

ANWAR DITTA

ANWAR DITTA - I WILL FIGHT TO THE LAST BREATH

In previous issues of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, we have reported the case of Anwar Ditta whose family has been cruelly split by British imperialism's immigration controls. For over four years, the Tory government and the previous Labour government refused Anwar Ditta's three children permission to come from Pakistan and join their parents in England. The children have been refused entry and the family broken up because:

'the couple had not established that they were the parents of the three children.'

The evidence is insufficient, declares the Home Office. The South African apartheid regime divides and destroys black families. British imperialism does the same, but covers up with legal jargon – 'insufficient evidence'!

It was in order to fight this racist attempt to destroy Anwar Ditta's family that the Anwar Ditta Defence Committee was formed in December 1979. Six months later, the campaign is at an important turning point. On Monday 28 April, the Immigration Appeal to hear Anwar Ditta's case was adjourned to 16 May. Under no illusions as to the racism of the Appeal Court, in which 80% of cases are lost, the Defence Committee is organising a picket on the day. The British state will be warned – unless Anwar Ditta's family is re-united, the struggle will escalate.

That the appeal date is on 16 May and not at some indefinite time in the future is entirely due to the campaign fought by the Defence Committee. It has forced the Home Office to give Anwar's case 'top priority' and bring the hearing forward, steps highly unusual in such cases.

The campaign which began modestly with mass petitioning in Rochdale has gone from strength to strength. Large and successful pickets have been organised in Rochdale and Manchester on the occasion of Timothy Raison's visits and in London supporters of Anwar Ditta organised a picket of the Home Office. Regular street meetings in Rochdale have revealed great support amongst the Asian community. Support has also poured in from all over the country. From London to Stoke, from Liverpool to Manchester, from Runcorn to Bradford, Oldham, Bury, Leeds Anwar Ditta and the Defence Committee have travelled to address meetings and conferences and gather support. And the results have been tremendous. The first stage of the campaign ended with a really successful demonstration in Roch-

dale on 1 March 1980 and the announcement that Anwar Ditta's appeal date was to be brought forward.

The growth of the campaign, its increasing support and effectiveness is the result of its simple anti-racist, anti-imperialist message. As an early leaflet of the campaign declared:

'Anwar Ditta's family is being destroyed by Britain's immigration controls... the Home Office has refused to admit Anwar's children because they are black.'

The Defence Committee identified the enemies of all the oppressed and appealed for support in the struggle against these enemies. As Anwar Ditta has repeatedly stated:

'The Labour and Tory party are the same, they are racist. They are doing this to me because I am black. They are breaking up black families. They treat black people worse than animals.'

In her speeches Anwar Ditta has made it clear that she speaks not only for herself, but for all black people oppressed by the British state and its lackeys. As the Defence Committee leaflet for the demonstration of 26 April put it:

'Anwar's case is not an isolated case of 'injustice'... By demonstrating on April 26th, you will be supporting not only Anwar, but all those at present under attack from the racist immigration laws... victory for Anwar will be a blow struck against the immigration controls. It will be a victory for all black people against the racist, imperialist state.'

This message, this appeal to the oppressed, its



uncompromising anti-racist, anti-imperialist standpoint has been the condition for the support and successes of the campaign. Support has come, first and foremost from the organisations of the oppressed. The Asian Youth Movement Bradford, which initiated the Black Freedom March, the Asian Youth Movements in Leicester, Manchester and Dewsbury have all given wholehearted support to the campaign. Black Freedom March mobilising meetings in Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool also declared their support for the fight. The RCG has also given complete support to the campaign. Not only has it played a central role on the Defence Committee but has also mobilised support in Leeds, Blackburn, Sheffield, Liverpool and Manchester. Support has also been given from the North of England Irish Prisoners Committee (NEIPC), an organisation fighting on behalf of Irish freedom fighters in jail who are demanding POW status. The NEIPC recognises that Black and Irish people face a common enemy in the British imperialist state and indeed its platform includes the demand for an end to all immigration controls.

Anwar Ditta's case has also been raised in numerous trade union organisations – ASTMS branches in Leicester and Manchester, NUPE and TGWU branches, Liverpool, Rochdale and Runcorn & Widnes Trades Councils have declared their support as has the NEC of the CPSA. So too have student organisations in Manchester and Leeds.

The campaign so far has been a perfect example of how to wage a fight on cases such as Anwar Ditta's – make an alliance with the oppressed, appeal for support from the oppressed and those who are ready to stand with the oppressed against British imperialism. Of course, the campaign, precisely because it has chosen the path of anti-racism and anti-imperialism has met with opposition. Police attempts to intimidate it off the streets are dealt with in

GROWING SUPPORT FOR ANWAR DITTA

That Anwar Ditta's fight for her 3 children is winning more and more support was shown when over 600 people marched through Mossdale and Rusholme on 26 April. Supporting the demonstration were Friends of Nasira Begum, Rochdale Asian Women's Group, AYM Bradford, AYM Manchester, OWAAD, Women Against Imperialism, FRFI Scotland and Manchester, RCG Manchester and Leeds, Widnes and Runcorn Trades Council, Merseyside LP, SWP, IMG, RCT, CARE, CAIL and ANL.

another article on this page. In addition, opportunist elements on the Committee, from the ANL, SWP and CRE have unsuccessfully tried to disrupt its work. A most striking example being their opposition to an RCG proposal that the NEIPC be invited to speak at the demonstration of 1 March. Is this not a glaring example of opportunists seeking to hold back and prevent the unity of the oppressed. The NEIPC extends its support to Anwar Ditta's struggle, it recognises that struggle as part of the united fight of Irish and black people against imperialism. And opportunists vote against a proposal to have the NEIPC speak at an ADDC demonstration! The opportunists have also tried to use the campaign to lend false credibility to their own organisations. Having done virtually no work for the campaign, the ANL (which did not even have a banner on the 1 March demonstration) and the SWP (which had a contingent of around 15 people from a claimed Greater Manchester membership of hundreds, and which has not even paid its affiliation fee to the Defence Committee) demanded speaking rights for the demonstration of 26 April. Yet the very same ANL and SWP opposed the RCG having speaking rights on the 1 March demonstration for no better reason than the fact that the RCG is a 'political' (ie anti-imperialist) organisation. This despite the fact that of all organisations on the Defence Committee the RCG has put the most resources and effort into the campaign. Is this not sectarianism of the worst sort? Is this not an attempt of opportunists to jump on the bandwagon, to use the successes of the campaign in order to extend their own influence?

Despite these obstacles the fight will, if necessary, continue. The Appeal on 16 May is a vital day for Anwar and her family. Despite the overwhelming evidence on Anwar Ditta's side, there is no guarantee that she will win. The British state is guided neither by human consideration nor by concern for legal formalities. It has only one aim and that is to crush the resistance of the oppressed. If Anwar Ditta and her family lose the appeal, the fight will go on. As Anwar has declared:

'I will fight until I win for I have a right to my children. I will fight until the last breath of my body has gone.'

And the Defence Committee, whatever the obstacles, will continue and escalate the struggle.

BRING ANWAR'S CHILDREN HOME! SMASH ALL IMMIGRATION CONTROLS!

POLITICAL POLICE IN ROCHDALE

In the period leading up to the 26 April demonstration, the Anwar Ditta Defence Committee decided to hold a series of street meetings in the Asian districts of Rochdale, in order to build support for the campaign and demonstration. The first street meeting was held in King St South on 15 March, it proved to be very successful with many people coming out of their homes to listen to what Anwar and supporters of the defence campaign were saying. As we were about to move along the street to hold another meeting, the police arrived, a sergeant asked us if we were holding a demonstration, and made comments about blocking the footpath and causing an obstruction. We ignored his veiled threats, and moved along King Street to an open space where we proceeded to start another street meeting.

Many Asian families stood in their doorways listening to what was being said, and people came and gathered round the speakers. This was too much for the police, two police cars arrived and parked in conspicuous positions, in an obvious attempt to intimidate the local Asian community from listening to the street meeting. A *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* supporter, who was in charge of the meeting was questioned by the police, and Anwar Ditta had her name, address and date of birth taken.

On Monday 24 March Anwar was paid a visit by two police officers. They specifically mentioned the street meeting, even feeling it necessary to remark that Anwar and Asian supporters of the defence campaign had spoken

They said that people had been selling *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* which called for *Hands Off Ireland* and support for the prisoners in the H-Blocks. According to our two helpful police officers the mere mention of Ireland would only do harm to Anwar's campaign, and in their opinion Anwar should just concentrate on her own particular case. One of the police officers who just 'happened' to be Canadian then went on to explain that immigration laws weren't racist and just used against black people, but whites as well. Recounting his own problems with the immigration authorities as proof of this, conveniently forgetting the 1971 Commonwealth Immigration Act which

Commonwealth citizens whilst excluding blacks.

The cover of the British police being non-political has been blown, the police in Rochdale have exposed themselves for what they are, political agents of British imperialism. Whether it be the cosy advice of a fireside chat in Rochdale, or the drawn truncheon and riot shields in Southall and Bristol the role of the police is the same. It is to attempt to smash the organised fightback of black people against the racist British state, and to prevent the natural unity of all oppressed people fighting back against British Imperialism.

That's why the police are concerned about people selling *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* because *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* shows the connection and unity of the struggle against racism and the struggle against British imperialism in the North of Ireland. That's why the police visited Anwar, and that's why they specifically mentioned the slogans in support of the Republican movement, because, as the tremendous events of Bristol showed, the one thing British imperialism is terrified of, is if the black fightback against racism reaches the heights of the struggle of the nationalist working class in the North of Ireland.

The political role of the police is clear, it is to attempt to prevent that unity taking place by any means possible.