongkongers would have no direct voice in the negotiations and no vote on the result".

TROTSKYISM

The book does not consider the People's Republic of China as a socialist country but as a big power cynically manipulating and negotiating about the lives of the people of Xianggang in a similar way to British imperialism. This view stems from the Trotskyist line that

China has not moved to socialism and that the revolution in China was defeated in 1927 with the massacre of workers in Shanghai by Chiang Kai-shek's forces when they turned to the side of imperialism. The nearly sixty years of struggle, change



Police defend Britain's "law and order" in China's territory of Xianggang.

and transformation is nothing in this view, mainly due to the fact that Trotskyism cannot understand the revolutionary nature of peasants, the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people and the main force in the revolution.

Similarly, Trotskyism cannot understand the progressive role played by nationalism in the revolutionary struggle in China, in Xianggang today, or in fact in the vast majority of Third World countries. In a short book of one hundred pages, the emphasis is on the struggle of the workers in Xianggang and on the role of the trade unions. In fact, Xianggang is an extremely complex society. The analysis of this book is that since 1949, and indeed

from earlier, increasingly large sections of people in Xianggang have been alienated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Although the CCP would no doubt be the first to admit mistakes made in their policies in Xianggang, this would be from a different viewpoint.

The book repeats the old myth of Xianggang being a centre for refugees from mainland China who had increased its population from 600,000 at the time of the Japanese surrender to the present five and a half million.

In fact, many people left during the war and returned after because it was their home. There were indeed many refugees but over one half of the population now is under 21. This generation has grown up in Xianggang and has little experience of the mainland as their parents' generation did. Xianggang also became a haven for refugees from S E Asia - Malaya and Thailand, etc. The book does not understand that a large part of society, known there as "patriotic" people supports the policies of the People's Republic in a general way: send their children to "patriotic" schools, work in "patriotic" firms, etc. Even the clothes people wear and the shops they go to mark them out as supporters of the People's Republic. Some of the so-called "squatter areas" in Xianggang organise their own community defence and the colonial police don't dare enter. All this side is dismissed as the people in Xianggang are said to be "apathetic".

The Chinese Communist Party has a policy of united front in Xianggang. Within the united front there exists struggle, but also unity. As such, they try to unite not just with those who are firmly committed to support for socialist China, but make broad alliances with businessmen, intellectuals and others. This kind of alliance is incomprehensible to Trotskyism for whom the class position of many of these people would brand them as reactionary. In fact, the history of the last fifty years teaches us that because imperialism oppres-

ses whole nations, many different class forces can be united for a broad anti-imperialist struggle.

DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

While on the one hand dismissing the achievements of thirty-five years of socialism in China, the book promotes the "democracy movement" in Xianggang as the force capable of giving leadership to the struggle for freedom there and in the long term in China as a whole. After the widespread distortion of political struggle under the period of the gang of four in China, the present period is one of trying to re-establish unity among the people and allowing a deep-going democracy. It seems that in the early stages of this, many young intellectuals went too far and abused this new freedom. Some elements got mixed up with foreigners and sold secrets. Some simply questioned the whole basis of socialism. In Xianggang they are also linked with dissident Red Guards who went there after the end of the Cultural Revolution and are generally dissatisfied with many aspects of socialism in China. Many have lined up with Trotskyist groupings there. To put forward these kind of groups of intellectuals as an alternative is only possible if you write off the whole history of struggle of the Chinese party and people, as indeed Trotskyism does.

There are many other useful facts and figures in the book, and it ends with a selection of documents, some of which contain useful study material. But because of its underlying analysis and assumptions the book cannot in fact come up with any useful solution to the question of Xianggang, which the Chinese Communist Party is the first to say is a complex question. For English communists, though, what is quite straightforward is that "Hongkongers" do not exist: the people of Xianggang are the people of China. Xianggang has always belonged to China, which has a right to recover her sovereign territory which we must uphold.

Sinn Fein Woman Speaks

In September 1983, members of the Troops Out Movement visiting the north of Ireland, met and interviewed Rosie. Rosie is a member of Sinn Fein in Belfast. Below we reprint extracts from the interview concerning the struggle in Ireland, the work of the Sinn Fein women's department and the nature of the Falls Road Women's Centre.

FALLS ROAD WOMEN'S CENTRE

Q: How did the Falls Road Women's Centre come to be set up?

"Three years ago this particular building was vacated that used to be the old Republican Press Centre and women who were involved politically in the area, in community politics, saw a need for a women's centre. A few of them had been involved in Women's Aid and other groupings, but you find that most of these groups are located in mainly loyalist areas. It's not a deliberate thing, it's just that most of the women who were involved were more academic, you know, students from Queen's and that. So most of them were located in that particular area.

"A few of the women, not of any particular political grouping, but women from various groupings who had been working together on women's issues in Belfast, got together and discussed the possibility of opening a women's centre on the Falls Road.

"As expected, it's very successful. It's not really an advice centre as such, it was never really visualised as just an advice centre. We women in the area felt there was a need for women to communicate with each other just on community issues, problems of being a woman, and to help to educate each other.

"The policy here is not so much that we give advice, it's that we talk to people, and if it's a Housing Executive problem you go with the person to the Housing Executive. It's this self thing again, where you're actually giving people back the confidence in themselves instead of just going to an advice centre and somebody says: 'Right, I'll do this' and they get on the phone and solve the problem. Whereas, if the person does it themselves they learn from it and that knowledge then they can give to somebody else.

"So, the result is this sharing thing and reaching out to other people. Sometimes it can be difficult working at an advice centre when you get somebody in who hasn't been well educated and who's totally lacking on confidence, so it takes maybe a wee bit of sitting down and talking to them, and once they get over the first hurdle the rest is easy enough and you find that those women go back into the area and they give out the advice that they just received, so it benefits them that way.

"The other thing is the meeting of the women involved in the different political groupings, it gives you a chance to discuss party politics, basic women's issues."

Q: What groups are involved?

"Well, you've Women Against Imperialism, Sinn Fein women, tenants associations, community associations; there's so many different groupings within the area, street committees. Some streets have their own committee and they would be involved and just ordinary non-aligned women who see a place for themselves even if they aren't involved



politically but feel that they have something to offer, even if it's just on a domestic level.

"It's going quite successfully. The thing is we feel the need for more, you know, the one is just not sufficient to deal with all the problems. We feel that every area should have a women's centre. It's just there if you feel like going in, having a cup of tea, sit and read a book, just to get the pressure off."

Q: What other issues is the women's centre involved with?

"Well, we're very much involved in the housing issue, for natural reasons - women are 99 percent of their time in the home, so it's mostly their problem. We have a lot of prisoners' wives who come in for advice. They have the problems of being a single parent for a particular time and they also have the added problem of having a partner in jail. They need a lot of help, a lot of support more than anything. Just the fact that somebody cares is sometimes all that you need."

THE WOMENS CENTRE AND SINN FEIN ADVICE CENTRES

Q: How do you see the Sinn Fein advice centres in relation to the women's centres?

"Well, I think only women can deal with women's problems and only a woman knows what the oppression of her sex is.

"If a woman goes into an advice centre on a particular issue, it might be necessary for her to speak to a woman. I mean, housing most people could deal with. A battered wife wouldn't want to speak to a man about it."

Q: What are the relations like between the women's centre and the advice centre?

"There's a good liaison between the centres; there's good to-ing and fro-ing. You find that we would get referrals from the advice centres and vice-versa. Sometimes maybe if a woman working in the women's centre is stuck on a housing project, she'll get in touch with one of the advice centres who are maybe more knowledgeable on that particular issue and vice-versa.

"I mean it has to work that way. It has to be total co-operation. Otherwise, it's contradictory to why the things were set up.

They're set up to help people, to broaden people, to broaden their intellect, and if there's any sort of barriers at all, that wouldn't help."

Q: Is the women's centre run by Sinn Fein or is it independent?

"It's a completely independent body. It has to be. If you were run by a particular political party it would only serve to alienate somebody, and that's not what the women's centre is about - it's there for the opposite reason. It's there to bring all women together on the very fact that they are women. It's best that way.

"It also gives the women of different political groupings, and non-aligned women, the chance to get together and discuss women's issues, which is a new thing in Ireland, too.

"You find that most of the women in the areas are very politically aware. When it comes to women's issues they're maybe not so much, because it's not a priority, given that there's a struggle going on in the country."

Q: Does the women's centre, and women in the movement mainly involve younger women or a good spread?

"I think we get a good spread. Besides the age difference, you also find the whole academic thing where you have maybe teachers and students, women who left school when they were fourteen and went straight into the linen mills, and you have them all sitting together and discussing political issues, community issues; there doesn't seem to be a lot of division. I think we have here what the women's movement abroad have been striving to achieve. Well, whether they've been striving to achieve it or not, I'm not really sure. I feel that's what they should have been striving to achieve - that women no matter from what walks of life, from no matter what clans or creed, that they can get together just as women, because it's the only way that women are going to achieve anything."

Q: Have attitudes been changing very much within the movement and in wider society in these areas over the last few years?

"Well, within the movement, I don't know so much about attitudes changing, but people who previously didn't ask questions have started to ask. The feminist issue has become less of a joke. I think we've got over that stage and people are starting to enquire and become inquisitive, which is good. It's the first step to accepting the whole thing."

Q: In society?

"I don't really think there's been that much change. There's a lot of talk, but when you really get down to it, as a woman there's not really been that much change."

Q: What kinds of issues have been successfully brought forward within the movement, what issues do you feel have been pushed back?

"Well, we sat down about two years ago and formulated a policy document. Now, given that this was the first time that we had got together, it's not finished, it's just the beginning. We kept it very basic. For obvious reasons, we felt it was better at that stage to ask for little and at least get something, rather than ask for a whole lot and get nothing.

"Most of the issues that would affect women - creches, day centres, after-school facilities, facilities for battered women, battered children, contraception, abortion - were all touched on, but we didn't go into them in great depth. Since then there has been a lot more discussion on the issues. The discussion itself is more widespread than just us. I think it's better to take things slowly. If you go at people very dogmatically the first thing they do is get the hump up and completely ignore the issue. Whereas, if you have a lot of discussion and a lot of explaining and make it a choice for people, it's much easier."

Q: What comment would you have on the question of abortion and the feelings of the women here towards the women's movement in Britain?

"Sinn Fein policy is that it is totally opposed to abortion, and having said that they're also opposed to the elements in society that make it necessary for a woman to have an abortion. Having said that, I don't think there's been enough discussion on the issue.

Q: Can you comment on the women in Armagh? Do they have a special significance for the women in the movement or are they just seen as any other Republican prisoners?

"They're no dividing lines at all. If anything, the women in Armagh have a very sound relationship with the men in H-Block.

"Through the Hunger Strike, Bobby Sands was in liaison with some of the women in Armagh. Everything is very structured. It's not a case of one arm not knowing what the other arm is doing.

"Support-wise, I would think it would be total support. They wouldn't support one without supporting the other. It comes as a surprise to me you asking that question. The questions you get do surprise you when you live here because we never think along those lines. That's not to say that at different times there isn't

more emphasis put on the Blocks or put on Armagh. When the Hunger Strikes were taking place it was the Blocks because that was where that particular crisis was taking place.

"I think it's your whole thing of priorities again, even given the women's issues.

"We get women coming over here from mainland Britain who only actually serve to alienate women because of the very superior attitude they brought over with them - we believe in this so you should believe in it, and this is a priority for us, why isn't it a priority for you?"

"I have women coming over here, I don't know what they expect, but they always say they're totally taken and that women are so aware here. They expect you not to be because you don't know about contraception or abortion, but we know as much as they know, it's just not a priority."

This interview has been cut for reasons of space. If you would like a copy of the full text of the interview we can supply it. Please send the cost of photocopying.

Further interviews will be published in 'Troops Out' paper, £4 annual subscription from Box 10, 2a St Pauls Rd, London N1.

(Cont. from p.8.)

units. Although the British government denies the existence of these methods, they are a fact. Wakefield's F Wing is an example. All this goes on behind a literal wall of secrecy and press silence, going under the prison services Rule 43, "good order and discipline" (GOD), under which no appeal can be made as it is not considered to be a punishment. The Home Office prefers to mystify these methods under the general title of "cellular confinement".

RELEASE OF PATRICK HACKETT ON MEDICAL GROUNDS

Members of the press were informed of the serious medical deterioration of Patrick Hackett, a Republican who was imprisoned following a premature explosion whilst on active service in England. He lost an arm, a leg and an eye. Patrick has been denied proper medical attention and has been subjected to continual harassment during his eight years in prison. He has been on the blanket but has recently been moved to the hospital wing. The campaign demands his release on medical grounds as a matter of great urgency if he is to get the proper medical treatment before it is too late.

ABOLITION OF P.T.A.

The speakers explained that central to this campaign would be a demand for the abolition of the recently revamped Prevention of Terrorism Act which is clearly devised by the British state as a weapon to harass, imprison and intimidate the Irish community. This is demonstrated by the fact that of 5,683 people persecuted by this legalised method of harassment, only 1.7% were actually found guilty of an offence under the PTA.

When questioned by press representatives as to who would be drawn into the campaign, Gerry MacLochlain replied that all support would be welcome, and the campaign committee intends to find a role for all supporters. He also saw this as linking up with mass opposition to the Police Bill. The role of the prisoners themselves will continue to be an active one but the responsibility must lie with those outside of prison to give maximum support to this campaign.

When asked what would be the campaign's reaction to the British government's banning marches and demonstrations, Alex Maskey pointed out that this could lead to more rather than fewer supporters.

FREEDOM FOR IRELAND

SINN FEIN LAUNCHES IRISH P.O.W. CAMPAIGN

A Sinn Fein press conference was called on Wednesday 8th February, at Conway Hall, to launch the Irish Republican Prisoner of War Campaign. Alex Maskey, Sinn Fein councillor for West Belfast, addressed the conference together with Gerry MacLochlain (recently released from Maidstone Prison) and other members of Sinn Fein in Britain. The campaign will put forward five demands on behalf of the 41 Republican prisoners and 13 innocent victims of four show trials held in the mid-seventies:

1. The right of Irish Political Prisoners to serve their sentences in northern Irish gaols, if they so request.
2. The release of those prisoners framed by the British state.
3. An end to solitary confinement and special control units.
4. The release of Patrick Hackett on medical grounds.
5. The abolition of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Alex Maskey and Gerry MacLochlain explained in detail the background and circumstances surrounding these five demands, and answered questions from members of the press regarding the organisation and publicity for the campaign.

TRANSFER OF POW'S TO NORTHERN IRISH GAOLS

Gerry MacLochlain pointed to the hypocrisy of the British state which has allowed English

soldiers convicted of criminal offences in Ireland to be returned to serve their sentences in England, whilst denying a reciprocal arrangement for Irish prisoners of war here. It was for this very demand that Frank Stagg died on hunger strike in Wakefield gaol in February 1976. If for no other reason, transfer of Irish prisoners of war to Ireland will be a great boon to relatives who have to travel many miles, only to be subjected to the frustration and disappointment of



finding their men have been moved to another prison. RELEASE OF FRAMED PRISONERS

The speakers reminded the conference of the existence of 13 wrongly convicted Irishmen and Irishwomen who are serving sentences from 12 years to life in British gaols. The campaign wants to draw attention to the fact that these prisoners are held as hostages by the British state. They include the Birmingham 6 and the Guildford 4.

END SOLITARY CONFINEMENT AND SPECIAL CONTROL UNITS

Gerry MacLochlain named the prisoners of war who are scattered throughout British gaols and undergoing continual physical punishments and psychological tortures designed to break their will. Most devastating are the special control units, which use sensory deprivation methods and are an extreme form of solitary confinement, quite unlike the usual segregation

(Cont. on p.7.)



Remember Frank Stagg!

On 12 February 1976, Frank Stagg died in Wakefield Prison. He was 27 years old, an Irishman who lived in Coventry and worked as a bus driver.

He was arrested in 1973 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for conspiracy. He insisted he was a political prisoner, refused strip-searches and was tortured. After two earlier hunger strikes which lasted for a total of one hundred days, he began a third hunger strike against criminalisation and for repatriation to an Irish jail.

Frank Stagg died 60 days later. In this country little interest was shown in his death or the reasons for it and little attention has been given to the annual commemoration of his death.

This year over one hundred people representing Sinn Fein and various sections of the solidarity movement, attended a dignified and spirited picket outside Wakefield Prison to remember Frank Stagg and in support of Irish political prisoners. We marched by the prison walls for about one hour chanting the names of Irish prisoners and slogans supporting the struggle in the north of Ireland, for Troops Out of Ireland, and for Political Status for Irish prisoners of war.

At the rally facing the main gate to the prison, the names of the long list of Irish



political prisoners in English jails were proclaimed in turn by their nationalist comrades from Sinn Fein, followed by the loud refrain: "We Support You". A wreath for Frank Stagg was laid at the main entrance.

In the words of the Sinn Fein speaker: "Frank Stagg was a Republican first and foremost. No British propaganda machine will ever make Frank a criminal." "The men and women who have died for their beliefs give us the strength to carry on."

Frank Stagg's last message was: "We are a risen people. This time we will not be driven into the gutter, even if this should mean dying for justice!"

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LETTERS FROM PRISONER ON REMAND

Below we reprint extracts from two recent letters written by Jimmy Brown, who is presently on remand in Crumlin Road Prison Belfast. Jimmy Brown is being held on the word of a paid perjurer. In the first letter

written in January he exposes the use of so-called supergrass and the nature of the show trials. In the second, he talks about an imminent hunger-strike by prisoners on remand.

The "myth" as created by the media that English law as practised in an English court is the SAME as in an English court on Irish soil. One glaring example of the differences can be seen if we come to examine the remarks of a former English police chief, Sir David McNea, who is quoted as saying: "I don't think here (England) that we would put a man before the court on the evidence of a supergrass ALONE. The DPP (England) would have to be satisfied that there was OTHER EVIDENCE THAT WOULD SUPPORT THE CASE." Here they have sentenced me to "life" in prison on UNCORROBORATED EVIDENCE. When one hears Maggie Thatcher tell the nation: "1984 will be a year of hope and liberty", and then considers the position that I and others are now in, the question "For who will the hope and liberty be in 1984?" arises. This is now the third time that I have been charged solely on the evidence of a police perjurer. At no time has there been any CORROBORATING EVIDENCE in these cases. My position is by no means unique. Three of the others with me here have now been on CONTINUOUS REMAND for almost two years (Feb.82). They have had FIVE SUCCESSIVE INFORMERS against them and far from being an indication of some guilt, it demonstrates the lengths to which the government and RUC will go. Of the five touts, three later withdrew their allegations, saying they were UNTRUE: a fourth, Jackie Grimley, was branded a "pathological liar" and the case against them thrown out. Yet they now face trial on the word of their FIFTH (!) informer, Harry Kirkpatrick. It is at a time like this that Kitson becomes a striking reality as THIS quote demonstrates: "The law should be used as just another weapon in the government's arsenal. In this case it becomes little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public. For this to happen efficiently, the activities of the LEGAL SERVICES have to be tied into the WAR EFFORT in as discreet a way as possible." Welcome to 1984!

Hunger Strike Imminent

I don't know if you read the 'Guardian' regularly, however on Monday 30/1/84, an article carried stated that a Hunger Strike is due to begin soon in the jail. My information confirms that this is indeed the case. At present it is unclear as to exactly "how many?". The names of several men are known here already. ALL are held on the sole UNCORROBORATED evidence of these super-grasses or paid perjurers as they have become widely known here. As you can imagine, there is a lot of discussion round the issue.One immediate reaction on the part of a few has been to draw wholesale comparisons between the Hunger Strike now proposed and those in the Blocks during 1980 and 1981. They are, of course, fundamentally different. The Hunger Strike in the Blocks presented a DIRECT CHALLENGE to the British government over the issue of political status. De facto it became a battle over HOW the

struggle in Ireland was to be perceived. As we know, ten men died in jail, dozens on the streets and in the NEXT general election over one hundred thousand people voted against the British presence in Ireland with the result of consolidating a whole NEW generation, who may otherwise have been lost to the imperialist-controlled dream machine of pop music, fashion and Boy George. The British claimed a victory and certainly the death of ten men has scarred the Republican collective consciousness for the rest of time. It was in all probability the single most cataclysmic event since 1916 though with the mass media and the advent of high communications technology, it is questionable as to which event had the most immediate effect.

However, if one looks at THIS proposed Hunger Strike, it is clearly visible in the distinct differences that exist that NO WHOLESALE COMPARISON IS POSSIBLE. Certainly when support was canvassed in America for the Hunger Strike proposed by men held on the uncorroborated evidence of convicted murderers whose only motive for giving such TESTIMONY is the fact that they were promised early release in England by the RUC here, the feeling in the US was one of widespread sympathy. The major and fundamental difference here is the fact that (a) the men in question are innocent (i.e. as yet untried), (b) the method of TRIAL here is like nothing else used in England, Scotland or Wales, (c) that in England the DPP does not permit CHARGES to even be put UNLESS there is CORROBORATING EVIDENCE (d) These men are NOT CHALLENGING the government. They are merely exposing that contradiction in English law which applies one set of standards in England and yet another in northern Ireland. So as you can see, even at a glance, no real comparison can be made.

There is no question here of convicted prisoners attempting to DICTATE anything; therefore British propaganda claims on that issue are doomed to fail. A close PUBLIC examination (such as that done by Lord Gifford) of the way in which cases are conducted here, compared with those in England, is ENOUGH to prove to the public that OURS IS A PROTEST AGAINST INJUSTICE NOT AN ATTEMPT TO SUBVERT IT. In England all trials MUST have a JURY (here none exist). The judge must warn the jury of the dangers of convicting on UNCORROBORATED EVIDENCE (here he warns himself). In England the DPP refuses to prosecute UNLESS there is CORROBORATING evidence (here a judge sitting alone CONVICTS on NOTHING but the word of a man who benefits both materially and financially from his evidence). Most of this may be known to you. But how much of it is known, really understood, by others. As you are well aware, a major problem we face is censorship in the media. In fact, I have no guarantee that you will even get this letter. In our attempt to attract support for our case, we have considered many options. We have sought to inform people as to what is happening. As part of that continuing process, we need to reach M.P.'s, lawyers, academics, liberals, radicals, revolutionary socialists, Daily Mirror readers, all! What is happening HERE is being done in the name of England and English justice!

The probable outcome of THIS HUNGER STRIKE is that one of us WILL have to DIE at least in order to prove to the world that all we seek here is justice. Our demands are simple:

1. The introduction of a ruling requiring the clear presence of corroboration before a guilty verdict can be returned in a Diplock no-jury court.
2. A public disclosure of ALL DEALS done between government representatives, the RUC and those convicted murderers who who have been promised early release in return for this evidence.
3. An inquiry into RUC handling of the "supergrass" cases.