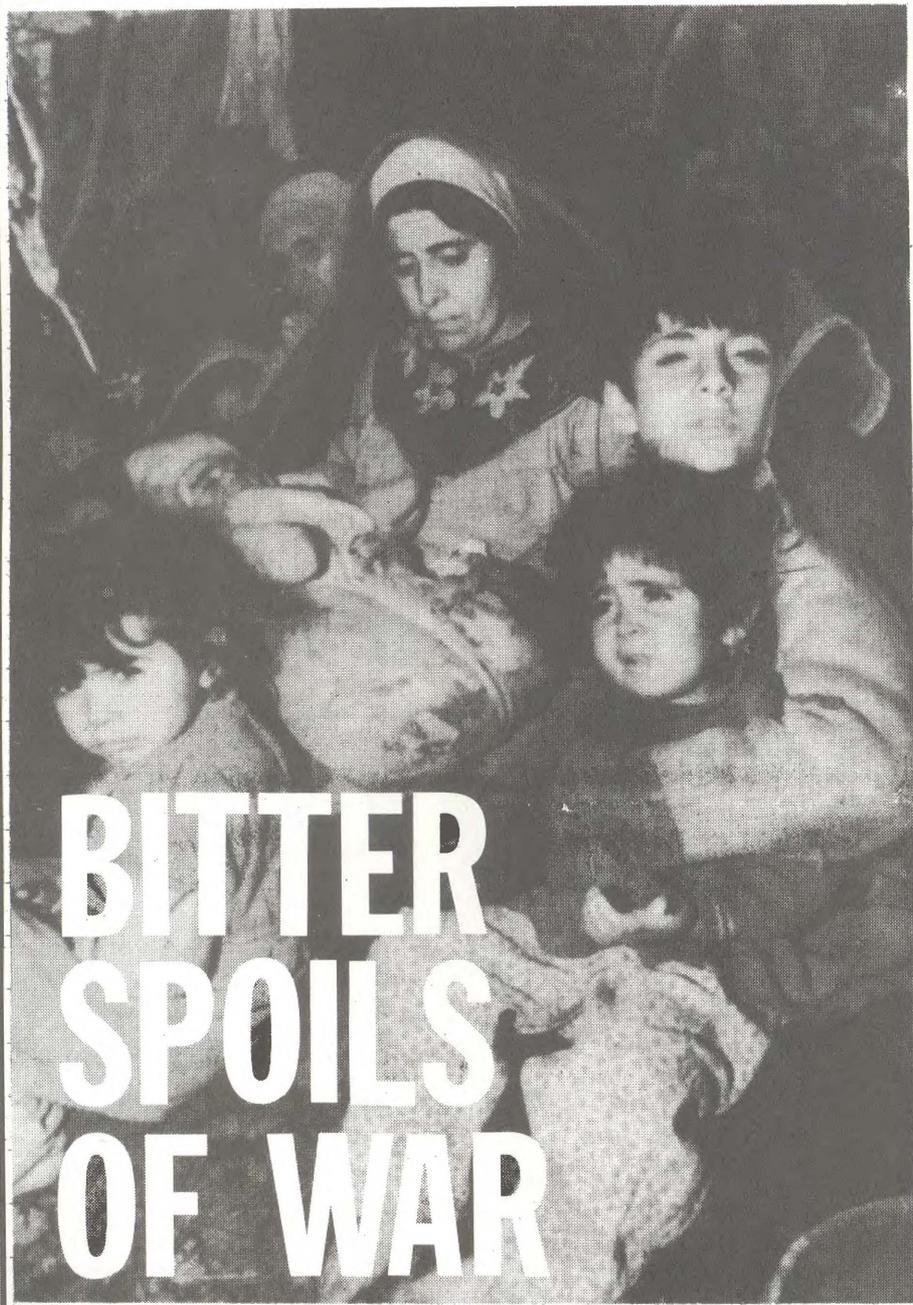


# CLASS STRUGGLE

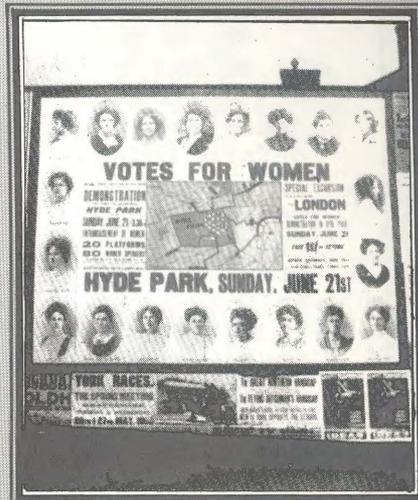
VOL.15 NO.4 MAY 1991

30P



CALAMITY ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE

## Kurds pay price for West's adventure



WOMEN'S STRENGTH  
WOMEN'S STRUGGLE  
—CENTRE PAGES

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# CLASS STRUGGLE

To mark May Day 1991, the 'Communist Party of Great Britain' has published a new draft constitution, announced to the press before it has been adopted by its members. The executive of this organisation has voted to: "adopt aims and values that drop Marxism-Leninism and embrace a politics drawing from creative marxism, feminism, anti-racism, ecology and other progressive traditions...." The executive recognises that: "the era of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 is at an end....."

We should welcome these developments. They leave the name of "communism" free to be reclaimed by those who stand by its basic values, aims and methods.

The new draft constitution contains no international analysis, does not mention imperialism, the Third World or even socialism. While mentioning feminism, anti-racism and ecology, the introduction fails to mention the working class and specifically rejects "the anti-democratic and outdated experiences and forms of Leninism...."

May Day has long been celebrated by communists as a day to celebrate the struggles of the working class, and in particular internationalism.

Since the early part of this century, as Lenin pointed out, with the development of capitalism into imperialism, it is vital for communists to support the struggles of the peoples of the oppressed nations. Mao continued this tradition, showing that the struggles of peoples of the Third World, particularly national liberation struggles, were the main force fighting imperialism in this era.

In the world of the 1990's, these basic principles are still true. The present system has brought war, hunger and starvation to millions of people in the Third World.

On May Day 1991, communists should say clearly that they fight against all forms of oppression and exploitation. That our main enemy is the system of imperialism and we have to unite the struggles of the working class with those of the oppressed peoples of the world.

We must support and develop the feminist, anti-racist and ecology movements. But to take up these struggles while dropping a proletarian stand and without an analysis of imperialism, is to lose all sense of direction.

## POLITICAL PAPER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST LEAGUE

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# 2 years for a life

"There is racism on other estates. Yes, I agree. But on Thamesmead, people really do live in fear of their lives." These comments were made in the newspaper, 'The Voice' recently, by Dev Barrah, of South London's Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks (GACARA). He was referring to the fact that there had been twelve attacks on black people on the estate in February of this year alone and he believed the violence would soon be out of control.

A clear indication of the state of affairs at Thamesmead was the murder of Rolan Adams, a fifteen year old schoolboy. The attack on him and his fourteen year old brother, Nathan, in which Rolan was fatally slashed in the neck, was no single one-off event. Of the eight youths charged in connection with the attack (four of whom were juveniles and were released on bail) some still have charges outstanding for attacking another black youth in the area just three months earlier.

In the past three years, GACARA has recorded nearly 500 cases of racial harassment in the area. They also say that crimes have gone up 20% in the last year since the British National Party set up its headquarters locally.

Following the attack, Nathan received two threatening telephone calls while he was in hospital. Someone said to him that if he gave evidence, he too would be killed.

But when his father called the police station for some protection for his son, Richard Adam found that the officer merely laughed and put down the phone. Later a police hospital guard was established but only four hours after hospital officials had telephoned for help.

Since the murder, the police have drafted in around eighty extra officers to the area. But as Dev Barrah noted: "Whenever incidents like this happen, police end up harassing black people instead of protecting them." He went on to comment: "Top level and community liaison officers have been sensitive. They have been liaising with the black community and ready to listen to us at GACARA. The problem is with some of the

officers on the streets, who seem to have National Front like attitudes."

## Typical

What has been going on at Thamesmead is not unique to that estate. It is only too common in many parts of Britain. In fact, many would question whether such attacks necessarily stem from fascist organisations such as BNP alone, or whether they are not rather one symptom of the depth of racism that exists in our society.

Further comments made to 'The Voice', confirm that Thamesmead estate is not alone. For example, a spokeswoman for the estate owners claimed that the attacks were not out of the ordinary: "I don't believe that the problems we have on



Owen Benjamin, uncle of Rolan Adams, at the scene of his murder. Photo: The Voice.

the Thamesmead Estate are any worse than on any other inner London estates." Even the Chief Superintendent community officer for Greenwich commented: "Although Thamesmead does have a problem, it is not unusual in the inner city estates."

Nor are such attacks confined to London. From Sheffield comes a story of two white men brought to trial following the death of a 66 year old Yemeni in September 1989.

Musa Mohammed Saleh died at home from a heart attack two hours after being subjected to an attack on a bus. He was among a group of passengers travelling to Rotherham from Sheffield, who were terrorised for nearly half an hour by two drunken thugs. They first taunted two nurses and then went on to punch and headbutt Mr Saleh.

## Two Years for a Life

At the trial, manslaughter charges were dropped. The men pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of affray. They were told by the judge: "You indulged yourself in humiliating this man or that for your own entertainment... This was blatant racism and calls for a deterrent sentence. You will serve a total of two years' imprisonment."

Racist attacks throughout Britain are on the increase. Black people who turn to the police for help, find themselves under suspicion. The courts rarely take racist attacks seriously and yet, if black people resort to self defence, they receive heavy sentences.

Racist attacks and other incidents are often only monitored by local campaigns and groups. The government does not take such issues seriously. A new publication which reports on incidents such as these and other aspects of racism and fascism in Britain is the paper of CARF - Campaign Against Racism and Fascism. CARF urgently needs subscriptions and donations to ensure its continued publication. You can pay £5 for an annual subscription or more if you can afford to support CARF's work. Contact CARF at Box 8784, London WC1N 3XX.

# VICTORY FOR 2- BUT THE FIGHT

Two black women in the Midlands recently won victories against deportation and the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign celebrated with a social on 13th April.

## Sonia Malhi

Sonia Malhi, a 24 year old Punjabi woman living in Tamworth, had won a long and difficult battle. Sonia married a British resident in Southall, Middlesex, in 1986 but because of the violence of her husband and the cruelty of his family, the marriage broke down. Sonia tried to kill herself and eventually escaped to live with her sister's family in Tamworth.

Under the racist immigration laws, the breakdown of a marriage automatically removes a person's right to stay in the UK as a wife or a husband at any time until the grant of "indefinite leave", which may take several years.

When she went to live with her sister, Sonia had no choice but to apply for leave to remain "outside the rules". The Home Secretary has complete discretion to permit a person to stay in such circumstances, and his main consideration is compassionate grounds. It is hard to see clearer compassionate grounds than in the situation of a woman whose marriage has broken down through violence and whose despair has driven her to attempt suicide. In Sonia's case also, her mother and father have both died since she left India, leaving her with no-one to return to.

But the Home Secretary managed to ignore all these things and refused Sonia's application.

Sonia's case was one of the first under the 1988 Act and so there ensued a legal battle to challenge the effect of the change in the law. The case was considered by the High Court, the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords. But in the end, the government won. The legal machinations brought Sonia some publicity, but mainly gave her time.

## Public Campaigning

In that time, the West Midlands Campaign took up Sonia's case and prepared for the political onslaught. Leafletting and lobbying commenced and Sonia's sister and family were drawn into the campaign. The key decision was to hold a public meeting in Tamworth in October 1990. Tamworth is a small



Staffordshire town, about fifteen miles from Birmingham, it has a very small and scattered black population. It is also a highly marginal parliamentary seat, with a Tory MP but a Labour council.

The public meeting was organised with the help of a few Tamworth supporters. An intensive publicity campaign took place, with press releases and telephone calls to local and national media. In the event, there was little national publicity but the local publicity made up for that. On the day of the meeting, Sonia told her story on the prime time local television news, and all the local radio stations and newspapers carried her story. In Tamworth itself the coverage was electric. Sonia had the front page of the Tamworth Herald together with an editorial supporting her right to stay and encouraging the people of Tamworth to attend the meeting.

After the meeting local Labour councillors put a motion to the whole council and the Labour and Tory councillors voted unanimously to support Sonia and to write to the Home Secretary on her behalf.

The Home Office were not unmoved by the pressure. They acted by sending three Immigration Officers to Sonia's home on a Saturday night to serve a deportation order on her. They had the decency not to arrest her, but managed to scare the life out of her and her family.

One other factor remained to complete the scenario. The local Tory MP, David Lightbown, is little known outside the House of Commons, but is a Government Whip and

extremely influential within the corridors of power of Tory Central Office. His knowledge of immigration law is minimal, and, with an overwhelmingly white constituency, he seemed to see his role as nursing the racist vote with suitably Powellite attitudes. Sonia had been to see him for help long before starting her campaign, and his response had been to suggest, politely but firmly, that she go back to India.

Now Lightbown faced an upheaval in his own backyard. The only local paper, widely read in the area, was supporting Sonia's right to stay. The local Conservative councillors were voting to petition the Home Secretary on her behalf. When first approached by the paper, Lightbown clung to his previous position.

The West Midlands Campaign decided to provide a lifeline to the drowning Lightbown. Local supporters made an appointment to meet him in his constituency surgery. A long discussion took place, with the campaign's most diplomatic spokesperson explaining Sonia's case. Mr Lightbown was keen to help. He promised to speak to the Minister of State, he asked the campaign to provide him with some medical evidence. A psychiatrist's report confirming the devastating effects of deportation on Sonia's health was provided.

Mr Lightbown put the case to the Minister of State and within days Sonia's ordeal was over. The Home Office informed her solicitor that "in the exceptional circumstances", she would be allowed to stay.

# GOES ON

The case of Dharmowtee (Sheila) Surju was, by contrast, short and sharp. Dharmowtee is a Mauritian woman who married Hariprasad Surju in Mauritius while he was on a short holiday there. Hari is of Mauritian origin, but a British citizen who has lived and worked as a psychiatric nurse in England for many years.

Since he only had a short leave of absence from work, Hari wanted to obtain entry clearance for his wife as quickly as possible to bring her back to the UK with him. They went together to be interviewed at the High Commission in Port Louis. To their confusion, the Entry Clearance Officer did not give Dharmowtee a visa but merely stamped her passport "Entry Clearance applied for".

When Hari and Dharmowtee arrived at Heathrow, even though visas are not required for visitors from Mauritius, the Immigration Officers said Dharmowtee needed a visa to enter as a wife. They would only give her 'temporary admission' - a short period of residence during which, in legal terms, the person is not really in the UK at all!

Hari and Dharmowtee came to the West Midlands Campaign straight away. First of all, Dharmowtee's admission had to be extended because she was not well. Then she found out that her application as a wife in Mauritius had actually been refused. The Entry Clearance Officer had made the false claim that she had said she would not have married Hari if he had not been a British resident. An appeal was lodged and Dharmowtee sought permission to remain until the appeal could be heard.

No official permission was ever given to Dharmowtee to stay on. At one stage, Immigration Officers were telephoning every day to ask when she was leaving. But the campaign publicised her case through leaflets and petitions, and the local MP, Clare Short, made representations to the Home Office. The Immigration Officers cooled their heels.

While this was going on, Dharmowtee found out that she was pregnant. Her child would, of course, be British, through the father. The Immigration authorities could not remove her while she was pregnant. Still she remained under the fear and pressure that she could at any time be

separated from her husband and sent back to Mauritius.

The child, a boy Junaid, was born in February, in a Birmingham hospital. A television crew had already arranged to record the event for a later programme. The Home Office were in a dilemma. They could not deport Junaid, who is a British citizen. If they removed Dharmowtee, they would be forcibly separating a child from his mother. Reluctantly, they informed her solicitor that Dharmowtee Surju would be allowed to stay.



## The Fight Goes On

These are two significant victories for black people, especially black women, and for the West Midlands campaign. But there is no room for euphoria or complacency. For every person saved, there are numerous others deported.

In particular, we are now fighting for two other women facing the deportation threat. Prakashwatee Charnimootoo is, like Dharmowtee, a Mauritian, and, like Sonia, the victim of a broken marriage and domestic violence. Her case involves the notorious "12 month rule". What happens is that a wife or husband of a British resident applies for leave to enter or leave to remain. If this is granted, 12 months is the initial period. At the end of the 12 months, they must apply for permanent stay. But if the marriage breaks down and the parties are not living

together by the end of the 12 months, or if the husband or wife will not support the application, permanent stay is refused.

In the case of domestic violence, a wife who is applying for leave is faced with the intolerable choice of enduring brutality or abandoning her application and risking deportation. Prakash was given 12 months leave when she came in with her husband in 1989. He is a British resident. Prakash was accompanied by her six year old son from a previous marriage, Preamsingh. The couple were living in London but after a short time, Prakash's husband began to subject her to physical violence and even endangered her son. She knew few people in London, although she has a brother in Birmingham. She did not dare contact the police or social services directly, but eventually made contact with the assistance of her son's headmaster. On the advice of her doctor and the social services, she left her husband and went to stay with her brother.

After some time she summoned her strength to become independent. She started work as a care assistant with the social services and obtained a rented house for herself and her son.

The campaign for Prakash and Prem continues through the West Midlands campaign. Assistance is being sought from Prakash's union, NUPE, and from the Birmingham Council, Trades Council, religious and other organisations. Prakash has an appeal on 18th June, which will be picketed by her supporters.

A similar case is that of Hemlata Patel, a Gujarati woman whose marriage also broke down in distressing circumstances before the 12 months had elapsed. Hemlata found herself lodgings and a job and has continued her legal case until it seems that there is no further hope within the system. The West Midlands Campaign are preparing to fight for Hemlata's right to stay.

In the meantime, two other women have contacted the campaign with similar cases and their only course is to fight public campaigns. Once again, it has been shown that British justice is no justice for black people threatened by the immigration laws and a mass campaign is the only way they can win the right to stay.



There are some people on the left who suffer symptoms of paranoia. They think that they are being followed. They are convinced that their mail is being opened. And every time they pick up the phone, they are certain they first hear a clicking noise, an indication that someone is listening in or making a recording of what they say.

Without doubt surveillance is going on in Britain today. This was borne out recently in a comment by Lord Justice Lloyd, the commissioner responsible for monitoring telephone tapping and mail opening by the security and intelligence services. He was quoted as saying, about the equipment the state uses to eavesdrop: "Neither the connection of the device itself, nor the interception of communications by such means, is audible in any way to the subscriber". In other words, it is official, telephone tapping is admitted. But it is silent.

According to the report of the Commissioners for 1990, on the 'Interceptions of Communications Act, 1985', the Home Secretary issued 515 new warrants for telephone tapping last year. Of these, over 60% were reported as being related to drug trafficking and around 20% of the warrants were connected to investigations into armed robbery.

#### The 'Subversives'

If that was the extent of the phone tapping, it would not seem unreasonable. But as the report goes on to indicate, an unspecified number of warrants were issued to cover what the authorities call terrorists and organisations they consider to be "subversive". Furthermore, one warrant can cover more than one telephone line and since the report does not include the number of tapping warrants issued by either the Foreign Office of the Northern Ireland Office, it is clear that telephone tapping is being carried out on a wide scale in Britain today.

#### Spying on the Unions

More insight into just how much surveillance of the public is being carried out comes from the April issue of 'Public Service', the journal for NALGO members. It is stated that officials working both for NALGO and NUPE, the two main public sector trade unions in the country, have been subjected to increasing levels of surveillance and interference from MI5. This, of course, has to be seen in the context of the probably merger of these two unions



## WHAT DEMOCRACY?

along with COHSE, a move which would lead to the creation of what would be the largest public sector union in Europe.

The article suggests that information is being built up on the union and its activists and officials now for possible use in the future. It then went on to state that the security services, notably in the shape of MI5, MI6, GCHQ and the Special branch had had a special interest in the country's trade unions for years.

#### F2 and S Branch

At the heart of the anti-trade union operations is MI5 and its F2 branch. From the early 1970's, this was given the task of obtaining information on large numbers of trade union officials and active lay members. Now it is reported that it is co-operating closely with S Branch, a growing section within the Special Branch which has responsibility for in-service training and the computer files, which it is estimated are held on over one million people in Britain today.

Fred Holroyd, the former MI6 officer in Northern Ireland,

is quoted in the NALGO article as saying: "No-one in the real world is aware of the extent of information gathering that goes on and the twisted purposes it is put to.... You lot in the union business really don't know the scale of the operations that you are up against."

In a report published in 1984, Nick Davies and Ian Black discovered that the immense power of MI5 came mainly from its freedom to decide who and what are the principal enemy. They found that it made its own decisions with the minimum interference from parliament or Downing Street and preserved its independence by insisting on the necessity for absolute secrecy. It even went so far as to suggest that even some Chief Constables were not totally aware of what some of their officers were doing.

Knowing all this may make a few people a little more paranoid. But those who want to see real change in Britain, need to know just what lies behind our so-called democratic system.

# Mandy's Diary

**March 22nd:** Well, it seems that the man who said that men are the oppressed sex because women call them names was not such an isolated lunatic as I thought. Following closely on his heels, comes Dr. Kevin Browne, senior lecturer at Birmingham Medical School, who claims that:

**"Women are just as likely as men to use violence, contrary to public opinion."**

You have to read between the lines to realise that whereas men's violence includes murder and rape, women's violence means individual incidents of kicking, hitting and scratching. To call men who are subjected to these things 'battered husbands' seems to me totally to undermine the much more horrific and systematic violence suffered by some 'battered wives'.

There was apparently a television programme recently, featuring men who claim to have been battered by their wives. It is well known that in this society men are physically stronger and have much more freedom to control their own lives than women. Why sit there and allow themselves to be 'battered'? What stops them walking out and ending the relationship? Probably the fear that there will be nobody to cook their meals and wash their socks...

**March 25th:** There is good news from Thailand! 'Sex tourists are no longer welcome here,' said Mr. Mechai Viravaidya, Minister of the Prime Minister's office. 'We are telling them to go back home and exploit their own women and children.'

Every year thousands of men from Europe, Australia, the United States and Japan flock to Thailand in search of cheap sex. Thailand has about 700,000 women prostitutes and 200,000 child prostitutes. In addition, about 200,000 people are infected with the HIV virus. The government plans to discourage girls from becoming prostitutes by approaching companies to provide jobs for them.

Mr Mechai said: "We also want to work on the attitude of the Thai male." However, he has got his work cut out at the moment! Seven thousand American servicemen have just arrived from the Gulf for some 'rest and relaxation'.

**April 17th:** Local authorities were banned yesterday from placing children for adoption

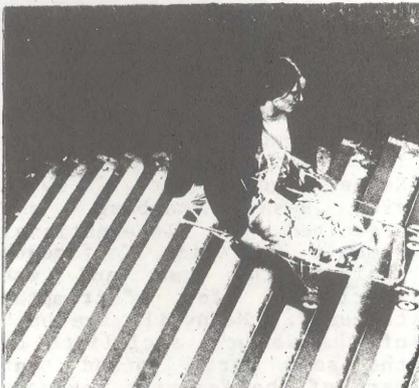
or fostering with homosexual couples. This followed moves by some London councils to employ homosexuals as foster parents.

The regulations of the 1989 Children Act oppose the idea of arbitrarily excluding any particular group of people. However, they add: "But the chosen way of life of some adults may mean that they would not be able to provide a suitable environment for the care and nurture of the child. No-one has a right to be a foster parent. Fostering decisions must centre exclusively on the interests of the child."

The British Association for Fostering and Adoption said that it would have been wrong to exclude any group of people from fostering. And a representative from the Association of Directors of Social Services said:

**"Personal relationships are only a small part of a much larger ability to foster."** This is just one of the ways in which homosexual people are discriminated against and denied opportunities which are available to heterosexual people.

**April 19th:** My diary plunges into uncharted depths this month. More than 100 public lavatories in Sheffield may be closed to save the council £100,000 a year in 'running' costs. The Labour-run authority has already axed 1,300 jobs and cut next year's budget by £17 million to avoid Poll Tax capping.



But as Sue Cavanagh, co-author of 'At women's convenience: a handbook on the design of women's public toilets' points out, it is women who stand (or sit) to lose most by the closure of public conveniences. Well do I remember the times I struggled to change a baby's nappy in a public toilet, or even to get into a cubicle with a baby in

a buggy. Small cries of 'I want a wee wee!' while out shopping in the town centre must be etched on the memories of mothers all over the country. Not to mention the frantic dash to the nearest loo when you were pregnant, or when your period came on unexpectedly. And because there are far more elderly women than elderly men, there must also be more women than men suffering medical complaints which mean 'paying a visit' more often.

There are fewer alternatives for women too. It is not easy for women to go into pubs on their own, and even more impossible if they have children with them. And if the worst comes to the worst, men can go discreetly behind a bush very much easier than women. So think again, Sheffield! It might seem like an easy solution to the cash flow problem. But for women, it is yet another restriction on their freedom. They will think twice before going out because they will have to plan their outings more carefully.

However, Birmingham City Council can have two Brownie points for considering a scheme which would ban men from selected areas of multi-storey car parks. Some levels would become 'women only' areas patrolled by security staff, and the walls would be painted in light colours to make the areas brighter. This scheme is already operating in Germany. It shows that the council is taking seriously the very real threat to women from men hanging around in multi-storey car parks.

**April 20th:** Britain's only hotel exclusively for women may have to close because of shortage of cash. The Reeves Hotel in Shepherds Bush, West London, opened in 1988 to cater for women travelling alone. The London Tourist Board said that even though a third of the lucrative business traveller market was female, women travellers had become accustomed to being ignored or patronised.

The Reeves Hotel is staffed exclusively by women and has earned the praise of the Good Hotel Guide.

Ladycabs, a London-based minicab service for women only, celebrates its tenth anniversary this month.

# Women's Strength- Women's Struggle

*The last issue of CLASS STRUGGLE looked at the events & issues that lead to March 8th becoming International Women's Day. This month we return to those same years in the early part of the century & examine some of the other threads that have drawn together women in struggle...*

## Against Imperialist War

Imperialist war is another thread which joins together Clara Zetkin, the suffragists in Britain and women today. International issues, the world view, is often the touchstone which shows movements and individuals in their true colours. True socialists, such as Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg, Selina Cooper and many other women of that time are able to analyse for themselves the causes of war, to distinguish just and unjust wars, imperialist and liberation wars and to stand out against the false patriotism of the day.

In 1912, at the Basle Congress of the Second International, Clara Zetkin actively campaigned against militarism,

imperialism and colonialism. Despite this, the German Social-Democratic Party voted for military credits to the Kaiser's government. In 1914, with Rosa Luxemburg, she organised the International Women's Socialist Conference against the war and was imprisoned for "attempted treason". Meanwhile the bulk of the women's socialists of the same party joined that part of the feminist movement which was supporting the war effort. (Clara Zetkin went on to join the Communist Party of Germany and was on its Central Committee. She remained a revolutionary to the end of her life making her last defiant speech in 1932 when she denounced the fascists and exposed the role of the Social Democratic Party.)

## War Stops Play

In Britain, the socialist and women's movement split along similar lines at the same time. In August 1914, the outbreak of war stopped the campaign for suffrage in Britain. It was at the height of its militancy and strength although there had already been many splits and different organisations set up. The WPSU, led by Mrs Pankhurst and one of her daughters Christabel, became intensely pro-war. They changed their name to the Women's Party. Sylvia Pankhurst and many other suffragists on the other hand strongly disagreed with this and continued the campaign for votes for women alongside speaking on socialism, against the war and later on, in support of Ireland. Sylvia Pankhurst continued working with her organisation based in the East End of London, providing practical help as well as campaigning for the vote. Another split in the National Union came when it refused to send delegates to an International Congress of Women in The Hague in 1915. From this split arose the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom which included many women who were also active in their localities, organising as the Women's Peace Crusade and speaking at demonstrations and meetings throughout the country. In Glasgow in 1917, the Women's Peace Crusade mounted a demonstration of over 12,000 people. Anti-war activists in the First World War suffered widespread violence and abuse.

## Gulf War

The war we have faced this year has, of course, different causes and other factors are at work. But there are similarities in our position of being anti-imperialist and anti-"patriotic", and our desire of a ceasefire and a "people's peace". We may find it useful to discuss the position taken by women in previous wars for ideas and inspiration.

## Trade Union Struggles

The striking garment workers in New York, as well as being part of a very divided women's suffrage movement, were part of an already long tradition of militancy on equal pay and demands for unionisation. Women in the USA were in the forefront and leadership of trade union development in the 1840's and the focus was in the textile industry. Interestingly, one of the earliest labour organisations, the Association of Working



**Sewing garments in a  
New York sweatshop,  
1910. Pay and conditions  
are still major issues for  
women all over the world.**

People of New Castle, Delaware, demanded the vote for women in 1831! Women organised in the New England Female Labor Reform Association (FLRA), argued and struck for the ten-hour day, giving leadership and militancy to the early labour movement. Later, the Knights of Labour, the first enduring national labour organisation in the USA supported both women and black people in their demands for equality. In contrast, the American Federation of Labour, an association of craft unions, gave working women little support and with the demise of the Knights around 1890, they came to dominate trade unionism and spread both

racism and sexism. The strikes of 1908 onwards then marked a huge upsurge in working class women's activity and success in forming enduring unions, cutting hours and improving conditions. The demand for the vote was present and the National Women's Trade Union League did something to unite women across class to fight for the vote. But, by and large, the garment workers won their victories without the ballot. What would these women think of the present-day plight of many garment workers? Less progress than they hoped, no doubt, and perhaps the recognition that capitalism has a way of adapting and bringing back oppression in a

different way, especially to a working class where men still oppress women.

#### Black Women Lead the Way

There is another reason for the weakness of the women's movement, as prominent then in the States as now, and that is racism. Were the garment workers on the streets in 1909 white or black? Black women were largely excluded from industry before the First World War and hence from unions being confined to agrarian and domestic work. However, there were black women working in the packing houses and as pressers in the garment industry. A white garment worker and organiser tells in her account of the beginning of the 1909 New York strike of her anxiety as to whether the women of the shop would walk out at the appointed time. They did, fifteen minutes early, when the fifty three black women of the pressing department dropped their work and led the whole shop out.

#### International Women's Day

International Women's Day is a good time to try and take stock of where women's struggles have come from and where they are leading. Many socialist women in this country today are confused as to the way forward. To study and discuss our history helps us see the complexity of the struggle, of how different strands of women's struggle can either intertwine and strengthen each other or pull in opposite directions and strangle each other. The militancy and bravery of women in the past, and especially perhaps the determination and resilience of long lives of struggle, can inspire us to persevere.

As in 1910, women here are struggling for better living and working conditions, for equality of opportunity, for an end to racist oppression and for a socialist society. There are still women deprived of the vote e.g. migrant workers, black women in Azania and our vote in the present system offers us only sham choices. Since 1910, we have increased our struggle against sexual oppression and gained new insights into imperialism's destruction of the environment. Perhaps most importantly, we have recognised that it is women in the Third World who will strike the biggest blows against imperialism and that as well as organising ourselves at home, we must always listen to them and work in solidarity with them. ■

# CHERNOBYL

## Five years on

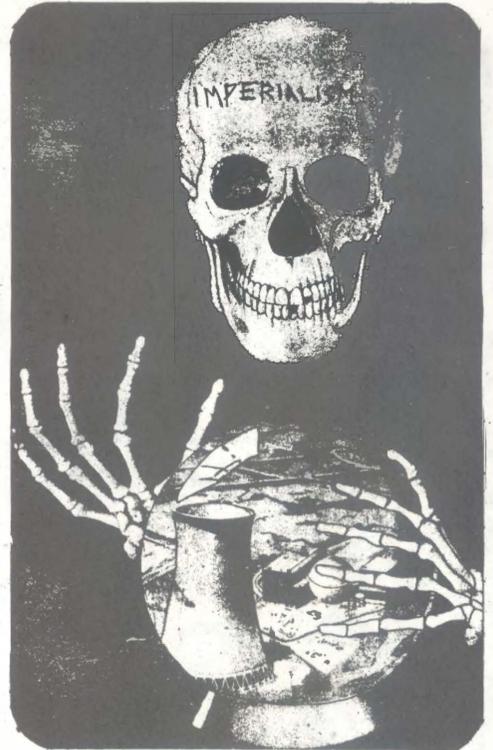
The fifth anniversary of Chernobyl, the world's worst nuclear disaster, was commemorated all over the world on April 25th. Five years on, its effects are still being felt, and the magnitude of the disaster in terms of future generations is being appreciated.

At the time of the accident, official coverage concentrated on the success of containment, the relatively few lives lost, and the myth that despite such accidents nuclear power still remained a safe option. How wrong they were! The continued monitoring, research and publicity by environmental groups has highlighted the long term effects. Remember the airmen who were allowed to watch the original nuclear

Crispin Aubrey :

"I spent 12 days in the region, talking to people who were still affected by the 1986 accident as well as those who are trying to deal with the continuing problems. My overwhelming impression was that the scale of the disaster, its effects on the countryside, on people's health and on their lifestyle have been totally underestimated by the authorities. Over seven million people are still living in contaminated areas.

Five years after the accident, the first serious illnesses are emerging, from blood disorders to cancer. As big a problem is that many more towns and villages are now having to be evacuated because



on sheep in Cumbria and in other pockets of the country, where tens of thousands of lambs cannot be sold for human consumption. In areas where sampling and testing take place surprisingly high levels of radioactivity are being sustained....and what about the many areas not tested ?

### Still Nuclear

Despite all this, nuclear power is far from dead. Although there is a moratorium on building new PWR reactors until 1994, the monster at Sizewell continues and the Hinkley C public enquiry found in favour of building another reactor there, to be rediscussed in 1994. What has been totally lacking from the government has been any coherent energy policy. We urgently need a policy which will promote and fund alternative energy sources. There is now no doubt that with that help the technology and knowledge does exist to provide cheap and safe energy for all. But for a capitalist government of course this is not advantageous as it does not mean big profits, and it does not mean support of nuclear weapon technology.

### Renewable Energy

Even without government support, progress continues to be made in renewable energy sources, and in conservation of energy. Wind power is already an economic reality with the Cornwall Energy project taking the lead. They have formed a company - Ecogen- and as well as the big wind farm in Cornwall have



tests in the 1950's? And the children who were allowed to play in the dust of radioactivity on the Pacific islands? Why do we continue to let ignorant imperialists and their 'yes-men' reassure us so dangerously?

### Visit to Chernobyl

'Stop Hinkley Expansion' is one of many local groups active on the issue and its spring newsletter reports on a visit to Chernobyl in March by

the level of radioactivity in the soil has remained much higher than expected.

The most important message for us in Britain is that the optimistic expectations of the nuclear authorities that the accident's effects would soon fade have been proved disastrously wrong."

In this country too, although we are so far away, the effects are still being felt. There are still restrictions

plans for them in Wales and elsewhere. Tidal power, already a reality in Scandinavia, is struggling for recognition and application here. Conservation of energy now plays a part in all new building plans, but much more financial help is needed on the domestic front. Low energy light bulbs, for example, are more easily available now, and if used widely would dramatically reduce domestic demand for energy. However the initial outlay is beyond many people's pockets. What an obvious place for government subsidy!

#### Acid Rain

Nowhere is the lack of a comprehensive energy policy more keenly felt than in the coal industry. Here British mines are being closed, mining communities destroyed, foreign coal imported, and acid rain damage from coal-fired power stations continues. We know how to make coal efficient and cleaner, by combined heat and power plants and adaptations to older types, and it could be done at less cost and less risk to health than nuclear power projects such as Sizewell.

According to a recent report from the Department of Environment, acid rain is causing much greater damage to British wildlife and trees than previously thought. Recent studies have surprised scientists who now say that a reduction of 80% in sulphur dioxide emissions from power stations is needed to stop the damage. Electricity privatisation and plans to sell off the coal industry will reduce the fitting of flue gas desulphurisation equipment by the government. The government promised the UN to cut acid emissions by 60% by 2003, a target now very much too low, and progress so far is poor. Britain is seen as dragging its feet by the rest of Europe, giving minimum information and talking political rather than scientific targets.

#### Hidden Agenda

One of the reasons that this government cannot have a democratic, open energy policy is its hidden agenda. This agenda includes the need for nuclear technology and research not only for power, but more importantly for weaponry; the importance to the ruling class of having electricity production in the hands of a few well-paid technocrats rather than the hands of miners, or of local people; and that for all capitalists the motive is profit, not safety or long term issues. These points have become very clear during the public hearings at Sizewell

and Hinkley along with other major problems of nuclear power such as disposal of radioactive waste and the danger from major accidents.

Chernobyl was not the first, and will not be the last, nuclear accident. It came very near to being a meltdown and full scale explosion. From

25th April 1986 to the present day we have been denied the truth and denied the lessons we should learn. But the groundswell of knowledge is growing, and with it the determination to work for energy which is safe for us, for the planet, and for the future.

## Four thousand people and 74 nations vote for a Nuclear Test Ban

A Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is demanded by all the nations at the U.N. except two....no prizes for guessing who used their veto to scupper democracy again.

The Partial Test Ban Amendment Conference, held in January, was unique: it was brought about by the non-nuclear nations forcing the nuclear powers to discuss a change from partial to comprehensive test ban. As the Sri Lankan delegate, Edmund Jayasinghe, commented: "The failure of the nuclear powers to work towards a comprehensive test ban (CTB) while adding to their stockpiles and calling on others to abandon nuclear capability is hypocritical."

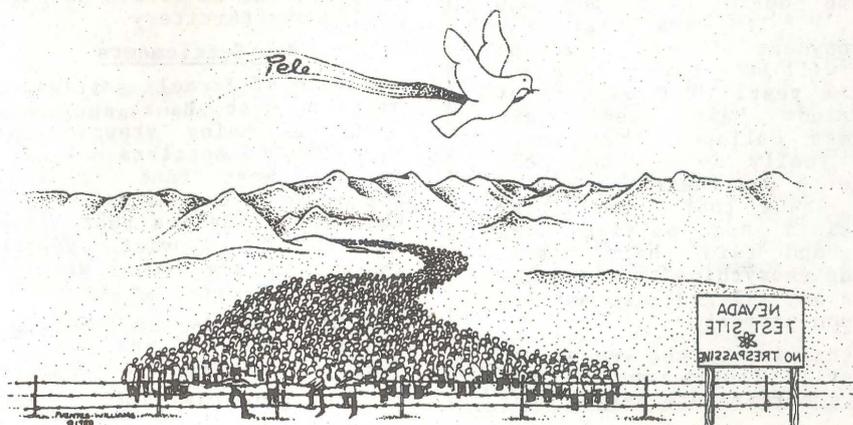
In the final vote, only the UK and the USA voted against the amendment, having been deserted by Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the USSR who all voted with the unaligned countries. Because of their veto, the amendment fell, but the majority were able to force another conference in two years time.

The fact that the nuclear powers have not yet agreed a CTB is a breach of their obligations under Article 6 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which restricts non-nuclear countries from using nuclear weapons up to 1995. The fourth NPT Review Conference in Geneva in September 1990 ended in a

fiasco because of the refusal of the USA and UK to end testing by 1995.

The governments of the UK and USA are becoming isolated on these questions at home as well as internationally. There is a mounting campaign here, supported by local peace groups and the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons, who are lobbying MPs, demonstrating and making international links. Some British demonstrators joined the massive gathering of 4,000 people at Nevada, USA in January to protest about nuclear testing prior to the UN conference. The gathering was addressed by the local Shoshone Indian spiritual leader on whose people's land the test site is situated (land assigned to them by the US government in 1863). He spoke of the environmental and health effects on local people, as did the Polynesian representative. The protest resulted in 740 arrests, but all were released without charge.

One result of the January Conference was the formation of the Global Anti Nuclear Alliance (GANAA). Its aims are to build a coordinated network of peace, environmental, religious and other organisations committed to a CTB and related issues. This includes indigenous peoples organisations as well as the well-known international groups such as Greenpeace.



# 'NO TRUST IN US PLANS'

By David Evans

"It all seems irrelevant. Baker comes and goes. But no-one I spoke to really believed that anything good for the Palestinians was going to come out of American diplomacy." A visitor who has been working in Palestine told 'Class Struggle' about the situation of the Palestinians of the West Bank today, in the wake of the Gulf War.

George Bush said that, following the western victory in the Gulf, there had to be a solution to the Palestine question. But the Palestinians are sceptical about that. Many feel that the USA had to go through the motions of seeking a just peace in order to please the Arab states that co-operated with it. But that the USA does not intend to use the leverage it has on Israel to make it withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and let an independent Palestinian state be established there. Instead, it will seek to arrange negotiations between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states - Syria in particular - which will exclude the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and if this does not work out, will drop its 'search for peace', leaving that part of the Middle East, at least, much as before.

While the talk goes on, things get tougher for the Palestinians. After being under curfew for most of the war, the economic position of the occupied people is worse than ever. Many simply could not go out and earn their livings. This is leading to further problems.

Israel has introduced a system of collecting taxes in the current year based on people's income during the previous year. It says that any overpayment in the current year will be repaid at the end of the year. But as tens of thousands have seen their incomes collapse this year, they really do not have the means to pay their tax bills. This means that Israeli tax officials and soldiers can come and raid their homes, taking everything they can lay hands on, allegedly to make up for non-payment.

But that is not the end of the matter. People who do not hold a certificate saying that



## WINNING INDEPENDENCE WITH THE PLO

they have paid their taxes up to date are not allowed to cross into Israel. This means that some cannot go to work there, even though they have the necessary identity card. (People with green cards are banned from entering Israel on 'security grounds'.) It also means that they cannot go from the north of the West Bank to the south without great difficulty, as the main routes go through East Jerusalem, which Israel has illegally annexed, and so treats as part of its own territory.

### New Settlements

The pace of Israeli settlement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is being stepped up. Over 100,000 settlers now live in the West Bank on land stolen from the Palestinians. When Israel denies that large numbers of Soviet Jewish immigrants are being settled on land it occupied in 1967, it is probably telling the truth, except in the case of East Jerusalem. Reports suggest many have indeed been

settled. However, it does not take a genius to realise that the Soviet Jews are having a 'knock-on' effect. When they arrive, those who cannot afford to pay higher rents end up on the streets. It becomes all the more tempting to go and settle in low-cost, spacious subsidised housing in the West Bank. And that is exactly what is going on.

Again and again, Palestinians ask: "Where's the West's concern about human rights now?" Their land is taken, and repression intensifies. But dozens of UN resolutions critical of Israel and supporting Palestinian rights go on gathering dust, unlike those which were used by the USA and Britain to justify a full-scale war on Iraq.

There is no sense of optimism among the occupied people. But they remain committed to their goal of winning independence from Israel, under the leadership of the PLO. To go on being ruled by Israel is totally unacceptable.

# BROKEN PROMISES

Events in Iraq since the Western powers declared an end to the war have confirmed that the 'new world order' has nothing to do with peace with justice for the people of Iraq or other countries in the area.

The devastating attack on Iraq killed thousands of civilians as well as conscripts in the army, many of them already in retreat. The destruction of the economy brought the threat of starvation and epidemics to millions of ordinary people. The Western powers also encouraged people, in both the north and the south of Iraq to rise up against the government of Saddam Hussein.

But the USA soon made it clear that they had no intention of helping a popular, democratic government to power in Iraq. The attack on Iraq was halted while major parts of Iraq's army were still intact. The USA aimed at causing enough chaos and resentment within Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein but made it clear that they would support a coup within the military regime. There was no way in which they would support either the Shia-based rebellion in the south of Iraq or the Kurdish people in the north.

In this sense, the war is far from over for the people of Iraq. The responsibility for the millions of Kurdish refugees lies with the USA, and its partners like Britain. In the south too, fighting is still continuing. Thousands have been killed, imprisoned or made homeless. Many have also fled to Iran.

The USA and Britain are directly responsible for the suffering of the people of Iraq. Yet they sat back and did nothing, even on the level of humanitarian aid, until popular opinion was moved to react to television films of desperate Kurdish people, over half women and children, dying on the mountains. Even now, the scale of their efforts to bring food and shelter to the refugees is pathetic compared with the scale of the military planning for the attack on Iraq. They have also mainly ignored the refugees in the south.

The Turkish government ordered armed soldiers to keep out the refugees and if necessary shoot them. When pressure was put on Turkey, they allowed some people over the border but restricted them to high mountain areas and did everything they could to force them to go back to Iraq. The

Turkish government already faces rebellion among its own Kurdish minority as a result of its repression. It fears that the Kurdish refugees will add to their problems. At the same time, Turkey has rightly pointed out that in spite of righteous sounding declarations by European governments, not one was prepared to accept refugees from Iraq. Fortress Europe is closed to refugees from the Third World.

The Iranian government has kept its borders open and done what it can to provide food and shelter. The amount of aid sent to Iran by the Western powers, particularly the USA, has been minimal. Iran was not, of course, part of the coalition that attacked Iraq and remained strictly neutral throughout the war.

No-one should be surprised then when Kurdish organisations negotiate and make deals with Saddam Hussein's government. For them, it may be a question of survival or finding a breathing space and it is their right to determine the solutions to the problems of their people.

The Kurdish people are a nation spread throughout different states in the Middle East and we should support their right to self-determination. The different organisations have the right to determine themselves the form that self-determination should take, whether separation, autonomy or other solutions.

What is certain is that once again the Kurdish people have been betrayed by promises of support from the West. They can expect little help from other states who fear national rebellion within their own borders. The United Nations and other international organisations have rarely supported the fight for freedom of minority nationalities.

We should support the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination, whether they choose to carry on the armed struggle for their own liberation or other forms of struggle. In the meantime, we can give immediate help in the form of donations for relief of the refugees:

**The Kurdish Disaster Fund,**  
14 Stannary Street,  
London SE11.

## Campaign in support of Iraqi people in Britain

In Britain, a campaign has been set up to support Iraqi people in Britain.

The campaign is calling for letters of protest to MP's, the Minister for Immigration and local publicity particularly in relation to the treatment of Iraqi people by the immigration authorities in Britain. A leaflet from the campaign points out that the immigration laws in Britain give the authorities arbitrary powers, especially under 'national security grounds' and that the effects on Iraqi people here go beyond the end of armed hostilities.

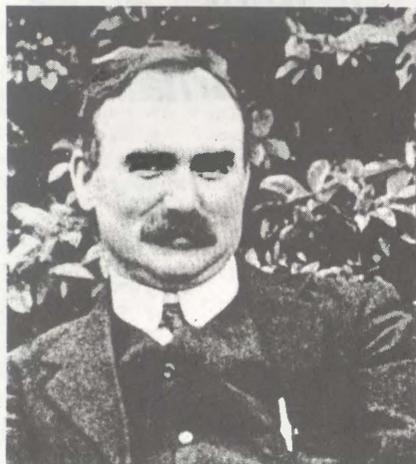
"In the opening months of this year... a series of events was set in motion which implied that the perpetrators had scant regard for human rights and civil liberties: people were arrested and held without trial; families were torn apart by detention and deportation; high level researchers were threatened with expulsion; and young children were listed on police files....

"The effects of war in the Gulf for Iraqi people in Britain have continued....they have found themselves without income, without access to their financial resources held in Britain, without an effective right of appeal against the refusal of the Home office to allow them to stay in Britain, and without the right to the protection of the British authorities which is willing to return them to a country in the midst of a civil war.

"The issue raised by the treatment of Iraqi people in Britain is no longer 'national security' but the power of the Home Office to target a specific nationality or group of people.... Today it is the Iraqi people who face the possibility of being forced out of Britain. But unless the source of the power of the Home Office is exposed and removed, it will remain a threat to be used against any Black nation or community."

For more information, contact:  
Campaign in Support of Iraqi  
People in Britain,  
021-622-7353.

# Easter Rising... UNFINISHED BUSINESS



**JAMES CONNOLLY**

Easter 1991 was the 75th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising and it was celebrated throughout the whole of Ireland with parades and rallies.

Despite the wet weather and various forms of obstruction by the authorities, up to ten thousand people took to the streets of Dublin on April 6th. During the parade through the city, actors at various famous landmarks portrayed those who either featured in the Rising or were closely associated with the

major political events which preceded it.

Outside the GPO building the crowd heard the artist, Robert Ballagh, tell them: "By your presence here today, you have shown that you are not embarrassed to celebrate the 75th anniversary of 1916, that you are not embarrassed to celebrate your Irishness, that you are not ashamed of your history ... There are still those who dare to suggest that what is happening in these commemorations is irrelevant, backward looking or misconceived. How could one of the most vital events in our history be irrelevant? Is the Fourth of July irrelevant to the people of the United States? Is Bastille Day irrelevant to the French? These people are not afraid, ashamed or embarrassed to celebrate the birth of their nation. Why should we be?"

Then he proceeded to show that the celebrations were not just about 1916 and those who took part in it. "We are also celebrating their ideals and vision; their valour and self-sacrifice; their commitment to freedom and justice. Their action in 1916 derived from a long and bitter history of oppression and resistance to oppression. Their vision

derived from a belief in the ultimate destiny of the Irish nation to be free, sovereign and independent. If we step back even one inch from that vision we will be betraying not only the men and women of 1916 but also the destiny of the Irish nation ..."

## A Total Transformation

"What they set out to achieve was not just a government in Dublin, a green flag over Dublin Castle and a harp on the coinage. They envisaged a total transformation of Irish society. You will find the outline of that transformation in the Proclamation of the Republic. The right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies. The right to national freedom and sovereignty. The right to religious and civil liberties, equal rights and equal opportunities for all citizens. The pursuit of the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally. Oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government which has divided a minority from the majority in the past."

## Political Leaders Fail

Noting that the country's political leaders had failed to build an Ireland that even remotely equalled the Ireland of the visionaries of 1916, he then went on to ask: "Who owns Ireland today, its natural resources, its mineral wealth? Do we as a member of a proposed European Union have unfettered control of our destiny? Can we truly say that we are a fully free and sovereign nation today? What about the quarter of a million Irish people without jobs? What of the hundreds of thousands of our exiles abroad, unable to find a living at home? What of the one third of our population living in poverty? The plight of our small farmers, the discrimination against travellers and the handicapped? The unequal distribution of wealth? These are questions we must ask even as we celebrate here today. And surely we must seek and strive for the answers to these questions if we are truly to honour and commemorate the men and women of 1916?"

An Easter Statement from the Leadership of the Republican Movement: (extracts)

"We declare the right of the Irish people to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be sovereign and indefeasible' - so stated the leadership of the Army of the Irish Republic 75 years ago, on the occasion of the 1916 Rising. Today at the gravesides of our fallen comrades, we the leadership of the Republican Movement emphatically reiterate that statement.

"The struggle for freedom and democracy in our country has been a long and hard one. Many men and women have given their lives to free us from British oppression. Today we recall the bravery of all those who paid the supreme sacrifice in 1916, but let it be said that many more Irish men and women have led lives of great valour, in opposing the Goliath of the British war machine. We need look

no further back than this generation of patriots to inspire us in our ongoing struggle for self-determination in Ireland. We pay them great homage and our tribute to them is to continue in that fight..."

"Neither the Rising nor the Tan Wars were clean fights. War is never clean. Republicans especially have no illusions about that! Neither have we any illusions about the fact that these dirty wars did force the British to leave 26 of Ireland's 32 counties. In every decade and every generation since then, Irish men and women have continued the struggle for a free independent Ireland. In that struggle many Volunteers and sympathisers have lost their lives. We are here today to pay tribute to their memory. They saved Ireland from the shame of subservience. We salute them."

Martin McGuinness at the Easter Sunday parade in Belfast.

## CENSUS IGNORES THE IRISH

The 1991 Census, now being carried out, ignores Irish people because it does not specify Irish as an 'ethnic group'. Other national minorities are recorded in the ludicrous phrase 'ethnic group'.

Irish organisations and newspapers campaigned for all Irish people in Britain, including second and third generation, to be able to specify that they saw themselves as Irish, in the question about 'ethnic group'.

No-one knows how many Irish people there are in Britain.

The 1955 Eden government estimated there were 750,000 Irish immigrants. Today, there are an estimated 55,000 Irish people in one city, Coventry, alone. The Irish make up 13.9% of the population of one London borough, Haringay. And there are large Irish populations in most of Britain's big cities.

Along with other national minority peoples, the Irish have always suffered racism and discrimination. Specific laws such as the 1974 Labour government's Prevention of Terrorism Act was aimed at the whole of the Irish community

and had the effect of frightening Irish people into wanting to be invisible.

As long as the British state occupies part of Ireland, it has a vested interest in marginalising the Irish community. Being recognised as a definite national group is part of the Irish community's fight for its national identity. The demands to be included in the 1991 census, reflect the increased confidence of the community to fight back.

To be recognised as a legitimate national minority is a basic democratic right of the Irish in Britain that should be supported.

## WHY BROOKE'S PLAN WILL FAIL

There is nothing new about Brooke's 'new initiative' on Ireland. It is yet another attempt to divert and marginalise opposition to British rule. Like previous attempts by both Labour and Tory governments, it will fail because it is a 'solution' based on British terms.

All these attempts try and sidestep the basic issues: partition of a sovereign country; creation of an artificial state (Northern Ireland) and occupation of that state by British forces.

Brooke wants talks with all interested parties except Sinn

Fein. He knows that the Republican movement cannot be defeated. But he wants to find a way forward that marginalises Republicans and weakens them. The losers are the Irish people who have every right to a united, truly independent Ireland so that they can decide their own future. The British state has always denied them that basic democratic right.

It is only when that is achieved that there will be the possibility of peace for the people of Ireland. Peace based on justice is the only lasting peace.

## HUNGER STRIKE 10 YEARS LATER

On 5th May, 1981, after enduring 66 days on hunger strike, Bobby Sands died. In the months that followed nine of his comrades were also to die.

They were struggling for five demands:

The right to wear their own clothes.

Exemption from prison work.

Free association.

The right to organise their own education and recreation.

Full restoration of remission.

These five demands added up to the demand for political status to be restored and a refusal to be criminalised for fighting to liberate their own country. In 1976, the Labour government had removed 'special category' status and tried to reduce political prisoners to common criminals. After years of prison protest, Bobby Sands led his comrades in the ultimate protest, the hunger strike to death if necessary.

Although the immediate struggle was lost, the hunger strikes had long-term effects.

The hunger strikes gained massive support not only throughout Ireland but all over the world. The Irish national liberation struggle was headlined in papers around the world. Bobby and his comrades were heroes, freedom fighters. British rule in Ireland was exposed.

The British state may have murdered ten Republicans. But the sacrifices those ten made led to strengthening of the opposition to British rule.

Bobby Sands and his comrades remain an example and inspiration to all who fight injustice.

## JUDITH WARD:

### The Forgotten

### Victim?

On 4th February, 1974, a coach carrying British soldiers was travelling along the M62 from Manchester to Catterick army camp. A fifty pound bomb exploded on the coach, killing eight soldiers and three other people.

Judith Ward was framed for that explosion and sentenced to life imprisonment. She is innocent.

The IRA said that one of their units planted the bomb and that Judith was not one of their members. Her alibi that she was one hundred miles away at a circus was confirmed by the ringmaster.

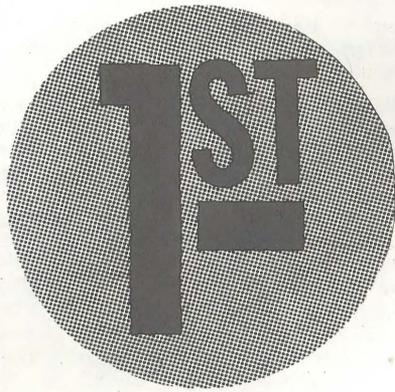
The forensic evidence against Judith was prepared and presented by the same Frank Skuse whose evidence against

the Birmingham Six was exposed as false.

Unlike the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four and the Maguire family, Judith was a single victim. She had no family to support her and build a campaign. Seventeen years in prison have left her demoralised and isolated. She has nothing to look forward to but more years in prison for an act she did not commit.

Judith is one more victim of the British state's revenge against the Irish in Britain for the successes of the IRA's campaign in the early 1970's. The police, the courts and the judges had no hesitation in framing Irish people and politicians of all parties went along with this in order to give the impression that they were winning the war against the IRA.

Now Paul Hill - one of the Guildford Four, Michael Farrell and Jeremy Corbyn are starting a campaign to make sure that this injustice is exposed and Judith Ward set free.



# MAY

May Day has long been a day to celebrate the struggles of the working class. It has been marked by demonstrations, marches and rallies around the world. The system we live under is determined by profits and the working class has always had to fight on many fronts, for better wages, against unemployment or for better housing, health or education. But May Day is not just about such immediate

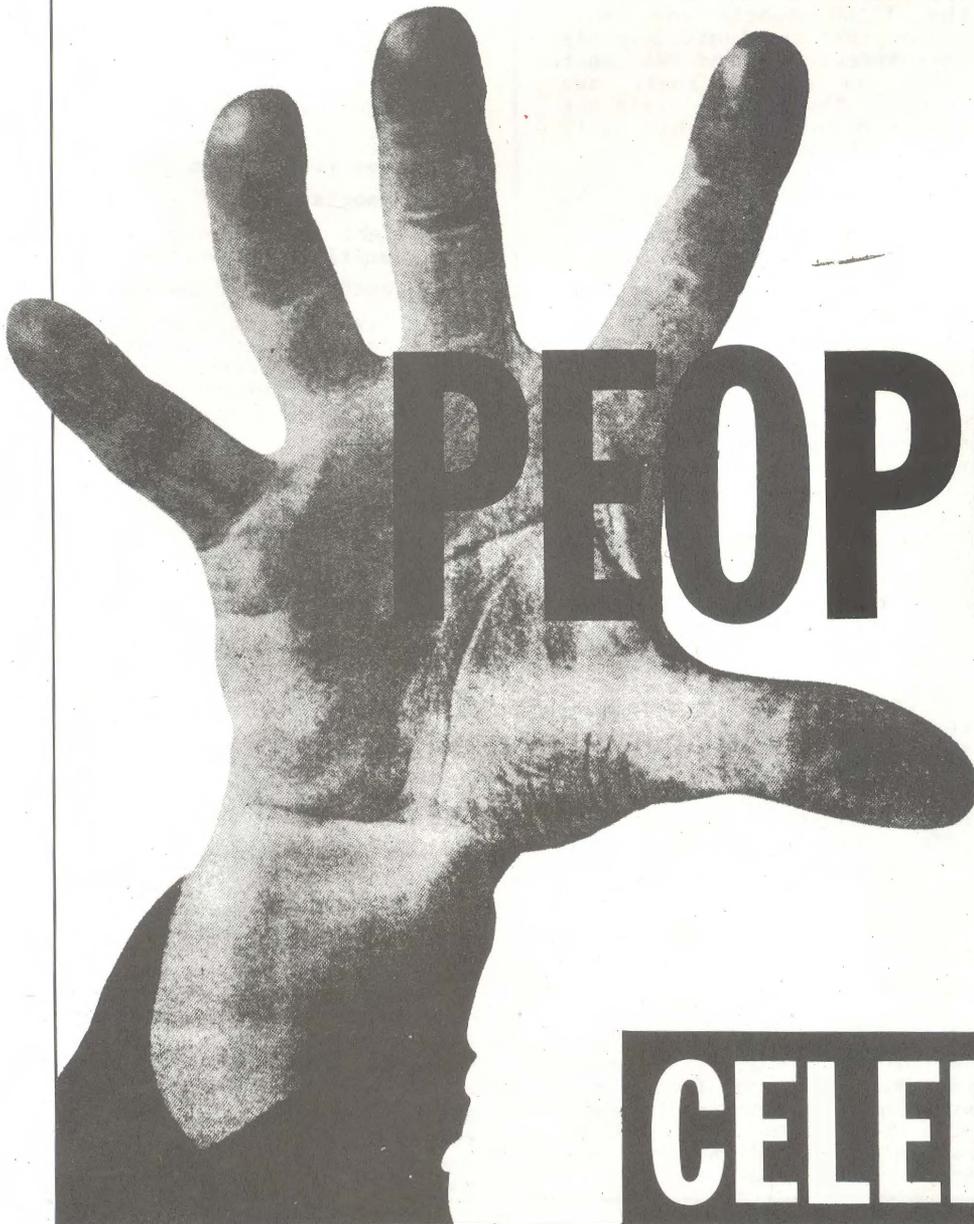
issues. It also celebrates the struggles of the working class for revolution, for a different system altogether, in which all forms of oppression and exploitation can be abolished, recognising that this is an international struggle.

In Britain, working class struggle has long been distorted by reformism, which works within the system but

does not challenge it. Britain's position as an imperialist power, has meant that concessions have been made to working class struggles for a better standard of living. But in the 1980's, we have seen the collapse of reformist opposition by the Labour Party and trade unions, at a time of growing attacks on the working class.

Internationally, the meaning of May Day has also been distorted by developments in the Soviet Union, which became an imperialist power itself. While using the slogans of socialism and internationalism, it invaded other countries and repressed struggles within its own borders.

If we want to build on the true spirit of May Day, we have to bring together the day-to-day struggles of the working class in Britain with those of all others fighting oppression, whether in Britain itself or in other parts of the world. The people of the Philippines, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Palestine and Kurdistan are on the frontlines of the battle against imperialism. May Day is a time to affirm our unity with, and support for, all those fighting against our common enemy.



# PEOPLE'S DAY

# CELEBRATE ★