

rp

REVOLUTIONS
PER
MINUTE

50p (£1 solidarity price)

inside -

***the police scandal that
won't go away***

Lee Hurst - star interview

true-life stories

*- "the government tried to split
up my family!"*

top tips

international stories

news - views - advice

resistance

old habits die hard

Since the mid-Eighties there has been an organisation in Hackney that has defended hundreds of people in court, won thousands of pounds in civil actions against the police and exposed the Stoke Newington and Hackney police's record of drug-dealing, theft, violence, murder and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. That organisation began as Hackney Community Defence Association and has become the **Colin Roach Centre/Resistance** – a unique force in modern politics.

As one of their most important areas of action Colin Roach Centre and Resistance members work with local people to help them defend **themselves** against police attacks. The scandals of policing in Hackney and the struggles of local people against it go back many decades. Neil Bradley tells the story of the outcome of the most notorious recent cases of the Stoke Newington police drugs scandal and its whitewash by "Operation Jackpot", and asks if anything has changed.

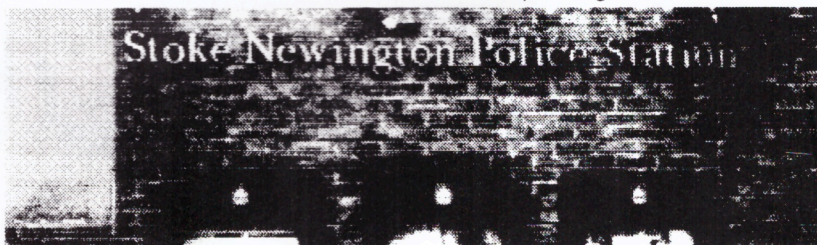
On Friday 8th December 1995, PC Ronald Palumbo walked free from the Old Bailey, acquitted of Perjury. A fellow Stoke Newington police officer had been unable to remember vital evidence against him. One week before, PC Palumbo and DC Barry Lyons had also been acquitted of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. These were the last two cases of the "Operation Jackpot" internal investigation into 45 police officers, and with it the police hoped to close the lid on the scandal at Stoke Newington police station. Days later PC Palumbo was arrested by Dover Customs and Excise and charged with the importation of a Class 'B' drug. Between visits to the Old Bailey he had organised a shipment of 650 kilos of Cannabis (worth £2.3 million) from Spain. The scandal was far from over.



PC Ronald Palumbo

rich pickings

Hackney is a peculiar place, unlike anywhere else in Britain. Its official status as one of the poorest boroughs in Europe doesn't make it unique, nor does its radical tradition. It is because Hackney survives as a collection of alternative communities nestled up to the City of London, a centre of international finance, and slap bang in the middle of prosperous and conservative South East England. Irish, Jewish, Caribbean, African, Turkish, Kurdish and Asian people have all brought their radical histories with them to Hackney and contributed to a dynamic political and cultural diversity. Hackney is also noted for its police and their notorious brutality and racism, particularly in Stoke Newington. Policing issues sum up all of the contradictions in our communities. Poor people among rich pickings have been targeted and criminalised by the police as a means of social control. The police have taken advantage of the divisions between our communities and played one group off against the other. But, to use the slogan (from the Irish civil rights movement in the 1960's) that was an inspiration to the founders of HCDA – **"where there is oppression there is resistance"**.



threat to authority

Hackney's opposition to police repression dates back to the formation of the police in 1829. Suffragettes, Communists and anti-Fascists were all singled out in the first half of this century before the police turned their attention on black people. Its also worth pointing out that, although police racism is a major problem, white people have been attacked and brutalised in significant numbers. The fact is that the police attack people who represent a threat to their authority and moral code.

deaths

Since the death of Aseta Simms in Stoke Newington police station in 1971, six people have died in suspicious circumstances in connection with Hackney and Stoke Newington police – Michael Ferreira, Colin Roach, Simeon Collins, Tunay Hassan, Vandana Patel and Shiji Lapite. Each one of these deaths has been met with determined community campaigns.

Colin Roach

Colin Roach was killed with a single shotgun blast in the foyer of Stoke Newington police station in 1983. The immediate reaction of the police to the killing was to harass members of the Roach family. Spontaneous demonstrations by the angry community were met with police brutality and arrest. The Roach Family Support Committee was set up in response and it developed a campaign which united political, trade union, religious, cultural and community groups.

more attacks

In January 1987 Stoke Newington police struck again. This time their victim, Trevor Monerville, another young black man, survived after emergency surgery to remove a blood clot from his brain. The Family and Friends of Trevor Monerville Campaign brought national attention to bear on Stoke Newington police. Within six months Stoke Newington police station was demolished and the officers were moved temporarily to Dalston police station, where in June Tunay Hassan died after witnesses had seen him being beaten, and another campaign was born. Throughout that year reports came in to the various campaigns of police violence and fit-ups. In November Gary Stretch was murderously assaulted by seven off-duty Hackney officers.

racist

In January 1988 the Trevor Monerville and Tunay Hassan campaigns jointly held a "We Remember" commemoration for all those who had suffered and died at the hands of the police in the area, and the Roach Family Support Committee published "Policing in Hackney", one of the first ever independent community inquiries. The report concluded, "We consider that the police have been guilty of serious malpractices and abuses of their powers over a number of years. In particular, we consider that policing in Hackney has been racist, both in terms of the behaviour of individual officers and in terms of overall policing strategy."

HCDA

Single issue campaigns no longer offered adequate resistance to Hackney and Stoke Newington police's rampage. In July 1988 Hackney Community Defence Association (HCDA) was launched, a self-help group for victims of police crime – giving a voice to local people who had been attacked by the police. It developed a highly successful strategy in combatting police repression. HCDA investigated allegations against the police, provided mutual support for victims and campaigned against police injustice. Victims of police crime were generally advised against making formal complaints in favour of using the civil courts. Today, eight years after HCDA started down this road, the Met finds itself in dire straits, with juries awarding hundreds of thousands of pounds to victims of police crime throughout London.

assault

Right from the start allegations flooded in. The first case taken up was of a 73-year old black woman, Marie Burke (a grandparent of Trevor Monerville), who was falsely imprisoned, assaulted and maliciously prosecuted by Hackney police. She was awarded £50,000 damages three years later. By 1993 over 500 cases had been taken up. Many other civil actions are still pending.



Michael Ferreira



Colin Roach was killed with a single shotgun blast in the foyer of Stoke Newington police station on 12th January 1983. Although the inquest verdict was suicide very few people in the community believe this. The independent community inquiry into his death systematically destroyed the suicide theory and showed that Colin had been murdered.

Colin Roach



Tunay Hassan



Shiji Lapite

rpm



crack

Among the allegations that HCDA began investigating were cases involving police organised crime. A picture emerged of drug trafficking, corruption and fitting-up of innocent victims by Stoke Newington police. The case of Ida Oderinde was taken up. In September 1990 she witnessed two Stoke Newington policemen supplying crack to a drug dealer. Shortly afterwards her house was raided and she was planted with heroin. Despite her innocence she was sentenced to four years imprisonment in 1991. The judge said he hoped her guilty conscience would kill her. A year later she was out on bail and by March 1993 the conviction was quashed. The lying, corrupt police who had framed her were no longer being believed. The scandal had begun to unravel.



planted

Ida Oderinde was not alone – throughout 1990 more cases had been coming in to HCDA. Hugh Prince, Rennie Kingsley and Dennis Tulloch were all planted with drugs and imprisoned. All three convictions were later overturned – in December 1994 Hugh Prince became the 13th victim of Stoke Newington police's drug squad to have his conviction quashed. In 1995 Rennie Kingsley accepted £76,000 damages from the police.



DC Lewandowski



jackpot

The drug scandal was brought to a head in January 1991 with the arrest of major drug dealer Mrs C. (we have concealed her identity as further criminal proceedings may be in progress). She had been selling crack cocaine supplied to her by DC Roy Lewandowski of Stoke Newington police (when she

was convicted in July 1992 the court acknowledged that he had been earning up to £2,000 a week by supplying her with the drugs). But the officers that had been protecting her had been transferred in the previous autumn, including Sergeant Gerrard Carroll, and somebody made the decision to close her operation down. Following her arrest the Police

Complaints Investigation Branch launched an investigation into her revelations about her suppliers. This investigation, "Operation Jackpot", began as an undercover operation but was exposed by HCDA and publicly announced in January 1992. At this point eight officers were transferred from Stoke Newington, although others had already been moved, including Sergeant Carroll who killed himself with a police revolver in Barking's police station's temporary custody bay the very same day. Stoke Newington Drug Squad was effectively closed down. "Operation Jackpot" lasted nearly three years and investigated 45 officers. The cost ran into millions.



DC Barry Lyons

HCDA became aware of 90 cases in which allegations of wrongdoing were made. They uncovered four main elements of police organised crime –

- the seizing of drugs and money from drug dealers stopped on the street, who are then released without charge. One one occasion a dealer had £8,000 worth of cocaine seized.
- the supplying of drugs to other dealers. HCDA knew of at least four street-level dealers who were supplied by police officers.
- running an extensive protection from prosecution racket.
- the planting of drugs and fabrication of evidence against suspected competitors in the drugs market or against people who get in their way.

Of the 77 cases taken up by HCDA, 42 cases led to Acquittals/No Evidence offered, and 13 people were acquitted on appeal. 25 civil actions against the police have followed. As a result of these cases, and others, six police officers have

been disowned by the Crown Prosecution Service as unreliable witnesses not worthy of belief. DC Lewandowski, Mrs C.'s crack supplier, was charged with theft and misfeasance in a public office (he was also originally charged with VAT fraud in connection with a £5 million gaming machines racket, although this was later dropped). He got 18 months in prison and has since emigrated to Australia. Neither he, nor any other officer was convicted in connection with a drugs offence as a result of this **drugs scandal**.

public meeting

Thursday 7th November 7.30pm

"the political implications of the fight against Stoke Newington police"

with speakers to include Graham
Smith, Hugh Prince, Carly Richards

and Russell Miller

at the Halkevi Community Centre, 92 Stoke
Newington High Street, London N16

power

HCDA's independent investigation of the scandal, using information collected from taking up the cases of unjustly convicted people to uncover a pattern of police crime, brought a high public profile, but more importantly made a contribution to the political strength of the community. On the one hand people's needs were directly addressed, victims of police crime gave each other emotional and practical support – the strength to continue with their lives, successfully defend themselves against criminal charges and then sue the police. On the other hand, HCDA turned the tables on the police – instead of the victims being the focus of media attention, the police criminals had to publicly answer for themselves. In effect, powerless victims engaged in a process of empowering themselves and collectively challenging the power of the State.

heckled

Imagination was brought to bear on problems – instead of demonstrations, annual commemorations were held and wreaths laid at local police stations; instead of just picketing the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police's speech at a local meeting, protesters went inside and heckled with wit and humour, forcing him to shorten his speech. When members of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice met a 40 strong meeting of victims of police crime they were presented with a report entitled **"A crime is a crime is a crime,"** using Margaret Thatcher's comment, on Irish prisoners' hunger strike for political status, back against the system.

independence

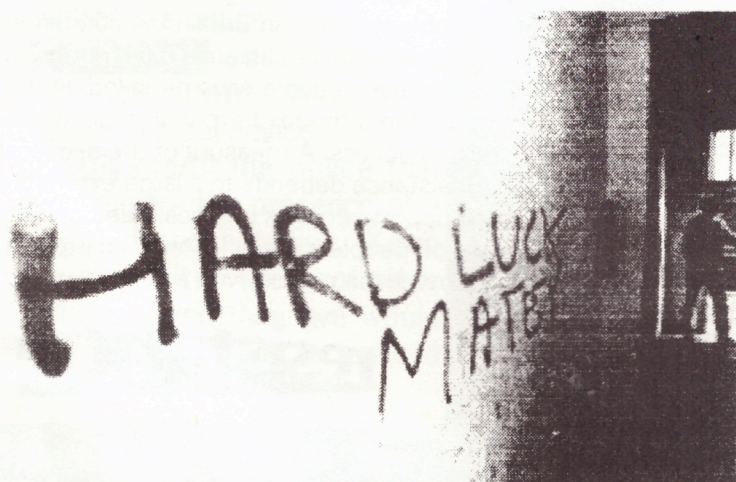
HCDA always maintained a distance from political groups whose ideological rhetoric is far removed from people's needs. Although formed with the support of the Labour Council, HCDA **never sought funding** for fear of compromising its independence. When the "new realists" later took control of Hackney Labour Party and council/police relations thawed, HCDA was able to continue its work without interruption. Its work was so effective that some people could not believe it was an **entirely voluntary group**.

unity

The Colin Roach Centre was set up by HCDA and Hackney's Trade Union Support Unit (TUSU) to provide an office space for the two organisations and give expression to the unity of traditional trade union struggles and developing community campaigns. It was opened in 1993 by Colin's father and sister on the tenth anniversary of his death. During the next three years both HCDA and TUSU dissolved as independent organisations under the umbrella of the **Colin Roach Centre**.

unwelcome visitors

In the early hours of 23rd December 1994 the offices of the Colin Roach Centre were broken into and attacked, on the eve of a picket of Stoke Newington police station to demand action over the murder of Shiji Lapite by the police. No money or office equipment was stolen, only files and letters were taken. The burglary was probably carried out by the Special branch or MI5. The Colin Roach Centre has since moved to its present address in Clarence Road, Hackney. The coming together of the various groups involved in the centre – as well as the work of HCDA and TUSU there have been immigration groups, anti-Fascists, gay, lesbian and International groups, among many others – has been made concrete with the launch of **Resistance** in October 1995, the group that has published this magazine.





whitewash

"Operation Jackpot" ended with the acquittal of PC Palumbo and DC Barry Lyons. Other than DC Lewandowski, no officer has been convicted of any offence, neither has any officer been disciplined to this day. It is plain that, in the face of overwhelming evidence, "Operation Jackpot" was a whitewash. So far more than **£500,000** has been paid in compensation to victims of Stoke Newington's drugs scandal.

work

The politics of HCDA were always broader than issues of policing, and the continuation of its support work for victims of police attacks carries on within the framework of Resistance. Between April 1995 and August 1996 the Colin Roach Centre/Resistance assisted almost 180 people in their struggle for justice against the police. The large majority were found "Not Guilty". The continued harassment by the police of some individuals and groups, including young people, has been prevented, however much more work needs to be done, locally and nationally. Organised self-defence groups are yet to be established on the estates of Hackney.

recent cases

In late September it was revealed that six Stoke Newington police officers (and one formerly based at Stoke Newington, but now at Enfield) were to appear in court, charged with offences that include assault, unlawful imprisonment and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

PC Jason Cook and Sgt Terence Norman face charges of assault (ABH) relating to allegations of assault in the cells of Stoke Newington police station in February 1995.

The other charges relate to incidents the night before the Homeless Festival in Clissold Park in May 1994 - PC Martin Pearl, PC David Hay and PC Mark Astley (now based at Enfield) are all to be charged with unlawful imprisonment and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. PC Colin MacLennan faces a charge of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, as does PC Dustin Irrabarren (along with an alleged assault). All were on duty at the time of the alleged offences.

Russell Miller, solicitor for the complainants in the May 1994 incidents hailed the decision to prosecute as "the culmination of 14 months work and an unprecedented example of co-operation between victims, their solicitors and those responsible for investigating police crime."



Carly Richards

Phylip Richards

Phylip Richards is the victim of Stoke Newington's drugs squad, who in their determination to cover up their own crimes need to get innocent people sent to prison. He is appealing against his conviction

"I would like to thank the Colin Roach Centre for their support and understanding that both my husband and myself have received over the last four months.

I have to say that over that time I have spoken to many agencies but although many made the right noises I don't think anybody actually believed that my husband was innocent of the crime he was charged and convicted of.

The Colin Roach Centre has been a breath of fresh air to me and my family, especially after having been through the policing and legal system. There have been days and nights when I have felt especially low, but the fact that there is support and guidance at the end of a phone will advance me in reaching my main goal, which is to have my husband freed from prison. He is currently locked up for eight years for a crime he did not commit."

Carly Richards

You can write to Phylip Richards, PC1261, HMP Swaleside, Eastchurch, Kent ME12 4AX.

what has changed?

Police racism and repression has not changed – **organised crime is so firmly established at Stoke Newington police station that it survived the transfers of officers and internal investigations in the past and continues to do so** – but one consequence of the strategy of suing the police was an awareness in the community of the possibilities for challenging the power of the police. The confidence gained by people who stood up and fought what must rank as the most oppressive police force in Britain, and severely undermine their authority, can never be lost. Victims of police crime no longer need an organisation like HCDA to tell them to sue the police, it is an automatic reaction.

where there is oppression...

Some of the people who founded HCDA, and those who went on to form the Colin Roach Centre and Resistance, took their inspiration from the resistance of the Nationalist communities of British-occupied Ireland. In Ireland brute force has been met by a whole range of ingenious methods, from banging dustbin lids to digital ordnance design. The inspiration is in the creation of one human response to another – a positive reaction to a negative force. The hope is that this resistance can release untold strengths in the face of extreme adversity.

Resistance to oppression is a continuous process which relies on the power of imagination to discover solutions to problems. Here in Britain the combined powers of imagination and resistance have not been realised and so many people have been led up the garden path by the orthodox Left, with their sterile backward-looking politics. A measure of the success of the CRC/Resistance depends to a large extent on its ability to support people's practical needs, draw fully on people's imaginations and provide powerless people with a political voice.

there is ...

resistance

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET STOPPED BY THE POLICE

Stop and search has become the brutal edge of street policing and young people are on the front line. The reality of stop and search is the routine criminalisation and harassment of our communities and the increase in the brutality against youth. **By knowing your rights you are in a stronger position to prevent the police abusing their powers and our community.**



The police **can** stop and search you **without** arresting you. But they must tell you what they are looking for. **Report any stop and search to the Colin Roach Centre.**

On the street if you are stopped and searched:

- + Stay calm and co-operate and give your right name and address
- + Note down all the officer's names and numbers
- + The Police officer must make a record of any search, including why it occurred
- + A Police officer cannot ask you to remove anything more than an outer coat, jacket or gloves in public. If arrested, shout to a witness to contact the Colin Roach Centre and your friends and relatives
- + Remember, under the law, the Police are not supposed to sexually, racially or physically abuse you, whether you are under arrest or not.

Juveniles: if you are 17 or under:

- + A parent or guardian or an "appropriate adult" must be present before any questioning may take place
- + It is important to have a solicitor present

In the police station:

in the absence of a solicitor:

- + **Do not** accept a caution
- + **Do not** sign or make any written statements
- + **Do not** admit to any offence until you have received legal advice
- + **Do** inform the police that you require the presence of a legal representative. Keep silent until the solicitor arrives. Even then, we would advise people not to make a statement to the police

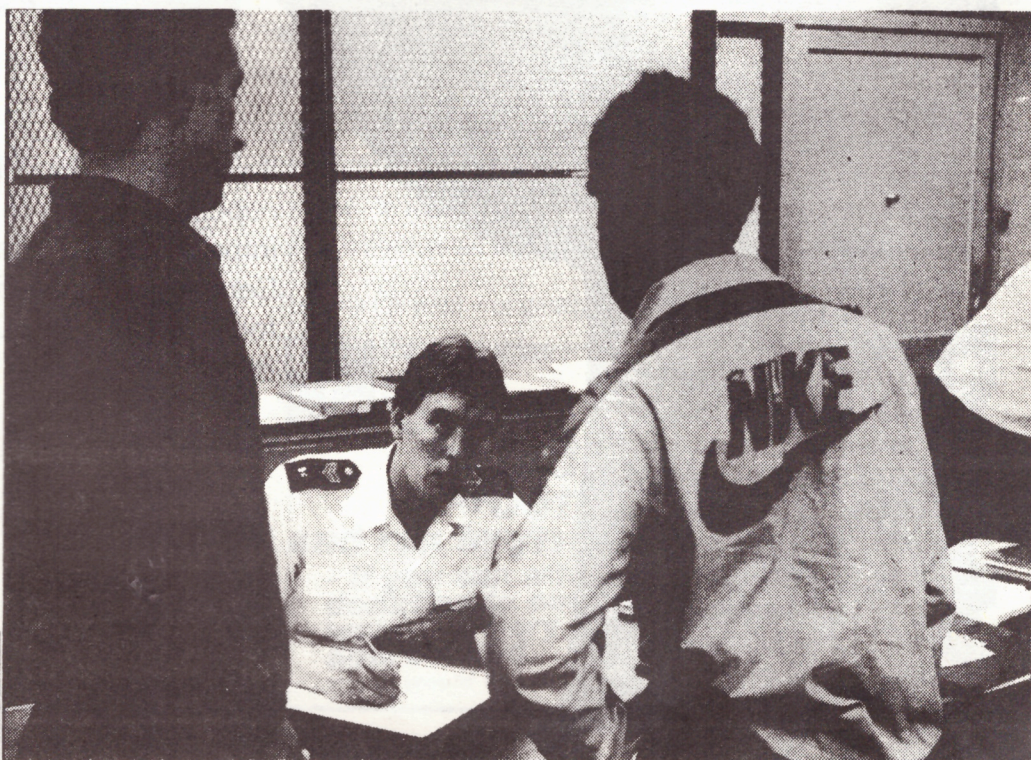
**COLIN ROACH CENTRE
56 CLARENCE ROAD E5 8SW
PHONE: 0181 533 7111**

ARRESTED AND/OR CHARGED BY THE POLICE?

FREE LEGAL ADVICE AT THE COLIN ROACH CENTRE ON MONDAYS FROM 6.30PM TO 8.00PM WHEN YOU CAN SEE SOLICITORS WHO SPECIALISE IN CRIMINAL LAW & COMPLAINTS OR CIVIL ACTIONS AGAINST THE POLICE.

**COLIN ROACH CENTRE
56 CLARENCE ROAD E5 8SW
PHONE: 0181 533 7111**

The Colin Roach Centre is autonomous and independent of all political parties. We support and promote solidarity and mutual aid in the community and workplace. We are for working class struggle against oppression and exploitation, by any means at our disposal, for revolutionary change to a free and equal society.



contents

1 old habits die hard

8 colin roach centre and resistance

10 Lee Hurst - star interview

11 do they owe us a living

12 remember Shiji Lapite

13 death on the site

15 top tips for organising at your workplace

17 what's happening with our
housing?

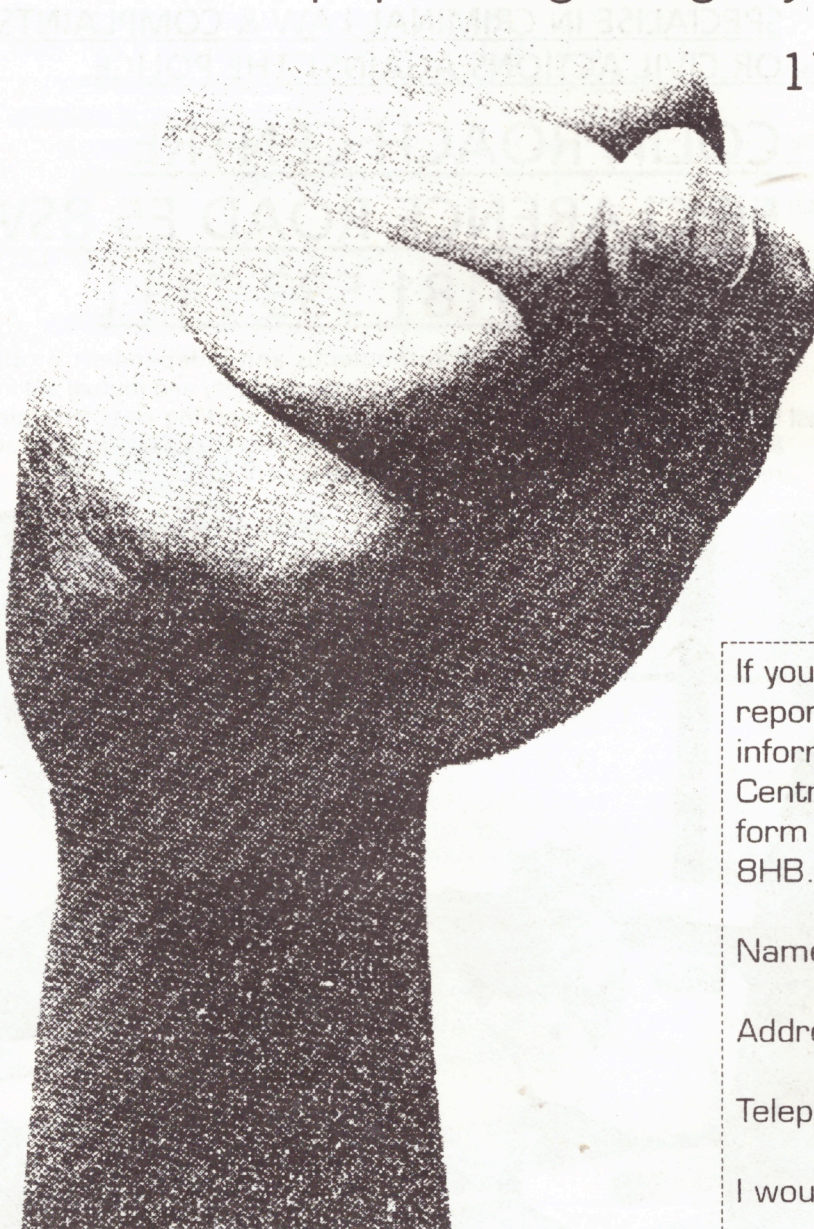
19 true life stories

21 in the line of fire - review

22 making a killing in
Kurdistan

24 murder in Luebek
25 striking back

26 what's cooking



If you can get involved in any of the work reported in this magazine or would like more information please contact the Colin Roach Centre on 0181-533 7111 or return this form to CRC, 56 Clarence Road, London E5 8HB.

Name

Address

Telephone

I would like information on



REVOLUTIONS PER MINUTE

– why we are producing this magazine

Now that Resistance has been going for a year, we felt it was time to spread our politics a bit more. We want to share our news, views and ambitions and engage in debate with others who believe that the existing structures of the Left don't offer any hope for working class people.

We also believe that in some areas of our work, Resistance and the Colin Roach Centre are unique political organisations and we think we've got a lot that's worth shouting about!

Resistance/Colin Roach Centre
56 Clarence Road
London E5 8HB Tel - 0181 533 7111



We welcome letters, although they may be edited (for reasons of space only).

If you require this magazine on audio cassette please contact the CRC.

An RPM reader's group is being set up in the near future. For more information or to make contributions to the next issue please contact the CRC.

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the CRC/Resistance.

Editorial committee - M. Cassidy, Angela Sibley, Mark Metcalf, Rachel Burns, Neil Warne.

Why did you come into the Colin Roach Centre?

My name is Regina Alabi, I was introduced to the Colin Roach Centre by a friend of mine who had had problems at her workplace. I mentioned my own problems and she suggested I came down to the centre. I have suffered harassment and victimisation at work from my manager and it has resulted in them calling a disciplinary hearing against me. I've found that the people in the Colin Roach Centre are willing to listen to my problem, willing to give advice and prepared to support me. Also they're willing to help with representation at a hearing if I need it.

If you lose your job, what effect will it have?

It's serious as I am the major breadwinner. I've got children to support in Britain and I'm also supporting my parents and my other brothers and sisters in Nigeria. My parents would become homeless as I pay their rent, I still have a part-time job but it only pays £400 a month and my own monthly rent is £230.

It's very difficult for people living in Nigeria, all the letters I get contain bad news, the poor are getting poorer. The farming situation is desperate, all products are for export, people are hungry. I can go to the local markets in England and get more products from Nigeria than you would get in Nigeria.

The leadership of the Government has no direction. Those who protest "disappear." I know people who have.

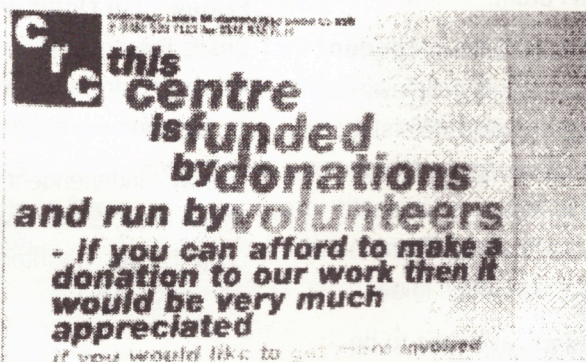
Why did you first come to the Colin Roach Centre?

"I have been informed by the people that it is a very supportive place, that it gives free advice to people. It's a well established centre and it's very active in giving advice and support to all people of all ages, races, sex. I've found that the members are supportive, dealing with people from all communities.

My particular case is an industrial tribunal case which I won and was awarded £12,000. However the company hasn't paid up, so there's still work to be undertaken.

In the meantime I've agreed to help in the centre, I've had a lot of experience of working with the community. I'm producing and distributing information to homeworkers, there's thousands in east London, in their mother tongue language. I'll be happy to support other members as well as others in the community."

Furhana Parveen – originally from Pakistan.



RPM

Sarah Ewin



Dear Friends

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all the help and support you gave me when my husband, David, was shot dead by PC Hodgson last year.

David's death was a terrible shock and at the time I didn't know what to do or where to find help.

The Colin Roach Centre helped to get a campaign started, "Justice for David Ewin". This campaign gave me a focus and helped me through a very traumatic time.

The Colin Roach Centre also opened my eyes to the way the police can pervert justice and get away with murder.

Thank you for all your well needed support and friendship. Good luck for the future.

Best wishes, Sarah Ewin

"Resistance is a political organisation which attempts to bring together two major strands in British political struggle—trade union and community organising. As such it will respect the differing traditions and methods of organising of each, and attempt to forge a unity which brings together the respective strengths of each, without the domination of either.

As a result it understands the fact that the working class is of all races, genders, sexualities and abilities, and not only suffers different oppressions, but experiences class oppression in different ways. Society as a whole, and the left in particular, try and deny this fact. Only when it is accepted will the links between specific experiences of oppression and capitalism become clearer.

As a result Resistance is anti-capitalist in its outlook. Capitalism is a system dedicated to the profit motive, creating a world in which war, famine, mass unemployment and poverty are inevitable. We are for a system based on the needs of working class people, and are working for a society in which all are working class. Resistance recognises that only the working class has the potential radically to change the world. As such it is our aim to create an organisation made up of a majority of working class people and including their allies.

Resistance, reflecting this effort, will organise both in the workplace and in the local community. Therefore, it will develop political and organising methods which are suitable to these different situations.

Unlike other political organisations, it intends to take its lead from local people, not simply from activists or any central committee within the organisation. Organisation of political work again will reflect this outlook.

Finally, one element in the political and economic power of the ruling class is its ability to discount the real abilities of working class people in particular, and of any opponent in general. Resistance will undertake work internally to counter this, so that all members can take a leadership role and undertake full responsibility within the organisation."

From the constitution of Resistance, available from the Colin Roach Centre.

n o t i c e b o a r d

Tuesday October 8th – Inaugural meeting of the central London branch of Resistance at Jolly Gardner's Pub, Euston Street NW1. 6.30pm start.

Sunday November 17th – discussion meeting at the Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 at 2pm. **"Will it benefit the working class if Scotland and Wales become independent?"** Organised jointly with The Republican Forum.

Do you live in South West London? Would you be interested in helping to establish a local branch of Resistance? We have been offered/given the use of office facilities in a busy area, so if you're keen to get involved then phone 0181 533 7111 and let us know.

Also in **November**, at a date to be

arranged, we will be hosting a meeting at a central London venue on **"How and why it's important to establish political resource centres in local areas."**

November 23rd – help needed by North-East **Anti-Fascist Action** with leafleting at Sunderland match versus Sheffield Wednesday. Contact Colin Roach Centre on 0181 533 7111.

Friday 11th October – Social at Chat's Palace, 242 Brooksby's Walk, London E9 to raise funds for CRC Immigration work – music food dancing!

Social – Independent Working Class Association. **Saturday October 26th** at Cock Tavern, Chorlton Street NW1. £3.50/£2.00

Wednesday 9th October - public meeting, **"The Struggle Continues – Malcolm Kennedy Defence Campaign / Justice for Patrick Quinn."** At the Camden Irish Centre, 52 Camden Sq, London NW1. Speakers - Malcolm Kennedy, Michael Schwarz, Grahame Smith. 7.30pm start.

Are you available during the day? If so, help is urgently needed. We are currently carrying out a series of research projects including into "stop and search" and the working conditions of textile workers. If you can help with these, or any other aspects of our work then we'd love to hear from you.

Lee Hurst – what's his crack?

Mark Metcalf talks to Lee Hurst, star of ITV's comedy show *Saturday Night Live*

Although you'd never know it from the papers Lee brings to his work as a comedian a history of east end working class struggle, having been active in various radical struggles over many years. RPM took the opportunity to interview him about some of them and to find out his views.

Lee has been a comedian for six years and admits to not knowing why he became one. Armed with this knowledge we then proceeded to ask his views on a range of subjects! Perhaps its because its a lot easier than all the other jobs he's been involved in – from being a cleaner, working on sites, an admin worker at Tower Hamlets Council, the DSS, a walk-on part as a Telephone Engineer Apprentice to the Halifax Building Society its been, until recently, a struggle to make ends meet. Because of this Lee still lives in Tower Hamlets and has no plans to move – "Its what I know, I don't see any point in moving."

We talked about why he doesn't do interviews for SKY or the Sun, "I don't do interviews for any of Murdoch's press, not after what they did at Wapping in the mid 80's. I saw local people's lives ripped apart, I went picketing regularly, I know what happened. Incidentally, if any of your readers, see quotes or a picture of me in Murdoch's press then "its a lie' as I just don't touch them. I'd advise others to do the same. "

Lee is less critical of the 5,500 printworkers who were on strike for a year at Wapping but he does believe that – "they should have been a bit more imaginative, especially on the issue of mass picketing. Standing in one mass block waiting to be attacked by the police; well let's just say that there's more than one way of skinning a cat."

So how active was he during the dispute?

"Very active (wink, wink....) if you know what I mean. It was the first time I'd been so active and it encouraged me to do more."

He said that Arthur Scargill was one of his political heroes, but also Mickey Fenn, a docker who I knew from seven years until he died recently. He was a staunch bloke who always did the right thing. A sad loss."

On the comedy front Lee Hurst admits to admiring Monty Python, Spike Milligan, Woody Allen and West Ham. Other heroes include a woman he once saw on Top of the Pops seven years ago and she turns out to be the person he'd

most like to be left alone in a room with. Asked what powers he'd like as a superhero then it's "the power to assassinate Michael Portillo from any distance" so, at last, it appears that Portillo's got one fan!

Lee's also not a big fan of working class people who rob from each other, believing that the old east end tradition where people got bent gear from a container – not second hand stuff stolen from someone's house, was much better. He is however a big fan of the NHS and rather surprisingly athletics. Perhaps that's because the first thing he's forced to do each morning is stretching exercises as he's got inflammation in the spine.

continued on page 23

*star
interview*



Can we pay a living?

I was recently laid-off from a casual job as a market researcher, wages were low, hours were long and work conditions were very poor. Basically, work fizzled out and it got to the point where they didn't have any work left to offer me. So I did the obvious thing and popped on down to my local DSS to claim the unemployment benefit I was entitled to. After all I couldn't be expected to live off nothing? To my dismay, for the next six weeks I was!

The DSS refused to pay me a penny until it seemed that they had investigated every minute detail connected to my claim.

Although I had already filled in the plethora of forms required to claim unemployment benefit, I was again and again asked for further proof that I was indeed, who I said I was, of my previous employment, my tenancy, my tax deductions, whether I was in any way co-habiting, if I was living at any other addresses as well, ad infinitum.

This resulted in not one but two home visits, the second one being nearly six weeks after I had made my initial claim by the "specialised" regional squad – and all in order to "detect" whether I was indeed entitled to the grand total of £48.50 per week – or not? Eventually all my details were passed onto an adjudication officer in order to see whether there was any doubt that I should be paid unemployment benefit.

As the weeks had gone by while waiting for my benefit, I began to wonder, with the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) being implemented by the Government in October, whether the new system was already partly in operation. Obviously the JSA cannot just be brought in overnight, so it makes sense for it to be brought in more gradually.

When the JSA is fully implemented, it is estimated that 250,000 people will lose between 20% and 70% of their benefit and 70,000 will be cut off totally. The government has given DSS workers targets of the number of claimants they must put onto schemes, or into low paid jobs or kick off benefits or deny benefits entirely. Their pay will be dependent on meeting these targets and if they fail they can be disciplined or ultimately

sacked. Also, waiting time for benefit claims to be processed will become much longer, as the more claimants they refer to "adjudication" the more pay they get.

For people signing on, the JSA will mean complete withdrawal of benefits for failure to comply (replacing the present 40%). So if you refuse a low paid job you could receive no benefit for up to six months. There will be much greater use of the job seekers directives – or orders to do this or that in order to find a job, hence they'll have the power to tell you to change the way you dress, your hair style and your "attitude". Also, if that's not bad enough, signing on will be like having a "Restart" interview every fortnight. There will be increased coercion and pressure on the unemployed to force them onto pointless training schemes and into crap jobs. Most present "voluntary" schemes will now become compulsory.

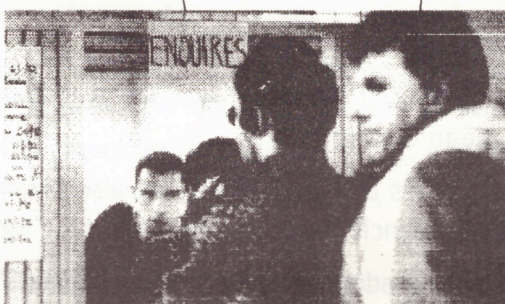
As an unemployed person, I ask myself what about my future prospects for getting back into full-time employment. The JSA is being brought in to force people like

me into low paid jobs. But I do not want to work for £2.50 an hour for the privilege of being poor. I want a proper job and a proper wage. Worse still, if I am forced into another crappy low paid job, I will still have to go through a means test and the whole rigmarole again in order to find out whether I'm still entitled to any top up benefits.

Hopefully, not all the JSA workers will be ghoulish Jobsworths delighting in hassling claimants. In fact, most workers will be so badly paid that they themselves may have to claim benefits. Even for them, the JSA will mean

job losses and increased attacks from claimants.

Mass unemployment has always been used to create a climate of job insecurity, so that people are too scared of the sack to face up to their bosses. The JSA will reinforce this process. Even now the penalties for getting sacked or leaving work are bad enough, with the JSA people will be left to starve. Employers are going to be able to move more and more towards low paid casual and part-time workforces. The unemployed will have to accept these jobs or lose all benefit entitlement. So, obviously, if you thought you were badly off now, wait until the JSA happens. That's unless we do something about it, to make sure that it doesn't happen.



The JSA was due to be introduced on October 1st and the government will hope that claimants will respond to its implementation as isolated individuals and that those in jobs will think it has nothing to do with them. Yet the fight against the JSA has already begun. A number of strikes by DSS and unemployment benefit staff are threatening to delay the timetable drawn up for the start of the JSA – no they don't want it either! Indeed, further industrial action could force the government to postpone the implementation of the JSA further. Local groups are already forming all over the country so that claimants and workers can support each other and make the JSA unworkable.

Do not co-operate – **REFUSE and RESIST** – or **CEASE TO EXIST**. We will not work for the privilege of being poor. Act now and say NO TO WAGE SLAVERY, to DOLE SLAVERY and to the JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE.

Written by D.F. (name protected to prevent total stoppage of benefits) – East London.

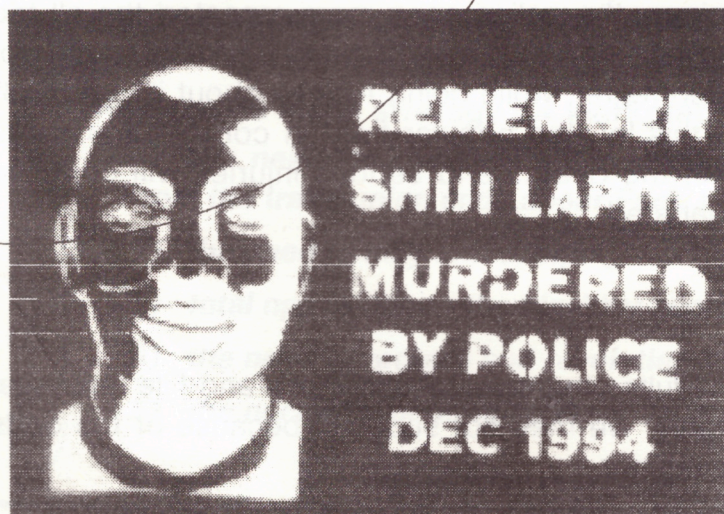
For more information contact Groundswell (Claimants Network), c/o Claimants Action Group, OUWCU, East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford OX4 1HU.

A guide to successfully answering all the questions in a JSA interview is available from the Colin Roach Centre.

Public Meeting **Tuesday 15th October**

**"The Job Seekers Allowance
and the Fight Against It"**
with speakers including
claimants and trade
unionists

6pm at the Colin Roach Centre



remember Shiji Lapite

Oluwashiji Lapite, a 32 year old father of two, died in the custody of police officers from Stoke Newington Police Station on Friday 16 December 1994. Shiji was stopped for "acting suspiciously" by two plain clothes police officers. Thirty minutes later he was dead. Several post mortems revealed extensive bruising and abrasions to Shiji's body. He had between 35 and 50 separate injuries. His death was due to asphyxia caused by a neckhold which fractured the bones in his neck.

It was to be over one year later, on 22 January 1996, that the inquest into the death of Shiji Lapite began at St Pancras Coroners Court. The public gallery was full every day and there was immense media interest as police officers constantly contradicted themselves in a crude attempt to destroy the dead man's character.

PC McCallum admitted kicking Shiji in the head, as "hard as he could." PC Wright admitted hitting him and holding Shiji around the neck. In almost exactly the same words as were used to describe Joy Gardner (killed by police in 1993) they punched Shiji as being a "super human" when he was in fact 5ft 10ins tall and of medium build. The officer's claim that Shiji was one of the "most violent and strongest men" he had ever met was not borne out by the fact that the dead man had between 35 – 50 separate injuries, whilst McCallum and Wright sustained only superficial cuts and grazes.

Other officers attempted to create the impression that Shiji was conscious when being taken to the van – rather than being unconscious and almost dead, they claimed he was "passively resisting!"

The inquest jury were completely unimpressed with the police, in less than half-an-hour they returned a unanimous verdict of unlawful killing. The coroner referred the case back to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) who had earlier decided that there wasn't sufficient evidence to prosecute the coppers. Months later the CPS decided, once again, not to take action. So they literally got away with murder! Shiji Lapite was the 49th black man to have died in police custody, but no police officer has ever been convicted of a criminal offence, demonstrating that the police are not, and never will be, accountable under the current system we are forced to live under.

Piarra Power from Newham Monitoring Project (NMP), who provided the backbone of the Justice for Oluwashiji Lapite Campaign, said: "Shiji's death was clearly one of the most horrific cases, the police brutally murdered him. We're trying to keep his name in the spotlight, whilst also supporting those he left behind. The lawyers are being asked to explore the possibility of a private prosecution and/or a judicial review of the case."

You can get more details on the case from NMP, 382 Katherine Road, London E7. Ask for a copy of their 1995/6 Annual Report which is highly recommended and carries an in-depth feature on the case.

death on the site

Brian Higgins writes here of the one issue which unites all building workers in real anger and about which the majority would do something if given a big enough and proper lead. This is the total lack of safety on site and the deaths and injuries this causes. He says, "We are now seriously attempting to provide a lead against this."



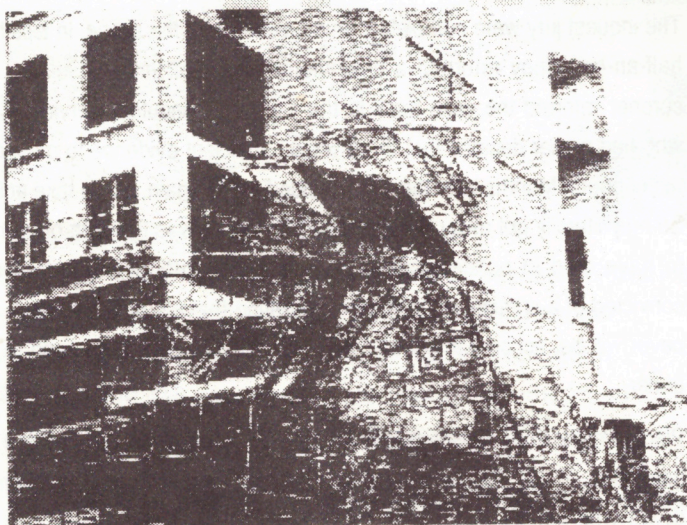
Brian Higgins is the secretary of the Building Worker Group, the oldest and most successful Rank and File group in Britain. He is the author of "Rank and File or Broad Left: Democracy versus Bureaucracy" a short history of the Building Worker Group, available from CRC/Resistance (£1.50).

"The slaughter continues – as does the callous disregard for building workers' lives and safety continually displayed by construction employers and the inability and reluctance of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and construction unions such as UCATT, Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) and AEEU to do anything about this.

In August 1995 four building workers **were** crushed to death on a site in Ashford, when a building they were renovating collapsed within seconds. The Surrey Coroner Michael Burgess recently ruled the men had been unlawfully killed.

We do not mince our words in this manner. They were in fact murdered by the construction firm John Lay before the renovation work commenced. This was premeditated murder! Yet no one was arrested, no one has been charged for any crime. The police have been asked politely to reopen the case. Oh yeah? Can you imagine what would happen if a group of building workers had been responsible for the deaths of four building employers!

We make no apologies for the language we use because building employers are, in fact murdering building workers week in, week out and getting away with it. **Nothing** is being done.



Edinburgh – May 1996 a 70 foot high scaffold, which the company Morrison Construction knew was inadequate for the job they were using it for, collapsed killing one building worker and seriously injured four others.

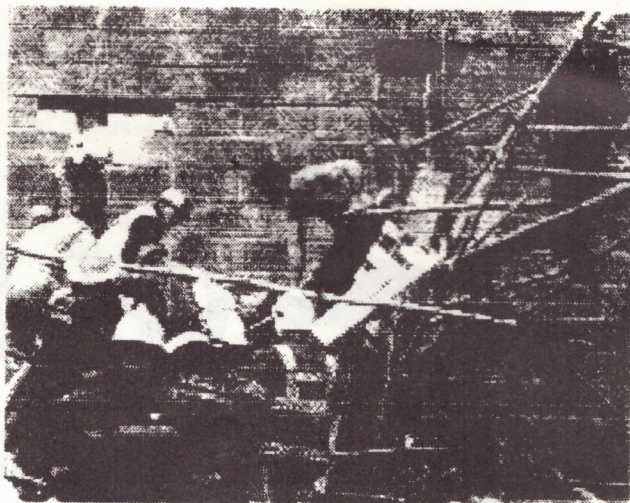
The building employers, the HSE, the construction unions, the police once more repeated the all too familiar ritual of breast beating and expressions of deep regret, while doing fuck all about it. If it is left to this lot, the popular front in construction if you like, the deaths and serious injuries will continue unabated.

Question – how do we stop the killing?

Answer – by stopping production when it happens.

Here we deliver a completely unequivocal and unadulterated revolutionary Rank and File message. Everything else has been tried and failed miserably. We may not succeed because of the odds facing us but unless we try no one else will in this manner.

The only people with the real power and desire to put a stop to the killings and serious injuries on construction sites are building workers. It is only when these workers get unionised and most importantly democratically and strongly organised on site and exercise total control over this and are prepared to stop production when a killing or serious injury happens that it will stop. Stopping or seriously effecting production is the **only** language building employers understand, fear and will take seriously.



Coupled with this, it is also crucially important to realise full-time trade union officials will **not** support industrial action to put a stop to death and injury in construction. In fact they will do everything in their power to counter and stop militant industrial action over safety and every other issue for that matter! This is because their cosy relationships with the employers and quiet lives are threatened by militancy and they are also shit scared of the law and even the threat of its use.

Building Worker Safety Campaign (BWSC) No doubt the reader will be thinking so far all this sounds good but what is the BWG prepared to do to put this theory into practice? We've been putting Rank & File politics into practice for the twenty one years of our existence. But in relation to safety specifically, the Building Worker Group is launching the BWSC, of which, the main policy platform is – "We hold the right to and will put a picket on any site where a death or serious injury has occurred."

This attempt to persuade site workers not to cross a picket line and to stop production in protest against deaths and serious injuries in construction has the eventual objective of a London wide and then UK wide strike for safety in the construction industry. It will take this to make the construction industry a truly safe and decent one in which to work.

We also have quite a few other policies around which we'll organise the BWSC, such as defiance of the anti union laws and total opposition to state interference in the democratic running of trade unions. Copies of full policy statements are available from the address below. Finally please support the Building Worker Safety Campaign. Please support our pickets when we call for them."

This is the first of a proposed regular series of articles from the Building Worker Group. However, we also want to hear from other workers, especially from any attempting to establish Rank and File groups. Send us your stories and news items.

Resistance has a strategy for workplace organisation built around 5 basic points:

- 1) the need for rank and file organisations to be based on complete independence from the trade union and Labour Party bureaucracies**
- 2) the need to defy and campaign for the repeal of all anti-trade union laws**
- 3) total opposition to the blacklist, victimisation and unemployment**
- 4) the need to reclaim and revolutionise workplace organisations**
- 5) the necessity of building direct international links between workers.**

TOP TIPS

for organising at your workplace



– a few ideas
by Mark Metcalf

You've just started work at a non-union firm and would like to get together with the other workers and get organised.

Only 3 out of 10 workers are in a union. This includes unions such as the Royal College of Nurses who have a no strike policy. In the private sector the figure is nearer to 2 out of 10 workers. Amongst those under 25 years of age approximately 1 out of 10 belong to a trade union. The unemployed don't belong to unions and are isolated. Internationally the situation is no better. Workers are disorganised and under attack.

Hardly surprising then, that one of the most frequently asked questions by workers is – "What can be done at my workplace to improve things? It seems impossible, the bosses are too strong."

From our experiences we suggest these tips –

● Try and find out as much as you can about the company you're working for. Does it have more than one factory or shop, is it a public company, how many people work for it, who owns it? The Colin Roach Centre in Hackney can help you with these questions, but there's also organisations such as the Labour Research Department. Try and build up a picture of the firm and people who work for it – for example, an increasing problem is that workers are "off the cards" and not working legally. Some workers may have problems with their immigration status.

● By chatting or often simply listening to other workers you should be able to find out what are their concerns. It could be pay, but this isn't always the case. Sometimes, their concerns are reactionary, such as keeping black people out of the workplace so you will need to be aware that not all concerns are necessarily progressive. Be discreet when trying to find out information, it's important not to let anyone guess what's happening at too early a stage. Keep a record of any major incidents at your workplace such as an accident or even threatening behaviour by a manager.

● Try and find out what other attempts, if any, have been made to organise the workers. It may be that there was once a union but it has collapsed. Try and identify those you believe would be interested in trying to organise the workplace. This will be difficult and could take some time – be patient. Our experience is that workers actions and attitudes initially change very slowly. Try and get to meet as many of your fellow workmates as possible, including out of work.

● When the time is right hold a meeting of those you have identified as being interested in getting organised. Do not be surprised if some workers do not turn up, don't get disappointed. The meeting should be as open as possible and discuss all issues which concern workers. The most obvious concern will be how to get the mass of workers involved. Every person who attends the meeting should be expected to see if there are other workers who can be got involved. Stress the importance of ensuring that management don't get to know about what's happening.

● A steering group could be elected to approach a trade union to see how they can assist. The word assist is vital, from the start the organisation of the workers should be by the workers themselves and not the union officials. This is vital if the organising and recruitment of workers to the union leads to industrial action. The workers movement is littered with hundreds of examples where workers have successfully organised and recruited workers to a union only to allow the officials to control their actions when strikes for recognition have broken out – i.e. Grunwicks in 1977, oil workers in the north sea in 1988, textile workers at Bacton Fashions in Hackney in 1990, Burnsall's in West Midlands in 1992 and, at the current time, workers at Hillingdon Hospital. The results have been disastrous and in some cases defeat has been snatched from the jaws of victory. The steering group can also try and establish whether there are any local groups who will be able to assist with practical initiatives such as leaflet production and a place to meet.

● At some point a leaflet will need to be produced and either distributed secretly at work or by friends when the workers are leaving the workplace. These actions will undoubtedly bring to management's attention that some workers are involved in trying to organise.

● When it is felt appropriate (which could be a period of a few weeks to many months) another larger meeting of all interested workers will need to be organised. Use the meeting to draw up a list of grievances and demands. The meeting will need to elect spokespeople to approach management. The workers will also need to decide if they wish to join a trade union, trade unions in Britain are not illegal and a company can be forced to negotiate with a recognised trade union.

● Be sure that the workers know that their actions may lead to the threat of dismissal and/or dismissal. Never convince workers into believing it will be easy. Discuss what this would mean if all or some workers are dismissed as this will require a decision to either strike and/or occupy the workplace (both of which we will cover in a future copy of RPM). Obviously the situation in countries where unions are outlawed is different and it will be impossible for workers to approach management. In discussions with workers from such countries it has become clear that sabotage of production becomes increasingly important.

● Keep a record of your attempts at organising – workers struggles are so rarely recorded that valuable experience is being lost and workers are having to go through the same problems. Many of them could be avoided.

**Have you tried to organise your workplace? What happened?
Write and let us know.**

support the Hillingdon Hospital strikers

After one year on strike, the group of women involved are continuing to fight for their jobs and against the cuts in pay and conditions. The strikers, all members of UNISON, have fought heroically and continue to need financial support, invitations to meetings and help on their picket line. Their fight has exposed the effects of privatisation in hospitals. It has also demonstrated that union officials cannot be relied upon to lead any effective struggle against a Capitalist offensive on workers jobs, terms and conditions.

Please send donations to:

Hillingdon Hospital Support Campaign,
Committee Room 3, Civic Suite, Uxbridge,
Middx. Tel 01895 - 255071



Liverpool Dock strike

One year on strike and the dockers from the Port of Merseyside refuse to give up their struggle for reinstatement. International support has been magnificent, with dockers throughout the world refusing to unload ships from Liverpool. The TGWU, the union all the strikers belong to, have not shown the same level of support. There is the prospect of the union withdrawing support, but whether or not this happens the struggle will continue.

Donations and requests for speakers to:

Jimmy Davis, Secretary, Liverpool Port Shop
Steward Committee, 19 Scorton Street,
Liverpool L6 4AS. Tel 0151 - 207 3388



what's happening with our housing?

by GB



Since around the middle of 1994 the London Borough of Hackney has been considering what it calls the Estate Regeneration Strategy (ERS). This is the transferring, or put another way, giving away of council homes and the tenants in them into the hands of consortiums made up of housing associations and private companies. By April 1995 tenants living on chosen estates for the scheme were informed of the councils plans and invited to public meetings about ERS.

At these meetings tenants were told that over the past year the council had conducted a stock conditions survey and found most of its housing was sub-standard for example:

- **2 out of 3 blocks needed window repair or replacement**
- **44% needed their roofs repairing or replacing**
- **2 out of 5 homes had inadequate heating or hot water systems**
- **that they didn't have the money to repair them**

We were told if we stayed with the council, repairs that needed to be done within the next five years would take 20 years to do. Some tenants took this as a threat and thought that council officers were saying that they may be penalised if they voted against any transfer.

Why would private firms want to be involved in doing up council flats? One reason is that they may get a proportion of the flats to sell – this could be why instead of the 18 estates that would cost the most to do up, those which could be more marketable have been included, like Lincoln court which is in a pretty location by the reservoirs with land round it. Or the Haggerston, Whitmore and Kingsland group being near the city.

For tenants on the chosen estates there are disadvantages, as council tenants rights are in law – with the consortiums they would have to be negotiated. Rents will rise to cover the cost of repairs, as well as more worrying concerns such as what happens if the consortiums go bust and the future of housing associations under the new housing bill. At the same time the number of homes the council owns will have shrunk so the council will be collecting less rent and money off the government to repair its remaining homes. It will have less homes to house homeless people and people on the waiting list.

What happens next? It will be at least a year before tenants get to vote to say if they want to go with the consortiums or not. Lincoln court has already had a "test of opinion" ballot – **80% of tenants and leaseholders voted and 97.5% voted to stay with the council, with 90% saying they did not wish to proceed with ERS.** Despite this the council is choosing to ignore the results, so that's what it thinks of tenant consultation! The council will continue to waste money promoting the scheme.

Consortiums will be negotiating tenancy matters and details of improvements with tenants on Estate Development Management Committees made up of tenants and councillors.

Can councillors be trusted to represent tenants' interests and get the "best deal" when they seem desperate to get rid of council homes?

Tenants may have had a couple of training days and a council officer on hand, up against consortiums with expert knowledge, out to get what they can. While Hackney has done an appalling job of repairing its flats is anyone going to be better off with a housing association which is answerable to the banks and businesses which enable them to take over council homes?

The council is planning to give away 18 estates – Haggerston, Kingsland, Whitmore, Gascoyne, Kingshold, Shore, Kingsmead, Morningside, Pembury, High Hill, Northwold, Southwold, Wigan, Hillside, Hindle House, Kennaway, Lincoln Court and Stamford Hill. The consortiums for the take over of these estates have already been chosen.

R P M



"The government wanted to split up our family!"



When **Margaret**, a Hackney woman, met the love of her life, she could not know what lay ahead. Because the British government, with its slogans about supporting the family, told her she had to choose between her marriage and living in Britain. In the end, only her Irish heritage, and Britain's membership in the European Union, allowed them to hold their marriage together while living in this country.

Mircea Ilin, her husband, comes from Romania. He left that country under the Ceausescu regime, seeking political asylum in this country. He and Margaret, an employee of Hackney Council, met and decided to get married.

That was when our big brother government stepped in. They ruled that, despite the marriage, Mircea could not remain in this country. Margaret as a British citizen could stay, but without her husband. The government told the couple that if they wished to maintain their marriage they could go to Romania. Then the couple were separated, with Mircea being held in detention in Rochester Prison down in Kent, a two hour journey from their home. A campaign, supported by her union, community and political groups, Hackney Council, local churches, and individuals, was set up.

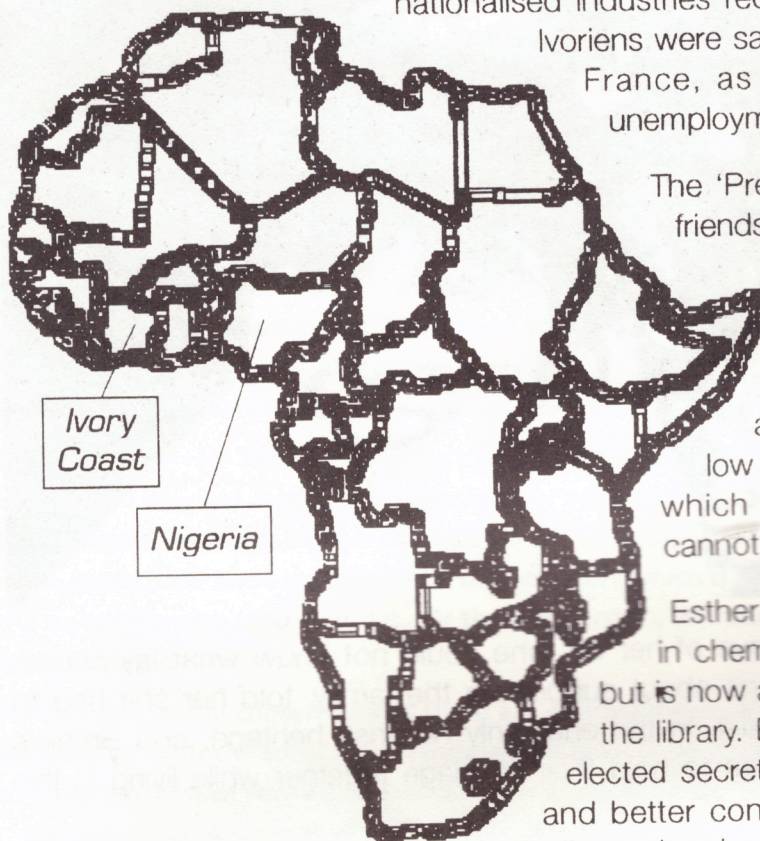
In the end the saving grace was her parents' Irish citizenship. Because of this, Margaret applied for Irish citizenship herself, which she was granted. And she found that she then had rights as a European citizen which she did not have as British subject. In effect, because she now had an Irish passport, and lived and worked in London, she and Mircea won their right to remain together in this country.

more true-life stories over the page...

There will be a public meeting in December to celebrate this important victory and to launch further support for other people fighting deportation.

"Give us information or you will have an accident!"

true-life stories from the asylum and immigration files



Esther Lehou was born in the Ivory Coast, a beautiful country on Africa's Atlantic coast. Despite winning its independence from France on paper, the Ivory Coast is controlled by Paris. So much so that when the country's nationalised industries recently underwent privatisation and thousands of Ivoriens were sacked, they were replaced by staff sent over from France, as part of a programme to deal with France's unemployment.

The 'President' of the country, his family and a group of friends, are in a unique position. Only they are allowed to trade the coffee and cocoa which are the chief products of the country, products which bring in large profits. As such, they are able to take most of the income from these items. The average Ivorien therefore lives on low wages, so low that most cannot afford health care in a country which has no health service, and so low that many cannot afford education for their children.

Esther was able to go to college, where she specialised in chemistry. This was a college built for 5000 students but is now attended by some 62,000. There are few books in the library. Esther joined her students union, and was quickly elected secretary. Students were protesting, demanding books and better conditions, but also an end to the restrictive trading practices whereby the 'President' and his friends are rich, and most

people are poor. And which had left their college in a poor state.

She was arrested and held without charge or trial. During this time she was beaten and injected with drugs. The authorities wanted names of other people she had worked with. But she refused. After several months, she was finally released.

She returned to her studies. Then her mother was harassed by soldiers with rifles. And she was taken by the police again, who threatened her. A government minister came to her interrogation and said that if she did not give them the information they wanted soon, she would have an accident.

She was able to leave the country. Because of France's friendship with the corrupt government, she came to London, where there is a small Ivorien community. At her immigration interview, the officer refused to believe her story, and while he could produce no evidence for his decision, turned down her claim. She now is appealing.

This young woman, 26, is having a baby. After she became pregnant, the government announced that she would have no access to benefits.

There is now support group for French speaking Africans which meets every other Tuesday of the month at the Colin Roac Centre.

true-life stories

from the asylum and immigration files
all interviews by Brad Kress

"I'm not allowed to work, but I'm not allowed benefit"

Jack (this is not his real name, because of persecution at home he needs to remain anonymous) is a personable young man from Nigeria. When he was a boy, in his home town a small river was the main source of water. However, it became highly polluted.

It was only when he went on to college that he began to realise the pollution was caused by a Shell refinery leaking oil not far from his home town. At the college he met people, including some who worked with Ken Saro-wiwa, recently murdered by the Nigerian government for campaigning for a better environment. He decided to join in protests, and did some fly posting. For this he was arrested and held first for several days with no charges made against him. He was released, then later arrested again. This time he was held for nine months in a prison, where he was routinely beaten. There was little food.

Eventually he was able to get out of the prison. He had never been tried, or even charged with anything. He caught a plane out of the country.

In London, not sure of how immigration worked, he entered the country and sought advice. Only then did he learn he was supposed to apply for asylum at the port. So he was not eligible for benefit. Fortunately, a church in Hackney housed him, and the Hackney Refugee & Migrant Support Group provided him with some money to live on and eventually got Hackney Council to house him.

He has since applied for asylum. At his initial interview, the officer refused to believe his claims that he was arrested and tortured, and turned him down. He is appealing, but has no right to benefit, and is not allowed to work.

There is now a support group for people fighting deportation which meets on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at the Colin Roach Centre.

These and other immigrants have come together to set up a Resource Centre to support asylum seekers and other immigrants who lose benefits. The Hackney Refugee and Migrant Support Group meets on the last Wednesday of every month (venues vary). Details from the Colin Roach Centre.



"Britain has played a primary role in creating world wide immigration as we know it today. The development of slavery, along with the introduction of taxes and enclosure around the world, set this immigration in motion. Immigration laws and other controls are intended only to make this immigration profitable. Immigration controls do not represent the interests of the British working class. But such controls have been made an important tool in the ruling class strategy of divide and rule. Resistance is working to devise ways to counteract this tool. We are opposed to all immigration laws and controls."

Part of statement passed at the Resistance founding Conference in October 1995

IN THE LINE OF FIRE

Reviewed by Mark C.

The Orange Order stand-off at Drumcree on the 7th of July this year and the subsequent U-turn and capitulation to the forces of loyalism by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), demonstrated to a world-wide audience that this paramilitary police force is alive and well and setting the British Government's agenda in the North of Ireland.

There have been many reports criticising the sectarian role of the RUC and in particular the indiscriminate use of plastic bullets over the last 27 years, yet little has changed as a result. "In the line of fire" is a pamphlet produced by the Pat Finucane Centre, a community based political centre in Derry, in conjunction with the Belfast based Committee on the Administration of Justice (CJA).

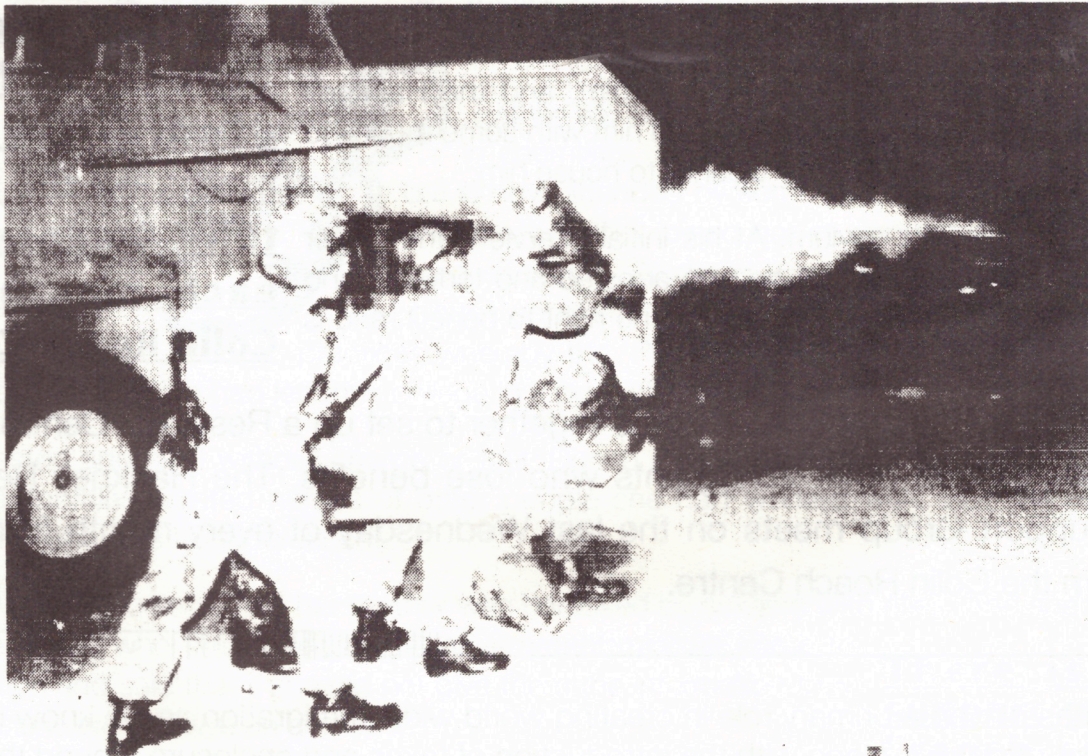
The report pieces together the events in Derry from July 7th to July 15th, after the Drumcree stand-off – a period of intense violence and sectarian excess instigated by the actions of the RUC. The report uses eye-witness statements, painstakingly collected, thereby avoiding the British media reports.

Over the period in question the RUC discharged thousands of plastic rounds (5340) and two Catholic men were killed. The RUC not only anticipated violence in Derry on the

night Dermot McShane was killed but eyewitness reports state that the instigated it, culminating on the RUC attack on the injured and their relatives in the Altnagelvin Hospital.

The British Government finally washed its hands of the nationalist community at Drumcree, allowing the RUC to impose martial law and resulting in widespread violence, injury and death. In the line of fire calls for the banning of plastic bullets and the disbanding of the RUC in favour of something more representative of the community in the north of Ireland. The overall message behind this report is that the most basic of human rights to live without fear of intimidation and violence is being denied to the Catholic community in the north of Ireland. Nothing has changed in 27 years in this respect.

Copies of "in the line of fire" are available from the Pat Finucane Centre, 1 West End Park, Derry BT48 9JF. At £2.50 it is essential reading.



Starting
in the
next
issue
RPM will
be
running
a series
on "The
History
of
Ireland"
written
by a
Belfast
based
activist.

Resistance is organising a trade union delegation to Derry in January 1997, to co-incide with the 25th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, when British Paratroops shot dead 13 unarmed demonstrators. Details from the Colin Roach Centre.

making a killing in Kurdistan

international news

We've all seen the pictures on TV - American cruise missiles racing to Iraq to "punish" Saddam Hussein for attacking the Kurds - the warplanes flying out from Turkey to police the "no-fly zone". America and Britain have often been quick to act against Iraq to "protect the Kurds". At the same time America and Britain have both pledged support for Turkey's genocide of Kurdish people. So what's going on - why the hypocrisy?

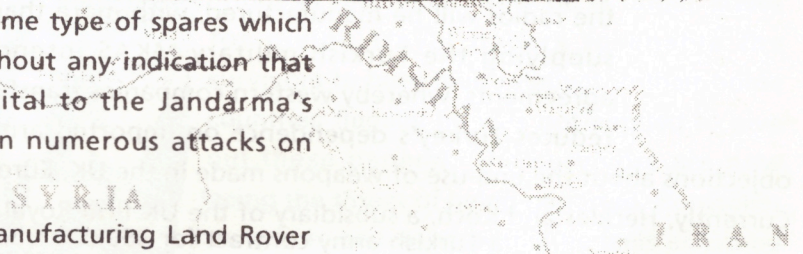
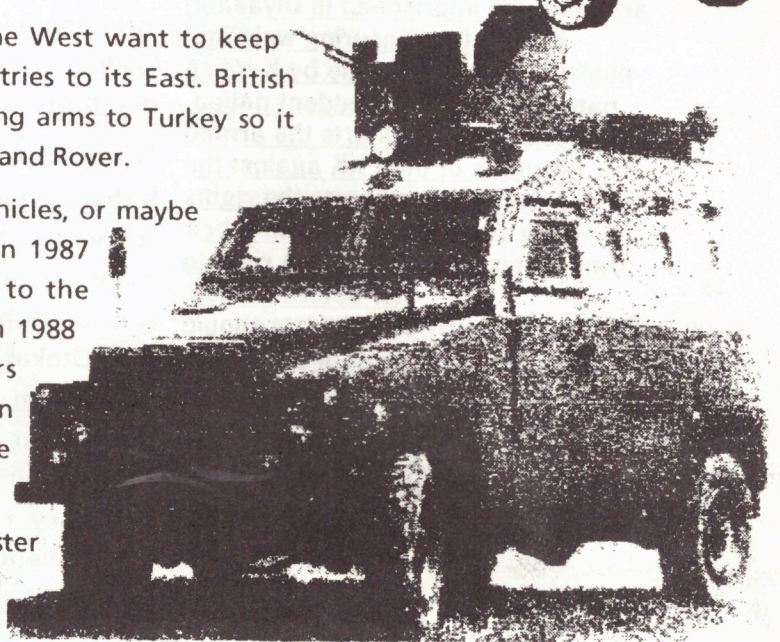
While attacks on Iraq protect Western oilfields, the West want to keep Turkey sweet as a buffer against the Islamic countries to its East. British companies also make a killing (literally) by supplying arms to Turkey so it can carry out its war on the Kurds. Companies like Land Rover.

People think of Land Rovers as chunky old farm vehicles, or maybe the Land Rover **Discovery**, the urban jeep. But in 1987 four hundred Land Rover **Defenders** were sold to the Turkish Jandarma (military-style police), followed in 1988 by forty Shorland 550s armed personnel carriers (APCs). These types of vehicles are designed for urban population control. They are not suitable for the "battlefield".

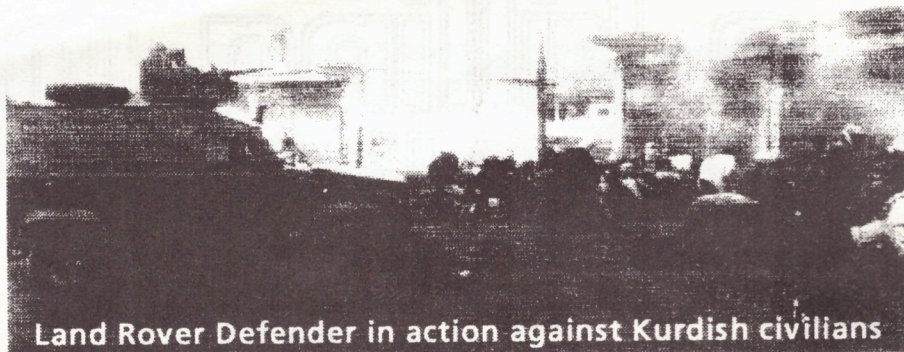
The Shorland, originally designed for the Royal Ulster Constabulary, is made by Shorts of Belfast who build an armoured body and machine gun turret on a Land Rover base. Both vehicles use 80% of the same type of spares which can be purchased on the commercial market without any indication that they are for military use. Both vehicles are vital to the Jandarma's operations in Kurdistan and have been used in numerous attacks on civilians.

Since 1987 a company called Otokar has been manufacturing Land Rover variants under licence. In 1994 it released details of a new APC developed for service with the Turkish security forces - the AKREP or Scorpion. This too, according to Janes Defence Weekly, has "70% of the automotive components drawn from the well known Land Rover Defender." Despite this, and the fact that it underwent trials at a Land Rover plant in the UK, the Ministry of Defence has denied any British involvement in its development or manufacture. **Since many of the components are the same as for civilian Land Rovers they do not need a defence equipment export licence.**

Britain played a major role in robbing the Kurds of their own homeland in the 1920s. Since the 1950's Britain has been a close military ally of Turkey through NATO. Now both the Tory Government and Labour "opposition" support closer integration



Although it is argued that most British arms exports are high-tech air-defence and naval weapon systems not used for internal repression, they still help maintain Turkey's military rule. And this in a country which was ruled by the armed forces until 1950, where there have been three military coups since then and where militarism is still a dominant authoritarian influence on the political system.



Land Rover Defender in action against Kurdish civilians

members of Resistance have visited Kurdistan as observers on various delegations. In November 1993 a 15-strong trade union delegation was arrested and imprisoned in Diyakabit prison, thus ensuring welcome publicity for the struggle by Kurdish patriots for an independent nation.

Resistance supports the armed struggle of the PKK against the Turkish State and supports the rights of all Kurdish people to decide their own destinies, including the right to self-determination.

We argue that trade unionists should support a boycott of tourism to

Turkey.

In Hackney we work closely with the Halkevi Centre and the Kurdistan Workers Association. We are active members of the Kurdistan Solidarity Committee.

1988 a Turkish branch of the government Defence Export Sales Organisation was set up to promote arms sales. In 1993 DESO the UK Defence Manufacturers Association and around 20 UK companies were represented at the IDEF exhibition in Ankara, including several subsidiaries of British Aerospace (BAe - the UK's leading arms manufacturer) and GEC Marconi. The UK provided the third main group of exhibitors after US and Turkey.

The glib justification that some military equipment is "non lethal" does not bear examination. A prime example of the spurious distinction between lethal and non-lethal arms (and of the way co-production deals export the technology of repression) is evident in the relations between Land Rover and the Turkish firm Otokar that we mentioned earlier. But modern armies also depend on communications and transport as much as guns to fight a war. The UK electronics firm Marconi has entered a joint production agreement with the Turkish firm Has, to produce military radios, in a £75 million deal backed by the UK government's Export Credit Guarantee Department.

The firm Marconi Kominikasyon (MKAS) was set up to run a new factory in Turkey where the radios will be manufactured, with more than half the components locally produced. As well as supplying the Turkish military MKAS intends to seek export markets. Such co-production agreements, whereby western companies transfer technology to establish a domestic arms industry, reduces Turkey's dependence on imported arms. It also avoids embarrassing moral and political objections about the end-use of weapons made in the UK, Europe or the USA.

Currently, Heckler and Koch, a subsidiary of the UK firm Royal Ordnance (itself a subsidiary of BAe), is bidding for a Turkish army contract for 350,000 rifles, to be produced under licence by the Turkish gun and ammunition manufacturer MKE. The fact that a firm with UK links is even in the running, shows the cynicism of British Government and arms industry "guidelines" on the supply of lethal weapons to repressive regimes.

Alan Brooke - Kurdistan Solidarity Committee

Lee Hurst - what's his crack? cont'd from page 10

We talked about the compromises comedians have to make on TV and surprisingly (certainly to us at RPM), Lee reckons that apart from not being allowed to swear or say anything libellous you can get away with most things on a Live TV comedy show. One thing you certainly won't get from Lee is racist jokes, as living in the east end he recognises how groups such as the BNP have divided people. At some gigs there's been the odd (very odd!) fascist in the audience, keen to see if they can wind him up. "It's important that you try and deal with such a situation through humour, you're there to be funny and if you go into a political rant then in a way he's won."

Finally we asked Lee if he has any ambitions for the future - "I want to open a comedy club in the east end of London, put something back."

It was good to talk to someone from the TV who's still down to earth. Thanks for the interview and good luck .

murder in Luebek

by Karsten Weber, Germany

international news

On the night of January 17th/18th this year, a hostel for asylum seekers in Luebek in Germany was burnt down. Ten people were killed and 30 hospitalised with serious injuries. Three skinheads from Grevesmuehlen were arrested as suspects.

Shortly afterwards, the three were released and a Lebanese resident of the hostel, Safwan Eid, was arrested and charged with murder. It was declared that he started the fire after a row with African residents.

Politicians declared themselves relieved - this outcome cleared Germany of the image of being a fertile area for racist and neo-fascist activities. They blamed the press for condemning innocents. Fascist parties used similar arguments in the ongoing election campaign.

The Alliance Against Racism in Luebek and a few journalists did not believe the official results and began their own investigations. They found that the police gave the skinheads their alibis! The three were spotted 15km (about 6 miles) away from the attack 20 minutes later - the police said you can't drive that small distance in that time. This is nonsense!

It was claimed that the arrested skinheads were not fascists. The truth is all are well known members of the nazi scene and one was held in custody for 2 months for doing fascist graffiti.

All three had burnt eyebrows and fresh burns on their faces. One claimed that he spilt petrol over a dog that had bothered him and then set fire to it, another said that he lit a match to look into the tank of his moped and it exploded and the third said he burnt a car to destroy the traces of the moped. The police did not investigate any of the stories - they did not look for the dead dog, the moped or the car.

All the residents of the hostel said that there were no quarrels between the Arabs and the Africans in the hostel, claiming this is an invention of the police. The residents believe that Safwan Eid (who denies all

charges) is innocent and are demanding his release. The 'witness' who accused Safwan Eid of having confessed to the murder turned up after the authorities set up a 50,000 marks (about £30,000) reward fund for finding the murderer(s).

The fire expert, Professor Ernst Achilles, who investigated the incident on behalf of Luebek Alliance Against Racism said the authorities' arguments were wrong - in the official version the petrol must have run uphill!

Luebek lies in Schleswig Holstein, which is locally governed by the Social Democratic Party (in coalition with the Green Party), which tries to be seen as a Left alternative to the conservative CDU (Christian Democrats). The Mayor of Luebek, Michael Bouteillier, is one of those rare species, a decent politician.

He helped the survivors of the arson attack and demanded their permanent right of residence. Now he is under attack for giving travel papers to enable the survivors to bury their relatives in their home countries (legally he was not entitled to give out these papers). The survivors are now facing the threat of being deported. Bouteillier has said in an interview that he feels ashamed to be a member of the Social Democratic Party.

The public prosecutor's office refuses to reply to any accusations against them. The authorities have their own form of reacting against proof of racism. The offices of Alliance Against Racism were raided, leaflets, posters and computers were confiscated and a demonstration planned for September 30th in Grevesmuehlen was banned.

Support the campaign against state racism by spreading the above facts about the racist German authorities.

FREE SAFWAN EID! - NO DEPORTATIONS!



STRIKING BACK!

is a support and positive action group set up in

the north Nottinghamshire area in May 1994, in

response to the growing number of people in the area suffering from the effects of chronic pain. The people who worked to set up the group, and who have sustained it ever since, are either sufferers themselves or are family and friends of sufferers. By definition, chronic pain is persistent, may have no obvious cause and is unresponsive to treatment. What that means in real terms is that most of us have reached the end of the road with regard to medical or surgical intervention, and that we each have a condition with which we are forced to live.



Carol Farmer

Possibly the worst issue for people with chronic pain, beyond the suffering, debilitation, sleeplessness and depression, is the sense of isolation that we feel. The pain itself isolates, added to which we are often surrounded by people who, no matter how well-meaning, cannot adequately understand what we are experiencing. There is often much anger in the sufferer. We may have had to give up our work, feel unable to adequately care for our families and will probably have given up most if not all of our social lives. We may feel that the pain is not taken seriously by either the medical profession or by family and friends. Striking Back! is an attempt to free ourselves from this isolation, to socialise in a caring and sympathetic environment and to meet others who understand only too well the restrictions that pain puts upon us.

The group aims to provide support for, and promote self-confidence in people with chronic pain; to seek to promote the health and well-being of members through a varied programme of activities, either directly connected with chronic pain or in exploration of skills that can be developed; to provide information and contacts for advice; to publicise and raise awareness of the problems of chronic pain; to provide support for members who are unable to attend meetings because of their pain and ultimately, of course, we aim to act as a pressure group in getting chronic pain recognised as a disability in its own right.

In the two years since its inception, we feel that the group has been a tremendous success. We made an early decision as a group not to have a "steering committee", as this would put too much stress on individual members who are unable to fulfil their commitments from time to time because of possible "flare-ups". As a result, from some 50 members, we have about 20 people who are active in making the wheels go round at any one time. We feel that this has enabled people who felt powerless in the face of pain, which most of us suffer 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to take control of our lives once more, giving us a sense of purpose. It has enabled people who have had difficulty in communicating fears, and anxieties in other circumstances to do just that in a safe and protected environment. Besides the obvious problems of the pain itself, members tend to suffer from the stress which attaches itself to these situations - money problems, deteriorating relationships, fear of losing homes and the incapacity to tackle sometimes the simplest of tasks. These issues can be discussed and often fears allayed as a result of talking to others in similar situations. Our biggest problem is reaching out to those who suffer in silence at home. Though we regularly advertise ourselves, it is difficult to cut through the isolation that those in pain feel, and encourage them out of their "safe" homes into a more dangerous world.

Striking Back! is only a local group, though there are many such groups throughout the UK, started by people who needed help and support themselves. Local development projects will often help with advice and initial funding in setting up. If you would like more information about Striking Back! and how we "got going", please contact Carol on 01623 451764 or fax on 01623 451745

what's cooking?

by Angela Sibley

Czarist Russia. We drooled over the lavish meals of the rich with endless menus and elegant tables. Then I brought in a typical Russian meal of the time for them to try. Their disgust at the dry rye bread and sauerkraut (fermented cabbage) which peasants relied upon helped the students to appreciate the problems and anger which existed at a basic level in Russia.

We know that starvation is still rife in many parts of the world, mainly those which were colonised by Britain and others in the recent past. Although technically independent now, their land is often owned by multinational companies and local landlords can't resist the greater profits to be made from growing cash crops such as coffee for the rich American and European markets, leaving inadequate food products for the local people. So much for market forces as a sensible way of sharing the world's resources!



Even in England, Scotland and Wales malnutrition has been a major problem. At the turn of the century nearly half of the volunteers for the Boer War were rejected as unfit for war. But that was a century ago, what about now? Over-eating is commonly portrayed as the main dietary problem and the Government's "Health of the Nation" 1991 statement declared that "the range of choices for a healthy diet has never been better" (in other words if your diet is not healthy its your own fault).

But the proportion of people with incomes below half of the national average income has more than doubled, going from 8% in 1982, to 19% in 1993. As poverty has increased government support has decreased (remember "Maggie Thatcher, Milk Snatcher" making a name for herself in the early 70's for stopping free milk for schoolchildren when she was education minister). The requirement to provide balanced school dinners also disappeared and it shows! Nearly half of the calories in Hackney's school dinners come from fat, in spite of "a particular need for school meals in the borough to be of good nutritional value" – that's according to Hackney council.

Hackney comes third in England's league tables for the proportions of unemployed people with children dependent on free school meals. If those unemployed people go to the job centre they'll find 85% of the jobs on offer at below the Council of Europe's "decency threshold" of £3 an hour. A third of Hackney schoolkids have no breakfast and a quarter of the teenage girls have low iron levels. 40% of pregnant women dependent on benefits spend less than £10 per person per week on food. Hackney has higher proportions of stillbirths, deaths of babies and deaths of young children than the averages for England. There are other working class areas in similar straits.

A woman whose husband is long-term unemployed wrote to "The Times" last year angrily pointing out that low income families eat "crap food" because healthy food is usually more expensive – wholemeal bread and pasta costs more than the standard white and biscuits fill you up much more cheaply than fruit.

Of course someone on income support with a high level of nutritional knowledge, good cooking skills, good cooking facilities, plenty of time and the ability to persuade their kids to take lentil loaf as a packed lunch instead of buying pizza and chips with their friends, could probably manage to provide adequate nutrition for their family!

**Sunday December
1st – discussion
meeting at the
Calthorpe Arms,
252 Grays Inn
Road, London WC1
on "The Politics of
Food" – 2pm start.**

what is **resistance** and what does it do?

For several years a variety of successful groups based at the Colin Roach Centre in Hackney have organised resistance on both a local and national scale, working on a practical and political level around issues such as policing, immigration, grassroots trade union organisation and fighting racism and Fascism. Groups based at the Centre have also initiated community defence projects, struggles against deportations, bad housing, council-inspired closures and estate sell-offs. We have a history of both practical and political support for strikes (including strikes organised by our members in their own workplaces) and building links with organisations around the world, amongst many other activities.

In the course of these different struggles and campaigns we recognised that if we wanted to achieve more than single-issue successes or reforms we needed to work together – we had common aims and experiences and we decided we had to widen the struggle, bringing together community and workplace struggles in a broad-based political organisation, breaking down barriers to build a new political movement.

At the end of 1995 we formed Resistance – a new and growing political organisation uniting the struggles and experiences of people based around the Colin Roach Centre. We are a revolutionary organisation, we want to build a society where people are more important than profit. Many of us are Socialists, Communists and Anarchists, many of us have no “label”. We are united in the belief that to create a better world Capitalism, the system we live in now, must be destroyed. We don't want to organise fightback for people, we want to help working class people organise *themselves*.

Resistance and the Colin Roach Centre are funded and organised by our members and supporters. We don't get any funding from council grants or political parties. We don't believe the Labour Party (New or Old) has anything to offer working class people. At the moment, we are in discussion with groups and individuals about establishing independent centres similar to the Colin Roach Centre in their own areas.

Our practical work includes defending over 500 victims of police crime, including over 100 in the last nine months of 1995, including murder, harassment, assault and racist attacks. We have stopped many people from going to prison and, on occasions, got people who had been sent down released on appeal. We helped set up, and provided support for, the Brian Douglas Campaign in South London as well as establishing the Free Malcolm Kennedy Campaign/Justice for Patrick Quinn. We worked on exposing the murder of David Ewin in Barnes in February 1995 – leading to the first ever charges of murder being brought against a serving police officer.

On a daily basis our policing work includes getting defendants proper legal representation, witness searches, support in court and, where someone is sent to prison, we continue to support them in a practical way. Some of the people we have been working with have received considerable financial settlements for the injustices they have suffered. Well over half a million pounds has been won. On a day to day level we are involved in providing practical and political support for asylum seekers and refugees. We are also involved in a number of individual anti-deportation campaigns, as part of our activities in the fight against all immigration controls.

All of this work, all of these successes (possibly in some areas more than the rest of the “revolutionary” Left or the Labour Party could ever dream of achieving), have been achieved by a relatively small number of people. Imagine what could happen if more people got involved—including **you**?

**We need your help to build on this work. Please contact Resistance at the Colin Roach Centre,
56 Clarence Road, London E5 8SW or phone us on 0181 533 7111**

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