

CLASS STRUGGLE

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Unemployment: MISERY FOR MILLIONS

The unemployment figures for August were released on August 24th. The total was: 3,292,702, or 1 in 7 of the workforce, the highest total ever. This represents an increase on last month's figures of 102,081, the highest monthly jump since last September. And there is no end in sight! Unemployment has climbed almost continuously for the last 36 months. 306,000 of the total are unemployed school leavers. That is nearly 1 in 2 of the total of 700,000. Compared to last year, there are an additional 25,000 graduates on the unemployed registers.

The real unemployment figures are much higher than the government ones. Left out of the government totals are the "hidden unemployed": those who do not bother to register because they know they have no chance of getting a job, those who have "taken advantage" of the government scheme that allows unemployed workers over 60 to retire early, the 600,000 on government slave labour schemes like the "Youth Opportunities Project" and the many women who do not qualify in terms of their National Insurance contributions for any form of benefit. Adding these people on shows the real unemployment figure to be an incredible 4½ million.

THE OPPRESSED AREAS

Unemployment is bad everywhere but its effects are distributed unevenly. The occupied six counties of Ireland have the worst figure: 21.5%. In some areas, like nationalist West Belfast, it approaches 50%. In Strabane it is 37.6%, Newry 32.8%. Dungannon 35.4% and Cookstown 33%. The North of England has a total of 17.9%, the North West 16.7%, the West Midlands 16.6%, Wales 17% and Scotland 15.9%. Areas in the Highlands of Scotland are being depopulated as recession closes down industries and sends unemployment soaring. For example, in the Outer Hebrides unemployment stands at 31%, with increased misery on the way with the recession in the tweed industry and the closure of an oil-related fabrication yard - the end of the oil boom. In the north of Ireland the figures are set for yet further increases with BP joining the long list of Courtaulds, British Enkalon, ICI, De Lorean, Shorts Aircraft Company, Harland & Wolf, and others who have announced closures, redundancies and short time working.

TARGET: 5 MILLION!

Unemployment causes poverty, misery, humiliation and even death (it has been shown that suicides rise by the same % as unemployment) for millions of working class people and their families. Is the govern-

ment satisfied? No! Their target is at least 5 million. A Tory journal, "The Journal of Economic Affairs" (a publication read by few workers), recently spelt out the true (not electioneering) aims of the government in an article by its editor, Arthur Seldon. He says that unemployment is, "inevitable, necessary and desirable" for the health of British capitalism. Thousands of jobs should be scrapped in railways, mining, steel, gas, electricity, education, the health service and many other areas.

"Progress must create unemployment. Every change in conditions of supply and demand renders someone's skill redundant and causes unemployment for a time, long or short."

He concludes:

"We shall have to see many more men and women change their jobs and their homes

- we shall have to see much more unemployment - before the British economy is freed of its dead wood to grow fresh shoots." (emphasis in original)

Here, speaking amongst themselves, is the true voice of capitalist barbarism. In order to give a fresh lease of life to their rotten and outmoded system, they are more than prepared to ruin the lives of millions and millions of working class families, reduce them to utter despair, force them to leave their homes to try to find work, and use their example to terrorise the rest of the working class into not fighting back against a stepped-up rate of exploitation.

RESERVE ARMY

Capitalism needs the unemployed as a reserve army of labour. By holding out the spectre of complete immiseration it aims to terrorise the whole of the working class, making them accept lower wages, worse conditions, and more intense exploitation, for fear of losing their jobs altogether. At the moment, for every new job offered, 50 people are made jobless. Working class struggles are thus pushed even

Cont. page 3

Eritrean Congresses Held

In mid-August the annual congresses of the mass organisations in Europe of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the National Unions of Eritrean Workers, Students and Women were successfully held in Bologna, Italy. Upon invitation, a representative of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain (RCLB) had the honour to participate in the congresses. Other fraternal delegations came from - amongst others - the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Tigray People's Liberation Front, Workers' Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) of Norway, Italian trade unions, Armagh Co-ordinating Committee, and various Eritrea Support Committees in Europe, including those of Glasgow and Manchester.

The opening session was attended by the Mayor of Bologna and the Regional Secretary of the Communist Party of Italy. Many messages of greetings were received. Those from Britain were the

Labour Party, Workers Against Racism, the distinguished scholar of African history, Basil Davidson, and Lord Avebury.

Nearly 2,000 Eritreans attended the congresses. The opening speech stressed how the Ethiopian regime (the Dergue) and the Soviet Union aim to crush the Eritrean revolution through the use of nerve gas, attacks on neighbouring Sudan and Somalia and deploying Soviet generals in the field. However, the recent 6th offensive, which had aimed to crush the Eritrean revolution, had been decisively defeated. The events in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East show that those who genuinely support self-determination are few. They "show that self-reliance and stepped up mobilisation of our own forces are the only guarantee of victory".

A delegation of the EPLF came from the field to attend the congresses. It was headed by Comrade Sabhat Efraim, member of the Political Bureau

SMASH POLICE CENSORSHIP ON IRELAND!

On Saturday, 24th July, at 4 p.m. the Tooting Police arrested six supporters of the South London Irish Solidarity Committee (SLISC) whilst they were taking part in a street meeting in Balham. The six are Gerald Denver, Ace Kelly, Terry O'Halloran, Seamus O'Mahony, Chris Procter and Adrian Pyke. They have all been charged with "obstruction of the highway". The six comrades were

- Held for seven hours.

- A black comrade, Ace Kelly, was singled out for "special treatment". His shoes were taken from him forcibly, he was manhandled and he was the last to be released.

- An Irish comrade was threatened with "special questioning".

- the SLISC solicitor was told by Inspector Newark that one reason for the arrests was that the six were "pro-Irish".

When the six appeared in court on Monday, 26th July the police applied for a bail condition banning the six from all political activity in the Balham and Tooting areas! Their application was refused, but the application itself is unheard of for what is supposedly a trivial and non-political charge. The police action vividly shows that their campaign of harassment has nothing whatsoever to do with "obstruction of the highway" but is a part of a systematic attempt to silence those with whom they disagree, in particular to prevent them from taking their message to the working class and the oppressed.

SUSTAINED HARASSMENT

The South and North London Irish Solidarity Committees have been conducting vigorous anti-imperialist mass work amongst the working and oppressed people of London. They have continuously sought to draw the links between the British state's war against the Irish people, its war against black people and its attacks on the living standards of the working class as a whole. The ruling class and their police force have been frightened by the princi-

pled work undertaken by these two committees. They do not want working class people to see the connections between their struggles and those of the Irish people. They do not want working class people to draw lessons from the Irish struggle. That is why the police have determined to force the two committees off the streets.



Photo: FRI

Apart from the case of the Balham 6, members of the two committees have faced police harassment when going about their mass work on no fewer than 13 occasions this year. A total of 6 comrades have been arrested on three other occasions. According to the police, making speeches and selling anti-racist and anti-imperialist literature on the streets is a crime. The situation will undoubtedly become worse with the appointment of Sir Kenneth Newman, torturer of more than 13,000 Irish people while chief of the RUC from 1976-79, to the post of head of the Metropolitan Police.

The North and South London Irish Solidarity Committees refuse to be intimidated and driven off the streets by the police. They are vigorously continuing with their work. This work is in defence of the democratic rights which all working and oppressed people need to conduct their struggles against racism, unemployment and poverty.

The time to fight for democratic rights is now.

SMASH POLICE CENSORSHIP!

DROP THE CHARGES NOW!

VICTORY TO THE IRISH PEOPLE!

TROOPS OUT NOW!



An EPLA tank unit manoeuvring for position

and Head of the Department of Mass Organisations. In presenting the message of the EPLF, he stressed that the Soviet Union seeks bases in the region for its overall hegemonist designs in the region and in the world. Therefore, the Soviets want to crush the EPLF even more than the Dergue do because the self-reliant revolutionary struggle of the EPLF is a major barrier to the Soviet Union's hegemonist designs.

On the second day Comrade Sabhat Efraim held a separate

meeting with the fraternal delegations to brief them and answer their questions.

In this issue of "Class Struggle" we print the message of greetings from the RCLB delivered at the congresses on the afternoon of the first day. In subsequent issues we will use the information supplied by Comrade Sabhat Efraim and other Eritrean comrades to explain the current military, political and relief situations in Eritrea and the surrounding region.

Editorial: Trends in Struggle after defeat of the ASLEF Strike.

The present government has launched an economic and political offensive against the working class and the oppressed. In order to overcome the capitalist crisis it aims to drive down the working class standard of living, to make them pay for the crisis, and to be able to do this it must eliminate the hard-won democratic rights that the working class needs for its struggles. Thus the economic and political attacks on the working class and the oppressed form two parts of a single reactionary strategy for survival on the part of British imperialism.

In its war against the organised working class the government has inflicted substantial defeats. Unemployment continues to rise, surpassing all previous levels; wages are cut, the health service dismantled, unemployment and social security benefits are taxed and cut, and vicious anti-trade union laws are enacted.

Faced with this sustained and conscious attack, the organised trade union movement can only retreat. The National Union of Railwaymen struck on 28th June. Their strike finished after 48 hours. NUR boss Weighell had ensured, by his continuous attacks on the train drivers union ASLEF, that his men would have to fight alone. Shortly afterwards, ASLEF went on strike. They were crushed not by the bosses or the state, but by the TUC who threatened to drive ASLEF out of the trade union movement unless they toed the line. From this we can see what an obstacle the trade union leadership has become to genuine working class struggle. Trade Union struggles are conducted in an isolated and sectional way that can only lead to defeat. And if a struggle shows signs of becoming a political struggle against the state, then the TUC is on hand to police the working class.

The defeat of the ASLEF strike marks a major step in the decay of conventional trade unionism. The trade union leadership (which has done nothing to defend black people and supports the imperialist war in Ireland) overwhelmingly gave its support to the imperialist war against Argentina, only to have the "Falklands Factor" thrown back in their faces a few days later.

In a speech on July 3rd, Thatcher said: "If the lessons of the South Atlantic are to be learned, then they have to be learned by us all. No-one can afford to be left out. And yet on Tuesday night, eight men, the leaders of ASLEF, misunderstanding the mood of the nation, set out to bring the railways to a halt. What has happened is that now, once again, Britain is not prepared to be pushed around. We have ceased to be a nation in retreat. We have instead a new-found confidence, born in the economic battles at home, and tested and found true 8,000 miles away."

The ruling class has to be thanked for having raised the struggle to a political level, and placing the question of Empire in the spotlight. 'The Sun' earned the hatred of railway workers for its reactionary attacks on them. Revolutionaries have to build on this experience and raise it to the level where they

will also reject the media's pro-imperialist reporting on Ireland, Argentina, etc. and thus grasp the connection between imperialism and class oppression.

It goes without saying that we don't welcome Thatcher's victories, on the contrary anything which punctures her arrogance and allows a respite to the working class would be good. At the same time we realise soberly that there are good reasons why these defeats are being sustained, and they will lead to a gain in consciousness. Reported remarks of the ASLEF strikers show that they are extremely bitter not only towards a typical trade union bureaucrat like Weighell, but also towards the whole TUC leadership which failed to back them. Dialectically, the present struggles are pointed into a reformist dead end and are thus not part of the struggle for revolution, but the experience to which they give rise can provide a basis - among some elements - for the growth of something different; and thus from an historical point of view these struggles become transformed into their opposite, from something peripheral into something not peripheral at all, namely a struggle directed against the imperialist state.

The basis of trade unionism

First we have to examine the basis of trade unionism. Marxism shows that the experience of being organised in industry (by capital) gives the proletariat a feeling for organisation which is undoubtedly one of its major assets. Isolated, the working people can easily be ground down by capital. "United we are standing, but divided we will fall", in the words of a song by US Labour leader Joe Hill. Hill's own work (concentrated as it was amongst poor immigrant and national minority workers) is testimony to the fact that this important sentiment articulates itself precisely most fiercely through the demands of the oppressed national minority workers who are ground down to a point where, without organisation, they have nothing. Our own experience in industrial work allows us to say with confidence that among these sections of the class the same idea is voiced as freshly as ever.

But only to be frustrated and betrayed by the official Trade Union structures. In a sense we can say that historical processes have transformed this phenomenon - the organisation of labour in trade union structures - into its opposite. In other words, it becomes an element for oppressing the working class. The trade unions are incorporated into the fabric of bourgeois society, where they play a "responsible" role as part of the superstructure, witnessed most recently by the obscene "elevation" of "miners' leader" Gormley to the House of Lords. Thus, organisations which originally were very proletarian indeed are turned into bourgeois organisations, against which a proletarian trend continually reasserts itself, only to have to hammer against the reactionary structures.

It is often said that the present government is trying to turn the clock back, to claw back concessions won by the working class in the early

days of trade unionism, and thus, by posing the issues of working class survival more starkly, it will perhaps create its own opposite by resuscitating the militant spirit of the early days. This analysis has some value but by itself it is grossly inadequate if we imagine for one moment that we can abstract the class struggle in Britain from the place that Britain takes up in the world, from the imperialist (decaying imperialist) character of Britain today. "And so there is created that bond between imperialism and opportunism, which revealed itself first and most clearly in England." - Lenin. "You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general. There is no workers' party here... and the workers gaily share the feast of the world's monopoly of the world market and the colonies" - Engels. "After occupying myself with the Irish question for many years I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against the English ruling class... cannot be delivered in England but only in Ireland." - Marx. This standpoint of the revolutionary teachers must be the starting point for work to organise a fightback today. Such a starting point - which entails building fighting anti-imperialist organisations amongst the working class - will enable the struggle to be taken not backwards to an era of more militant trade unionism, but forward to a new era of conscious revolutionary struggle to overthrow imperialism and build socialism.

Democratic rights and national struggle

In terms of industrial working class struggle, what are the results of this proposition? Basically, that the struggles in question are objectively rendered (i) more political and (ii) more peripheral. What do we mean by this? Well much of our concern in developing theory should be to get deeply into the essence of Marx's analysis in order - creatively and dialectically - to see how the fundamental trends he analysed assert themselves under contradictory forms, under conditions of decaying imperialism (and hence to draw the strategic and tactical conclusions). In "Wages, Price & Profit" and other writings, he demolished the argument that it is pointless for the working class to struggle for a better share of the "bowl of soup" (or national cake) under conditions of capitalism (and this remains a valid point); at the same time he clearly regarded this mode of the class struggle as a limited one, and stressed that the really important point was to make the leap to the revolutionary struggle for the abolition of the wages system.

Now, our understanding is that the present capitalist offensive against the living standards of the working class, which occurs under conditions of decaying imperialism, is by no means just an episode in the round of to-ing and fro-ing over shares in the "cake", the challenge which it poses is by no means purely "economic" but is in fact eminently political - as the Falklands factor amply demonstrates.

The anti-imperialist struggle, manifested in the rise of the Third World, forces the monopoly capitalist class to push the burden of the crisis more and more on to the working class at home, to claw back the concessions it was able to give in a period of rising imperialism. It is this attempt by the rich to make the people pay for the crisis that prompts the economic fightback. But for that economic fightback to take place the working class needs the democratic rights it struggled to achieve. That is why the economic and political attacks of the rich are two parts of a single whole. That is why it is in the direct and immediate interests of the working class to oppose the attacks on the right to sell socialist newspapers, hold street meetings, etc. The struggle of the industrial working class has thus become part of the overall struggle for democratic rights against fascism. In its objective significance it is elevated to a more political level, while in the same breath it has to be regarded as relatively peripheral, at least in the sense that the leading element in the overall anti-imperialist struggle for democratic rights lies elsewhere.

Class and national struggle

Globally, in the era of imperialism, national struggles are in essence class struggle, they are class struggle in a less "direct" form, but at the same time the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist perspective allows us - unlike Trotskyites and revisionists - to grasp dialectically that this form is also a more advanced and crucial manifestation of class struggle. Now the world crisis is "bringing it all back home", and these world phenomena are imploded with increased force into the imperialist countries themselves. So we can say that the issues posed by the current offensive against the organised working class objectively invests its struggles with an important significance while at the same time placing them within a wider context where the leading role is played by those sections of the working class with national contradictions with the British state, in particular black and Irish youth, as epitomised in struggles such as those of the Bradford 12. It is a struggle for democratic rights which at the same time directly and inescapably poses the issue of imperialism.

The SWP says that it looks forward to the day (in talking about Ireland) when the present national issues will be replaced by class issues. Since by the latter they mean British-style bourgeois trade unionism, this should be relatively easy to criticise. What must be done is to take that as the starting point and develop the critique to the point of recognising the leading role which can be played by struggles for national self-assertion whether in Ireland, Poland, Afghanistan or amongst black people in Britain. Marx viewed the proletariat's class struggle as one where it could not liberate itself without liberating the whole of humanity. Applying this principle creatively to the era of imperialism we can see that it is the oppressed nations which incarnate this charac-

teristic of the class struggle most fully, since the whole exploitative system is built upon them, in particular upon their workers and peasants.

There is a point of junction between national struggles and the present issues of struggle posed to the whole of the working class. This has to do with the fact that most national minority people are workers, but this fact in itself does not furnish the full explanation. The essential point is that they have the potential to inject into the broader working class struggles an element arising from their national demands, which in turn draws on their continuing links with the countries of the third world, or parts of Europe (Ireland, southern Italy, etc.) with conditions broadly akin to those of the third world. The national minority people see their direct oppressor as being the state and thereby direct their struggles at the state, which is the crucial question in revolutionary struggle. Their impulse to an organised fightback, which arises inexorably in the struggles to defend their communities, is the element which can reawaken the spark among sectors of the working class at large, thus negating the negation wrought by bourgeois trade unionism.

Coming struggles

Among the major struggles of the coming period are those of the health workers and miners. In our view these will have an important bearing on the long-term struggle.

In the period since World War II the value of labour power, besides being established at a somewhat higher level, also split into two segments, of which that received indirectly in the form of the so-called "social wage" has the advantage from the capitalist point of view of being less easily defensible by conventional means like strike action. In the current attempt to drive down the value of labour power, a crucial element in capitalist state strategy pioneered by the Labour Party is through cuts in "social services". The current struggle of the health service workers thus has a significance far beyond the scope of just one section of the working class. In its lowest, most militant strata, the health service includes some of the most heavily exploited and oppressed workers in the country, a large proportion of them being from black, Irish and other national minorities, often women. Their struggle thus constitutes an important field in which the processes we have been talking about will occur, and indeed radiate in the direction of other groups of workers, whose solidarity with the health workers is of tremendous importance. The miners are a section of workers who are exceptionally oppressed in terms of the hard conditions of work, and of health and safety, which incidentally also leads them to understand particularly sharply the significance of the health service as an essential part of the value of labour power. Also, the miners, not just at a workplace level but also at a community level, have preserved much of the original working class collective consciousness. This does not spontaneously generate anti-imperialism but is a basis on which anti-imperialism can quickly arise given a spark

to ignite it. A remarkable television programme which somehow crept onto BBC TV showed the great anti-imperialist fighter Joris Ivens meeting and presenting a selection of his films to a group of English miners and their families, and it was very clear that by coming into contact with a true presentation of third world struggles (e.g. Indonesia in the 1940s) which bourgeois ideology had suppressed, these workers' consciousness could rise to a really anti-imperialist level at which it is pretty certain the "Falklands spirit" could not gain much of a foothold.

Imperialism was the condition for the value of labour power to be established at its higher level (given the absence of a real fighting labour movement). However, this does not mean that the present struggle to preserve as much as possible against the capitalist onslaught goes in the direction of preserving imperialism; on the contrary it is enslavement to imperialism which is the main obstacle in conducting it. In this situation the task of revolutionaries is clear - to go deep into the working class and build fighting anti-imperialist organisations that can both defend the short-term interests of the class, and fight for the long-term interests. From such organisations will be trained the cadre who will be able to build a party based on a thoroughgoing integration with, and application of, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought to the concrete conditions of the revolution in Britain.

No-Strike Agreement

By an NHS Shop Steward,
Birmingham.

Despite the lack of clear leadership from the TUC, the support for the Health Service pay dispute has been very good. Links have been made with other groups of workers and co-operation has been strengthened within individual hospitals.

There is perhaps an issue bigger than immediate pay which is now looming on the horizon. That is the permanent pay-review body on NHS pay which is already being discussed nationally by the government and the unions. Certainly, the government wants to link this with a no-strike agreement.

Obviously, no one working for the NHS wants to go on strike; but at the end of the day we need to keep that basic democratic right if workers are to be able to safeguard their interests as employees.

A permanent pay review body plus a no-strike agreement would either reduce the role of the unions or be part of incorporating the unions even further within the bosses' state apparatus. Either way, it would reduce the involvement of the membership in the running of the unions on major issues.

"Class Struggle" Correspondent

Over 100 employees of Air India in London are on strike to demand their reinstatement by management. In May, the management tore up a joint consultation agreement with the unions and then immediately attempted to impose a new roster which, the strike committee claims, would mean a £1,000 a year loss in shift allowance and would lead to redundancies. When a less drastic change was imposed at Heathrow a shop steward objected, pointing out that the union had not been consulted, as agreed. He was promptly suspended for alleged bad timekeeping and then sacked on 2nd July. 100 workers then went on strike and were sacked for taking "illegal" and "unauthorised" strike action. The dismissals were based on an Indian law, the "Essential Services Maintenance Order", which makes strikes in certain sectors illegal.

The workers staged a demonstration, passing Air India offices, and India House, to a rally on August 16th. Strike Committee spokesman, Furuz Darwalla, said:

"Whether it is ASLEF, the hospital workers or Air India, what is happening is an all-out attack on the working class people of this country."

He went on to say that with collaboration from the Indira Gandhi regime and British immigration officials, scab labour was being brought into the country.

AIR-INDIA STRIKE



The strike is supported by the Transport & General Workers Union. The strikers' branch secretary, Mala Dhondy, said the workers would hold out for months if necessary.

"We will not lie down quietly so they can walk all over us."

Surender Cheema of the Indian Workers' Front (Southall) called for a campaign to win the support of the local community around Heathrow. The shop steward's chairman of the Irish airline, Aer Lingus, Sean Lynch, said, "We are totally behind you." In the best traditions of international working class solidarity, workers at Heathrow from Aer Lingus and most other foreign airlines are blacking any cargo agents who cross

Air India picket lines.

Donations and messages of support to: Transport House, 7-9 South Road, Southall, Middlesex. Cheques to be made payable to AI TGWU.

from Page 1

further onto the defensive: against redundancies, against flexible rostering, etc., rather than for improved pay and conditions.

(Of course, unemployment must then be made as unattractive as possible. This the government is doing by: keeping unemployment benefit increases below the rate of inflation, i.e. cutting them, ending earnings related supplement and taxing unemployment benefit, which working people have already paid for out of their National Insurance contributions.)

This is the "method" in the Tory "madness": terrorise the working class into slaving away to build up the fortunes of the British imperialists.

However, the contradictions of capitalism are fundamentally insoluble. Within the reserve army of labour there grows a deep and burning sense of injustice and resentment, from which is born a spirit of rebellion amongst those who know that capitalism has no future to offer them, who have no stake in the system, and nothing left to lose. This is what Norman Tebbit means when he talks about "strains on the social fabric". It was such people, in particular "the youth of no property", led by the black youth, who formed the backbone of the uprisings of last summer. Further revolutionary outbursts will occur and develop in intensity and frequency.

BUILD THE FIGHTBACK!

Provoked beyond endurance the oppressed must fight back. The oppressed are fighting back! Genuine communists unconditionally support the oppressed when they rise up. Increasingly, the task will be to build fighting organisations that will be able to guide the coming revolutionary storms along a path of conscious and organised revolutionary struggle.

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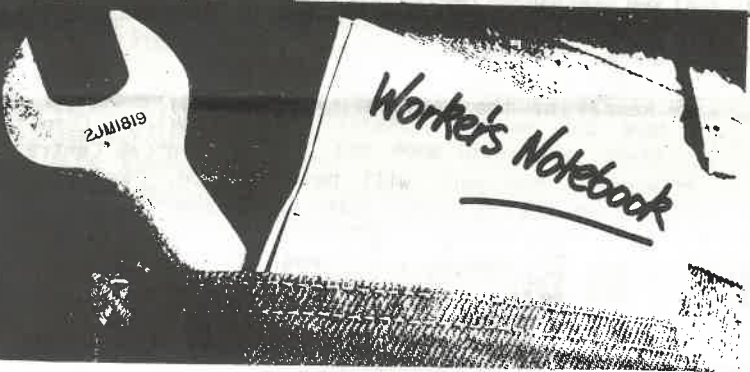
Health Workers' Notebook

Working class solidarity is now a crime. On 13th August Fleet Street electricians' leader, Sean Geraghty, became the first trade unionist to be fined under the Tory Government's anti-union laws. A High Court judge ordered him to pay £350 for not doing enough to halt a strike in support of the health workers which stopped the production of capitalist daily newspapers on Wednesday, 11th August. Geraghty was also ordered to pay costs estimated to be in the region of several thousand pounds. Like other workers in struggle, Sean Geraghty has to fight not only the bosses and their courts, but also the trade union misleaders. He has been attacked by the leader of one of the Health Service unions, and the TUC have done nothing to support him. His own union leader, notorious right-winger Frank Chapple, is trying to prevent any further solidarity actions by the Fleet Street electricians. Sean Geraghty said that in 20 years of trade union activity he has learned never to expect the support of his union's general secretary or executive council.

It is becoming very clear that the health service workers are fighting to preserve the health service and that the government is trying to destroy it. For example, health service cuts are to lead to closures at the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, most likely resulting in the closure and subsequent sale of its 106-bed unit in Surrey which treats orthopaedic and cystic fibrosis patients, as well as multiple-handicapped children. Another possibility is the ending of a number of specialist treatments which only Great Ormond Street can provide.

Meanwhile, the government shows its contempt for the health workers. Whilst there is alleged to be no money to pay the health workers, the overpaid police have been given a 10% pay increase so that they can better attack workers' picket lines, harass political activists, persecute black people and engage in corrupt dealings with gangland bosses.

Health workers in the north of Ireland have been very active in the current struggle, and have gained strong support from other sectors of the working class. They do, however, have to cope with some very dangerous opportunists. Members of the Workers' Party (formerly the "Officials" or "Stickies"), who have an anti-nationalist and pro-British line, have infiltrated a number of Strike Committees. At the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, one of these elements actually publically thanked the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) for their services at the picket line. The RUC has just celebrated 60 years of murder, torture, terror and repression against the nationalist working class of the north of Ireland. Those political forces that defend and praise this murdering scum have to be driven completely from the ranks of the working class movement.



Employers' vindictiveness has its petty side as eleven factory workers have recently discovered. When 40 workers were made redundant by Peak Engineering Company at Stratford-upon-Avon, eleven fought against the sack by claiming unfair dismissal. Not surprisingly, an industrial tribunal disregarded their case. The company's spite against the workers who resisted was expressed in their decision to ban the eleven from the social and sports club. One of them, Mr Keeley, aged 57, had recently received an inscribed trophy for his long service to the club. Those who didn't appeal against the sack are still allowed to use the club.

With long-term unemployment as Britain's fastest growth industry, and with more than a million people unemployed over a year, the repercussions are literally deadly. Not every one can cope with the distress, depression and degradation that unemployment brings. In Bradford, for example, a 48-year-old jobless bricklayer committed suicide because he had run out of money, and the bureaucratic chaos and carelessness of his local SS (social security) office left him in a pit of despair.

The growing extent of the crisis is reflected in the composition of those standing in the dole office queues. In Birmingham 3 dons (the first of 47 Aston University staff who were made redundant this summer) can pass the time with the deputy mayor of Solihull and a former mayor of Dudley. One of the lecturers spoke for them all: "I never expected this to happen in my life. I'm a bit sick about it." They are experiencing the grim reality that has long plagued the working class.

Not only is a purpose-built skill centre at Dudley, West Midlands, to be closed after 18 months as an "economy measure", but a rent of over £1½ million is still to be paid over the next 3 years. Such is the absurd logic under capitalism, that rents are honoured while people suffer. Not only are the unemployed denied retraining facilities, but the rent for the empty building would maintain the needed 50-bed old people's home, Witton Hall, which is being closed 10 miles away due to the cut in the social services budget.

Despite massive profits, British Gas is likely to announce a further rise in prices in the next few months. A large part of this will be due to the Gas Tax imposed by Energy Secretary Nigel Lawson which amounts to £600 million a year. This works out at about £40 per head of population.

A vigorous campaign is being built in Leeds against police harassment of working class youth. Originally known as the Precinct Two Defence Campaign, it was set up to defend two people, Les Haw and Mohan Pipial, who were arrested in Leeds City Centre on 17th July and charged with "threatening and abusive behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace". However, from the start the campaign also saw its role as being to fight back against police harassment and fascist attacks which affect black and anti-racist white youth in Leeds. For example, on 31st July fascists attacked a vigil in commemoration of two Irish hunger strikers.

The Committee's first march took place on 31st July. Over 60 youths kept up militant shouting throughout the march. "STOP POLICE HARASSMENT! DEFEND THE PRECINCT TWO!" "WHO BREACH THE PEACE? POLICE BREACH THE PEACE!" and "WHOSE CONSPIRACY? POLICE CONSPIRACY"

Speakers at a rally after the march stressed that the youth could only rely on themselves. Every youth victimised had

to be defended. Such campaigns were the beginning of a revolutionary movement.

Around 80 youth defied police harassment to take part in a second demonstration on 6th August. At a rally Les Haw told how the police had threatened to arrest anyone who gathered in Leeds Lane Precinct, where the campaign had held a street meeting the week before. "No arrests were made on this occasion. However, such unauthorised gatherings and rallies will not in any way be tolerated in the future."

After the rally about 15 youths went off to give out leaflets, collect signatures on petitions and sell newspapers. Les Haw, Tony Lalley and Chas Andrews were arrested and charged with "obstruction of the highway" - which is at least 20 yards wide.

The Precinct 5 Defence Campaign held a march on 21st August. After the march people intended to move off

to conduct mass work in the area. The police approached and said that they were causing an obstruction and should either sit down or move on. The youth then sat down on the wall of a fountain. Mohan Pipial was then grabbed by a cop. When he tried to defend himself he was overpowered by four police, dragged to a police van and beaten up.

Several youth then moved off towards Headrow. Garvey Harris was stopped by the police and told to move on and hurry up. When he turned round to speak to a friend he was arrested for allegedly calling a policeman names. Five policemen dragged him to a van. He was later found to have suffered a perforated eardrum. When Les Haw protested at these arrests he was set upon by five policemen who knocked him to the ground. The police punched, kneed and handcuffed him. This caused Les Haw to have an epileptic fit. In spite of the protests

of onlookers the police refused to take off his handcuffs. The police looked on as Les Haw screamed and hit his head on the pavement. Whilst still going through convulsions two policemen carried him off and threw him into the police van. A crowd of over a hundred stood and watched in horror.

A picket of Bridewell police station, where the three were being held, was immediately mounted by 20 youth. National and local press, councillors and M.P.s were contacted. Their numerous enquiries led the police to issue a brief press statement which denied that the arrests had any connection with the earlier demonstration against police harassment and said that the three were arrested for "threatening and abusive behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace". The three were held on remand until their court appearance on Monday, 23rd August. At the court hearing the police applied for the youths to be

remanded in custody to stop them from organising politically in their defence. Two were given bail, but one, Mohan Pipial, who is still in his teens, has been remanded in custody.

These arrests are clearly political and aim to prevent the youth from organising in their own defence. In the past five weeks, ten black and anti-racist white youths have been arrested in Leeds City Centre. Such intimidation aims to deter the youth from fighting back. But the Defence Committee say:

"In fact it has strengthened our resolve to continue the struggle for the right to walk the streets free from police harassment and to engage in legitimate political activity"

Mohan Pipial would welcome cards and messages of solidarity. They should be sent to: Mohan Pipial (Remand Prisoner) Thorpe Arch, Wetherby, Yorks.

The Campaign urgently needs money to continue its work. Send to: Precinct 6 Defence Campaign, c/o LAP, 58 Cookridge Street, Leeds 2.

DEFEND THE PRECINCT 6!

Free Phil Robins!



In the July issue of "Class Struggle" we outlined the case of Phil Robins, the black foot baller who, during the Liverpool 8 Uprising of last year, was shot and badly maimed by the Liverpool police and then framed by them for burglary and sent to prison.

Not content with all this, Phil is being given a hard time in prison. He has lost 14 days' remission, was kept in solitary for 14 days, and lost "privileges" for exercising his right to ask for a proper medical examination. Police officers have visited him to harass him over his complaint against the Liverpool police.

The Free Phil Robins Campaign is vigorously working to defend Phil and other victims of the Liverpool police terror. They have got 7 M.P.s to take up his case. However, they direct their main work to the working and oppressed people of Liverpool. Every Saturday street meetings are held. A petition has 4,000 signatures - the aim is 10,000. Over 3,000 leaflets have been distributed. Working class areas were flyposted with posters depicting Phil's wounds. They were hurriedly removed by riot police.

On 26th August the Campaign held a spirited picket of Preston prison where Phil is being held. For 2 hours slogans such as, "Free Phil Robins: Shot, Maimed, Framed!" were shouted to a good response from passersby. The Campaign can be contacted at P.O. Box 52, Liverpool L69 8AT.

No Deportations - Defend the Bradford 18

From: The Joint Anti-Deportation Committee

There are in Bradford 8 separate families and individuals facing removal or deportation. The total amounts to 18 people including British-born children.

Bradford's black community is facing many attacks. Racist attacks are on the increase; the Bradford 12 trial showed that activists who resist are under danger of internment. Now, Bradford is facing mass expulsions. Nearly all the cases involve

people who have lived here for ten years or more. The Home Office is refusing to show any discretion or compassion.

The Bradford Joint Anti-Deportation Committee has been formed to co-ordinate the activity of each campaign and to fund-raise locally and nationally. We hope to organise national events in the near future, around the demands of:

1. A moratorium on all deportations and removals.
2. A new amnesty, ten years

after coming into effect of the 1971 Immigration Act.

3. No removals or deportations where British-born children are involved.
4. An independent body of black organisations, trade unions and M.P.s to look at cases of discretion, and not Home Office civil servants.
5. Repeal of the racist 1971 Immigration Act.
6. Repeal of the Nationality Act.

Primarily, our work will be to support the individual cam-

paigns. But we feel that the issues involved must now be generalised before we face a veritable tidal wave of unjust and racist repatriations from Britain.

We ask you, therefore, to support the Bradford Joint Anti-Deportation Committee. We ask you to affiliate and send generous donations, in view of the number of people involved, and support our activities.

Contact: Bradford Joint Anti-Deportation Committee, c/o Bradford Law Centre, Sedgfield Terrace, Westgate, Bradford BD1 2RU.

Palestine Solidarity in Birmingham



In various parts of the country the Revolutionary Communist League has actively taken up work to support the Palestinian people, seeing it as being fully inter-related with our revolutionary tasks in Britain. The following report from our comrades in Birmingham outlines the development of the work there, and points to the real allies of the Palestinian revolution in Britain.

A representative of the PLO, Uri Davis anti-Zionist Jew, Ernie Ross from the Trade Union Friends of Palestine, and a local trade unionist spoke to a packed meeting of 400 people in Birmingham on August 4th. The meeting strongly condemned the Zionist genocide in Lebanon, and fully supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination. A collection to support the struggle raised over £500, and many hundreds more were promised.

This meeting was organised by the Birmingham Solidarity Committee in support of the Palestinian People, which was set up in July this year amid the usual interminable wrangles between the various shades of opportunists. The revisionist CPGB, for example, proposed that the planned public meeting be deferred until we had "mobilised the working class" - to which a comrade responded that perhaps we should request that Begin delay his plans to bombard Beirut! The revisionists have fought against the committee taking an anti-imperialist political line. The Trotsky-

ists were defeated in an attempt to promote a certain Mr Tariq Ali, ex(?) IMG, present Labour Party member, as a speaker at the above-mentioned public meeting, on the spurious grounds that he would draw in the "ethnic minorities". This argument was treated with a fair degree of scepticism by the national minority people present. They were not convinced that their communities needed the likes of Tariq Ali to tell them to support the Palestinian people!

In spite of these problems, the committee has organised several street events, where leaflets were handed out and signatures collected on petitions. Coaches were organised to take people to London for a demonstration, and a

successful public meeting was held. Large numbers of trade union branches have been circulated and asked to pass resolutions condemning the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and supporting the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Mosques, temples and Gurdwaras have been visited and asked for support. Future meetings and rallies are being planned. National minority organisations have also organised their own, independent work, such as a major rally on Sunday, August 22nd, called by the Kashmiri Workers' Association.

The composition of the committee sounds very impressive. It is well peopled by revisionists and an assortment of Trotskyist organisations,

but when it comes to filling coaches for a demonstration, attending public meetings, raising money, etc. the real support comes from the national minority communities. It is they who have a truly internationalist perspective, and grasp the link between imperialist oppression here and overseas. Whilst it is correct to campaign for the Palestinians' right to self-determination, and expose Zionist/imperialist genocide in Lebanon within the working class as a whole, we must recognise where, at this stage, the most staunch support for the Palestinian people and the anti-imperialist struggle in general is to be found - and not regard national minority people as peripheral, as do the revisionists and Trotskyists alike.

The level of support from the national minority people is shown clearly by the large numbers of Asian youth who have expressed a desire to volunteer and fight alongside the Palestinian people. This magnificent gesture of proletarian internationalism shows once again where the real forces for revolution are to be found in this country.

With the involvement of major national minority organisations and Birmingham Campaign against Racism and Fascism, who are united against the opportunists, it is hoped that the work of the committee will continue, and we aim to work with Palestinian people here to build a genuine solidarity movement.

Prisons: British Gulag

The government has at last admitted what prisoners, their friends and many progressive people have long known: that in those hellholes of oppression - the British prisons - prisoners are forcibly injected with drugs as punishment, as psychological torture and as a means of turning potential rebels into mindless guinea pigs.

In 1978 a large part of Gartree prison was destroyed when the prisoners rose up in protest against brutality and drug abuse. As a result of information received from one prisoner, Mr X (who has now been transferred from Gartree to Parkhurst), Lord Avebury has taken up the cases of several prisoners. One case concerns the forcible injection of a non-English speaking prisoner, Mr A. Mr A receives daily: 4x150ml doses of Largactil (tranquilliser), and 1x400ml dose of Tuinal (barbiturate). Mr X says:

"Even though the inmate is not committed under the Mental Health Act, he is still being forcibly treated ... by the above drugs. He has been intravenously forcibly administered drugs by medical staff at Gartree. This is a horrific experience for any human being. Now, on every occasion when he refuses to accept the medication orally, he is threatened by staff they will again inject him."

In a letter to Lord Avebury, Lord Elton, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, has confirmed the allegations of Mr X concerning Mr A.

In a further admission, the Home Office say that a Mr B has been "administered an injection without his consent." The prisoner claims to have been injected with Paraldehyde, whose main feature, according to the British Medical Association

(BMA) is that as an injection it is extremely painful for the recipient. There are now far better drugs available.

According to Dr Whitehead of the BMA the drug commonly causes the formation of abscesses after injection. Mr B spent two days after a leg injury asking for pain killers. He was refused. Driven beyond endurance he smashed up his cell in protest. According to Lord Avebury:

"Apparently there was no difficulty in finding a doctor when it came to the destruction of property, as opposed to human suffering. Immediately Mr B was transferred to a padded cell, stripped naked, and injected on both sides of his bottom with paraldehyde. These injections were given against his will."

Lord Avebury says that what he has managed to uncover is "only the tip of the iceberg". Even what types of drugs are used in the prisons is "classified information".

THE STATE

The state is an instrument for the violent suppression of the working class and the oppressed. The prisons have a key role to play. They are full of working class people who in one way or another have "stepped out of line". Their example of brutality is used to warn and terrorise the entire working class. But where there is oppression, there is resistance, and the state is terrified by the revolutionary class fighters who are developing within the prisons. "Class Struggle" has been told of the classes in communism given by Scottish republican prisoners in Peterhead prison.

The state fears the revolutionary stand and example of the Irish prisoners of war, in particular the effect that they are having on the black prisoners, as was shown in the Home Office report on the Wormwood Scrubs riot (see April issue of "Class Struggle"). The forcible use of drugs is a cynical and brutal move by the authorities to strike terror into all prisoners and make them docile idiots rather than angry fighters. The British imperialists hypocritically condemn the misuse of drugs in Soviet prisons. But now even on the government's own admission we can see that the British state carries out precisely the same evil policies.

SAVE DAVID KITSON'S LIFE!

David Kitson is serving his 18th year of a 20 year sentence as a political prisoner in South Africa for being part of the fight against the barbaric apartheid regime. He is a British citizen and was a member of the African National Congress.

David Kitson's treatment shows what happens to those who take the side of humanity against the barbaric regime in South Africa. The South African racist regime have carried out a systematic attack on David Kitson in their vain attempt to isolate and demoralise him in the last years of his sentence:

- * They have delayed his letters for up to 3 months.
- * They arrested, detained and tortured David Kitson's son Steven whilst he was visiting his father. Only a public campaign in Britain got Steven released.
- * They murdered David Kitson's main contact with the outside world, his sister-in-law Joan Alison Weinberg, only hours after Steven's release.
- * They kept David Kitson without heating or hot water in bitter cold winter blizzards and below-zero temperatures.

David Kitson has bronchitis again and his health is deteriorating. He is over 60 years old and they are trying to murder him because they cannot break his spirit. They have repeatedly said over the last 18 months that they will move David Kitson and other prisoners to a jail with better conditions. They have failed to do this.

The South African authorities have now set up a remission board to review the sentences



of 'security' prisoners. They will not say when David's case will be reviewed and it is feared that delay leaves David seriously at risk. David Kitson's family have decided that pressure must be put on the South African regime now to save David's life and release him.

Norma, Amandla and Steven Kitson began a picket of South Africa House, Trafalgar Square London from 25th August (David's 63rd birthday) which they aim to continue non-stop until something is done to improve David's conditions. They are calling for help and support in doing this. They hope that you and your friends will join them on the picket and raise the plight of other political prisoners in South African jails.

The City branch of the Anti-Apartheid Movement is calling for the maximum possible support for the picket from organisations and individuals. Norma, Amandla and Steven will need help and support, including at night, overnight and with food supplies.

For further details contact: City Branch Anti-Apartheid, c/o 22 Brownlow Mews, London W.C.1.

Snoopers Foiled

"Class Struggle" Correspondent

Special teams of investigators have been descending on various areas in Liverpool to intimidate claimants and prevent them putting in for entitlements under the guise of preventing people making false claims. But they haven't been getting it all their own way.

Last January the Merseyside Campaign against Social Security Cuts inundated Netherley with leaflets explaining to claimants their rights, and held three demonstrations outside the dole there. When the snoopers arrived on the estate they got doors slammed in their faces. Claimants never faced an interview alone. The most important thing was that two people always accompanied claimants. Instead of one claimant facing two investigators, it was two investigators facing three people; as well as the claimant, one person would take detailed notes and the third would simply stand up, towering over the investigator. As a result, no-one in Netherley lost benefit, an activist in the campaign told "Class Struggle".

Now the snoopers are about to descend on Speke. Leaflets to warn the residents of the impending blitz were given

out at Speke Carnival and following this a twenty-strong meeting was held on the estate and three campaigners from Netherley explained how they'd dealt with the snoopers, and offered help to the Speke residents in setting up a campaign themselves.

A further sinister development which shows how the DHSS and the Immigration work hand in hand to attack people is that black claimants have been asked to show their passports to the SS. In two cases claimants' passports were taken off them and sent to the Home Office for checking.

The Campaign distributed leaflets through black organisations and the CRC, warning black claimants not to give in their passports without seeking advice first, and asking anyone who suffered harassment in this way to contact the Campaign.

The Campaign has forged links with the unions in the DHSS, namely the CPSA and the SCPS who are opposed to the "fraud squad" and have in many cases refused to co-operate with them; they are hoping to have a joint day of action soon.

For information about the Campaign, contact it c/o Liverpool Welfare Rights Centre, McDonald House, Clayton Square, Liverpool.

The Glorious PLO

A clear cloudless sky
Dotted with the demons of death,
Swoop - with messages to the besieged
"Your end is nigh - Your end is nigh".

Tall, proud, blasted buildings of Beirut.
Stand firm PLO fighters
We are counting the carnage
Your heroism we salute.

To the West - the Armada on the sea,
Shelling songs of sorrow,
Stand firm all you gallant fighters
You will live to fight tomorrow.

Wave after wave
Come the Phantoms of the Yanks.
Bombs on Beirut
Bullets of those butchers
Shells from the sea
Rockets from their tanks
Cannot drown the sound of the screams
Of the dying children and their mothers
Of dying sisters and their brothers
Stand firm PLO fighter
Palestine is what you're after.

"Class Struggle" is very pleased to be able to publish the following poem which has been submitted by Tariq M. Ali, one of the Bradford 12 defendants. The poem clearly shows the revolutionary internationalist bonds linking the anti-imperialists in the oppressed nations and in the imperialist heartlands.

To the Israeli propping Yank,
We understand your every move,
Begin is no madman, nor a raving crank,
Nor a bloody fool.
He is your faithful servant
And just your little tool.

Take heed of what we say
You hypocrites of Arabia.
Neither Reagan, nor Begin,
Nor the bloody CIA
Will save you,
When Palestine makes you pay
For your silence in this butchery.

For your connivance in this genocide,
Your people shall decide,
When your heads, they should roll.
Beirut may be taken,
But the cause of Palestine
That can never fall.

Alas Moubarak, oh Moubarak*
The day it shall come
When we shall silence
the bloody Zionist gun.
Moubarak to the day

(* As well as being the name of the Egyptian President, Moubarak also means 'congratulations' in Arabic and Urdu.)

When you shall go to pray
Alongside of Sadat
Not in the tomb of a Pharaoh
But in the hovel of a rat.

In the year of '48
When the flags of Zion
Dirtied the morning air
The sun rose too late.
Rotting bodies of robbed Palestinians
Littered and scattered everywhere.
The Star of David
Shone from their guns
Shone from their planes
Shone from their tanks,
And the wealth of Arabia
Filled the Yanki banks.

Now in blood-soaked Lebanon
The vulture doesn't dare
To eat of the carnage
For cluster bombs are there.

You Yanki Zionist butchers
Surely you must know
Victorious they shall be
The Glorious PLO!

The Little Black Rose and reggae

- Contributed -

"A cog and a wheel" is how Lenin described the relevance of cultural work in relation to more direct political activity.

In this respect, a BBC commission for this year's Promenade Concerts appears to have misfired from the point of view of the imperialists. For what they got from composer Nigel Osborne in response to a commission for an orchestral work of around a half hour's duration was his "Sinfonia", the two sections of which are subtitled "The Little Black Rose" and "Reggae"; and present, in powerful musical form, Osborne's understanding of the crucial importance of the Irish and Caribbean national minority peoples' position and struggles in the development of the life of this country.

Speaking about the work in advance of its first public performance at the Proms., Nigel Osborne told of the influence on him of an Irish poet friend who described the beauty of the Ulster landscape despoiled by forts. In the Sinfonia, this comes out in the sharp snare drum rattles imposed on a moving string lament which draws on the ancient Irish song "An Roisin Dubh" - "The Little Black Rose" - one of the 'secret' names used for Ireland when her name was forbidden.

The second part, "Reggae", is no cheap imitation of reggae in orchestral terms. Rather, it is a tribute to the spirit and vitality of the music which Osborne finds such an inspiration for the future development of culture in Britain. There are passing references to "Dub" technique - and direct allusion to Bura drumming, an historical antecedent of reggae in the Caribbean.

So far, so good; but how well does the work communicate with the audience? Perhaps the best answer to this was the rapturous reception accorded it. The composer was called back to the rostrum repeatedly to receive the acclaim of the packed arena, where he joined in the applause for the orchestra who had so clearly revelled in playing such a communicative piece, so relatively rare in 'modern' music.

The "Radio Times" noted that, "His Sinfonia reflects the Character and speaks in the accents of the multi-racial Britain of 1982." - Indeed but it surely goes a step further in laying stress on two of the most important sources of revolutionary change in Britain.

Nigel Osborne's "Sinfonia" is indeed a fine work. Its focal cogs mesh well with the wheel of history - with social progress and against reaction.

RCLB GREETES ERITREA

The following is the full text of the message of greetings delivered by the representative of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain at the recently held congresses of the National Unions of Eritrean Workers, Students and Women - Europe, the mass organisations in Europe of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). A report on the Congress appears on the front page of this issue.

Subsequent issues will contain reports from the congresses on the military, political and relief situations in Eritrea, and the neighbouring region:

Respected Comrades from the frontline in Eritrea, Comrades attending the Congresses of the mass organisations of the EPLF in Europe, Comrades and Friends from other fraternal delegations, Comrades and Friends,

The Revolutionary Communist League of Britain extends its greetings to the participants of the Congresses of Eritrean Workers, Students and Women in Europe. It extends its greetings to the comrades who have come here from the frontline of the struggle in Eritrea. The Revolutionary Communist League of Britain is very honoured to be invited to your Congresses. And we are very happy to have come here to participate in your Congresses. We regard this as an occasion for us to extend our unconditional support to the Eritrean people's struggle led by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).

The struggle of the Eritrean people is that of a people of the Third World. Therefore it is a component part of the struggle of the Third World, the main progressive force in world politics today. Furthermore, the Eritrean people's struggle is a part of the struggle of the great African people to liberate

the whole of the African continent. Africa was the primary source of primitive accumulation for rising capitalism. As Marx pointed out in his work, "Capital", Africa was literally turned into a "warren for the hunting of black skins". It was on the basis of the slave trade that the prosperity of the English cities of Bristol and Liverpool, indeed of the City of London, was built. It is not surprising that today, when imperialism is decaying, these cities form the centre of youth uprisings, led by the black youth, the descendants of the slaves on whose backs the British Empire was built, that in July 1981 shook the British ruling class to its foundations. Today the people on the African continent are struggling against the ravages of neo-colonialism. For all these reasons, the African revolution has great significance for world revolution.

Also, the Eritrean people's struggle is a part of the worldwide struggle of the proletariat for socialism. Not only because it is a national liberation movement weakening, disintegrating and undermining imperialism, but also because the EPLF correctly combines class struggle and national struggle, the struggle to emancipate the Eritrean working class and other super-oppressed sections of the Eritrean people, such as Eritrean women, with the struggle to free the Eritrean nation itself. This can be seen in the EPLF's policies on health care, literacy and democratic reforms, in particular the struggle against feudalism. It is for this reason that the EPLF has emerged as the strong vanguard of the Eritrean revolution. It is for this reason that the Eritrean revolution has shown itself to be indestructible. Time and again, the

fascist Ethiopian regime has thrown all its forces against the Eritrean revolution, most recently in the insolently named "Operation Red Star". Yet each Ethiopian offensive has been defeated and crushed, just as the Communist Party of China defeated all the encirclement and suppression campaigns of Chiang Kai-shek. The risen Eritrean people led by the EPLF have faced the might of Soviet social imperialism and its various lackeys, such as the Cubans. The Eritrean people have faced their weapons of genocide, such as poison gas. None of this can crush the Eritrean revolutionaries, because they are fighting a just war for the liberation of their country. The sublime revolutionary sentiment for independence and liberation is always grasped by genuine revolutionaries around the world. The great Irish revolutionary, Bobby Sands, said:

"I have the revolutionary spirit of freedom that cannot be crushed."

And it was this revolutionary spirit of freedom that enabled Bobby Sands to face death after more than 60 agonising days on hunger strike, fully confident in the victory of the Irish revolution.

Comrade Ho Chi Minh also put forward the view that,

"Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom"

In the last few weeks, heroic West Beirut has shown what lengths of heroism the desire for independence, for the homeland, can produce. Comrade Yasser Arafat has aptly termed West Beirut as "the Stalingrad of the Arab revolution".

Korea's revolutionary leader, Comrade Kim Il Sung, has said,

"Independence is what keeps

The Soviet Union has simply stood by and left the Palestinians in the lurch. Even King Hussein of Jordan, himself the perpetrator of the September 1970 massacre of Palestinians, tried vainly to persuade the Russians to commit themselves more strongly to opposing Israeli aggression, but all they would do was advise the Arab regimes to unite first. About the strongest action which the Soviet leadership has taken - worried no doubt about their future success as salesmen of death - is to issue a Tass statement refuting the "lying information" according to which the Israeli victories over Syria reflect the superiority of American arms over Soviet ones!

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

But Moscow's betrayal of the Palestinians need come as no surprise if we look at the historical record. A few brief points:

* The Soviet Union waited ten years after the foundation of the PLO before recognising it in 1974; in contrast, China recognised it in 1965, the first country so to do.

* Around 1968-9 the Soviet press, and declarations by pro-Soviet lackeys in the Middle East, referred to the fedayeen (Palestinian freedom fighters) as "adventurers" and "provocateurs", saying that they were pursuing "utopian political objectives".

man alive. If he loses independence in society he cannot be called a man; he differs little from an animal. We might say that socio-political life is more valuable to a man than physical life. He is a social being. If he is forsaken by society and deprived of political independence, though he seems alive, he is virtually dead as a social human being. That is why the revolutionaries deem it far more honourable to die in the fight for freedom than to keep themselves alive in slavery.

"Ignoring independence is tantamount to ignoring man himself."

Soviet imperialism advertises its murderous rampaging in Eritrea, Afghanistan and Kampuchea as "socialism" and "proletarian internationalism". This is a vile distortion, a standing of truth on its head. What the Soviet Union practises is imperialism, pure and simple. It is the fighters of Eritrea, Afghanistan and Kampuchea who represent the real forces for revolution in the world, the forces of the future. Joined by the other frontline fighters against imperialism, such as those of El Salvador, Guatemala, Azania, Namibia, Iran, West Sahara, East Timor, Malaya, Oman, the Philippines, Ireland, and the courageous Palestinian people, they represent the main fundamentally healthy force in world politics today, the force standing against all imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, hegemonism and dominationism, and for independence. As the great Irish revolutionary leader, James Connolly, said,

"The internationalism of the future will be based on the free federation of free peoples and cannot be realised through the subjugation of

the smaller by the larger political unit.

"Under a socialist system, every nation will be the supreme arbiter of its own destinies, national and international; it will be forced into no alliance against its will, but will have its independence guaranteed and its freedom respected by the enlightened self-interest of the social democracy of the world."

The Revolutionary Communist League of Britain stands with the genuine revolutionary forces in the world, those upholding independence. That is to say, the national liberation movements, the countries who insist on exploring and pursuing an independent and creative road to socialism, that accords with, indeed arises from, their own national conditions, first and foremost, the People's Republic of China, and finally the revolutionary forces in the imperialist countries themselves that support the revolutionary uprisings of the oppressed. Those are the forces that we stand with.

And the forces that we stand against are those who talk of socialism, but practise dominationism and trample on the independence of the peoples, whether that force is Soviet social imperialism, or those forces such as the British Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain who stand opposed to the Irish people and those other peoples who are rising against British imperialism.

It is within this context that the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain fully supports the Eritrean peoples struggle.

VICTORY TO THE ERITREAN PEOPLE!
VICTORY TO THE EPLF!
VICTORY TO THE MASSES!

Soviet False Friends

The healthy trend in the world is the affirmation of the people's demand, particularly in the oppressed nations, to control their destiny - to say no to great-power domination and hegemonism. This runs diametrically opposite to what the Soviet Union stands for. The Soviet Union is itself the most sinister practitioner of dominationism - in eastern Europe, Afghanistan and elsewhere, and where it pretends to support a liberation movement it does so only in the hope of using this as a pawn in its global power strategy, and hates and fears the current of popular mobilisation for genuine independence.

History will certainly look back on the recent war in Lebanon as an event of immense significance in the progressive affirmation of this popular current. Earlier this year, the risen people of the West Bank and Gaza had shown their death-defying will to overthrow Israeli domination. Sensing that the PLO was the core of this struggle, Begin decided to pay the high territorial price of handing back the Sinai to Egypt in order to have a free hand in smashing the PLO, the leading element not only of the Palestinians', but of the whole Arab people's struggle.

But the popular upsurge also put fear into the Soviet leadership, because it showed

that the movement wouldn't be so easy to manipulate, which is all they are interested in. In the period after the Rabat Summit of 1974 when the PLO had apparently won the united backing of the Arab regimes, a voice in the United Nations and so on, Moscow considered it prudent and expedient to develop relations with the PLO, hoping no doubt that it would become pliable and respectable and could be exploited as an element in the scheme which the Russians were then plugging for 'global negotiations' on the Middle East, in opposition to the 'step-by-step' diplomacy then being conducted by the USA.

FAILING TO DELIVER THE GOODS

But now that the Palestinians have come to the most serious hour of crisis in the whole of their epic history, they have found many of their apparent supporters failing to deliver the goods. Among the Soviet Union's closest allies in the region, Syria failed to put up more than a token resistance to Israel, Libya has issued a declaration advising the Palestinians that the honourable course of action is to commit suicide, while Iran has taken advantage of the situation to intensify its war with Iraq and launch direct aggression against that country.



* After the 1967 war in the Middle East the Soviet Union voted for the UN resolution 242 which speaks of the Palestinians only as a refugee problem and declines to recognise their right to self-determination.

* In the summer of 1970, shortly before the September massacre, the Soviet paper "New Times" wrote that the solution to the Middle East crisis could only be political (by implication not military), and "the Arab population of Palestine had better remember this".

* In August 1972 "Pravda" arrogantly instructed the Palestinians how to conduct their fight, saying that they must give up "terrorism" and must collaborate with "progressive Arab governments", and denied that the Palestinian movement has a "special mission" to fulfill.

* In the heat of the 1973 war against the Palestinians' main enemy, the state of Israel, the Soviet Union spared no efforts to sabotage the war effort of Egypt, just when it was on the point of scoring important successes.

* In 1976 the Soviet-sponsored army of Syria deliberately encouraged the massacre of Palestinians in the refugee camp of Tell El-Zaatar.

* In 1977 the Soviet Union, with the USA, signed the Vance-Gromyko joint statement on the Middle East which contained no mention of the PLO.

* In 1981 when Israel was already bombing Lebanon and publicly preparing for its invasion, the Soviet foreign minister (Gromyko) held a lengthy interview at the United Nations - described by Begin as "very important" - with his Israeli opposite number.

It can thus be seen that the recent Soviet treachery has a history. We are confident that the genuine revolutionary forces in the Middle East and the world will draw appropriate lessons concerning "Soviet friendship". As Al-Fatah and PLO leader, Abu Iyad, recently said: "And if the Soviets do not correct their stand in respect of what is happening in Lebanon, many of the liberation movements and Communist Parties will have different positions, very different."

NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS: "We want no condescending saviours!"

For fifty days a year a hot wind called the 'khamsin' blows from the desert over the Middle East. It is as nothing compared to the blasts of hot air directed to Ireland and Lebanon, in the form of the free and unsolicited advice offered by Britain's Trotskyists to the revolutionary fighters there.

THE LEBANON

Up to the middle of August, the Palestinians and their Lebanese allies had fought the Zionist forces in a full-scale war for longer than the Arab states did in 1956, 1967 or 1973. Outnumbered by more than 10 to 1 in Beirut, heavily outgunned, with little to hit back against air and naval bombardment, the PLO and its allies fought heroically and frustrated the Zionists' main aim, to wipe out the Palestinian resistance. Revolutionary and progressive people can have nothing but admiration and respect for what the Palestinians have accomplished in the past few months.

But this was not the attitude of most of the British left. As the shells fell on Beirut, 'Militant' carried a major article ("Israeli Assault on Lebanon" - 6.8.82) besmirching the name of the PLO. It refers to "its policy of individual terrorism", when the PLO has no such policy - its fighters undertake military action against Zionist targets as part of an overall political and military strategy for the liberation of their land. 'Militant' talks of the PLO "wheeling and dealing with the reactionary Arab regimes" as if it is impermissible for a revolutionary force to have dealings with reactionaries; the point for revolutionaries is what are the contents of such dealings for: to further the revolutionary struggle by exploiting contradictions among the reactionaries, or to betray the struggle. 'Militant' hopes that "Palestinian workers" will abandon "the methods of the PLO" and calls for a "programme of common class struggle" between "Israeli and Palestinian workers"; it calls for "the self-determination of both Israelis and Palestinians ... on the basis of a socialist federation of Middle Eastern states". It thus ignores the fact that Israel was established by displacing the Palestinians from their land and that there is therefore no basis for "Israeli self-determination", which could only be given practical effect by a denial of the Palestinians' national rights. This is in keeping with its line on Ireland, where it calls for "workers' unity" in the north, and a "workers' militia" organised by the trade unions to replace the British Army, ignoring the fact that the Loyalist working class is thoroughly tied to British imperialism, and that Loyalists have an iron grip on the trade unions, so that any "workers' militia" they organised would be like another UDA. And these are the people who are meant to be "dangerous left-wingers infiltrating the Labour Party"!

'Socialist Worker' (SW) sang a similar reactionary song. Once more, the Palestinians are told they aren't fighting properly. "Neither will the Palestinians' armed struggle

bring Israel down". "What is needed is an attempt to begin anew the struggle to organise the strength of Arab workers." (SW 24.7.82) No matter that the Palestinians have organised themselves into a strong national liberation movement (of which the Palestinian working class is a full part); no matter that their main enemy is Israel, with its US backer, and that it is the task of the Arab masses in each country to make their own revolutions; no matter that, in pursuing their fight against Israel, the Palestinians have been an inspiration to all progressive Arab forces, and that they are at the forefront of revolutionary struggle in the Arab world: SW tells them that they've got it all wrong.

But not only that: it tells them the PLO is selling out (SW 31.7.82 - "Is Arafat ready to sell out?"), and that the demand that the PLO upheld "for the replacement of the Israeli state by a new state in which Jews, Muslims and Christians had equal rights" is "the position genuine socialists in the Middle East will continue to stand for, whatever Arafat says". It is ironic that when the demand for "a democratic secular state of Palestine" was first put forward, British Trots like these told us it was a "bourgeois" demand, and socialist revolution was the only answer! By 21.8.82 SW tells us "the PLO will almost certainly dwindle into what it was before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, a collection of impotent windbags drifting from one capital to another." In fact most of the present leadership of the PLO had to work illegally before 1967, patiently trying to build up the Palestinian resistance in the teeth of opposition from the Arab regimes as well as Israel - at a time, incidentally, when the forerunners of SWP-IMG were still playing footsy with the "left" Zionist party, Mapam. This sort of criticism of PLO leaders who have gone through arduous struggles by those whose most gruelling experience is waiting for the pub to open can only be treated with contempt.

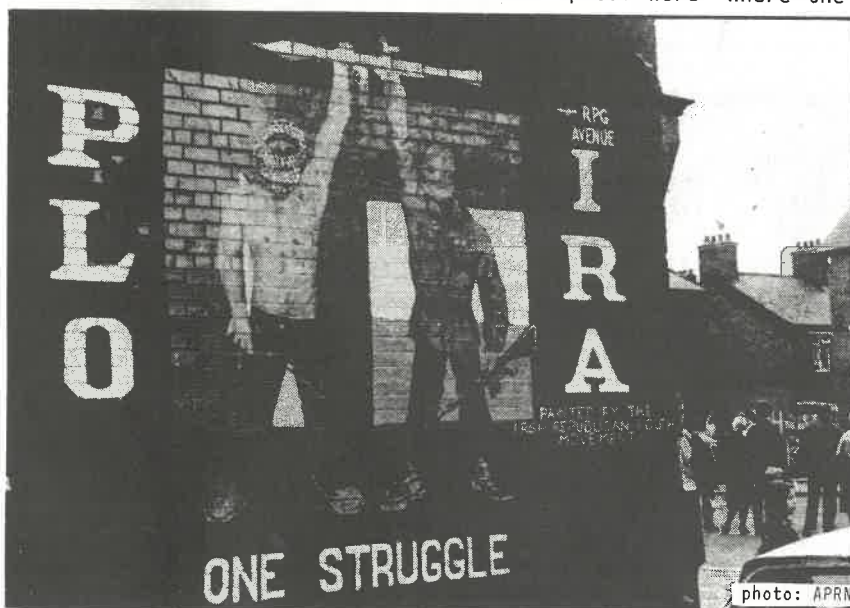
The same issue of SW has an article by John Rose rightly criticising the feeble response of the British left to the Zionist invasion of Lebanon, but there's not a hint of self-criticism about SWP's own disgraceful performance in failing to mobilize for marches!

If 'Socialist Worker' was atrocious, 'Socialist Challenge' was worse. After mercifully taking a summer break, its writers made up for it in no time. In its issue of 19.8.82, Phil Hearse wrote, "The PLO can best prepare the ground for continuing the struggle by staying in Beirut and fighting to the bitter end ... Do not be fooled if the PLO fighters leave Beirut as heroes, waving their Kalashnikovs - they will be going as the defeated. Their real victory would be to stay and fight to the end." A similar view is offered by Ros Kaplan. Thus do these Trotskyist heroes proclaim their revolutionary readiness to fight to the last Palestinian against Zionism from the safety of London.

They attempt to lend credibility to their position by carrying a statement by a Trotskyist sect called the

"Revolutionary Communist Group of Lebanon", tastefully illustrated with a picture of 8 individuals militantly brandishing Kalashnikovs in an office. This same group only weeks before called on the Soviet Union and Cuba to send troops to repel Israel.

'Newsline' paper of the Workers' Revolutionary Party (WRP) correctly slammed 'Socialist Challenge's' stand on Lebanon (21.8.82) and, to give it its due, has given strong support to the Palestinians. But a month before this, it took a very different view of a liberation struggle going on closer to home: that of the Irish people.



IRELAND

Both 'Newsline' and 'SW' referred to a great political crisis which was apparently raging in Britain in July, when all at once IRA bombs went off in London, killing 11 soldiers. An editorial in 'SW' told us that the bombs "strengthened the Tories", by diverting attention from the unemployment figures. It was as if the enraged masses were just about to take to the streets when this "diversion" came along: why they should have to be diverted at this particular time, when the unemployment figures have been bad enough for months already is not revealed! There is a difference between 'SW' and 'Newsline' though; while 'SW' sees the bombings as objectively a diversion, 'Newsline' hints darkly ("Who authorised this latest bombing and why?... Isn't it a fact that we are now living in a period where imperialist conspiracies and provocations are being used on a hideous scale...?") that they were actually organised by forces not a million miles away from Mrs Thatcher! Revolutionary struggle in the Middle East is fine it seems, but once it gets too close to home, it must be vilified!

The SWP have abandoned such Ireland solidarity work as they once did. Rather than welcome the anti-imperialist actions of the IRA, the SWP took the bombings as an opportunity to sling mud at the republicans and so justify their own miserable inactivity. The week after the bombings there was a centre page spread with a lead article on "Why ordinary people become bombers" by Pat Stack. For Stack, the reason for this "distressing tendency" among sections of the Irish people is unemployment and discrimination against Catholics in the north of Ireland - Stack

simply sweeps the national question under the carpet.

If his analysis was correct, British imperialism could have simply taken up the revisionist "Communist" Party's proposal for more public spending and a "Bill of Rights" for the north and the "problem" would have been reformed out of existence! But the wretched conditions the nationalist people of the north of Ireland face are precisely the product of British imperialist oppression of the Irish nation as a whole and the partition of Ireland in order to ensure the continuation of that oppression.

The other articles on the same centre spread were "Where the

could not be a bourgeois revolution in the oppressed countries of a kind which took place in England in the 17th century, or France in 1789. To raise themselves up the oppressed nations must confront and defeat imperialism (and their most resolute elements - frequently the leading ones - have been their workers and peasants). Their struggle has thus become part of the world proletarian fight to smash the entire imperialist order and establish socialism; no organisation which has any serious pretension to be socialist can fail to support the liberation movements of the oppressed - those who do that are not interested in fighting imperialism.

Harman belongs to this category. He reproaches the "leaders of the Provisional IRA" with seeing themselves as "the heirs of the United Irishmen of the 1790s, the Fenians of the 1860s, the Easter Rising of 1916, the Sinn Fein Movement of 1918-21." The IRA are correct and Harman is wrong in this; the fight for Ireland's liberation has yet to be completed, and until it is, it is correct that the national struggle should be carried on. Not that the IRA does see its struggle as just being for national independence - it clearly states its aim to be a 32-county socialist republic!

It is quite laughable that Harman also sees a "complication" in assessing national movements in that they often have leaders who are "members of the professional middle classes ... who would benefit from a national capitalist development." Aren't SWP's own leaders precisely members of these classes, and it would seem from their rotten political line they have benefitted from the "national capitalist development" of Britain!

All in all, most of the Trotskyist and semi-Trotskyist left has taken a stand against the national liberation movements in Palestine and Ireland. In attacking the IRA, 'Newsline' made a statement which actually applies to these forces themselves. "We are witnessing the outward manifestations of the world capitalist crisis and its seering impact on the outmoded capitalist system in Britain. All that is rotten, corrupt and ultra-reactionary is being dredged to the surface."

We couldn't put it better ourselves. But there are healthy anti-imperialist trends growing under the impact of this crisis too, and it is with such forces, the emerging revolutionary forces of the oppressed, that the future of socialism in Britain lies, not with the middle class Trotskyist hacks, who long ago prostituted themselves to imperialism.

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FREEDOM FOR IRELAND



Irish POW: 'Build a Principled Solidarity Movement'

Below we reprint the full text of a letter from Irish prisoner of war (POW) Gerry MacLochlainn which was published in the August 19 issue of "An Phoblacht/Republican News". The letter he refers to from Tariq M. Ali was reprinted in our August issue.

Gerry MacLochlainn is an outstanding Irish revolutionary. Formerly the Sinn Fein organiser in South Wales, he is serving a sentence in Maidstone prison on trumped-up conspiracy charges. Originally sentenced to 6 years, reduced to 4 years on appeal, Gerry has stated that he does not wish to be considered for parole if such would necessitate any compromise on his republican political beliefs. Whilst in prison Gerry has continued the struggle, for example by refusing to make clothes for the British Army in the tailors shop (see April issue of "Class Struggle"). We reprint the letter because of the great political force and clarity with which it calls for the building of a principled, anti-imperialist and working class solidarity movement.

"Sinead Reilly's letter, 'People's War' (AP/RN July 15th), was a welcome contribution to the debate launched a couple of weeks ago on the 'Lessons of the Malvinas'. I wholeheartedly agree with the comments made on the nature of a revolutionary people's war.

"The political struggle for the hearts and minds of the people in England as well as Ireland is indeed necessary but this must not be confused with attempts to build a reformist campaign. Britain will only withdraw from Ireland when there is a greater risk to its interests as a whole by remaining rather than by withdrawing. How can we best bring about such a change in British interests?

"Sinead correctly points out that the victories of the Irish liberation war will inspire those elements of British society who have no future under capitalism anyway. The badly-paid, and the unemployed black youth, for example, who formed the backbone of last year's uprisings in many British cities were clearly inspired by the Irish war.

"Scarman, in part 1, paragraph 3, of his report complains that the petrol bomb was copied from disturbances in Ireland. Tariq M. Ali in his letter to AP/RN (July 8th) also expresses the feeling of solidarity with the Irish struggle which black people are beginning to feel. As the British state uses CS gas, plastic bullets and widespread frame-ups, as it has for years in Ireland, then these sentiments are bound to increase.

"Such youth will provide a layer of republican sympathisers (in the real sense) in

Britain who, far from being 'horrified' by IRA successes, will take heart from these and will redouble their efforts in their own struggle for justice.

"It is among such people, as well as the Irish community, that Sinn Fein in Britain should concentrate in attempting to build a principled solidarity movement which will support the Irish liberation war and really strike 'terror' into the heart of the British state.

"As they experience for themselves the pressures which drove the nationalist youth of Ireland to war in the first place they will provide a natural base for such a campaign. Demonstrations by these forces will help to draw the lessons of the Irish war and its connection with their fight for their rights, giving confidence and inspiration to the oppressed people of Britain, as well as exposing the nature of the Brits' war in Ireland. This is the revolutionary way towards the winning of the hearts and minds of the oppressed people of Britain.

"The danger is to attempt to build a reformist campaign among those sections who have a vested interest in maintaining capitalism - the middle class. Such forces do no harm and I welcome them as far as they go, but they will never force a British withdrawal from Ireland. In fact, at decisive points in the struggle when the British state is in danger they will disappear. Where were they during the hunger-strike?

"Such moralists and sympathisers were nowhere to be seen when ten young blanket men were murdered in the H-Blocks. The recent successful attacks on military targets in London will again send them scurrying for cover just when it is vital that political analysis and explanation is presented to the British people. This will not be forthcoming from reformists who view the armed struggle as a hindrance.

"We correctly broke with such reformists in Ireland and based our movement among the oppressed people who have protected and succoured the Republican Movement throughout 13 years of oppression. Our only allies in Britain will also be found among the oppressed people and we should be careful not to make a mistake in Britain that we avoided at home.

"The lesson of another major war taking place just now should also be remembered. Our brothers and sisters in the PLO are at present being butchered along with thousands of civilians in Lebanon and the only allies they have found was among the oppressed Lebanese. The rich, conservative Arabs have abandoned them but Lebanese working-class people are fighting and dying alongside them in Beirut.

- Fascists of a feather -

It has long been known that Loyalist paramilitaries in the north of Ireland have had links with British fascists. In the early '70s a joint statement by the National Front and the UVF appeared in the UVF journal 'Combat'. The NF's "Northern Ireland Organiser" was a UVF supporter. Later, Brian Hosie, was convicted of carrying out the particularly vicious murder of a black man in Glasgow, and it was revealed that this thug had dual membership of the UDA and National Front. It is hardly surprising that such links should exist. Loyalists may be Irish by birth, but Loyalism is not an Irish ideology, it is British fascism and, in the organised forms of the UDA and UVF, it is only to be expected that close ties should exist between it and the most extreme fascist elements in Britain. They are birds of a feather.

Now there are indications that the UDA are trying to expand their international links beyond Britain, with the help of British fascists who already have extensive overseas connections. The anti-fascist magazine 'Searchlight' has, in its August issue, published excerpts from a letter from Steve Brady, ex-League of St. George International Liaison Officer, to UDA "Supreme Commander" Andy Tyrrie, suggesting organisations with whom the UDA should establish contact. (The League of St. George is a very secretive Nazi organisation; Brady has had close dealings with Italian fascist terrorists and other fascists.)

Among the organisations with whom Brady suggests the UDA should link up are the Waffen SS Veterans Association ("always ready to support anti-communists"), "New Order" (Italian terrorists "whose main activities are machine-gunning Red marches, blowing up Red offices, car bombings of Reds, assassinations of leading Reds, and good clean fun of that sort"), Spanish neo-Nazis (who, Brady explains identify the IRA with the Basque nationalist organisation, ETA) and the Nationalist Action Party (a large Turkish party whose youth wing, the "Grey Wolves", has been responsible for hundreds of murders of revolutionaries and democrats).

It sounds as though the UDA is in good company.

"In Britain, as everywhere else in the world, we must look for real support among the oppressed who alone will applaud and draw inspiration from our success. The sympathy of middle-class protesters may be welcome but it will prove as consistent as the 'friends' of our Palestinian comrades proved.

"Let us start now to build a principled Irish solidarity campaign which supports the Irish struggle under the leadership of the Republican Movement."

Gerry MacLochlainn,
Republican POW,
Maidstone Prison,
England.

Polio in Belfast

Panic swept West Belfast on 12th August when it was learned that a 2½-year-old boy, Martin Conlon, had contracted a mild form of polio. Martin had been unwell for some time but had not been properly examined by doctors. Eventually Martin underwent a series of tests whilst his parents were kept in the dark until, on August 8th, they were bluntly informed that polio was suspected. It was confirmed on August 12th. Poliomyelitis (or polio) is an infectious disease which can be spread by food or flies and which seeks out points of physical weakness and attacks parts of the nervous system, usually the spine. In its most serious form it can lead to paralysis. The muscles may recover but often become wasted, thin or stunted. Where there are problems of breathing, patients have to be placed in an "iron lung" to keep them alive.

Martin's mother suspects that he caught the disease because the family lived until recently in the Moyard flats. Today 400 families live there, enduring a daily ordeal of waste sewage coming up through the water pipes because the drains are blocked. Uncollected rubbish and animal excreta litter the area, which is filled with structurally unsound maisonettes. Martin attended a nursery school where, outside, sewage poured from a broken pipe.

As well as the to be expected rush for vaccination, the local community has been organising protest activity against the callous attitudes of the Department of the Environment and the Housing Executive, who have repeatedly failed to do anything about the atrocious conditions which have given rise to the polio outbreak. The protests have been organised by the Moyard Housing Action Committee. At one picket an apt banner read: "Come to Costa del Moyard and catch jaundice, dystentry and polio free of charge."

The Committee point out that over the years the rats, infested rubbish and open sewage have led to repeated outbreaks of jaundice, dysentery, vomiting and diarrhoea.

The foul conditions in which the nationalist working class in the north of Ireland are forced to live are a product of British colonial rule and will only be ended by the defeat of British imperialism.

VOTING RIGHTS

The democratic rights of the Irish national minority in Britain are facing a serious attack from both sections of the Tory party and from an all-party Commons Select Committee which will soon begin a review of the Representation of the People Act, 1949. It is likely that a proposal to take the vote away from (disenfranchise) the Irish community in Britain will dominate the proceedings of the Committee. A large

IRA ON BOMBINGS

In claiming responsibility for the two attacks on military targets in London on 20th July, the IRA referred in a statement to what the British government had said during the Malvinas War, and continued:

"Now it is our turn to properly invoke article 51 of the United Nations Statute and properly quote all Thatcher's fine phrases on the rights to self-determination of a people. The Irish people have sovereign and national rights which no task or occupation force can put down."

The newspaper 'An Phoblacht/Republican News' commented:

"Justifying the use of force in the South Atlantic war last April Thatcher had said: 'You have to be prepared to defend the things in which you believe and be prepared to use force if that is the only way to secure the future of liberty and self-determination.' The IRA are doing just that."

HELICOPTER ATTACKED

The IRA's South Armagh Brigade carried out a dramatic M60 machine-gun attack on an armour-reinforced British army helicopter patrolling in the Jonesborough area on Tuesday evening, July 20th, forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing after several shots hit the helicopter's fuselage.

The attack took place as British troops took part in a dragnet search for IRA explosives in the Forkhill/Jonesborough area. Five Volunteers were involved in the attack, and intense gunfire was employed against the aircraft.

This latest development will cause serious concern in enemy circles, particularly if the IRA have managed to inflict any substantial damage to the helicopter. It is generally recognised that were it not for the virtual immunity of the helicopter from present IRA firepower, it would be almost impossible for British troops to operate on the ground in substantial areas of Counties Derry, Fermanagh, Tyrone and Armagh. If that situation is reversed, the balance of military firepower in these areas may swing markedly in favour of the republican forces.

(reprinted from "An Phoblacht/Republican News")

number of branches of the Tory party will be putting similar policy motions at the Tory party conference in October.

This is a serious anti-democratic and racist attack on a substantial section of the British working class. Potentially it could deprive millions of people of their right to vote and set a dangerous precedent for disenfranchising other sections of the working class and the oppressed.