

# FIGHT RACISMS

# FIGHT IMPERIALISMS

Revolutionary Communist Group

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## POVERTY

**10** million live in absolute poverty

## PENSIONS

down **27%**

Benefits £6 billion down

Child benefits £1 bn down

## LOW PAY

**46%** of British workers are low paid

75% of women manual workers are low paid

**20%**

**THE RICH GET RICHER**

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## UNEMPLOYMENT

**9%** 2.5 million officially out of work

SOLIDARITY PRICE £1



KINNOCK AND LABOUR COUNCILS HOUND POOR FOR POLL TAX

## BRITAIN'S FREE MARKET

# RECESSION

# POOR GET POORER

## DEBT

Household debt is 114% of household income

## HOMELESSNESS

**168,000**

700,000 private homes empty  
300 died on the streets

**200,000**

## BANKRUPTCIES

PUBLIC DEBT will be £23 billion in 1992/3

# Break with the Labour Party

As we enter the final few months of the present Parliament, we are confronted with a remarkable possibility. A General Election in the next few weeks could see the return of either a Tory government, or a hung parliament in which the Tories are the largest party.

Twelve years of Tory governments have failed to solve the underlying crisis of British imperialism. The overall record is a disastrous one. Manufacturing output has barely grown since 1979 and manufacturing investment will almost certainly fall again below the 1979 level. Bankruptcies are at record levels. The balance of payments deficit, even after another deep recession, is still nearly £6bn, and the pound is locked into ERM with a 15-20 per cent overvalued exchange rate. There has been a serious deterioration in the standard and level of public services in spite of nearly £100bn North Sea Oil revenues and more than £60bn from the sale of public assets. Still the Public Sector deficit will grow to £12bn in 1991-2; is predicted to rise to £23bn in 1992-3; and £26bn (4 per cent of GDP) in 1993-4 on the assumption of a small tax bribe (£1bn-£2bn) in the coming budget and no further increases over planned levels of public expenditure plans.

Meanwhile we approach a General Election after five successive quarters of falling non-oil output with no let-up in sight, manufacturing output down by more than 10 per cent, and unemployment at 9 per cent and rising with over 700,000 lost jobs in 1991. Home repossession orders issued by county courts are up by 35 per cent to 74,000; applications for orders by lenders by 29 per cent to 186,786; and there is still the legacy of the ever present Poll Tax. Yet the Tories could win the General Election. How can this be?

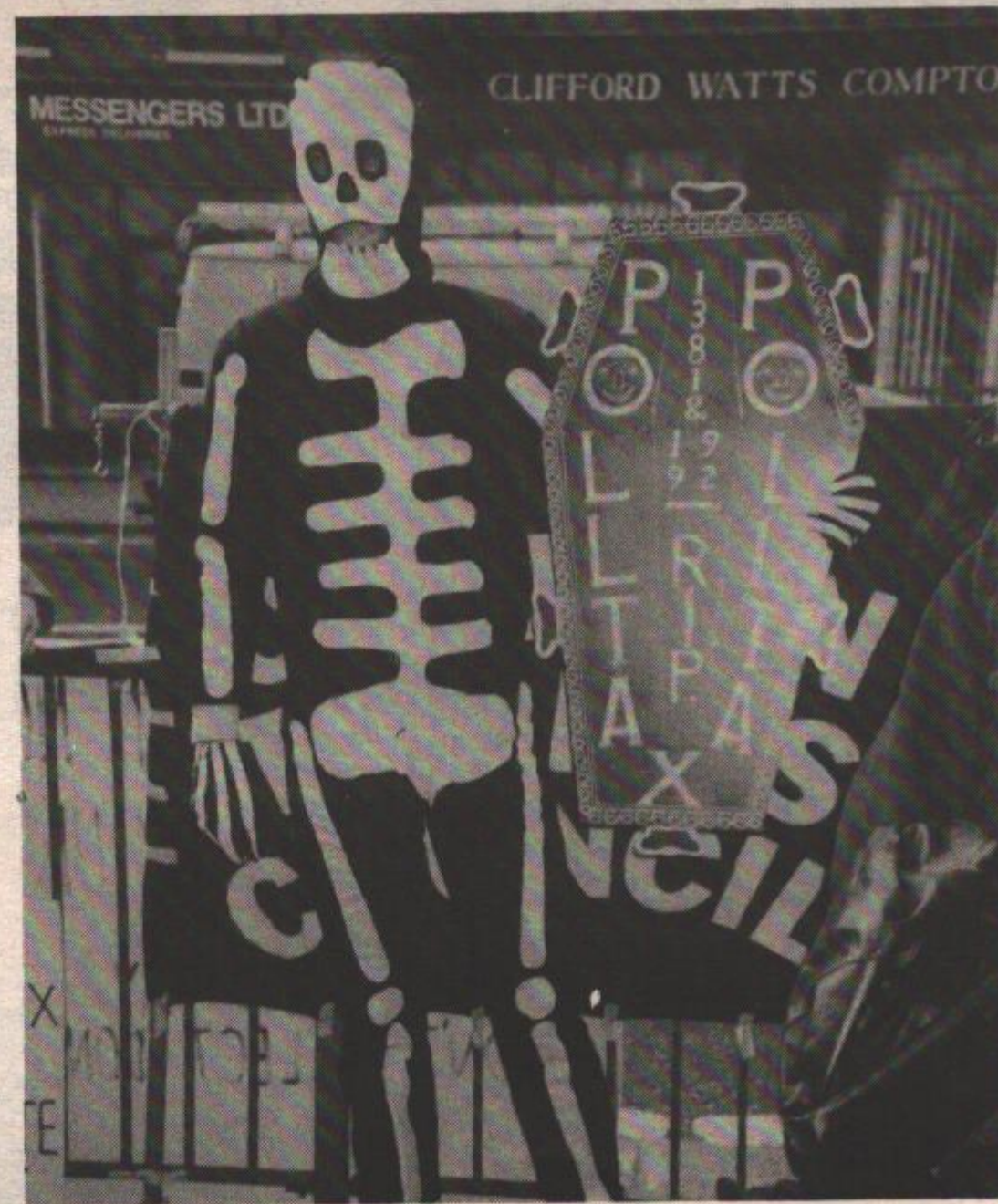
In Britain it is impossible to be elected to power without winning the allegiance of a sizeable section of the skilled and better off working class and middle classes. Labour has, therefore, adjusted its party and its policies to the interests of these layers. The 30 per cent of people living in poverty in Britain and who have become relatively poorer over the last 12 years are of little concern to any of the political parties as their votes do not determine the outcome of elections.

Thatcher won the elections in 1979, 1983 and 1987 because she won the skilled and better off sections of the working class away from Labour. She retained their allegiance through a massive redistribution of income from the poorest third of the population to the better off two thirds. Changing the rule on pensions in 1980, increasing them in line with inflation and



not earnings, has saved the government a cumulative £31bn, cutting the single pension of £52 by some £14 per week. Labour's commitment to increase the pension by £5 hardly makes a dent in that. Cutbacks in unemployment benefit have saved £5bn and child benefit £1bn. Tax changes have seen a significant redistribution of income to the better off and the rich. The latest government figures show that the share of total income after tax of the poorest fifth of the population fell from 10 per cent in 1979 to 7 per cent in 1988. While that of the richest fifth rose from 37 per cent in 1979 to 44 per cent in 1988. The gap has almost certainly widened since then.

Subsidies and bribes for better off workers and the middle class have been continuous throughout the period. Besides the tax changes, mortgage tax relief, privatisation, PEPs, Tessa, are all subsidies to the better off. So is the bribe, costing some £5bn, to get people to opt out of Serps into a private pension scheme.



The list is endless and no political party, and certainly not the Labour Party, is going to reverse this because if it attempted to do so it would lose any chance of winning the election.

As we pointed out nearly a year ago: 'The growing crisis... leaves the bourgeois political parties, Tory, Labour or Liberal Democrats without a seriously viable economic programme and with little room for manoeuvre in the run-up to the General Election' (Editorial, *FRFI* 100 April/May 1991). A recent IFS study has shown that neither the Tory nor the Labour Party 'will be able to achieve all their goals in the next Parliament'. Even on the basis of assuming a very optimistic average growth rate of 2.25 per cent per year, the Tories will not be able to cut income tax from 25p-20p in the pound, and Labour will be unable to go beyond its short term spending commitments until at least 1994-5. So either way the deterioration in public services will continue.

With so little to choose be-

tween their policies, the election process has turned into a public relations exercise run by advertising agencies to convince the better off workers and the middle class that their privileges will remain intact. Here the Tories have an advantage given their massive lead in the crucial area, among the better off in London and the South East. They can offer a further, and maybe a decisive bribe, through small tax cuts in the next budget. They also have some £20m in their election fund, compared to Labour's £6m, to sell this policy. It could be decisive.

Take public spending: Labour has promised to raise pensions and restore child benefit by increasing taxes and National Insurance Contributions for the better off. The amount to be raised is small, around £3.5bn or about a ninth of what was taken from pensioners over the last 12 years. But Labour appears to have been put on the defensive about this and for very good reasons. 20 per cent of households in London and 18 per cent in the South East would pay more if the ceiling of £20,280 on National Insurance Contributions were abolished, compared to 11.8 per cent in the country as a whole and 8 per cent in the North of England. That is, one in five households would pay more in the marginal seats in those areas on which the outcome of the election depends. Further, according to the recently-published *New Earnings Survey*, between 25-30 per cent of full-time male earners earn more than £20,280 a year and they could crucially determine the outcome of the next election.

The Labour Party cannot change. It is a party which gives political representation and expression to the better off sections of the working class and sections of the middle class. To win the election it must represent their interests and satisfy their prejudices.

For our part a Labour victory in the election will make no difference to the low paid, the poor, the unemployed, to the less privileged layers of the class. Labour imperialism, as Labour's role during the Gulf War so strikingly demonstrated, and Labour racism, as Labour's consistent support for immigration controls shows, will still be intact. Nothing will change in Ireland. Labour's consistent stand behind Britain's brutal policies of murder, torture and repression makes this clear. Labour will do nothing which undermines British ruling class interests at home and abroad.

Communists urge workers to break with Labour and boycott the election. For the choice which confronts us is of voting for almost identical imperialist parties which have nothing to offer the vast majority of the working class. ■

## Can't pay, won't pay, can't be made to pay

The decision on the use of computer evidence as hearsay is a major victory for anti-Poll Tax campaigners. DEBBY, an activist in Camden Against the Poll Tax, describes the experience of fighting and winning in the courts.

In December 1991 while Clerkenwell Magistrates' Court was hearing evidence against Camden Council, lay magistrates in Bury-St-Edmunds became the first to admit publicly that the Poll Tax emperor wore no clothes, when they dismissed the case against Don Pollard after he argued that the computer evidence used against him was inadmissible. News of this decision spread and one week before the Clerkenwell judgement courts in Liverpool and Gravesend adjourned thousands of cases to await the Clerkenwell decision. Many others followed suit and on 22 January magistrate Bourke gave judgement in favour of the defendants.

The implication of Bourke's judgement is that every one of the seven million liability orders granted to date is invalid. Anyone who has been to prison for non-payment has a claim for false imprisonment and any other action taken on the basis of a liability order, including the use of bailiffs, is unlawful. The government's reaction has been to promise action to 'plug the loophole' on the one hand, while continuing on the other to claim there is no problem, that magistrates can continue granting liability orders on the basis of computer evidence and that enforcement of existing orders can continue. The latest indication is that an amendment to the Local Government Finance Act will make computer evidence admissible in Poll Tax hearings from March onwards.

The Labour Party, meanwhile, is pressing for retroactive legislation - not to abolish the Poll Tax but to make it enforceable. Labour's environment spokesman, Brian Gould, and local government spokesman, David Blunkett, attacked the government - not for the unlawful use of hearsay evidence against non-payers - but for not acting quickly enough to plug the loophole.

Gould bemoaned the fact that 'it will take at least another

month before new legislation can pass through the House of Lords', adding that the Labour Party would look sympathetically at passing a bill in a day. Blunkett called for the law to be applied retrospectively. Relying on that old chestnut: non-payers cause Poll Tax bills to rise, Gould and Blunkett wheeled out examples of the difficulties local authorities have in collecting the Poll Tax in the face of government incompetence.

Magistrates and councils have reacted in a variety of ways. Because one magistrate's ruling does not bind others, some - including Highbury with Camden cases - have ignored it and continue to give orders against defendants, without giving any reasons. When one of these cases is appealed against, the decision will be binding on all magistrates' courts.

Many other magistrates' courts have been only too eager to adjourn cases, clearly intending to engineer a situation where they are not heard until after the law changes. Some councils, such as Lewisham, have requested adjournments. Hatfield council asked for an adjournment 'to get legal representation'!

More encouraging is the fact that the threat of false imprisonment claims has frightened some councils away from continuing with committals. Committal summonses in Bath were recently withdrawn completely while APTU campaigners in Weston-super-Mare were told that committal proceedings listed for the following day would be adjourned 'for obvious reasons'.

Even if the government does change the law, we will just move on to the next line of attack. What made this legal challenge possible in the first place was mass resistance to the Poll Tax, with a spontaneous occupation of the Highbury Court. We still can't pay, still won't pay and it's time they learned - we can't be made to pay! ■

### In Memoriam

#### Terry O'Halloran

1 May 1952 - 23 January 1989



In some ways the three years since Terry died seem very short - our memories of him remain sharp and clear. But in other ways those three years seem terribly long ones. Huge events have taken place - the Soviet Union has gone; a war has left Iraq ruined and 100,000 of its people dead; the long predicted major economic crisis of capitalism has surfaced. The communist movement is in disarray internationally. How much, in such circumstances, do we need and miss the talents of a comrade like Terry, active from his youth in the communist movement.

The respect in which Terry is remembered was shown on 23 January this year, when a City of London Anti-Apartheid Group picket in his honour was held outside the South African Embassy. As Tim Gopsill of the NUJ pointed out, 'How many of us will be well enough remembered three years after our death to draw a crowd together in memory, in the freezing cold?'

Terry's work is also remembered through the work of the Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund which has now sent over 170 books and subscriptions to prisoners.

IN BRIEF

**Magistrate – 'wrong' and 'unreasonable'**

It is now official! Magistrate ('Gays are perverts') Bartle of Bow Street Magistrates' Court was 'wholly wrong' and 'unreasonable' when he ruled that police officers implicated in framing the Guildford 4 should not stand trial. The High Court has decided that the officers should stand trial despite Bartle's attempt to save them. Magistrate Bartle is notorious. His book – a guide for new magistrates – being also manifestly 'unreasonable' – describes homosexuals as 'perverts' and police officers as possessing 'God-given authority'. Bartle also allowed police officers charged with criminal offences during the Wapping strike to go free on the grounds that delay was an abuse of process. It seems that the main abuser of the law is Mr Bartle himself.



On 23 January Detective Chief Superintendent Graham Melvin and ex-Detective Inspector Maxwell Dingle were remanded on bail at Bow Street on charges of perjury and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. The charges relate to the framing of the Tottenham 3. ■

**Tommy Sheridan imprisoned**

Tommy Sheridan, Chair of the Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation, was gaoled for six months in January for defying a court order banning him from attending Scotland's first Poll Tax warrant sale in October 1991.

Sheridan, who plans to stand for Scottish Militant Labour in the General Election, defiantly ripped up the court order in front of 500 protesters. The crowd went on to prevent the sale going ahead. Sheridan has now been released pending appeal and has agreed not to attend future sales. *Lorna Reid*

**Q. When is a demonstration, not a demonstration?**

**A. When it's an AAM photo opportunity**

On 1 February de Klerk had lunch with John Major followed by a visit à deux to a rugby match at Twickenham. The response of the Anti-Apartheid Movement was to call a demonstration at Twickenham – it was short notice but it had potential.

On the telephone the AAM HQ informed us: 'We don't want too many to turn up. We have agreed with the police that we can stand outside Gate 8 and if too many people turn up they might move us.' ... And where would de Klerk be at the time? ... Err, at Downing Street. And when would he arrive at Twickenham? ... Err, when the AAM had packed up and gone home.

Erring on the side of effectiveness, City AA and the RCG organised a picket at Downing Street instead, leaving the AAM to their press-call. We kept up the chants for an elected Constituent Assembly and majority rule throughout de Klerk's lunch. *Richard Roques*

SOUTH AFRICA

**De Klerk promises white veto: USA launches campaign against PAC**

On 24 January white-only President de Klerk fired his opening shots for the next period of negotiations on South Africa's future when he opened what is predicted to be the last session of the white-only parliament in Cape Town. His speech was made against a background of further confirmation that both he and his government are directly implicated in township violence. Now it has been shown that the Inkatha-gangs were in the pay of the army and the police. For the moment, with the African National Congress (ANC) centrestage in the negotiating body CODESA (Conference for a Democratic South Africa), the anti-ANC campaign has retired into the wings. Instead, there is now clear evidence that a similar campaign is beginning against the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC). The PAC has stated, along with AZAPO, its total opposition to CODESA and has pledged a militant campaign against it.

The central plank of de Klerk's speech was the renewed promise of a white referendum on constitutional change. Neatly side-stepping his critics, de Klerk has designed a referendum which gives all races the vote, but their votes will be counted according to their racial category. Effectively a majority of the five million whites can block any change.

Plans for negotiations include a transitional government, transitional parliament and transitional constitution. The transitional constitution will be agreed by CODESA. This will be followed by elections to a 'multi-racial parliament' and government, the composition of which will be decided by the transitional constitution. All this is an elaborate confusion and unlikely to be transitional in its consequences.

In fact the regime claims CODESA as the multi-party conference it always wanted. CODESA's composition confirms this, with 14 of the 19 parties involved being the regime's puppets. This body which will decide the transitional constitution, which will determine the future parliamentary composition, is pre-packed in favour of the regime. De Klerk will now press for the transitional constitution to include a two-tier parliament with regional representation and white vetoes, as proposed last year. This 'multi-racial' parliament will then be the final debating ground for the final constitutional agreement! A far cry from the elected Constituent Assembly the ANC says it wants. The dice are very loaded.

The main thrust of de Klerk's speech was aimed at his own right wing: 'Broad consensus will not be achieved unless there are credible guarantees against domination'. Inviting the Conservatives to join CODESA, he said that while a separate sov-

ereign state (ie a white homeland) within South Africa is not feasible (pace the Bantustans), there are 'other ways of ensuring autonomy in language, culture, education and community rights'. Allister Sparks has estimated that the regime has almost certainly lost the support of the



On 24 January 1991 thousands demonstrated against the white-only parliament

majority of Afrikaaners to the Conservatives. Moves to accommodate their interests are therefore high on the agenda: hence de Klerk has ruled out the

possibility of a democratically elected Constituent Assembly and unfettered majority rule.

When the preliminary talks to set up CODESA took place in November 1991, the PAC made it clear that it would not enter into negotiations with the regime which could only lead to a compromise on their central demand for an elected constituent assembly. A special PAC conference in December confirmed this. The PAC bitterly attacked the ANC for breaking the Patriotic Front alliance by joining the regime's multi-party talks.

That criticism was sharpened when Nelson Mandela indicated that a guaranteed bloc of seats for whites in Parliament might be acceptable to the ANC. In the period since then, the PAC's army, APLA, has stepped up

the disintegration of the sanctions and boycott movement caused by the ANC's equivocal position. A campaign opposed to Paul Simon's concert tour brought the liberation movements into head-on conflict and this may well be a pattern for the future. Simon's concerts in Johannesburg had mainly white audiences. As a result of a bomb explosion at offices connected with the tour, the police rounded up leading members of AZAPO's youth section.

On 16 January newspapers in South Africa and the USA carried stories that the US government had decided to launch a diplomatic offensive to isolate and pressure the PAC because of its boycott of CODESA and the armed actions of APLA. This followed a meeting between the US Ambassador to Pretoria and a PAC delegation led by Deputy President Dikgang Moseneke where the PAC explained their standpoint. At this meeting, Ambassador Spinks explained that 'American Intelligence has gathered information on a round trip by Mr Gora Ebrahim (PAC Foreign Secretary) to influence African governments against CODESA'. Without further consultation with the PAC, the US decision on a diplomatic offensive was leaked to the press.

It would be naive to suppose that this offensive will be limited to 'diplomacy'. US campaigns to undermine national liberation movements have rarely stopped short of terror. On 27 January PAC General Secretary Benny Alexander was arrested at a township demonstration against rent rises in Johannesburg. On 29 January, Dikgang Moseneke's office was bombed (overnight so no one was injured). The PAC is now the prime target for the terror tactics in which the regime and its allies are so well practiced.

As the media in this country now continually counterpose the PAC 'left extremism' to the 'right extremism' of the AWB, and in the expectation that another form of 'black on black violence' directed at the PAC will arise (sponsored by the regime) FRFI readers should have no problem or confusion about the real situation. What is needed is our total support for the demand for an elected Constituent Assembly in a united South Africa. Nothing less will do. *Carol Brickley*

**Contras attack Cuba**

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The bourgeois media is trying to make a 'human rights' issue of the execution, in January, of one counter-revolutionary and the jailing of two others for 30 years, who had infiltrated Cuba from Miami. However, the real issues surrounding this case expose a sinister escalation of the imperialist attack on Cuba. Violence and terrorism are now being employed to undermine a society already suffering a debilitating economic and political war.

The three contras were captured on 29 December. They had in

their possession 41 plastic explosives, four chemical irritant grenades, an AKM rifle, a Luger submachine gun, two pistols and sufficient ammunition. Their intended targets included attacks on the Havana power plant, a paper factory and a distillery. In addition they planned to detonate incendiary devices in public centres to create panic among the population.

The contras were no isolated fascists. The Cuban prosecutor underlined the ties between these thugs and the organised counter-revolutionary groups in Miami where they are permitted to organise military training camps and trade in arms. They hope that current economic dif-

ficulties will provide them fertile ground to recruit terrorists and promote the emergence of armed anti-socialist groups Cuba itself. Combined with the US-imposed blockade and severe economic difficulties they believe that such operations will hasten the collapse of Cuba.

It is generally accepted within Cuba that current conditions will indeed generate discontent among large sections of the population. But armed bandits fighting against socialism will not be recruited from the Cuban working class. They will come from a tiny stratum of privileged elements and criminals who make a living at the expense of the state and the working class. Raul Castro describes these as 'the parasites of the declassé scum, the comfort-loving, weak

and cowardly fifth-column of the pseudo-erudite fortune hunters looking to take over in a stroke of luck as they have seen others do in Eastern Europe ...'

In today's difficult conditions, neither the Cuban government nor the Cuban people can afford to tolerate criminals, bandits and contras. A Granma article warned:

'Anyone who at this moment tries to detain the Revolution's progress, create panic in the population or destroy its property, as in this case, will be crushed by the force of our people.'

To this end, the government has distributed arms to workers in the factories and fields. The act of a truly democratic and popular government. ■

**BLACK ATHLETES BOYCOTT APARTHEID SPORT**

Athletes John Regis and Linford Christie announced in January that they would not participate in a Great Britain v South Africa match in Cape Town in May – a deal secretly arranged by the British Athletics Federation (BAF) behind the backs of the athletes and before the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) had met to discuss South Africa's readmission to world athletics. Other black athletes – more than 50 per cent of the men's team is black – soon followed their lead. Regis made it clear that black people in South Africa are still fighting apartheid and therefore he will not go. In fact the BAF jumped the gun: the IAAF did not re-admit South Africa because the three Athletics Boards have not been united. The BAF claims to have the support of the ANC – and if this is the case then the ANC is leading the boycott-busting jamboree. As one correspondent to *Athletics Today* pointed out, a quarter of the black population cannot participate in South African sport because they are consigned to the Bantustans. Racist discrimination is still at the heart of South African sport and Britain's black athletes are to be congratulated for their stand. ■

**Campaigning with City AA**

On 24 January, City AA organised a torch-lit march and demonstration against the opening of the white-only racist parliament in South Africa and in solidarity with the thousands of black South Africans demonstrating in Cape Town that day.

At Downing Street a delegation, including a representative from the PAC, handed in over 20,000 petitions calling for majority rule and an elected Constituent Assembly. The demonstration then moved to the South African Embassy, where speakers from the BCMA and PAC stated their commitment to the struggle for majority rule, and a message was read out from the ANC.

Earlier that week, the third in City AA's series of Monthly Briefings was addressed by Cde Dumisani Nduki, ANC. A lively discussion on the role of CODESA, the armed struggle, political prisoners and the way forward for the movement ensued. The next Briefing in February will be addressed by the PAC.

City AA meetings are held every Friday, 7.30pm, at Millman Centre, Millman Street WC1. Over the last two months, speakers have included Cde Vuyani Mngaza, PAC UK Chief Rep; Lionel Morrison, ex-NUJ President, recently returned from South Africa, and Cde Mbuieio Rakwena, AZAPO Foreign Secretary. Topics for future meetings include: re-launching the sports boycott; the history of the ANC; the fight against racism in Britain.

The fight against apartheid continues with weekend pickets of the racist South African Embassy in Trafalgar Square and regular pickets of South African Airways at Oxford Circus. For details of City AA's programme of activities, tel: 071 837 6050.

*Terry Dowding*

# Palestine – Zionist colonisation accelerates

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

While the farce of Arab-Israeli 'peace negotiations' limps along, the Zionist-imperialist assault on the Palestinian people continues. On 16 December 1991, under the initiative of the USA, the UN General Assembly voted to repeal its 1975 Resolution 3379 which equated Zionism with racism. Only 25 states voted to retain the resolution, while 111 supported the US. The Zionists have treated the vote as international blessing for further fascist outrages.

Immediately after the UN vote, the Israeli government, in defiance of UN resolutions and international law, decided to expel 12 Palestinians in retaliation for the killing of an Israeli settler in the Gaza Strip.

In an even more sinister and dangerous move on 26 December, the government licensed the formation of a so-called Civil Guard – armed auxiliaries to the police – from among the 100,000 settlers in the Occupied Territories. The Guard will supplement dozens of armed vigilantes



Palestinians in Ramallah demonstrate against the spread of Zionist settlements

groups already organising pogroms against the Palestinian population. Peretz Kidron, a journalist for *Middle East International*, writes: 'In response to any incident, real or imagined, posses of armed settlers storm into neighbouring Arab communities to stage demonstrations of force and indiscriminate rampage.' The Israeli army is also increasing, by 20 per cent, the number of its troops.

This combination of measures aims to nip in the bud the resurgence of Palestinian armed struggle. During 1991 there were

124 explosive devices used by the resistance and 120 shooting incidents compared to less than 60 in 1990. While in 1990 grenades were used on only 10 occasions, during 1991 there were 90 grenade attacks by Palestinians.

Intensified force, official and unofficial, is also being deployed in anticipation of a resurgence of popular protests in response to a massive increase in land confiscation for new settlements. The Shamir government has already decided to spend most of its 1992 housing budget on homes for settlers in

the Occupied Territories. In the first 9 months of 1991 settlement housing starts totalled 6,435 compared to 1820 for the whole of 1990. Another 5,000 starts are planned for 1992.

The resignation of two fascist parties from Shamir's Likud coalition does not alter Zionism's genocidal drive. Shamir opened his re-election campaign with a visit to the West Bank where he reassured settlers that the 'peace process' will not affect the Zionist presence in the occupied territories and declared: 'We see the building here and all over Judea and Samaria. This will continue and no force on earth will halt it.'

Whatever the UN vote, Zionism clearly is racism. Anti-racists in Britain can help in the fight against Zionism by boycotting all Israeli products. ■

### Stop Press

On 1 February George Habash, leader of the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine left France safely after medical treatment. A kick in the teeth for those who demanded his arrest and trial for terrorism!

# Forward to Kurdish liberation – support the PKK

TREVOR RAYNE

The new Demirel government in Turkey is determined to isolate the PKK and halt the advance of the Kurdish revolution. With a policy of 'Yes to the Kurdish question, no to the PKK' it promises economic progress in North West Kurdistan (South East Turkey), relaxation of language restrictions and is promoting a 'Kurdish Conference' in Istanbul to organise a rival Kurdish political force.

Meanwhile, since 8 January Turkish planes have bombed up to 300 miles into Iraq from the Turkish border. Death squad activity is now constant. Funeral processions are fired upon.

Turkish media have mounted

a sustained campaign against the newly-elected Kurdish MPs, focusing on Hatip Dicle for his defence of the PKK guerrilla struggle. Dicle and fellow MP Leyla Zana were forced to resign from the Social Democratic Party. The 20 other Kurdish MPs are being challenged to publicly

denounce the PKK.

Turkey's international allies have also been mobilised. A draft report on Kurdish rights presented at the European Parliament in January declares 'the doctrine of self-determination cannot be applied' to the Kurds, applauds the Allied attack on

Iraq and the 'safe havens' and expresses optimism over the Turkish government's plans to 'protect human rights', 'allow Kurdish self-expression' and 'relieve the poverty of South East Anatolia'. On 3 January *The Independent* published two articles by Terry Kirby and Tim Kelsey purporting to expose PKK extortion of money from the Kurdish community in London. Dev Sol were also accused. The journalists cite two sources: the Turkish embassy and somebody in Ankara. Scotland Yard says it has been alerted.

These developments are all part of a desperate effort. Demirel has been toppled from power twice before. His government will fail again unless it retains the allegiance of a military determined to destroy the PKK. ■



Kurdish women on hunger strike in London, July 1991

# Kurdish women fight for freedom – interview with YJWK

Jenny Sutton spoke to Dersim, Zelal and Bahar of the Patriotic Women's Union of Kurdistan (YJWK).

**When was the YJWK was founded, and why was it felt important to have a women's organisation?**

The YJWK was founded in 1987 out of the Third Congress of the PKK. It is very important for Kurdish women because the YJWK fights for a free and independent Kurdistan and also for the liberation of Kurdish women. Kurdistan is a colonised country and as long as this situation remains no Kurdish woman can talk about liberation. Kurdish women are doubly oppressed – as Kurds we are colonised, but as women we are also 'colonised' by our husbands, our fathers and other men. Since the formation of the PKK our situation has been very different – now we can talk about everything, we can talk about politics and we can fight against imperialism and against Turkey.

**What are the tasks of the YJWK?** We promote propaganda, fund-raise for the liberation struggle and deal with women's problems in that context. For example, we need to fight for greater equality between men and women and for the education of children as part of the liberation of Kurdistan.

**Are there women within the leadership of the PKK and ERNK?**

Any position is open to us, and we can be in the leadership, but this will take time. We have to change deep traditions, but we are trying. There are many women guerrillas in our army.

**Are the women in the ARGK [People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan] young single women, or do you have women with families and older women?**

We have all types of women, young, old, single, married – they go with their children. The PKK can provide for the children in the military camps; they are looked after communal-

ly so that the mothers can fight.

**Popular support for the liberation struggle in the towns and villages, and in particular the participation of women, is an indicator of the depth of the struggle. Are women in the community politically organised?**

Yes. The women organise the *Serhildan*, the uprising. The first uprising in Kurdistan was organised by women and was led by a woman, Berivan. This was in Cizre, Diyarbakir in 1989. Berivan was killed by Turkish soldiers and is a heroine of the Kurdish people, men and women. She is a figurehead for the women of Kurdistan. The *Serhildan* is today stronger than ever, and it is the women who take the lead.

**Could you say something about the 'Kurdish firebrand', Leyla Zana?**

Leyla Zana is the first Kurdish woman to win a seat in the Turkish Parliament. She represents the People's Labour Party (HEP) which was the party of Vedat

Aydin [see FRFI 103], a party that raises the demands of the Kurdish nation. This is very important for us. She is a part of the struggle, and although in the Turkish Parliament you are not allowed to say 'Kurd' or 'Kurdish' she will do so – she is one of us. Her husband, Medhi Zana, who was Mayor of Ahmed, has been in Turkish prison for the last 7 or 8 years.

**In the struggle for a free Kurdistan, women have broken from their traditional roles in order to participate fully. Once you have liberated Kurdistan, do you think that Kurdish women will revert to their traditional roles?**

No, that is not possible. We have had to change in order to participate in the struggle, and we are now different. We do not want to lose the gains we have won as women. Kurdish men and women will have to work together to build a new nation.

**Do you think Turkish women see the organisation of Kurdish**

# Algeria: reactionary factions in contest for power

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The struggle in Algeria between the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) is a contest between two reactionary factions for control of state. On 13 January 1992, the authorities cancelled the second round of Algeria's National Assembly elections thereby robbing the FIS of almost certain victory. In the first round, on 26 December 1991, the FIS won 188 of the 430 Assembly seats. The FLN trailed in third place with only 15, beaten also by the Socialist Forces Front, based among the 4.5 million Berber minority, which captured 25 seats.

The collapse of the socialist bloc, the crisis of the socialist movement and the disintegration of secular nationalism provides the backdrop to the rise of Muslim fundamentalism in the Middle East. In Algeria, fundamentalism has thrived on the FLN's failure to resolve the country's growing economic crisis. Algeria, with a population of 25 million has a foreign debt of \$25bn, double its annual foreign earnings of \$11-12bn. To repay this sum, the FLN plays the IMF tune, cutting subsidies, privatising industry and opening up the country to foreign capital. Only two months ago, it further amended a 1986 hydrocarbon law to entice imperialist oil companies into joint ventures. These processes are leading to a rapid and widespread increase in poverty and unemployment, which now stands at nearly 30 per cent.

In these conditions the FIS emerged with phenomenal speed. Within 20 months of formation in 1989, it won control of 865 authorities in the November 1990 municipal elections. Today it also controls 8,000 of the country's 10,000 mosques. In its quest for power

the FIS has exploited massive popular resentment against the FLN which for nearly 30 years used power to bolster the privileges of a tiny westernised elite while the country was racked by economic crisis and growing poverty and unemployment.

However, despite its popular base, the FIS is a thorough-going reactionary and anti-working class force, containing trends akin to fascism. It is an alliance of less privileged sections of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie which, in conditions of economic crisis, is mobilising to seize power from the FLN. It will then use the state as an instrument for advancing its own narrow class interests. The working class and mass movement will of course get nothing.

The FIS opposes democratic rights for the working class, for women and for the Berber minority. Its leaders equate democracy with blasphemy and declare that 'Islam is light, democracy is darkness'. Women will be driven out of work and into deeper domestic slavery in order to buy a few votes from unemployed males! The FIS is committed to the free market economy. But to secure small traders' and craftsmen's votes, it also denounces 'anti-Islamic' interest on credit and promises to 'make the poor rich, without making the rich poor'.

The cancellation of the elections has temporarily stopped the advance of the FIS. However the imposition of a five-man collegiate presidency under Mohammed Boudief, a veteran FLN leader who has been in exile since 1963, is no guarantee of social peace. Social forces pushed into action by economic crisis will not halt indefinitely at military obstacles. In the forthcoming conflicts socialist forces, whilst currently in a minority, will organise to defend the working class against both factions of a ruling class which can only retain power by suppressing democracy. ■

**women as an inspiration for their own struggle?**

Yes. We have liberated Turkish women within the PKK and ARGK fighting for a liberated Kurdistan, and we have the support of some women's organisations within Turkey. These women recognise that in our fight against the Turkish state we are helping them.

**How important do you consider your relations with women internationally?**

We want to build links and solidarity with women abroad. We are in contact with a women's organisation in Palestine and a women's committee in Nicaragua. We want to build relations with women in liberation struggles and also with the women's movement internationally.

**What do you think of the position of women in Britain?**

70 per cent of women in Kurdistan are illiterate; women in Britain can read and write, and can work. But in Kurdistan

we do not have pornography!

**Women refugees in Britain are particularly isolated because often they do not have jobs, cannot speak English, and so do not meet British people. Do you have a strategy for this?**

We want Kurdish refugee women to go to meetings and to be active. Most Kurdish women can't speak English, and the first step is to learn; we need help in this. Many refugee women are limited in what they can do here because their status is not secure and they may want to bring their husbands over here to join them. This is not our country – we are stranded in England. The YJWK is starting to try and organise the refugee women and take them out to other organisations. We want to find out everything about organisations in Britain and we want to do things with them. We are planning fortnightly YJWK meetings to bring these women together, and we would like to meet other British women who are politically active. ■

# Brent Council: a case study in racism

In May 1991, a black councillor, Beryl Johnson, defected to the Tories, giving them a majority with which to run Brent Council. This defection was greeted by the Tories with jubilation. John Major sent her a bunch of flowers. Councillor Johnson's reasons for defecting were that the Labour Council was racist in favour of West Indians and did nothing for Africans.

This incident is the icing on the cake of events that have exposed Brent Council, whether run by Labour or the Tories, as a reactionary body which does not hesitate to attack the working class, and uses race to divide us. Brent, being typical of left Labour councils, makes a good case study, as what is happening there is undoubtedly being repeated elsewhere.

An essential prop of 'municipal socialism', which has failed as an experiment, was Equal Opportunities. It was a phoney panacea to cure all the forms of discrimination suffered by the oppressed. Whilst communists oppose all forms of discrimination, the Equal Opportunities Policies (EOPs) of the councils were phoney and were implemented in an intimidatory and repressive way. Instead of blaming the bourgeois state and its institutions, including the council, for the oppression of minorities and women, the fault was put on white individuals, regardless of their class, who were deemed to be inherently racist, and therefore had to be changed. How convenient for the bourgeoisie, and an easy escape route in diverting attention away from the real culprit.

The Brent EOP was implemented by bureaucratic codes of 'conduct' and vocabularies of 'in' words which were drawn up, breaches of which led to disciplinary measures. In reality the main changes were the mushrooming of the race relations industry, promotion for some black middle class aspirants; buying off grassroots militants with grants for interest groups. In the meantime service provisions deteriorated, affecting the whole community, particularly those who were black

and working class. There were many disputes between the Council and its workforce, usually as a result of cutbacks and victimisation of workers.

Although some of the studies that were undertaken on multicultural communities were factually illuminating, the concrete benefits were negligible for the working class unless you were a careerist Labour councillor. Let us remind ourselves of the immediate history to this phenomenon; the aftermath of the worst rioting Britain had seen in the post-war years. Then, the recession had severely affected black people, and militants were emerging who wanted to organise independently of the Labour Party which, whilst relying on black votes, had done nothing to counteract racism. Indeed, whenever Labour had been in power, they were the perpetrators of racism. The buying-off was done to ensure continued loyalty to Labour and, consequently there was no decisive break with bourgeois politics. This was reflected when Brent Labour Party elected Britain's first black council leader.

When the crunch came in 1988, there was no doubt which class these 'socialist' councils served. As London councils ran into huge financial problems as a result of rate-capping, it was workers and our communities that were sacrificed so that Labour could retain control of the local state machinery. Brent made 1,000 redundant; services were cut to the bone; the rubbish piled up into mountains on the streets; and homeless families were turned away due to a lock-out of housing workers. And much more hardship was meted out because, with the exception of a few Trotskyite entryists, no

Labour councillor was prepared to resign or go to prison in order to fight government-imposed cuts. Needless to say, black working class people suffered immensely.

The Labour Party did nothing to organise resistance, and council workers were disarmed because the cuts were made by a black-led and black-dominated Labour council.

In the aftermath of defeat, the way was paved for the Council to attack the conditions of the workforce with greater freedom. Agreements were reviewed with a view to abrogating rights; staffing levels were continuously run down; and people were disciplined for being sick, or if they opposed management. Social and housing services disintegrated. Morale amongst the workers hit rock bottom - the prevailing mood was defeatism. At the same time, in some sections there were rumblings of antagonism between black Afro-Caribbean staff and Asian staff. This was caused by some incompetent and tyrannical managers, black and white, who tried to scapegoat certain staff for their own ineptitude. This emergent split is sharpening, as there are now strong rumours that Asian Labour councillors in Brent want to form a separate party for the Asians in the borough.

Outside in the community, vicious racist attacks were escalating, in the form of muggings, vandalism and council tenants being harassed in their homes. In one case, two young Indian women were raped by a gang of skinheads in their council home; in another an Asian family was petrol-bombed. Brent was slow to do anything in these specific cases.

It did nothing to protect the victims or those vulnerable to racist violence, and also prevented publicity in order to protect their image. Ken Livingstone, MP for Brent East, said that in one case of racial harassment he was dealing with, the council were unhelpful and obstructive.

It is no wonder that Labour lost control of a borough which was largely black and working class in the 1990 local elections. In fact Labour advertised for candidates willing to stand and had to recruit people on the promise of a safe council seat to contest. Sky-high poll tax and rents, plans to privatise the estates, the services and whatever else available, was the reality of Labour, who have no socialist or working class credentials left in Brent. The defection of corrupt, dishonest and self-serving Labour councillors, who are all black, is merely something that completes the picture.

The Tories now are only continuing Labour's policy but with even greater ferocity. They know that, thanks to Labour, the opposition currently lies defeated and in tatters. They have abolished the Race Unit and are victimising black staff, including some managers who have been singled out for the sack. In private they want to recruit white workers because they think there are too many black workers. One black manager has been sacked because he was responsible for recruiting too many black staff. Grants to black, women, Irish and other minority groups have been slashed or withdrawn. For example, the Asian Women's Refuge Centre faces the axe without the funding. Over 200

tenants have been evicted, and rents are being increased by 20 per cent.

The lack of a fightback is a political problem. There is a lack of political leadership amongst the class conscious, and while this void continues, organised resistance to the council, and indeed working class resistance nationally, will not lead to the reversal of the current tide. One point that cannot be overlooked is that within Brent, the SWP has a large branch, and many workers in the council, some threatened with redundancy. This puts them in a position to lead, but they have failed to organise concerted opposition to the cuts.

The Labour Party and Labourism can never be trusted to lead the struggle against racism or any other struggles. Behind their anti-racist small talk, they are carrying out countless discriminatory and racist actions in their role as the servant of the state. If the working class is left to trust Labour, the path to disunity is wide open, and we will not be able to challenge the state. Unless the issue of racism is dealt with from a class perspective, the class will remain divided and weak, for the simple reason that black people are the exploited and oppressed backbone of the British economy.

The fight against the council is continuing, and we hope will gather strength. The start is the march against racism, redundancies and rent rises on February 3rd organised by Brent Nalga which should be supported by all those who take sides with black people and the working class in Brent.

Lila Patel



Today's Labour Party is not interested in fighting for black peoples' rights



## THE BOYZ ARE INNOCENT

The Cardiff Three: Steve Miller, Yusef Abdullahi and Tony Paris, were convicted in November 1990 for the murder of Lynette White on 14 February 1988. Several witnesses saw a white man at the scene, apparently bloodied and distressed. But the police arrested seven black men of whom five were tried for and three convicted of the murder. Yusef and Tony have been granted an appeal which is due early this year. Steve has not yet got leave to appeal. Support the Cardiff Three Campaign, 56 Alice Street Docks, Cardiff.

## DEFEND THE DEANE FAMILY

On 4 November 1991 police officers viciously assaulted two black shopkeepers in Newham. Mr Deane and his son, Tony. Mr Deane, a 53-year old severe asthmatic, was hospitalised. The Deanes were then charged with assaulting the police, an impossible offence. Newham Monitoring Project has set up Defend the Deane Family Campaign and organised a March for Justice: British Justice - Racist Justice! on Saturday 28 March, assemble at 12.30pm at Plashet Park, Plashet Grove, E6. Contact the campaign at PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7. Tel: 081 855 8151.

## DEFEND THE CHARING CROSS 12

On 7 December 2000 people demonstrated outside Charing Cross Hotel against French fascist leader Le Pen who was addressing a meeting organised by 'Western Goals'. 12 protesters were arrested and face various charges of public disorder. The Committee to Stop Le Pen is organising their defence: c/o Box 273, London E7.

## RACIST ASYLUM BILL ALMOST LAW

The government's new asylum bill which, with other measures, will deny asylum-seekers facing deportation the right to free legal advice, passed its Third Reading in the House of Commons on 21 January. A slight amendment will give asylum-seekers 10 days to appeal against deportation instead of the originally-proposed two, but the racist bill has now only to pass the House of Lords in April or May to become law. Fortress Europe is being constructed.

## IRISH PEOPLE AND BRITISH RACISM

A report compiled by Haringey Council reveals that Irish people are the only migrant group whose life expectancy worsens upon arrival in Britain; that Irish people are twice as likely to be admitted to a mental hospital as English people; and that the unemployment rate among Irish people is second only to that of the Afro-Caribbean community.

# Down with Double Punishment!

COLETTE LEVY

On 1 January fourteen men and one woman, all members of the 'Comité contre la double peine' (Committee against the double punishment - see *FRFI* 104) and all faced with the threat of expulsion from France to their so-called 'countries of origin' launched an unlimited hunger-strike in an attempt to publicise the issue of 'double punishment'. Non-French citizens can legally be punished twice for any crime: first by a gaol sentence and then by deportation. Their main demands are: the total abrogation of the laws of 'double punishment'; and amnesty for all those under arrest awaiting expulsion or already abroad and forbidden to re-enter French territory.

During January support grew and the hunger-strikers were joined by many prisoners already serving sentences and facing the possibility of the second punishment. 60 women in one gaol joined the hunger-strike for five days in solidarity.



Mohammed, one of the hunger-strikers on his 23rd day without food, spoke to *FRFI*:

'In 1981 Mitterand declared: "It is an infraction of human rights to separate people from their families and expel young people born here or who have spent part of their youth here. These practices are unacceptable. If I am elected I shall ask the government to put an end to it immediately..."'

'That was 10 years ago. Nothing has been changed. I

have three children, all born in France. They've taken away my papers. I reside here illegally now.'

As we go to press, 200 people faced with the 'double punishment' are presenting themselves at the Ministry of the Interior, carrying their bags and baggage, demanding 'Arrest us or return our papers now!' They refuse to remain clandestine and are making their protest public, forcing the government into a corner where it must either exercise repression in the full glare of publicity, or back down. ■

# Anti-racism and the left

CAT WIENER

On 29 January, the Anti-Racist Alliance held its inaugural meeting. A week earlier, in a pre-emptive, and divisive bid to be the anti-racist initiative, the SWP announced the re-launch of its own Anti-Nazi League.

With racist and fascist attacks escalating, any organised response from the left is timely, although the fact that there are now two competing organisations is hardly cause for optimism.

The ANL sets out to 'fight fascism', which it sees as unconnected with racism. In *Socialist Worker* the SWP criticised the recent 100,000-strong anti-racist march through Paris for concentrating on 'the general issue of racism' rather than fighting fascism. Those who recall the ANL's ignominious history may well question its ability to do even that. However, by concentrating its attacks on 'the fascists' the ANL neatly avoids the need to confront the racism both of the British state and more specifically, of the Labour Party. In

*Beating Time*, an account of the rise of the ANL, Kinnock is quoted as saying in the 1970s: 'As far as I am concerned, the ANL performs a very important function for the Labour Party.' If Labour gets in at the next election, the ANL will undoubtedly carry out that function again.

ARA on the other hand has stated its opposition to the Asylum Bill and police racism, and includes amongst its sponsors community-based black organisations such as Newham Monitoring Project and Asian Action Group. Principled anti-racists will have a hard fight to ensure that this commitment translates into action. ARA's public events have shown it to be dominated by Labour Left MPs such as Ken Livingstone and Diane Abbott. Will ARA be yet another organisation sacrificed on the altar of support for the racist Labour Party? The timing of the launch of these organisations may have more to do with the forthcoming election and Labour's need to get the black and anti-racist vote without having to take a public position on racism, than a belated recognition by the left of the need to confront racism. ■

# Maastricht and a united Europe

*The decisions to establish a European central bank by July 1998 and the installation of the ecu as the common European currency by January 1999 are the key components of the Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht in December. These decisions reflect the degree of integration achieved by European finance capital. TREVOR RAYNE reports.*



As a palliative to the Thatcherites, to calm them down for the duration of the election campaign, the British government reserved the right to opt out of the single currency process. However, the Treaty removed the veto for any EC member on currency union decisions, thereby overturning the previous rules for key policy votes in the European Council. The City of London favours a single European currency and it is inconceivable, if the rest of the EC follow the Treaty, that Britain will hold aloof. A revealing passage in the 1989 report on European financial markets, written by central bankers, pointed the way to Maastricht:

'Once every banking institution in the Community is free to accept deposits from, and to grant loans to, any customer in the Community and in any of the national currencies, the large degree of territorial coincidence between a national bank's area of jurisdiction, the area in which its currency is used and the area in which "its" banking system operates will be lost.'

A single currency and a single central bank invariably mean a diminution of the role of the Bank of England and the Treasury in managing monetary policy and government budgets for the British bourgeoisie. If monetary union is achieved it will be a critical step on the road to a United States of Europe: an alliance of 'national committees of millionaires known as governments', formed to plunder the world, to protect their booty from the USA and Japan and to suppress the struggle for socialism in Europe and the Third World (see Lenin, 'On the Slogan for a United States of Europe', *Collected Works* Vol. 21).

Other Maastricht decisions included the setting up of the Western European Union to 'work with NATO' as the EC's military arm, steps towards a common foreign policy on such as recognition of new states and imposition of sanctions, and moves towards a joint immigration policy, including cooperation on policing frontiers and drawing up a common list of countries whose nationals need visas to visit EC countries. Such is the necessary apparatus of an imperialist state.

Britain declined to sign the Social Charter relating to minimum working conditions. *The Wall Street Journal* correctly interpreted the British intention:

'The message to the world is that an investment in Britain gives you access to the single market but without the high labour-cost threshold imposed by an EC Social Charter.'

Responding to the Maastricht Treaty, the Labour Party leadership attempts to be both more European than the Conservatives when the prospect of European economic performance and incomes is raised, supporting monetary union and the Social Charter, while at the same time appealing to British middle-class chauvinism; seeking to retain independent control

over defence, foreign policy and immigration.

## **The trends in imperialist relations**

Lenin identified two trends in relations between imperialist countries, 'one, which makes an alliance of all the imperialists inevitable; the other, which places the imperialists in opposition to each other.' The former is an alliance against socialism and for the plunder of the oppressed nations; the latter is a competition for markets, materials and labour. With the combination of the collapse of the socialist bloc and the growing crisis of capitalist accumulation, it is the tendency for imperialists to oppose each other which is intensifying. In the recent period this has chiefly been conducted on the economic level between the EC, the USA and Japan over exchange rates, interest rates, copyrights and licences, trade, subsidies and protective barriers. With the Gulf War Europe's and Japan's less than enthusiastic response to US and British jingoism shows economic rivalry transforming into contention over spheres of influence: competition over strategic resources and geographical hegemony.

The essence of imperialism is the division of the world between a handful of oppressor nations and the mass of humanity in the oppressed nations. Inter-imperialist rivalry changes the form in which this exploitative relationship takes place. A Cabinet Minute of 26 April 1961, released on 1 January 1992 under the 30-Year Rule, shows how the British ruling class viewed European unity:

'The countries of the Common Market, if left to develop alone under French leadership, would grow into a separate political force... Eventually it might mean that the Six would come to exercise greater influence than the United Kingdom, both with the United States and possibly with some of the independent countries of the Commonwealth. This development was therefore a threat to the political position of the United Kingdom as a world power. It would be consistent with our traditional policy to seek to prevent the concentration of undue strength in a single political unit on the conti-

ment of Europe. Politically, our interests would be better served by working for a wider European association in which we could play a prominent part.'

Thirty years on Thatcher develops this position, seeking to preserve Britain's privileged status within the array of imperialist nations through a continuation of the 'special relationship' with the USA.

However, the reality of capitalism is that it progresses unevenly and equilibrium is only a transitory state of affairs. The global balance has changed: the relative economic decline of the USA combined with the accelerated process of European integration has shifted the gravitational attraction for British capital away from the USA towards the EC. From its deteriorating economic position the US government now recognises the increased significance of Germany within Europe, particularly in relation to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and the diminishing influence of Britain on European affairs. The USA now wants Britain and Turkey in the EC as instruments of its own influence on Germany and France. The position that guided Macmillan's government in 1961 and Thatcher's in the 1980s is no longer sustainable.

## **British capital in Europe**

The ultimate determinant of rival imperialists' powers and of Britain's realignment towards Europe is the economic strength and productivity of capital. From 1967-91 Britain's growth of output per worker was 1.99 per cent per annum. For the USA it was 0.77 per cent, the EC 2.53 per cent and for Japan 4.3 per cent per annum. Britain's performance was buoyed by North Sea Oil income. Since 1973 manufacturing output in Britain, excluding oil, has risen by just 1.9 per cent; France's has grown 18.3 per cent, Italy's 33.5 per cent and Germany's 41.4 per cent.

Increasing competition in North America and the former British empire has elevated the significance of the European market for British firms. Britain's trade with the EC has grown from a third of total trade in 1960-67 to over half in 1985-90. At the same time this trade has grown from less than 5 per cent of Gross

Domestic Product to 11 per cent. For the EC as a whole, 60 per cent of its total trade is between EC members. This is the biggest market in the world with 36.7 per cent of world trade. British manufacture is tied to Europe; if sterling is kept out of monetary union it faces exclusion from credits and markets vital for its already tenuous existence.

At the same time as Britain's trade with the EC has grown so has the interconnectedness of British capital with European capital. The relative stagnation of British capital has accelerated the process of concentration with takeovers and mergers. Of the top 50 EC companies 23 are British or Anglo-Dutch. They have made substantial investments in Europe. In 1990 British companies made cross-border EC acquisitions worth over \$20bn: \$3bn more than the nearest rival France. Of the leading 500 European companies the combined share value of British concerns is almost triple the value of German and French companies'. British monopolies appear large on the European stage and fancy that what they lack in productivity they can make up for in mass and acquisitions.

London has nearly 500 foreign banks, its nearest European rival 300. The City is by far Europe's biggest player in the world foreign currency, Eurobond, international equity and fund management markets. However, it faces competition from Paris which has removed exchange controls and credit restrictions and opened up a financial futures market. Frankfurt has reformed its securities market and relaxed taxation of security holdings. Exclusion from the single currency process would threaten the City's competitiveness. Further, sterling now lives in a \$600bn a day foreign currency exchange market. Tied into the Exchange Rate Mechanism since October 1990, it is backed by over \$200bn of European central banks' exchange reserves. Nevertheless, if the EC moves towards currency union without Britain, sterling would increase its exposure to speculation and devaluation that could rapidly erode the City's position.

## **The Labour Party**

'Would British investors give priority to investing and developing a Britain when they had every reason to believe that the British government was ever-ready to withdraw [from monetary union]?' Kinnock.

For the Labour Party, the merger of British and European capital holds out a possibility of reviving Keynesian state spending policies on a European basis.

'If Europe is to construct a social market - a market economy where social institutions are properly underwritten by the state - it can only do so together. There have to be common rules and a common system of policing. Labour Party leaders are all for a Social Charter, supervisory boards and all the other building blocks of a social market, because

that is what they want to construct in Britain.' Will Hutton, *The Guardian*, 9 December 1991.

Revenues from European capital are intended to subsidise British industry and maintain public sector provision; in effect, to buy back the class consensus that prevailed in post-1945 Britain before the 'winter of discontent' and Thatcher.

European integration is supported by a section of the British and European labour movements precisely to try and ensure better pay and conditions at the expense of the Third World workers and their immigrant counterparts inside Europe. The Labour Party left is divided between Ken Livingstone et al who are pro-European integration and Benn and Skinner who are opposed to it. Livingstone wants 'a fully-fledged federal structure, incorporating local devolution, with a single currency, a central bank, common environmental, foreign and defence policies and a supreme court, control of transnational corporations and the conversion of military production to civilian uses. Radical social democratic policies that have repeatedly failed in the face of the British imperialist state are recycled in a European guise.

Tony Benn proposes a European Commonwealth modelled on the British Commonwealth and fears that further British integration into Europe will undermine parliamentary democracy which, says Benn, allows to get rid of those who govern us 'without bloodshed'. He warns of a 'frustrated nationalism'. This feast of illusions in a blood-stained, chauvinistic parliamentary system amounts to a defence of the Labour Party as dependable guarantor of the rights of the working class. As a great English constitutionalist Benn would do well to read Walter Bagehot, author of *The English Constitution*: 'Democracy is the way to give the people the greatest illusion of power while allowing them the smallest amount in reality.'

The integration of Europe is unlikely to sufficiently stimulate British capital to provide adequate revenues for public expenditure to prevent a decline in living standards. Economic growth is slowing in the EC and the USA. Japanese capital is strengthening its position across Asia, Latin America, Europe and the former socialist countries. Africa has been leached dry. Inter-imperialist rivalry can only intensify and as it does, so markets will become less stable and each bloc will attempt to off-load losses onto the other. Within the EC economic slowdown will heighten antagonisms among the ruling classes against the leading position of German capital. Political conflicts are certain to arise from the rigours that the single currency process will impose on states (Italy and Belgium, for example), whose industries and public sectors depend on huge budget deficits. The concentration of finance capital and its attempt to impose its monopoly across Europe will exacerbate the effects of uneven development within Europe itself. ■

Hurd and Major - walking the tightrope between Little England and European super-state



# Divide and rule

***The Turkish working class and Kurdish oppressed masses are facing very conflicting tasks and dangers. Any analysis of the political conditions resulting from the general election in October 1991, of the policies of the newly established liberal-social democratic coalition must begin with an examination of the revolutionary dynamic of the labour movement in Turkey and the Kurdish resistance. MURAD AKIN, a member of a revolutionary organisation in Turkey (Gelenek), evaluates the newly developing trends in the class struggle in Turkey.***

managers to be involved in the Kurdish resistance on a more pragmatic, collaborationist basis. These elements tried to exploit the anti-imperialist patriotism of *Serhildan*. They want to narrow the scope of resistance to the interests of the Kurdish national bourgeoisie, using the support of European and Turkish liberals to compromise with the Turkish state. These elements welcomed Özal's 'liberal' intervention in northern Kurdistan. They joined the Social Democratic Populist Party which has no democratic or anti-imperialist standing. This layer of Kurdish politicians and propertied-classes also supported the new coalition.

Today these 'realistic' politicians, European-based Kurdish organisations and some sections of the Kurdish intelligentsia are planning to organise a 'Kurdish conference' with the help of pro-imperialist European and American politicians in such a way as to exclude the PKK. Using the 'liberal' policies of the Turkish bourgeoisie, they are aiming, primarily, to channel the grassroots radicalism and anti-imperialist socialist orientation of the Kurdish resistance towards the lines approved by the Turkish liberals and new world 'realism'. The 'Kurdish conference' has claimed that 'Today is not the age of socialism and national liberation movements but democracy and human rights'. This is taking place at a time when Kurdish guerrillas are being buried at mass funerals and the people are being shot by Turkish 'special teams' in the Kulp and Lice districts of Kurdistan. The PKK denounced the call for this 'Kurdish conference' in a press release on 2 January 1992.

There is nothing new in the new government's approach to the national liberation movement. Demirel, the new prime minister of the coalition government, is repeating the brutal-liberal approach of the Turkish state under Turgut Özal in the period prior to the elections. This policy depends on the recognition of Kurdish identity as an ethnic group, a rhetoric of democracy and tolerance, and armed suppression of any sort of resistance by those fighting for Kurdish independence. This policy is sponsored by US and European

party) and the Social Democratic Populist Party spent enormous energy convincing Big Business and Finance Capital about their 'realistic' and conciliatory policies by meeting TUSIAD (Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Organisation) during the pre-election period. It is clear who will pay the bill of economic recession and political instability.

The workers and oppressed masses are beginning to understand the conciliatory declarations of the seventh Demirel government. The new government is subject to the same ideological and economic constraints of the preceding bourgeois governments. The new cabinet was absolutely aware of the 'demands' of TUSIAD before forming a government. The new economic advisors support the master plan on privatisation prepared by the US bank Morgan Guaranty Trust. The first consequence will be the dismissal of a further 125,000 workers from Public Economic Enterprises, over and above the 300,000 job losses in 1990-1991.

The miners' strike had countered the hysteria of privatisation. So the privatisation of coal mines, steel plants (Erdemir), TEKEL (Tobacco Monopoly), TEK (Electricity Company) was slowed down. The new



Turkish Prime Minister Demirel - ready to divide and rule on behalf of imperialism

'democrats'. It is basically aimed at the creation of a collaborationist layer within the Kurdish liberation movement.

Demirel promised everything during his post-election trips with his partner Inonu (leader of the Social Democratic Populist Party) through Kurdish cities. But he did not forget to stress the unitary state structure, threatening to destroy the armed struggle 'more brutally than ever'. This policy had the support of ex-ANAP prime minister Mesut Yilmaz. The policy to eliminate the PKK by every means is the common denominator in Turkish bourgeois politics. The aim is to win the representatives of the Kurdish propertied classes away from the Kurdish revolutionary democratic movement - a movement which is based on the poor and oppressed working people and peasants of Kurdistan.

***The working class begins to remember Demirel in power***

Both the True Path Party (Demirel's

Secretary of State responsible for economic restructuring claims he will deal with privatisation in a more 'humane' way by a process of creating 'autonomous' (independent from the state budget) enterprises. But nobody knows how making those enterprises 'autonomous' will be more 'humane' than privatisation.

TUSIAD has now put more pressure on the legislative and governmental bodies to ensure through rationalisation a reduction of the number of unionised workers to under two million - less than 10 per cent of the work force. So sackings as a mean for deunionisation continue with armed suppression against any attempts at resistance under the new government. The glass workers in Tuzla in Istanbul, for example, protesting against dismissals were suppressed by the 'mobile force' (a special anti-riot police force) at the end of 1991.

The main form of attack today by capital in industrial conflicts is through layoffs. This is because real wages have risen from their low point in 1988 and over the last two years

have shown an increase, regaining the 1983 level. However, even current real wage levels in manufacturing are 21 per cent less than the 1977 average. The increased labour costs, despite the low level, were a constraint on profits in the exports sector. Last years' job losses represented 15 per cent of unionised workers. However, the trade union leadership in close collaboration with the coalition parties, gives credit to the government and offers no sign of assistance.

The new bourgeois government faces a foreign debt of \$55bn, unemployment at 21 per cent, and inflation around 60 per cent. On the other hand, the 500 largest industrial companies in Turkey enjoy a real rate of profit of 30.5 per cent. The share of labour costs as a proportion of sales revenues of these companies means that a worker works 24 days for himself, and 230 days for capital in a year. The recent increases in state employee's wages of 25 to 30 per cent were far below the inflation rate.

There is very little that is 'new' in the policies of the coalition government. The deunionisation and dismissals increasingly may consist of casual workers, privately contracted employees etc. The new economic advisors emphasise the need to reorientate resources towards efficient and productive investments, rather than the speculative income-creating investment of the previous government. The Turkish bourgeoisie is now concerned to reduce the weight of the rentier stratum and increase the productive capacity of manufacturing industry as part of its new climate of consensus and democracy.

There is no pressure from the unions on the new government to reduce unemployment. The official level is 3.1 million, however, including agricultural unemployment and the informal sector, the figure could reach 9.5 million.

The old managers of the misnamed DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions), whose activities were banned by the military regime, now promote their new concept 'contemporary trade unionism'. This concept is based on the total rejection of class unionism, and has been reinterpreted for its new world of 'peace and compromise'.

The reality is not so promising. Disillusionment has already set in among state employees. Plans to reduce VAT repayments to workers as employees will significantly reduce real wages. Government plans to force Public Economic Enterprises to find foreign buyers as a mortgage for foreign debt threaten massive redundancies and more expensive services.

The government also believes that by allowing Kurdish liberals to publish their own newspapers and organise a Kurdish Democratic Party something similar, it will isolate those leading the armed resistance against the Turkish state.

***A common struggle against the Turkish state***

As 1992 begins the Turkish ruling class in alliance with the Kurdish bourgeoisie is taking measures to retain the political initiative. This is dependent on the ability of the Turkish bourgeoisie to retain the collaboration of the trade union leadership in its economic programme and its success in integrating the Kurdish bourgeoisie in a more stable political relationship as part of the overall US-political strategy in the Middle East.

This path will meet resistance. The economic crisis will force the working class increasingly into confrontation with the reformist-collaborationist leadership of the trade union. Kurdish anti-imperialist resistance is still independent, far away from defeat and liquidation. This is the context in which the ideological and political rejuvenation of revolutionary organisation of Turkish socialism is the precondition for a united anti-capitalist/anti-imperialist resistance against the Turkish state. ■

1991 proved to be the high point of the growing class resistance in the form of unofficial mass action which began in 1989 - the '1989 Spring'. The miners' strike in Zonguldak, December 1990-January 1991, was the first nation-wide anti-government challenge to the Motherland Party Government (ANAP) since the 1980 military coup. But after the intervention of local social democratic politicians and trade union leaders during the final stages of the strike, a collective agreement was signed and imposed on the strikers and the unofficial and widely supported mass movement was isolated. This development revealed both a weakness in class solidarity and the inability of the revolutionary movement to influence the course of the strike and combat the influence of the local trade union leaders.

Nevertheless, the positive example of the miners' strike spread to other workers' struggles against job losses, for higher wages and better working conditions. The glass workers of Pasabahce in Istanbul followed the example of the workers of Zonguldak converting workplace protest into a locally-based unofficial mass movement.

The Turkish and Kurdish workers suffer from a relatively new and careerist layer of trade unionist leaders, both local and national, who have benefited from post-coup legislation. This legislation allows higher ranks of trade unionists to be highly paid and to control a huge volume of financial sources. It was this trade union aristocracy which pushed the working class into an organisationally premature general strike ('general action' in their terminology) on 3 January 1991 during the last days of the miners' strike. They reduced this action to 'general absenteeism' - the workers merely stayed at home, although the 'general strike' was a concrete demand among the politically advanced workers. This contributed to the liquidation of Zonguldak resistance and the spreading of a general climate of defeatism in the working class movement.

After this, the trade union leadership limited the agenda to economic issues, depoliticised strikes and offered an indecisive opposition to the ANAP government. This was consistent with their call for a coalition government of social democrats and liberals. Such a government was formed after the elections in October 1991.

***'Serhildan Ciyane' - 'To resist is to live'***

Kurdish resistance (*Serhildan*) not only demonstrated the mass basis of the struggle led by Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK) but a new stage of struggle in the cities complementing the guerrilla warfare in the rural areas. Today the Turkish cities realise that the Kurdish resistance now incorporates an urban mass movement, although there is still a problem of interaction between the class movement in the cities and the *Serhildan* against the Turkish state and propertied classes.

During the imperialist military assault against Iraq, the PKK adopted a clear anti-imperialist policy risking isolation and repression by pro-imperialist Turkish forces. Nevertheless, this anti-imperialist policy, unique on the Kurdish left, helped the *Serhildan* to gain ground in the largest parts of Kurdistan.

On the other side, the majority of the metropolitan Kurdish left look towards US and European intervention for a 'democratic' mid-way 'autonomy' solution to the Kurdish question. This wing includes Talabani and Barzani of the Kurdistan Patriotic Front in southern Kurdistan.

This policy has been disastrous for the Kurdish people once again. The growth of mass support for the Kurdish national liberation movement allowed some local Kurdish politicians and ex-social democratic party

# The Rise and Fall of Great Powers

*We live in extremely dangerous times. The handful of national powers that dominate the world are struggling for first place in the New World Order. The trends, particularly those towards inter-imperialist rivalry, that were held back or hidden during the Cold War, are again on display. Nationalism and its slogans – whether Republican Pat Buchanan's 'America First', Labour's 'Made in Britain', or the racism of the growing fascist parties in Europe – are beginning to dominate the political debate. Underlying the slogans are the increasingly apparent signs of impending trade war and national rivalry.*

The USA, after decades of unrivalled economic, political and military supremacy, faces serious challenges. It may not have been merely '24-hour flu' that prompted President Bush to vomit over his Japanese hosts during his recent Asian tour. He had seen for himself the economic strength with which Japan can dominate the Pacific region. He had also signally failed to get any serious concessions from Japan to deal with its massive \$41bn trade surplus with the USA or its protected rice market.

The prospect of a German-dominated Europe also worries the USA and Japan. Germany is using its economic strength to expand into those regions of Eastern Europe which will be most beneficial to it economically and politically – parts of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and the now dismembered Yugoslavia. In the recent trial of political strength between the USA (against recognition of Croatia and Slovenia) and Germany (wholeheartedly for it), Germany won and forced the EEC to submit to its political will against the reflex caution of Britain and others when dealing with Balkan issues. It is Germany which will benefit most from this recognition, gaining both lucrative markets and convenient access to the Adriatic Sea. Alongside this dispute is a running battle over the GATT talks, with Europe and the USA at loggerheads over their protected agricultural industries.

## Is the world heading for another imperialist war?

It is political periods like this that drove Marx and Lenin to libraries in order better to analyse the underlying trends in capitalist development and equip the working class movement with an understanding of its political tasks. Unfortunately the collapse of leftist movements in recent years has left both a practical and an intellectual void. In such circumstances we could do worse than to study the work of bourgeois historians and theoreticians who, in however distorted a way, throw some light on these developments.

Such is the case with Paul Kennedy's book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (Fontana, 1989, £9.99). Subtitled 'Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000', it evidently became required reading among those sections of the US ruling class which still read the odd book. What they may have found particularly novel in it, since they, like most ruling classes, believe their rule to be immutable, is Kennedy's simple thesis that:

...there exists a dynamic for change, driven by economic and technological developments, which then impact upon social structures, political systems, military power and the position of individual states and empires.

Obviously, Marxists will have no difficulty accepting this since it is a form, at least, of materialism, even if shorn of its class content. But for US politicians and businessmen struggling with a serious economic crisis, it must touch a raw nerve when Kennedy says:

...all of the major shifts in the world's power balances have followed alterations in the productive balances, and further that the rising and falling of the various empires and states in the international system has been confirmed by the outcomes of the major Great Power wars, where victory has always gone to the side with the greatest material resources.

Kennedy doggedly pursues this thesis and in doing so amasses a wealth of facts which are of great interest in showing the relative economic and

military strengths of imperialist powers. From such a vast subject matter it is possible only to concentrate on one or two issues raised by the book: Part One of this review will cover the decline of British power and its consequences; Part Two the current position of the USA and its challengers.

## Decline of British power

'We have got all we want in territory, and our claim to be left in unmolested enjoyment of vast and splendid possessions, mainly acquired by violence, largely maintained by force, often seems less reasonable to others than to us.' *Winston Churchill*

In 1900 Britain possessed an empire larger than any ever seen: 12 million square miles of land and a quarter of the world's population. However, unlike the situation in the early to middle 19th century, it no longer enjoyed unrivalled dominance. Germany, USA and Russia were feared threats to Britain's empire.

The emergence of these rivals had its basis in economics. Whereas in the 1850s Britain had produced two-thirds of world coal, half its iron, and 40% of world output of manufactures was British, by 1900 much had changed. British industrial growth had slowed to less than 1.5% per annum, lower than its competitors and it found itself priced out of markets in North America, Europe and colonial areas. Its share of world manufacturing output was down to 13.6% by 1913. Whereas in the 1850s 92% of British imports were raw materials and foods, now its domestic market was being flooded with foreign manufactures.

Germany was the imperialist nation which most resented the existing division of world power. From a handful of small states in the mid-19th century, it had, by 1913, become the 'economic powerhouse of Europe'. By 1914 its share of world manufacturing production was 14.8%, higher than Britain, with giant firms like Siemens, AEG, Bayer and Hoechst dominating the European electrical and chemical industries. It is not surprising that German politicians such as Chancellor Bulow should argue:

'We cannot allow any foreign power, any foreign Jupiter to tell us: "What can be done? The world is already partitioned."'

and,

'The question is not whether we want to colonise or not, but that we must colonise whether we want it or not'.

This conflict, with its roots in economics, led inexorably to war. However, having plundered the world for decades, Britain remained unimaginably wealthy. It had \$19.5 billion invested overseas – a staggering 43% of world foreign investments – and its wealth had enabled it to build formidable military power. When Germany challenged the existing Great Powers of Europe it was unsuccessful and the 1914-18 war put an end, although for a mere two decades, to German expansionism. It allowed the victors, particularly Britain and France, to divide Germany's colonial possessions.

However the war had proved costly – with 60 million casualties and a bill of \$260 billion. Moreover, the war had helped to ignite the fires of the Russian Revolution. Both production and trade took time to recover but within 11 years the capitalist slump halved industrial production and reduced world trade by a third. Once again fierce competition aggravated inter-imperialist rivalries with protectionist blocs being established. The world supremacy of British imperialism was based less and less on

economic supremacy. And 'while the European powers were establishing their League of Nations – hiding their imperial interests under ever more elaborate fig leaves', anti-colonial movements were founded and grew in Africa, Egypt, China, Turkey, Tunisia, Indonesia and India.

Nor had the German question been solved. Kennedy quotes AJP Taylor: 'At the moment in 1919, Germany was down-and-out. The immediate problem was German weakness; but given a few years of "normal life", it would again become the problem of German strength'.

Britain's share of global commerce fell from 14% in 1913 to just under 10% in 1937. Nor could its overseas earnings any longer cover the deficit. In the face of German and Japanese rearmament, Britain could not compete and its armed forces were stretched across the globe containing anti-colonial movements in India, Iraq, Egypt, Palestine and elsewhere. Hardly surprising therefore that the British ruling class favoured 'appeasement', offering colonial and commercial concessions to Hitler and allowing territorial concessions – Czechoslovakia – within Europe itself. Only when forced to, and then reluctantly, did the British imperialists take on fascist Germany. That Germany's second 20th-century bid for domination was defeated was due primarily to the colossal sacrifices of the Soviet people, assisted by US and British power.

## Post-war realities

'When the Labour government entered office in July 1945, one of the first documents it had to read was Keynes's hair-raising memorandum about the "financial Dunkirk" which the country was facing: its colossal trade gap, its weakened industrial base, its enormous overseas establishments, meant that American aid was desperately needed to replace the cut-off Lend Lease... By this time, it was impossible to believe that Britain was still at the centre of the world politically.' (p473)

Indeed, not merely Britain. As Kennedy says: 'All the efforts of British and French governments to the contrary, however, there was no doubt about the passing of the European age'. The USA was supreme, economically and militarily.

Politics, both nationally and internationally, takes time to catch up with economic realities, probably partly because the old men who run things were formed in an earlier epoch. Britain might withdraw from India, Palestine and abandon guarantees to Greece and Turkey, but 'there was no intention of giving up the rest of the dependent empire, which in economic terms was more important to Britain than ever before. Only further shocks and the rising cost of hanging on would later force another reappraisal of Britain's place in the world' (p474). It might be said that only now, when the Suez men are finally gone from British politics, has the 'awful reality' sunk in.

Britain's share of world manufacturing production slipped from 8.6% in 1953 to 4% in 1980, both a relative and an absolute decline. Its share of world trade fell from 19.8% in 1955 to 8.7% in 1976. Its gross national product, third largest in the world at the end of the Second World War, was swiftly overtaken by Germany, Japan and France. Kennedy quotes *The Economist*: 'since 1983, Britain's trade balance on manufactures has been in deficit for the first time since the Romans invaded Britain'. Even in those entirely parasitic fields where British capital excelled – banking and finance – its share of

This is the age of the New World Order. With the collapse of the old world order, we are entering an era of fierce competition between the neo-socialist bloc and for a new redivision of the world. The political rivalries. Once united in their endeavour to deal with the world as everything goes well, competition effects a practical change no longer a question of sharing profits, but of sharing loss. This fight threatens the world with terrible calamities. This is the historical development of imperialist rivalries and the

# Imperialism in the New World



world trade in such services has fallen from 18% to 7% in the past 30 years.

Yet this senile power has sharp teeth to use against those who would challenge its wealth and power – particularly the oppressed nations. It continues to field a huge defence force financed by the fourth largest defence budget in the world, and spends a colossal 5.5% of its GNP on arms. All of this explains the ferocity with which the debate over European integration

has been conducted. The question is which stronger imperialist power offers it the best crutch. It also explains the paucity of ideas of all of the ruling parties over the way forward. Thatcherite Britain represented the logical conclusion of a ruling class which, having looted the world, was finally forced home to steal the remaining national assets or, as Macmillan put it, to 'sell the family silver'.

(To be continued) *Maxine Williams*



of the socialist bloc an era of peace between nations, prosperity and progress was promised. Instead we have major imperialist powers. With the onset of a severe economic crisis they are fighting for control of the world. Behind the polite and innocuous communiqués of the Group of Seven, lurk the fiercest economic and military forces. To destroy communism, the major powers are now dividing into hostile camps. As Marx said in *Capital*: 'So long as there is no international brotherhood of the capitalist class . . . so that each shares in the common loot . . . But as soon as it is no longer so . . . competition then transforms itself into a fight of hostile brothers.'

With this issue of FRFI, EDDIE ABRAHAMS AND MAXINE WILLIAMS open a discussion on these issues; on their relationship to the Third World and their political consequences for the working class movement.

# Imperialist rivalries and the New World Order

## The New World Order, Imperialism and Marxist Theory

Many ex-communists today dismiss Lenin's writings on imperialism as 'superficial', 'unscientific' or, at best, 'outdated'. Naturally they have not bothered to study the Marxist theory of imperialism, nor tested it against today's conditions. Noam Chomsky's book *DETERRING DEMOCRACY* (Verso, 1991, £19.95), is a welcome riposte to such people. Chomsky is no admirer of Lenin or of Bolshevism, quite the contrary. Our disagreements with him are many and profound . . . Nevertheless his book contains a coherent and damning indictment of imperialism, and particularly US imperialism, in the twentieth century.

Using as evidence testimony from US politicians, financiers, historians, journalists and military personnel, Chomsky rips aside the hypocritical veil of democratic rhetoric which conceals the worst barbarism and violence, the coldest cynical contempt and indifference for democracy or the well being of the majority. He excels in polemic against US intelligentsia which acts as hired pens to justify imperialist crimes. *Deterring Democracy* is an excellent reference book for anti-imperialists and indeed Marxists.

Chomsky's central argument is that at the end of the Cold War with the removal of the limited Soviet deterrent, promises an even more violent and militaristic US ruling class. The concept of New World Order of peace and democracy is a euphemism, cultivated by the hired intelligentsia, to disguise this reality. Meanwhile serious bourgeois commentators urge the US ruling class to seize the opportunity, presented by the collapse of the socialist bloc, to consolidate US domination of the Third World.

Dimitri Simes, a senior associate at the prestigious Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, believes that at the end of the Cold War will 'liberate American foreign policy from the strait-jacket imposed by superpower hostility'. It 'makes military power more useful as a United States foreign policy instrument' . . . against those who contemplate challenging important American interests' (p98).

The US, he writes, can now end the manipulation of America by Third World nations' and be in a 'stronger bargaining position vis-a-vis defiant Third World debtors.' The invasion of Panama and the destruction of Iraq were undoubtedly only the first examples of this 'liberated policy'.

That the New World Order will differ little from the old is also grasped in senior military circles. AM Gray, US Marine Corps Commandant General, argued in 1990 that to ensure unimpeded access to 'developing economic markets throughout the world' and 'to the resources needed to support our manufacturing requirements', the USA needs 'a credible military power projection capability with the flexibility to respond to con-

flict across the spectrum of violence throughout the globe'.

Today there is to be no deviation from post World War II US planning that required the Third World to 'fulfil its major function as a source of raw material and a market' for imperialist capital (p143). The New World Order merely opens up new spheres for imperialism to exploit as it exploits the Third World. While many a 'Marxist' applauded 'revolution' in Eastern Europe, Chomsky, who had no sympathy for those regimes, sees a 'project of Latin-Americanising Eastern Europe'. Again he cites respected bourgeois commentators to press home his point. *The New York Times*, expressing the view of imperialist capital, wrote:

'Most American companies view the Soviet Union and the newly opening nations in Eastern Europe as potential markets for their products or as sources of low-cost manufacturing labour.' (p61)

### US imperialism and the Bolshevik Revolution

Throughout this century the US and imperialist ruling class has had two overriding objectives: the destruction of the communist movement and the defeat of anti-imperialist forces in the Third World. These were central conditions for the defence of the imperialist/capitalist order. They were the strategic aims of the Cold War.

The Bolshevik revolution was the first sustained challenge to imperialism. Bourgeois historian John Lewis Gaddis, saw it as a 'challenge - which could hardly have been more categorical - to the very survival of the capitalist order' (p14-15). In 1917 DeWitt C Poole, from the US Embassy in Russia, wrote of the 'ominous threat' of Bolshevism, whose 'essence' is 'that it is international and not national in character' (p15). Senator Warren Harding, a future US President, therefore concluded that: 'Bolshevism is a menace that must be destroyed . . . the Bolshevik beast [must be] slain' (p337).

In 'slaying the beast', 'democratic' imperialism stopped at nothing. The US supported Mussolini when he took power in 1922. Their Embassy reported

that the Fascists are 'perhaps the most potent factor in the suppression of Bolshevism in Italy.' The imperialist US Labour Movement in the form of the AFL, in the words of Ronald Filippelli, considered the fascist corporations 'a welcome replacement for the old, Bolshevik-infected industrial unions' (p38). In the aftermath of World War II, the US reconstituted the fascist German and Japanese capitalist class as a counterweight to the USSR whilst at the same time launching a systematic attack on working class and trade union organisations.

### Imperialism against the Third World

No means were spared to control the Third World. A few of the examples Chomsky deals with in detail include: US-organised military coups against democratically elected governments in Guatemala (1954), Iran (1956) and Chile (1973). US forces invaded Lebanon (1958) and the Dominican Republic (1961). In 1963, the CIA helped organise the massacre of 500,000 communists in Indonesia. It then facilitated the Indonesian invasion and genocide in East Timor.

In the 1970s, imperialism supported military-fascist dictatorships in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. Hundreds of thousands 'disappeared' after brutal torture. Throughout, the US supported Zionist genocide against the Palestinian people and the invasion of Lebanon (1982) which killed 20,000.

During the 1980s the US armed and financed death squad governments in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. It armed the Contras in Nicaragua and Mujahedin in Afghanistan. It launched military attacks on Lebanon (1983), and Libya (1986) and invaded Grenada (1984).

Behind this violence is imperialism's 'economic rationale'. Two examples must suffice from the enormous detail Chomsky provides. Between 1980 and 1989, according to the World Bank, the share of the world's wealth controlled by poor and medium sized countries (constituting the majority of the world's population) declined from 23 to 18 per cent (p241). The Mexican

Secretariat of Urban Development estimates that 90 per cent of industry (US and imperialist owned) in the Valley of Mexico violates global pollution standards. In the chemical industry, more than half the labour force suffers irreversible damage to the respiratory system (p226).



### Great Power rivalry

In the New World Order, violence and national oppression will persist and intensify as 'the US seeks to shore up its own domains in the developing conflict with the other two major world power centres' (p173).

During the Cold War inter-imperialist rivalries were muted. But they were never eliminated. During the 1950s, the US fought to replace Britain and France as the dominant imperialist power, especially in the Third World. It attempted simultaneously to restructure Japanese and German capitalism and subordinate them to the US ruling class.

However today, Japan and Germany have emerged to challenge the declining US economy. With the collapse of the socialist bloc and the onset of a serious international capitalist crisis,

the stage is set for an intensification of the clash between the three main imperialist power blocs competing for supremacy through control of the Third World. Within the US ruling class there is already concern that its rivals are better poised to benefit from international developments in the next period.

Japanese capital is fast penetrating domains regarded as 'our little region over here'. Japanese investment in Latin America and the Caribbean has risen to over half that of the United States, nearly 20 per cent of Japan's total overseas investment. In Eastern Europe, Germany is profiting more extensively from the 'project of Latin-Americanising' the ex-socialist bloc.

'We have lost a lot of our authority as a leader of the world . . . Now we are just one of the boys' (p62), moans US Trust Company consultant James O'Leary. The US ruling class is however preparing to resist. Democratic US Senator Patrick Leahy urges the US government to 'help American businesses compete against . . . nations . . . taking . . . markets away from us in Africa, Asia and Latin America' (p63).

The collapse of the socialist bloc and the New World Order have neither altered the nature of imperialism nor eliminated the necessity and indeed inevitability of popular resistance to it. To quote AM Gray again:

'The underdeveloped world's growing dissatisfaction over the gap between rich and poor nations will create a fertile breeding ground for insurgencies. These insurgencies have the potential to jeopardise regional stability and our access to vital economic and military resources.' (p31)

As in the 'Old World Order' imperialism will resort to butchery and repression to defend its 'vital economic and military resources' against 'insurgency'. The Leninist theory of imperialism and revolution is clearly no Marxist 'invention'. It merely reflects objective economic and political processes from the standpoint of the majority of the world's people.

### Chomsky and Leninism

Chomsky's libertarian and anti-Leninist politics lead, however, to many conclusions Marxists reject. The Bolshevik Revolution, he says, was a 'coup d'etat' and the USSR a 'tyranny', a 'Russian empire', 'constructed by Lenin'. An odd empire which, in the words of a commentator quoted by Chomsky, 'was in fact that unique historical perversion . . . in which the centre bled itself for the sake of its colonies . . .' (p244).

Chomsky himself tells us that the USSR subsidised Eastern Europe to the tune of \$80bn during the 1970s ensuring that 'shops are better stocked than in the Soviet Union and material conditions are often better.' He quotes Martha Gellhorn:

'I can testify that it was far better and safer to be a peasant in communist Poland than it is to be a peasant in capitalist El Salvador.'

A rather different species of 'empire' to the US! It should also not be forgotten that much of the popular resistance to imperialism, cited by Chomsky himself, was inspired by Leninism and supported by the USSR.

Crucially Chomsky does not adequately explain the weakness of the anti-imperialist movement in the imperialist countries. In part he attributes this to the power of imperialist propaganda. But imperialist propaganda is only successful because imperialism has bought off and corrupted sections of the working class with a portion of superprofits plundered from the Third World. It is this that explains the well described reactionary character of the organised Labour Movement in the US.

But we shall leave a theoretical debate on the political consequences of these issues for a later date. For the moment it is better to unite with 'libertarians' such as Chomsky who are anti-imperialist, than with so-called 'Marxists' who deny even the existence of imperialism.

Eddie Abrahams

**'Winning the war was not the Revolution.  
It gave us the right to make the Revolution'  
Fidel Castro, 1959**

# CUBA

## THE LIVING REVOLUTION



I was in Cuba in December 1991 when Fidel Castro announced that in 1992 the country would receive a bare third of the oil it needs. The collapse of the Soviet Union, representing 85 per cent of Cuba's trade, together with the unrelenting pressure of the 30-year US economic blockade, is taking its toll in the form of unrelieved economic hardship. This year will be the harshest yet. Yet against all the odds, the struggle for survival, for economic independence and for socialism continues.

The signs of the crisis are everywhere as you walk through the backstreets of Old Havana: beautiful Spanish colonial houses, since the Revolution home to working class families, are cracked and peeling because there isn't any paint; washing lines hang from crumbling stone balconies and rusting railings. The shops are virtually empty, because everything - bread, soap, cigarettes - is rationed. Working mothers get priority. The only food that isn't rationed appears to be oranges, ice-cream and pizza: immediately long queues form till the supply runs out.

The shortage of petrol has created an acute transport problem. The cheap city buses, or *gua-guas* are filled to overflowing; the Ladas and huge fifties American saloons are being replaced by bicycles, driven at breakneck speed through the narrow streets, bells ringing madly.

For hours on end there may be no water, as the city waits for the pumps to start working - though when it comes, the water is clean and drinkable straight from the tap.

In spite of the problems, the lack of any kind of luxury, I was struck by the fact that even in the poorest districts of Havana, I saw no-one begging, no one out on the streets, no one starving. In what other Latin American city could you walk down a working class street and say the same? Or know that every child is guaranteed, not only a place at a nursery or school, but three meals a day? There is poverty here, but no cholera, no open sewers, no typhoid. These are real achievements in a developing Third World country. It is precisely for this reason that socialism has a mass popular base in Cuba.

For Cubans, queueing is a way of life - for food, for buses, for newspapers. In the teashops, there is only tea - hot, or luke-warm or iced, maybe a sweet sticky coconut cake if there's been a delivery that day. It is here the young 'intellectuals' hang out, the first generation to have benefited from Cuba's superb system of higher education, the poets and the artists who refuse to take up essential work in agriculture, preferring to sit around for hours on end and criticise the system.

Meanwhile, inside the cool, mosaiced enclaves of the tourist hotels, every kind of luxury is for sale for hard currency to big-spending German and Canadian package tourists. Not surprisingly, a booming black market has sprung up: as you walk down the central Prado towards the fountains and palm trees of José Martí Square, or along the Malecon, on every side you hear the low hisses: - 'Psss, *guapa*... *quiere a cambiar?* do you want to change money?' - at a rate of 10, or 15, or even 25 pesos to the dollar (the official rate is one to one). Or do you have anything to sell? A pair of jeans, your sandals, even your half-finished bottle of shampoo? Illegally acquired dollars are re-sold at inflated prices on the black market, or find their way to the dollar shops - not the shiny tourist bric-a-brac shops filled with rum and cigars and maracas marked 'Cuba', but big anonymous stores down the side streets selling fridges, plastic shoes and flared jeans that no spoiled Western tourist would want. In the current economic situation it is inevitable. Tourism is a necessity - the urgently needed dollars will pay for insulin for the hospitals, for suture thread, for powdered milk for the children, no longer available from

East Germany. But inevitably it creates its own social problems, opening up a whole world of consumerism. Even the littlest children accost the tourists demanding chewing gum or pens: 'Pss... *chiclé, chiclé*... *boligrafo?*' 'No tengo', you tell them, 'I haven't got any. I'm a poor tourist'. This cracks them up. There aren't any poor tourists. I tell them that in my country, in the richest streets, in every doorway there are young people sleeping in cardboard boxes. All but the most political remain sceptical.

And yet, and yet - Cuba is still the land of the Revolution. You go to see the *Granma*, the ridiculous little dinghy, now encased in glass behind railings, in which 86 inspired young revolutionaries, including Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, landed to start the Revolution. It is surrounded by the motley array of delivery vans and motorcycles in which, a few years before, they had driven to launch the heroic Moncada assault. In front of it burns an eternal flame, to the martyrs of the Revolution. And it strikes you that there is something a little crazy and indescribably moving about the entire Cuban experience, that the Revolution happened at all, that socialism should be built here, in this tiny, embattled, Third World island; it is as though at every turn Cuba took on the impossible and triumphed through a sheer effort of will.

In Havana, too, I met the comrades from the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, the central workers' federation, for whom each day of survival is a victory against the crushing weight of US imperialism. It is they who attempt to distribute the meagre resources, find outlets for Cuban trade, persuade European states to sell them medical equipment, juggle economic necessity against political motivation, mobilise the workers. Come what may, the three priorities

### Hands off Cuba!

## ACT NOW FOR CUBA

**Join the Revolutionary Communist Group's material aid campaign for Cuba! At this crucial moment every genuine socialist has a responsibility to actively defend the achievements of the Cuban Revolution against the imperialist US blockade. You can demonstrate your political support for Cuba in a practical way by collecting urgently needed, basic goods such as soap, razors and paper. Set up collection points outside your local supermarket or chemist; organise a collection through your school, college, union, workplace or organisation. We can arrange collection and freight to Cuba of your contribution.**

**Support Cuban schoolchildren by buying paper, biros, pencils, crayons, powdered milk.**

**The agricultural self-sufficiency programme offers Cuba the chance to feed its people - but the workers need gloves, boots, overalls - protective clothing of any kind.**

**Support the Cuban health service when you next go to the chemist: buy aspirins and paracetamol, plasters, bandages, antiseptic cream, syringes, surgical gloves.**

**If you are able to help in any way with this campaign, or would like more information, contact:**

**FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N3XX tel 071 837 1688.**

of food and of free and universal health care and education will be maintained. 'When we in Cuba decided to build socialism,' Lazaro Quintana, of the CTC National Committee, told me, 'it was because experience had taught us that capitalism couldn't meet the needs of the vast majority of the population. When the Revolution triumphed, those problems found their solution. Today we are following the socialist path because we already know the alternative.' In Cuba, freedom is indeed the appreciation of necessity.

I flew out to the Isle of Youth - formerly the Island of Pines where Fidel Castro was imprisoned after the Moncada uprisings, now a centre for students from all over the world, but particularly from Angola and Namibia, testimony to Cuba's long history of support for their struggles for liberation. There I visited the vast beehive-shaped Presidio Modelo prison, now a ruin, the iron bars stripped off the windows to be recycled as spare parts, a bleak contrast against the lush mountains and blooming bouganvilleas. The museum guide proudly showed us the scars from where he'd fought with Raul Castro in the mountains. 'Without the Revolution,' he said, 'today we would have nothing'.

Then east to Santiago. As we flew in over the Sierra Maestra, that bleak maze of dark green scrubland where the revolutionaries of the 26 July Movement fought and died, everyone on the plane fell silent. Perhaps it was only a romantic coincidence, but Santiago is the birthplace of the revolution, and history feels very close.

A comrade from the Salud Publica, the regional health service, showed me around Santiago's historical sites - the Plaza de la Revolucion, with its statue of Maceo and huge iron pikes, symbolising the struggle

that continues, the eternal flame to the heroes who died within living memory, the stark stone memorial to Abel Santamaria, tortured and butchered by the Batistas after the Moncada assault.

And Moncada itself: a modest yellow building still pock-marked with bullet holes, once the second most important military post in Santiago. It was here that a group of idealistic young men and women, none of them over thirty, launched their heroic, historical assault on the Batista regime, an assault that was to be the spark that ignited the revolution. More than half the revolutionaries were murdered within hours of their surrender. To be guided through the Moncada museum is a moving experience. Those black and white photos of corpses, young men with their eyes gouged out, their features smashed - are photos of real people, remembered heroes. The names are the names of those who gave their lives for what Cuba is today: Abel Santamaria, Frank Pais, Jose Antonio Echeverria. And the women, Haydée Santamaria and Melba Hernandez, imprisoned and tortured.

After taking in the horror, and being left speechless at the sheer tenacity of a struggle which seemed at times against all the odds, you come suddenly face to face with the famous photo of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara at the head of the Rebel Army, entering Havana in triumph, arms upflung in victory, and it is like a tremendous cry of affirmation: the Revolution was, it is, it will be!

Havana seems a world away. Here too, times are hard, but in this predominantly black, Caribbean city consciousness is high. A doctor at the specialist oncology hospital said: 'Listen. If we have no fuel, we will burn wood. If we have no clothes, we will go about naked. But one thing we will not compromise on, and that is our health care - free, and for everyone.' The comrade from the Salud Publica, also a doctor at the hospital added: 'What we are going through is a transition. It is very hard. But nobody said that building socialism would be paradise. All we want is to build a society that is just'.

Then by train overnight to Santa Clara. The lights had gone out, the train was packed, the journey took twelve or thirteen hours. The only refreshments were occasional paper cones of sweet strong coffee, and a hunk of nameless meat, chewed hungrily in the pitch dark. All the buses from Santa Clara to Cienfuegos were booked for the next few days but if I had dollars... I rode to Cienfuegos in a red American Buick. These *collectivos* make a fortune out of the transport crisis, charging maybe three times the price of the overbooked buses. The vast dusty motorways stretched empty, except for a few bicycles, or horses, and the occasional lorry filled with hitchhikers packed like logs in the back.

In Cienfuegos, the father of the family I stayed with showed me his medals - this one for fighting the counter-revolutionaries in the mountains after the invasion of Playa Giron in 1961, this one for fighting in solidarity with the Angolan revolution in 1976, this one for so many years exemplary service in the Communist Party. At the moment, water gets pumped through to the house between 3 and 8pm every day. Then, nothing till the next day. Enough has to be stored for six people to wash and drink, for the laundry, the cleaning, the washing up. Next year, if there is less electricity, it might be every two days. But one night, we sat out drinking rum on the terrace, talking politics, and he said: 'Listen, *chica*, I'll tell you what democracy is. Democracy is a roof over your head; democracy is food in your belly. Democracy is knowing that your children will go to school, and that if your family is ill they don't have to have money to be treated. Without those things, there isn't any democracy'.

Cat Wiener

**'Tell them that this island is not a Stalinist enclave, as it is called, that we are not a repressed society, that here people don't get shot down on the streets... we are fighting for a more just society, and that society is socialism.'**

# CUBA YOUNG COMMUNISTS

After the triumph of the Revolution in 1959, in the face of unrelenting US hostility, trends within the broad-based national liberation movement became conscious of the need to find a total programme that would radically transform the very foundations of Cuban society. It was in that context that in 1961 the Union of Communist Youth (UJC) was formed. Noel Carillo, of the International Department of the UJC, talked to *FRFI* about its work among the Cuban youth today, in the 'special period'.

## The UJC today

Today, we have about 600,000 people in our organisation, 19 per cent of all 14-30 year-olds. The UJC sets out to be an open organisation of vanguard youth rather than a mass organisation, since we believe that being a communist is something that is achieved, not automatically, but through political work and sacrifice.

The UJC has a strong grassroots base in workplaces and colleges, wherever young people gather socially. We invite young people who aren't activists to our political meetings, to discuss the questions which most preoccupy our youth, particularly since the collapse of the socialist countries. We have to clarify for them the historical differences and the differences today between socialism in Cuba and in the socialist countries. It is precisely through this kind of discussion that we can focus clearly on how to improve our work.

For example, we were producing publicity that was too serious; we changed that completely, to produce publicity that is more dynamic, brighter, younger, without losing its political content. We have changed our graphics, our slogans, the form our meetings take so that they are more lively and participative.

We don't believe in unanimity. We know there are many different views within the country; within the revolutionary movement also, each person has the right to their own ideas. We believe that democratic centralism is necessary within our organisation, but at the same time it's important for there to be a pluralism of ideas and opinions within the organisation itself, and for all our decisions to have the backing of the majority.

## The economic crisis

This period marks the most difficult moment yet for the Revolution. We are suffering from a blockade both by the United States, and from the ex-socialist countries.

Meanwhile, the Revolution is thirty-two years old, and for young people today who were born after the Revolution, the things we have achieved are 'normal' things, which they have an automatic right to - for example, free health care, free education, social security. These young people have new aspirations in their lives, which to a certain extent are being held back by the economic situation.

So we have to develop two kinds of work in this area. First, we have political work on an individual level, to explain why we are in this economic situation, what the gains of the Revolution have been, and why the socialist camp has suffered setbacks. We believe that the vast majority of our population, young people and adults alike, support the Revolution and we have a duty to be very honest about the situation we are in.

At the same time, notwithstanding the severity of the economic situation, we work to find solutions amongst the youth themselves. The UJC mobilises young people to work in agriculture, so that they really understand the necessity of the self-sufficiency programme for our survival, and in the construction programme and armed forces - we

call on them to make sacrifices. But at the same time we have a duty to work to guarantee them the chance to enjoy their free time, which means resolving some of the material problems, for example, by developing recreational youth centres in the main thoroughfares of the city.

reality what is happening now, and not only from history. But for the immense majority of our population one thing is clear: Cuba has only been able to achieve what it has because of socialism. Our historical experience teaches us that without socialism we could only have been a

Cuba, a girl prostitutes herself for a pair of jeans, or to eat in an expensive restaurant - to enjoy all the privileges that the tourists have access to and our society can't provide. So we have to go to these girls, and talk directly to them, and explain clearly that they are endangering their health. We point out how little ideological and material fulfilment there is in their work, and the opportunities that our society can offer them. But it has to be the decision of the girls themselves. We don't have any other way of persuading them.

## On religion

At its Fourth Congress in October the Party agreed to allow believers who were also revolutionaries into its ranks. Religion here has a popular working class base, and many young people feel there is no contradiction with being in the Communist Party or the UJC. The only difference is that they believe in a divine being, and we believe in Marxism. So now we are beginning to work more together. In Cuba, socialism has to create itself with the participation of everyone. Given that we are a tiny island under siege, we have to have unity. And to achieve unity, we have to have a measure of tolerance in these matters.

## The fight against discrimination

Our nation has been formed over the years by many different races. We are all Cubans, whatever colour we may be. When the Revolution triumphed, it eliminated racism as a political force, in all its institutionalised forms. Beyond that it is a question of changing people's ideas. So we have worked very hard to eliminate the vestiges of racism in our society. I would say that now, particularly amongst the youth, racism barely exists at all.



## The tourist industry

Given the blockade by the United States, the shortage of oil and so on, one of the few sources we have to obtain hard currency as quickly as possible, is the tourist industry. But at the same time this means we now have new hotels and night clubs which are given over to tourism, creating negative tendencies among some sections of the youth. They understand our need for hard currency, but at the same time they feel their need to enjoy some of the benefits more directly. So by working very closely with the National Institute of Tourism, we have obtained a discotheque in the Malecon, some cafes and youth centres, where young people can enjoy themselves.

However, I repeat, our most important work is the work of political discussion. Because we want each of our young people to understand from the standpoint of their own

colony of Spain, or a neo-colony, the brothel of the United States. We know that to bring capitalism back into Cuba would mean achieving a standard of living equal not to that of Miami but instead, of a Guatemala or Nicaragua.

We are aware that while we need the tourist industry to obtain hard currency, at the same time it has created, especially here in the city of Havana, a lifestyle around the tourist centres, based on consumerism, which doesn't correspond to our reality. Some of our youth, lured by the glamour of tourism, live off the black market, changing money in the hotels or illegally trading cigars. Also, which is harder for us to accept - through prostitution. As far as the black market is concerned, the police and the state deal with it, because what they are doing is a crime against our economy. But with prostitution, we don't believe that repression can be a solution. In



Machismo is a different question. Our society, like all Latin American societies, is very macho. In Cuba, before the Revolution, women were seen simply as belonging to the man; their husbands didn't want them to work, they had to look after the children and put up with whatever their husbands wanted. This situation has changed a lot. In this regard,

a very important role has been played by the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC). But this problem has not been eliminated.

Here in the UJC there are many young women. The national executive body is still mainly made up of men, but at the grassroots and provincial level the leadership is predominantly made up of women. So in the coming years the situation at the level of national leadership will change very quickly. We don't believe in having a quota for women. Women in Cuba are winning the rights for themselves.

But the same machismo and the Hispanic cultural tradition mean that while the law does not discriminate against homosexuality, society does. The UJC, the Party itself, cannot decide to accept homosexuals until our members themselves accept that they are human beings with the same rights, simply with a different sexual orientation.

At the grassroots we try to prevent discrimination, ensuring that no one is prevented from participating in social, work or student activities simply because they are homosexual. But it will take a long time because first of all we have to change ourselves. But the younger generation are different, they understand far better this situation, and accept it far more readily.

## The need for international solidarity

The Boat for Cuba initiative that you were involved in was important, not only for the petrol but from the point of view of mobilising political solidarity. That is the solidarity we urgently need.

We don't have the resources to reach the whole of international opinion; we know that the so-called free press of the West is not free at all. But we want to see published in the *Observer*, for example, articles that speak both of the problems we face and of our achievements - about our struggle for socialism. It's very important that you help us explain to people the hostile influences against our country - the blockade from the United States, the Guantanamo base - which have brought us to this special period. This is work your group and others on the left can do. Tell them that this island is not a Stalinist enclave, as it is called, that we are not a repressed society, that here people don't get shot down in the streets, that yes, we have economic problems, we have machismo and discrimination against homosexuals, but that we are fighting for a more just society, and that society is called socialism. ■

I would like to thank all those who through the hospitality they showed me and the inspiration they gave me through their unswerving commitment to the Cuban Revolution, made my visit to Cuba so rewarding, and in particular the comrades from the CTC in Havana and the Salud Publica in Santiago, and the Miranda family in Cienfuegos.

## RCG Communist Forum

### Hands off Cuba!

An eye-witness account of Cuba's struggle to defend the gains of the Revolution in the face of unrelenting US hostility.

**Sunday 15 March  
2.30pm**

**Conway Hall, Red Lion  
Square WC1  
(Holborn tube)**

**Speaker:  
Cat Wiener**

# No peace for British in Ireland

SARAH RICCA

**'They are trying to run a more effective campaign but we are stopping them - make no mistake about that.'**

So said the chief of the anti-terrorist squad, George Churchill-Coleman, of the IRA's Xmas campaign in Britain. The campaign caused an estimated £55m in lost profits, saw Whitehall bombed for the second time in 12 months and involved the following incidents:

December:

- 1 six stores in London fire-bombed
- 7/8 14 commercial properties in Manchester and Blackpool fire-bombed
- 14 three bombs in Brent Cross Shopping Centre, leading to an estimated £5-6m loss
- 15 bomb in Sainsbury wing of National Gallery
- 16 bomb on the line near Clapham Junction, causing the closure of 13 terminals over five hours; a quarter of commuters gave up their journeys
- 23 three small incendiary devices on London tubes, leading to 273 stations and 11 main lines into the capital closed; one million commuters stayed at home
- 10 January 5lb Semtex device



IRA attack in Belfast city centre

explodes at Whitehall, while Cabinet meets

If that's a campaign which has been rendered ineffective, what would a successful one achieve? Churchill-Coleman himself had to admit the kudos value of the Whitehall attack, and his 'so-called review of security' was lambasted by Tory back-bencher Ivor Stanbrook as 'a mockery'. Neil Kinnock observed that 'the terrorists are the enemies of all the people', for which read: I hope they don't do that when my Cabinet's meeting!

Less publicised but just as effective has been the campaign in Ireland, which has included

over ten explosions and disruptions in Belfast City centre, two in Antrim, one in Portadown and three in Derry, and a 48-hour shut-down of the Belfast-Dublin train line. The attacks destroyed several million pounds worth of the £2bn which Britain has pumped into the north's economy this year. A senior civil servant commented: 'Come to Belfast' is not the sort of thing you can say with a straight face these days.'

Alongside this activity have gone numerous attacks on military targets, including the destruction of an RUC barracks in N. Armagh and an army communi-

cations centre in Derry. A busload of construction workers on a job for the security forces was also targeted, killing eight of its members. The construction firm has been repeatedly warned against collaboration - nevertheless, the attack brought a level of condemnation and outrage never displayed when Catholic civilians of no political affiliation are killed.

Under pressure from such a sustained campaign, and with increased intransigence from Unionists in the run-up to the general election, Peter Brooke's talks have failed to revive. Inevitably demands for action in the wake of the IRA campaign have centred on the only policy that Britain has consistently pursued in Ireland - repression. Already the armed forces have been strengthened in Ireland: at least 1,500 more British troops have been sent over - a quarter of the British infantry is now in the north; 1,400 part-time Ulster Defence Regiment members have been made full-time. There is also some support for Unionist demands for internment: Hugh Annesley, RUC chief, has refused to rule it out. A 'senior military chief', believed to be John Wilsey, commander of British troops in the north, advocated it openly in an interview in the *In-*

dependent on Sunday.

With the left weaker than ever, there is no prospect that internment would meet with any serious opposition in Britain. But the ruling class may well worry that it would only increase the already effective opposition in Ireland. The alternative is to continue the policy of containment: relying on the army and its allies in loyalist gangs to assassinate specific activists and drive away support amongst the wider nationalist community; keeping talks about talks going as a bait for war-weary elements within the nationalist camp.

Parliament seems to prefer this policy just now: hence the cries of 'No, no!' from both sides of the House, when Peter Brooke was at the dispatch box in January. No - he hadn't offered to sing again. He had offered to resign for his earlier performance on the Gay Byrne show. Unity is a rare thing amongst British Parliamentary parties. That all of them, Unionists excepted, could be unanimous in their rejection of Brooke's resignation shows they have as little idea as he does how to deal with the determination of the Irish people to rid themselves of British rule. ■

## PTA figures top a million a year

In response to a parliamentary question, the Home Office has confirmed the number of people stopped under the PTA whose details have been checked on Scotland Yard's central computer. In 1987 there were 81,600, in 1988 77,747; in 1989 the number shot up to 101,766 and in 1990 there were 85,753.

The police are only required to keep records of the number of people detained under the Act for one hour or more. The Repeal the PTA Campaign believes that as many as one million people are stopped at ports of entry, some for five minutes to fill out an embarkation card, but more alarmingly a person can be held for 55 minutes and no record needs to be kept.

Lorna Reid

## Joe Doherty

Irish republican prisoner, Joe Doherty, faces deportation to Britain on or before 10 February since the US rejected his case for asylum. Doherty was convicted of the killing of an SAS captain in 1981. He and seven others escaped from Crumlin Road gaol, with Doherty ending up in the US. He was arrested in 1983 on an immigration warrant and has spent the last eight years conducting a legal battle against his extradition.



Doherty's case exposes the arbitrary use of the US asylum laws for political ends. His case comes within weeks of another Irish republican successfully winning a case of political asylum on the grounds that he feared for his life if he were to be sent back to Northern Ireland.

Pam Robinson

## Army's dirty tricks

Once again the British state and its forces have deflected attention away from their campaign of dirty tricks in their war against the Irish.

The trial of Army informer Brian Nelson could have heard potentially damning evidence of collusion between Army and RUC officials and Loyalist paramilitary organisations. Instead, Nelson agreed to plead guilty to conspiracy to murder, possessing a sub-machine gun and possessing information likely to be of use to terrorists in return for two murder charges and 13 other charges being left on file. This means that no evidence will be offered on whether the Army were aware that Nelson was allegedly involved in murdering two republican men; or indeed whether the Army actively encouraged Nelson to plan attacks on these men and others by passing on information to him.

For the British state, their embarrassment lies in the fact that Nelson was caught. The trial of Brian Nelson will have no effect on Britain's dirty war against the Irish. The only difference is that in the future they will work harder at being undetected.

For the nationalist population, the trial of Brian Nelson is just a further indictment of the farce of so-called British justice in Ireland.

Lorna Reid

## Bloody Sunday - 20 years on

LORNA REID

**Twenty years on, the truth about Bloody Sunday in Derry is still to be admitted by the British government. Fourteen people died and 13 were injured after the British Parachute Regiment opened fire on a civil rights march in Derry on 30 January 1972. At the time the army claimed that those killed were armed with guns, nail-bombs or stones. Forensic evidence proved this to be untrue and eyewitness accounts confirm that all those killed were either running away from the army's gunfire or were attending to the dead and wounded at the time they themselves were shot.**

Neither the British Government nor the army has ever taken the blame for the massacre in Derry that day. The Widgery Tribunal, headed by Lord Widgery - then Lord Chief Justice, set up to investigate the killings, concluded that the army did come under fire before it started shooting and offered only one condemnation - that the shooting in Ross-ville Street 'bordered on the reckless'.

The message that went out from Bloody Sunday and Widgery was that it was alright to shoot to kill and that there would be no legal comeback if the British security forces shot innocent people in the north of Ireland. But it is not only the army which emerged blameless from Bloody Sunday. The British government was able to hide behind the Widgery facade. It is widely believed that the security plans for the civil rights



march that day were discussed at a meeting of the Defence and Overseas Committee of the Cabinet presided over by Edward Heath on 29 January 1972. The decision to send in the Paras, a unit that is trained to act swiftly and ruthlessly, was a conscious one. No-one could have had any doubts of the effects of this decision - including the Cabinet.

The Heath government was under tremendous pressure from loyalist politicians at the time to smash the civil rights movement and the so-called no-go areas of Free Derry. It is inconceivable that the decision to employ arms against the demonstration was not politically motivated. It is not the case that the army went berserk. All those killed were men and all but one were of a military age ie they were of an age where they could join the IRA. Each one fell as he crossed a line of fire. All of this indicates that the killing was discriminate.

The effects of Bloody Sunday

are widespread. Irish people have continued to be massacred at the hands of the British army and RUC without redress; many young people who witnessed the killings of their friends and relatives went on to join the IRA which today continues its war of liberation against Britain's occupying forces.

The 20th anniversary of Bloody Sunday has attracted substantial media attention. There have been several documentaries and feature-length newspaper articles. All are interesting but give a picture of a historic outrage, something which must never happen again and which has no connection with the present. Outrage at the events of Bloody Sunday has even become another weapon in the campaign against the IRA and Sinn Fein. TV reports of the commemoration march in Derry focussed heavily on the one relative who boycotted the march, claiming it had been 'hijacked' by Sinn Fein.

Evidence of what actually happened in Derry on Bloody Sunday has been gathered in a book called *Bloody Sunday in Derry* by Eamonn McCann. The book analyses the lies contained in the Widgery Report and calls for an independent international investigation into the events that day. This is also the demand of the Bloody Sunday Initiative in Derry.

But there remains a lot more to be done in this country if sufficient pressure is to be built in order to force the British government to admit to the murder of Irish people on Bloody Sunday and get their troops out of Ireland. ■

## Haughey going, going, gone!

SEAN Ó MAOLDHOMNAIGH

**The political death has just occurred of Mr Charles Haughey, the Irish Prime Minister. While the man may have tendered his resignation as Fianna Fail party leader and Taoiseach, his style of government will continue to haunt us.**

The sinister machine driven by crooked dealings and twisted politics carries on. The crew moves around like musical chairs, a new captain will be installed on the bridge and Fianna Fail will float on in power oblivious to the needs of the vast majority of people.

The government of the country is a shambles. Everything is being put on the long finger. Skeletons of scandals past are being dug out of the closet as various politicians try to build up portfolios of dirt to discredit each other. Issues of relevance such as unemployment, the north etc are ignored as personality-related incidents from the past take precedence. A phone-tapping affair a decade old and almost forgotten finally toppled Mr Haughey.

In a country where the excess of school leavers over retirees is 25,000 this year and new jobs as scarce as honesty from the government, the out-of-work, 18-year-olds of today are hardly too concerned about a phone tap laid ten years ago.

With Haughey hardly off the field of play, the fight for his job is in full swing. Favourites for the post are either Albert Reynolds, recently out of the Cabinet and out of favour for throw-



Haughey - looking for a job with BT?

ing down the gauntlet before Christmas. The other likely lad is finance minister Bertie Ahern: Haughey protégé and faithful sidekick, who only this week brought in a soft budget in the most transparent Fianna Fail style of graceless opportunism. He put off important details like exchequer borrowing and repayments until next year. A plethora of other degenerates have also thrown their names into the hat. The outcome of the impending battle is irrelevant. A party of self-centred politicians intent on hanging onto power at all costs is hardly likely to produce a leader or a will to deal with a country just feeling the oncoming pangs of a worldwide recession. As people here say: if Britain sneezes, we get the flu. Going by looming conditions in Britain we're in for a sustained and painful illness. Charles Haughey's political death is very small cheer. ■

STOP PRESS

As we go to press, Bertie Ahern has withdrawn and Reynolds leads a one-horse race.



The exercise yard at Wandsworth

## HMP Wandsworth: Top of the league of lousy prisons

**ERIC ALLISON writes: A recent report by the European Commission condemns conditions in three English prisons, Armley, Brixton and Wandsworth. At Armley prosecutions are being considered following allegations of systematic staff brutality. The state of Brixton is fairly well known though during a recent, very brief stay there, it seemed to me that conditions had improved slightly. I am in Wandsworth at present and can say that this prison's position at the very top of the league of lousy gaols is probably unassailable.**

The one factor which unites the three prisons named is they are 'screws' nicks'. Physical conditions hardly come into it - most inmates in Wandsworth would gladly transfer to the Scrubs or Pentonville yet both are as overcrowded and ancient as this place. The difference is there is some attempt to offset the physical conditions in those places; the regimes provide extra 'privileges' eg more than the one statutory shower per week, association, allowing inmates to purchase toiletries from their private cash (no small thing on a wage of £1.80 per week and a 'privilege' which is allowed in every establishment in England and Wales - bar Wandsworth), etc, etc. At Wandsworth the cons get nothing above the minimum: one shower and kit change a week (if you are lucky), no association; limited slop-out periods even! - three a day if you are lucky enough to have a single cell, four if twoed up. There is no slop-out after breakfast or lunch - and short slop-outs to boot (You've hardly time to get to the recess some days before the staff are bawling at you to collect your meals). Prisoners are even refused permission to have cell-doors left open while they clean. The staff cannot wait to get inmates banged up. And when you are behind your door the chances are that landing-staff will not answer bells; so inmates shit in their buckets, knowing full well that staff are available but not inclined to allow their charges out to perform basic bodily functions.

To top the austerity of the regime - a regime which when questioned, trots out the ubiquitous reply of 'We're short of staff' (Do they imagine that prisoners don't know that other,

better, gaols have almost identical staff/inmate ratios?) - you have the infamous 'Wandsworth attitude'. When you do leave your cell - for those not working bang-up time is in excess of 22 hours a day - they harass you with silly, military-style orders: 'Fasten all your jacket buttons up!' (When you're lucky enough to get a jacket, let alone one with buttons!) 'Single-file when walking round the centre. No talking in the centre.' (The silence rule was abolished over 25 years ago. And, short of staff as they claim to be, they manage to ring the centre with officers, who ensure that their niggling orders are complied with as inmates go to and from exercise.)

The purpose of these 'Wandsworth rules' is to let inmates know that staff rule; and they are more than ready for a row if you question their silly power games. Many do challenge them of course - and hearing the alarm/whistle sound is a regular feature of Wandsworth's daily routine. And seeing the dozens of staff who suddenly materialise and rush to the scene of trouble again gives the lie to the 'We're short of staff' myth.

Governors at all grades are conspicuous by their total absence from the landings - and it is rare even to see one on a wing. As to the Number One Governor I'd bet my remission you wouldn't find 50 cons here - out of 1250 - who even know the man's name! It's Graham Clark for what it's worth, which unfortunately for inmates is not a lot for he is the Governor in name only. The power and authority in Wandsworth lie in the hands of the 480 uniformed staff; they are the governors here - and they are proud of it. ■

# Hull Prisoners Forum sabotaged

Following the example set by Long Lartin prisoners over the last three years, the prisoners of Hull Special Unit have been attempting to organise a forum in April where members of outside organisations can spend the day discussing and debating with prisoners. **NICKI JAMESON reports.**

The Long Lartin prisoners held their first forum on prisoners' rights; then, while the Home Office and governors strove to make organisation harder and harder for them, organised two further days on race relations and prisoners' families. The Hull SU prisoners chose suicide prevention as their topic and on 13 January held a preliminary meeting to discuss both the topic itself and organisation of the forum. I attended this meeting together with representatives of a wide spectrum of prisoners' support and prison reform organisations: Inquest, HALOW, PRT, New Bridge, MIND, NACRO. The probation service was present and a prison psychologist but no prison officers or governors. Three prisoners took part. The discussion was heated but constructive and basic proposals for suicide prevention were agreed on.

Hull Special Unit is a strange corner of the prison system. It cost £800,000 and is designed to hold 20 prisoners. This capacity is never met and it currently holds eight, of whom two are on 37/90 'lay-down'. Each prisoner has his own cell and access to education, art, telephones (under supervision) and a computer. There are pool and table-tennis tables, ostensibly for the inmates but mainly used by the 40 prison officers considered necessary to staff the Unit. There was a kitchen too, where prisoners could cook their own food; however,

just before Christmas it was burned out. The Unit chapel is painted with vivid murals by framed prisoner Kevin O'Neill who was married there last year.

Special Unit prisoners are deemed 'dangerous' or 'disruptive'; they have a history of not 'conforming' to the system, which usually means they fight for their rights and those of other prisoners and are not broken by the normal methods of beating and segregation. Prisoners Paul Ross, Andry 'Jacko' Jakubczyk and Frank Cook are continuing to fight the system, not physically this time but by challenging the 'liberal' nature of the regime and pushing it to its limit. They are using the computer facilities to write documents condemning the prison system; they are making posters calling for the release of framed prisoners and opposing brutality; they have been using their education time to organise meetings such as the one on 13 January and to plan for the forum.

At every turn they face opposition. While smiling benignly, the authorities systematically work against them. Just as the Long Lartin men had to deal with the ghosting of main organiser, John Bowden, two days before their first forum, the banning of guests Geoff Coggan (PROP), Farida Anderson (POPS) and anyone from FRFI, the Hull prisoners are already all too aware of what they are up against. No outside visitors were denied access to the preliminary meeting but an *Independent* journalist and a TV crew from 'Look North' were barred from the press briefing and early in the discussion, the Unit governor decided that as three was too great a number of prisoners to 'supervise', one of the organisers had to return to his cell. Now, the greatest blow of all has been struck; the forthcoming forum, which was designed to be not just for the Unit, but the whole gaol, with a larger number of outside guests, is only to be open to Category B and C inmates. Cat As will not be allowed to participate. This neatly excludes Paul Ross, while Frank and Jacko who are Cat B have been told the ban includes them as well. Responsibility for the event has passed into the hands of the Education Department and the Home Office. From a principled initiative taken by self-organised prisoners the

venture has been derailed into yet another Home Office hype. No doubt *The Independent* will now be allowed in and will witness a stag managed, sanitised debate. Unless the situation is immediately reversed, anyone seriously concerned with prisoners' rights should take no part in this farce.

Although disappointed, the prisoners are undeterred. They plan to organise more discussion meetings within the Unit, are writing up the discussion on suicide prevention and Paul Ross and Andry Jakubczyk are undertaking a serious study of the question. They have produced a draft paper called *One-off* which has been welcomed by criminology departments and which we hope to review in a further issue. ■

### Fighting the labels

Publication of prisoner Frank Cook's autobiography, *Fighting the labels* has been blocked by the Home Office. Doncaster Library Services, who had agreed to finance and publish it, have pulled out, following a friendly visit from the head of the Home Office P3 security department.

The grounds for obstructing publication given by the P3 official to Frank are that in the last chapter a prisoner called 'Kevo' is mentioned. Kevin O'Neill is serving life plus 30 years for a murder he did not commit. He says of *Fighting the labels*, 'It speaks truth; there is little wonder the Home Office want this book hidden'.

## I N S I D E N E W S

### KENNY CARTER

Kenny Carter (see FRFI 104) was moved from Gartree to Frankland on New Year's Eve, his worst nightmare as the gaol's staff and inmates include many from Durham who were involved in framing and persecuting him. Kenny and two comrades began a dirty protest resulting in the other two being immediately moved to other gaols, one in a body-belt, and Kenny remaining alone in Frankland. Support Kenny by sending him cards and letters. Kenny Carter AD3434 HMP Frankland, Brasside, Durham DH1 5YD.

### STRANGWAYS TRIAL

The first Strangeways trial opened on 14 January. Charged with murder and riot are Paul Taylor, Alan Lord, Tiny Doran, Martin McLatchie and Andrew Nelson. Three others face riot charges only. Alan and Paul were

prominent in media coverage of the 1 April 1990 uprising. After being charged with the murder of prisoner Derek White, Alan, who had further incensed the authorities by escaping from a police station as his gaolers watched the World Cup on TV, wrote to FRFI: 'the charge of murder is only conveniently there to stigmatise my true character because of the embarrassment I caused to both police and Home Office'.

### JOHN BOWDEN

John is currently in the Segregation Unit at Gartree, sent there from Maidstone following petty disciplinary offences which were blatantly used to get rid of him. He was to be sent on to Long Lartin but governors who remember his previous impact on prisoner organisation and solidarity blocked his return. He is being kept in solitary not for any offence,

but on the basis of his 'reputation for organising'. This situation must be allowed to continue. Write a complaint to Mr Duncan, Governor HMP Gartree, Market Harborough, Leics, LE16 7RP and to John Duvall, Lifers' Section, Home Office Prison Department, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1. Send letters of support to John Bowden, B41173 at Gartree.

### POWs' birthdays

Liam Quinn 49930, 6 February, HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS  
Michael McKenny L46486, 7 February, HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Brasside, Durham DH1 5YD  
John McComb 851715 25 February, HMP Frankland  
Ella O'Dwyer D25135 3 March, HMP Durham, Old Elvet, Durham DH1 3HU

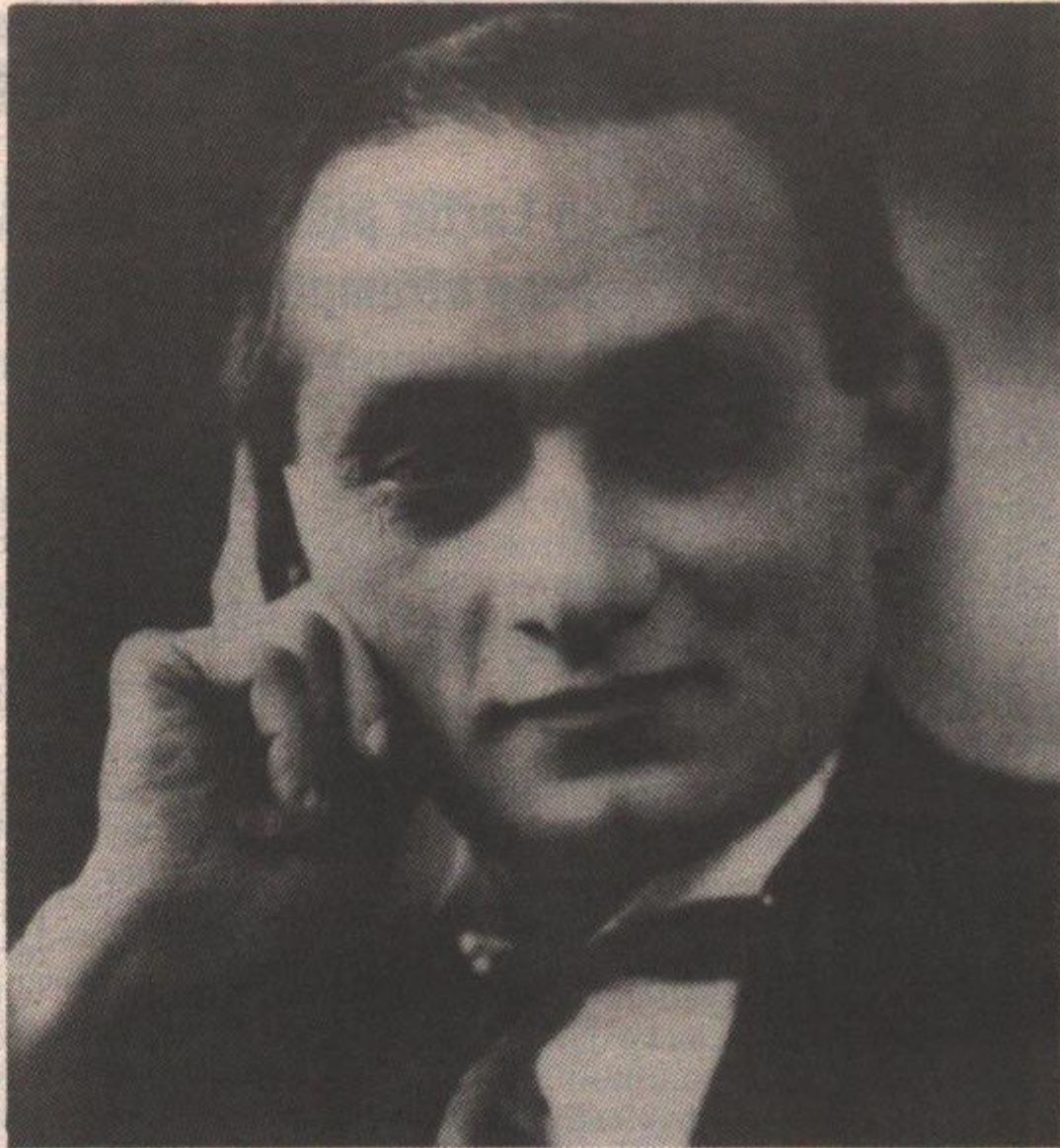
# Tribune of the people

**The Fifth Commandment: biography of Shapurji Saklatvala** by his daughter Sehri Saklatvala, Miranda Press 28 Station Square, Salford M5 4NZ, pbk 488pp, £4.95.

'The Social Democrat (Communist) ideal should not be a trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression no matter where it appears . . . ' Lenin, *What is to be done?*

'Tribune of the people' is the definition that best applies to the political life of Shapurji Saklatvala, who was born in Bombay in 1874 and died in London in 1936, one of the first two communist MPs elected to the House of Commons. It is a life, however, that has been sadly neglected in the histories of the British labour movement and Communist Party of this period.

This biography concentrates on Saklatvala's family life and, through reprinting from Hansard, the speeches he made in the House of Commons and issues he took up as an MP. The book does not attempt to place Saklatvala's work as an MP in the overall context of political developments taking place nationally and internationally. Similarly, although Saklatvala's work as a propagandist outside parliament is touched on, it is not related to developments taking place within the working class and Communist Party at that time. That said, Saklatvala's political development is traced, from being a member of the National Liberal Club when



Shapurji Saklatvala on his election to parliament in 1922

he first arrived in England in 1905, to joining the Independent Labour Party in 1909 and the Communist Party in 1921.

Saklatvala was first elected MP for Battersea North in 1922. Although he was a member of the Communist Party, he was the candidate for the Labour Party. In the December 1923 election, again standing for Labour, he lost his seat. In 1924, this time standing as a Communist Party candidate with the backing of the Labour Party, Saklatvala was re-elected. He was to remain an MP until 1929, when, opposed by the Labour Party, he lost his

seat. On both occasions when Saklatvala lost his seat, the Labour Party formed the Government; January 1924 being the first time the Labour Party had formed a government in Britain. Saklatvala did not then have the opportunity to expose the role of the Labour Party in government, although he did have plenty of opportunities to attack their subservience to British imperialism in opposition.

The main strength of the biography is the extracts from Saklatvala's interventions in Parliament. They give us a flavour of his wit and courage in standing

virtually alone exposing the role of British imperialism. Saklatvala continually exposed the role of imperialism in the colonies, particularly in India and Ireland. He showed how the impoverishment of workers in India led to growing unemployment in Britain.

His maiden speech in Parliament in 1922 focused on three issues: unemployment, India and Ireland. He began by attacking the Prime Minister Bonar Law for refusing to meet a delegation of unemployed workers from the first national hunger march.

He then attacked the role of British imperialism in India. The export of capital to India meant over '74 jute mills have been erected in Bengal by British millers and capitalists who had got their capital produced with the hard toil of the workers of Dundee, with the result that today we have shut up shop in Dundee and our workers in Bengal are working at from 14 shillings [73p] to 38 shillings [£1.90] a month and producing for the owners dividends of from 150 to 400 per cent.'

Saklatvala then denounced the treaty partitioning Ireland. As he put it, 'everyone knows that the Treaty has unfortunately gone forth as the only alternative to a new invasion of Ireland by British troops.' From his maiden speech in 1922 through both his periods as an MP, Saklatvala continued to expose the role of imperialism, sharpening his attacks on the role of the Labour Party in his second period as MP.

The conditions of life for the working class in India were terrible, with an infantile death

rate in working class areas between 600-700 per 1,000. Saklatvala had exposed these conditions in Parliament before he visited India. On his return he found that the government banned him from re-visiting India, a ban that was to last until his death in 1936.

He also found that the government was setting up the so-called Simon Commission to report on the future development of the administration of India. Saklatvala opposed the Commission: 'everybody knows, whether it is put in black and white or not, that the first thing that will be put in the terms of reference is how this country can keep a stranglehold over India'. The Labour Party however supported the Commission, and Clement Attlee was one of its members. On its visit to India, the Commission was greeted with massive demonstrations denouncing the continued subjugation of India.

Reporting in *The Daily Worker*, Saklatvala wrote: 'It has been well-known for some time that the Commission would have a hostile reception from the Indian workers, who view it as the latest weapon of British imperialism . . . When the Bombay workers burned the effigy of MacDonald in the streets along with that of Lord Birkenhead and others, they showed that they viewed the Labour Party as nothing more or less than the willing hirelings of British imperialism'.

Saklatvala played a central role in the development of communist politics in India. During his visit he had debated with Gandhi about the way forward for the national struggle, oppos-

ing his middle class passive resistance policy. He visited the Soviet Union three times, the last time in 1934, paying special attention to the development of the Asiatic peoples of the USSR, comparing their lives with the lives of Indian workers and peasants under the yoke of imperialism. As he put it, after 150 years of British rule, only 10 per cent of the Indian population was educated: after five years of the Bolshevik revolution 65 per cent of the agricultural population had received education. In 1927 Saklatvala was elected to the Executive Committee of the League against Imperialism.

Saklatvala died in 1936 after a history of heart problems - problems which never deterred him in his commitment to the cause of the working class and oppressed. His political position, which is as relevant now as it was then, is summed up by his May Day speech, 1929:

'May Day is above all the day of world proletarian solidarity. In every great city the workers will be demonstrating despite police attacks and despite the efforts of Social Democrats to suppress their manifestations. But we must remember on our platforms that our slogan is now no longer merely "Proletarians of all countries unite!" but "Proletarians and oppressed peoples of all countries unite!" Not only textile workers in Bombay and Calcutta, miners in India and China, and steel smelters in Bengal, but millions of oppressed peasants in India, China, Egypt and the African colonies are now with us in our fight against the common enemies - imperialism and reformist Labour.'

Bob Shepherd

# Street fighting years

**Out of the Ghetto: my youth in the East End: Communism and Fascism 1913-1939** Joe Jacobs, Phoenix Press, 2nd edition, 1991, 320pp, £9.00.

This is the second edition of Joe Jacobs' book - it was first published in 1978, a year after his death. He died while writing it and the text was completed from his documents by his daughter. Jacobs was born in 1913 in the East End of London, the son of Polish and Russian Jewish immigrants. His book is a historical document - he believed that by a meticulous presentation of all the facts, his readers would draw their own political conclusions. In some ways this makes for tedious. There are long lists of names, documented daytrips to the seaside, endless family connections, with few clues about the significance of all this.

Yet out of a wealth of facts, there gradually emerges a picture of life in the East End between the Wars: grim lives of relentless poverty and exploitation in the clothing industry; rackrenting landlords and greedy sweatshop owners. Alongside this a life on the streets and in cafes reflecting the Jewish culture of the area. It was also a political street life as the youth, at most one generation from Soviet Russia, hotly debated world affairs. Street meetings were a commonplace - Christians, Labour Party, Trade Unions, Communists, Socialists, Anarchists, Unemployed Workers and many others (in-

cluding an ex-police inspector who claimed to be Heir to the Throne of England).

What also emerges is a picture of the young Communist, Joe Jacobs, an activist, not a theoretician or intellectual, boorish as young men can be, but also self-critical and shy with girls, who by the age of 23 was Stepney Communist Party branch secretary and a leading figure in the fight against fascism. Not that you would know this from official Communist Party histories. Joe Jacobs and his friends were written out of history.

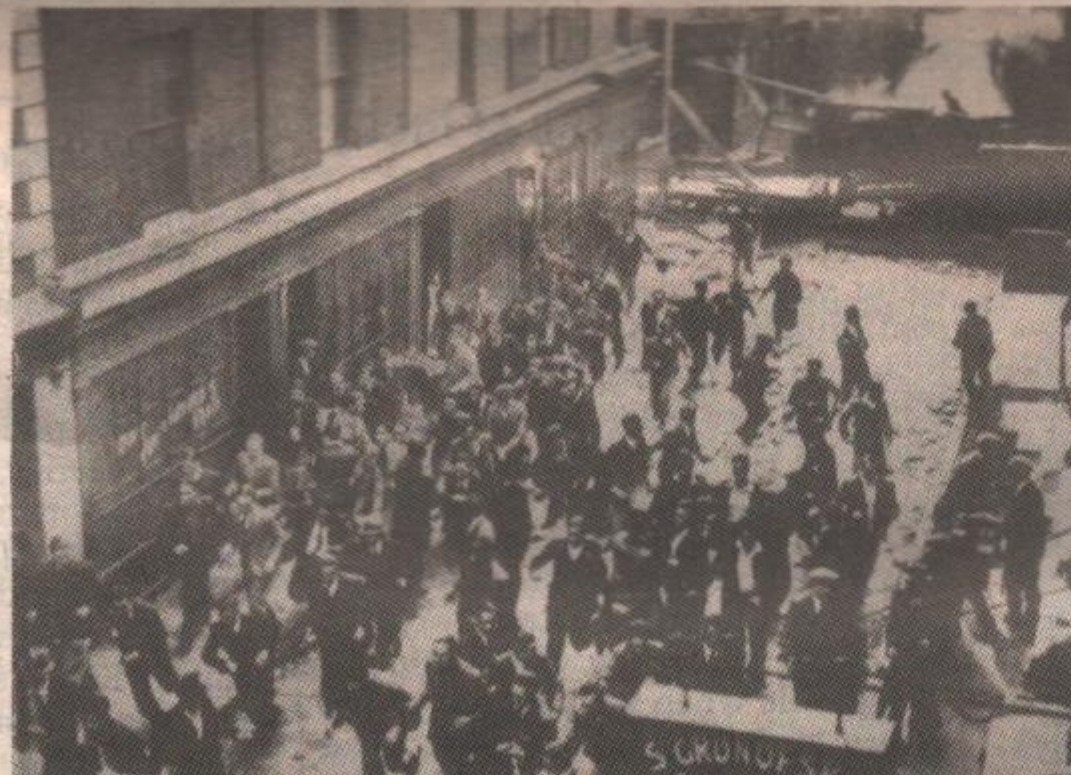
To understand the politics responsible for hounding Jacobs out of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and out of their history, it is necessary to look beyond his own memoirs. Jacobs doesn't attempt to explain his opponents' position in detail. Phil Piratin, a Stepney Communist from 1934 onwards, and later a Communist MP, writes his own account in *Our Flag Stays Red* (1948):

'The Stepney Communist Party was enthusiastic and hard working on issues that were clear, such as anti-fascism and unemployment. Complex issues, or those calling for *balanced presentation*, were often over-simplified and sometimes avoided. Activity was undertaken almost solely by directive of higher organisations of the Party, rarely from local initiative, and hardly ever arising from the needs of the people.' (p14 my emphasis)

If Jacobs' book needs a justification for being written, the exposure of this sly, misleading paragraph will serve the purpose on its own. The 'balanced presentation' which Piratin's superiority requires was to become, in Jacobs' view, an accommodation with Mosley's fascism, but above all with the Labour Party.

Jacobs' first doubts about the direction of the CPGB came with the closing down of International Labour Defence (ILD) in 1935 on the grounds that the CP should concentrate on Party building and united action with the Labour Party and trade unions. Jacobs saw the ILD, and other mass organisations which were soon to be closed down, as recruiting and mobilising grounds for the CP - a means of involving people in activity which would lead them to communism. He was shaken by the decision but nonetheless accepted it after a long argument. The emergency of Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) in the East End was to focus his attention.

It was around this time that arguments emerged in Stepney CP from a section of its leading members (with a direct link to District and National leadership) that members should give up 'street work' in favour of 'Trade Union work'. Jacobs rejected the view that greater influence in the Labour Party and trade unions would be more effective in fighting fascism than anti-fascist work on the streets. The unions, he argued, were in



Battle of Cable Street, 1936: anti-fascists flee as police dismantle barricades

the hands of right-wing leaders and 'the Social Democrats' role in society was to betray the workers' - and what about the masses of unemployed and unorganised workers?

'Always, and as the years passed, more and more, the positions these people captured in the unions were held to be more important and sacred than the outcome of this or that particular struggle.' (p193)

The watershed of the dispute came when Mosley announced that his blackshirts would march through the East End on 4 October 1936. It was a deliberate anti-Jewish provocation. Jacobs and his friends knew that the fascists could be sure of massive police protection. This was not the first battle with the blackshirts: many had waged an unremitting fight to prevent fascist meetings and marches. Arrests and injuries were commonplace; it was the stuff of Jacobs' everyday life. As soon as Mosley's march was announced East

End anti-fascists began to organise to stop them, adopting the slogan 'They shall not pass' from the Spanish anti-fascist movement.

Jacobs and his circle were shocked when the CP called for support for a YCL rally in Trafalgar Square in support of Spanish Workers at the same time as the fascist march. They already knew that the District leadership were opposed to confronting the fascists and this was confirmation that this was the Party Line. Jacobs was instructed by the local full-time organiser: 'If Mosley decides to march let him'. This was also the Labour Party position - 'free speech'.

Jacobs and his friends decided to fight the decision and a meeting with the District leadership was arranged, only days before the march. While they were being treated to a diatribe on the comparative importance of the YCL rally, a message arrived from central headquarters that the decision had changed. The leadership had become 'aware of the real situation only that

day'. The 'real situation' was that with or without the CP, the East End would march against the fascists.

At first Jacobs thought this a great victory - Cable Street went down in history as the day the fascists were beaten. But after the march, the District leadership renewed its attack on 'street work', publishing a document proposing emphasis on work in the trade unions, the Labour Party and the Co-op Guilds, and omitting confrontation with the fascists.

What was at issue was not the distinction between 'street work' and 'Trade Union work' but the accommodation to Social Democracy that underlay the turn. Jacobs knew this and was blunt in his opposition. For his pains, and still considering himself a loyal Communist, Jacob was first suspended and then expelled from the CP with little chance to argue his standpoint. One must conclude that if the CPGB could find no room for the likes of Jacobs, then it had no right to call itself Communist.

It is hard in a short space to do justice to Jacobs' book which contains a wealth of facts and description of political struggle: the planned escape of a Yugoslav Communist by the ILD network; his friends who fought in the Spanish Civil War. It is timely, now that fascism is on the upsurge again, that Jacobs' account is once again available to political activists and Communists. In this way his political struggle as a Communist continues. Which is more than can be said for the CPGB who have ended, as Jacobs predicted, in the ranks of Social Democracy, ready to betray the workers' struggle.

Carol Brickley

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## LETTERS Write to FRFI BCM Box 5909, London, WC1N 3XX



### Still can't pay, won't pay

In a hearing in Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court on 23 January, stipendiary magistrate Ms Quick ruled against myself and two other people summonsed for non-payment of the Poll Tax. She rejected submissions that the council had based its case on

inadmissible hearsay evidence, particularly in the view of its reliance on computer evidence. She issued liability orders and massive costs of £600 against each defendant. The day before, at Clerkenwell Magistrates', the Magistrate there agreed that the same council had based its case on inadmissible hearsay evidence, thereby implying that every one of the 76,000 liability orders issued by Camden Council

becomes legally invalid. Even so, Camden Council still continue to drag working class people through the courts. We will go on to appeal against the Highbury decision. The decision at Clerkenwell makes it clear that the Poll Tax is not only unpayable but unenforceable.  
TERRY DOWDING  
North London RCG

### RCG solidarity with Cuba

I am writing to provide a formal acknowledgement of the RCG/FRFI's contribution of £1,000 to the Boat Appeal for Cuba.

I was very pleased to be able to accept on behalf of BCRC such a large donation, to which a great deal of effort must have been devoted in order to raise it.  
TIM YOUNG  
Chair, Britain Cuba Resource Centre

*The total money raised in Britain was £10,000. At the request of the Cuban Ambassador in Paris it has now been used to buy much-needed medical equipment for Cuba. Thanks go to all our supporters who contributed to the FRFI donation.*

### Adjudication farce at Maghberry prison

Achara, Whenever a prisoner has committed an 'offence' contrary to prison rules they are put 'on report' by a screw which results in an adjudication taking place. This adjudication is conducted by a governor backed up by screws and is supposed to be an impartial hearing whereby the accused prisoner is found guilty or not guilty. If someone is found guilty, the governor will impose a punishment.

Prisoners have long questioned the impartiality of the adjudication and indeed on several occasions have successfully challenged governors' decisions at outside court hearings, resulting in governors being found guilty of misuse of the adjudication system.

The latest adjudications taking place here in Maghberry Women's Gaol have once again shown up the disciplinary hearings for the farce that they are. Over the last week 12 women have been sentenced to periods of solitary confinement. It is clear to us that the decision to give women this punishment was made even before the adjudications had taken place, let

alone before anyone had been found guilty of any 'offence'.

This was borne out by the fact that a wing that hasn't been opened for the best part of six years due to staff shortage was, all of a sudden, opened on the morning before the first adjudications took place to provide the extra cells necessary for punishment. The first group of women to leave the punishment block were told there would be another group arriving at the wing two days later even though the group that they were referring to hadn't even had a hearing - fair or otherwise!

A further example and one of the most blatant is the case of Geraldine Ferrity who was locked in her own cell prior to the hearing. Geraldine asked that the yard be opened so that she could use the exercise facilities to which she was entitled. She was not getting out at that point but should ask when she got to D Wing, ie the punishment wing.

Republican women prisoners are no strangers to the pettiness of the Gaol Administration and the farcical little rituals which are enacted all too often. We feel it would suit the Gaol Administration better to channel their energies into resolving conflicts in a mature and open manner instead of playing charades as they currently do.  
T BROWNE  
Maghberry Women's Prison

### Czech anti-communism

It was a shock but not a surprise to hear of the draconian anti-communist law recently introduced in Czechoslovakia, threatening a long prison sentence for anyone advocating communism or fascism. The inclusion of fascism in this law need not fool anyone, since anti-communist laws are themselves a feature of fascism.

It reminds us that the bourgeoisie's version of democracy can only exist in its relatively 'free' and 'developed' form in imperialist countries with their parasitically stable economies.

The bourgeoisie know that the workers' movement in Eastern Europe is already beginning to revive, and they are terrified of it. Their only response is to crush the

workers' democratic rights. The Czech and Slovak communists deserve all our solidarity.  
JONATHAN COHEN  
Beijing

### TERRY O'HALLORAN MEMORIAL FUND

The Memorial Fund was launched by the RCG to commemorate Terry's life and contribution to the political movement in Britain. Terry played an important part in fighting for the rights of prisoners. The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund provides books and publications for prisoners at their request. So far over 170 prisoners' requests have been dealt with.

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### Iranian political prisoners

On Wednesday 16 January 1992, 110 Iranian refugees, all of whom are registered with the UN in Ankara, were rounded up by the Turkish authorities, on the pretext of moving them into better accommodation. Promises of housing in Sweden were offered to discourage resistance to this attempt at forced repatriation. Some of the refugees were political prisoners from Iran, one of whom had been detained for over 7 years. All of them were active politically, thus they were clearly legitimate political asylum seekers. Iran has been condemned throughout the last decade for its continued repression of human rights and was responsible for the execution of thousands of political prisoners during 1989-90.

They were taken to Van in east Turkey where one escaped and was able to alert refugee and human rights groups who were able to start active lobbying around Europe. The remainder were then driven that night to Yrsakova, a border town, and there several more were able to escape. Here, the Turkish authorities intended to transfer them across the border into Iran, handing them back into the Iranian Islamic regime's custody. This action would have clearly been in contravention of Turkey's responsibilities and duties under various UN charters and directives on the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

Demonstrations were rapidly staged that same day outside the UN headquarters in Ankara, the Turkish embassy in London and in other cities.

On Thursday 16 January 1992, thanks to the pressure applied by these campaigners, the refugees were driven from the border back to Van. Thus the Turkish authorities were forced to call off their attempt to deport legitimate refugee-seekers.

NEIL BAKER  
Secretary, Iranian Political Prisoners Action Committee  
BM Box 6926  
London WC1N 3XX

### RCG Communist Forums

A series of monthly discussions on topical issues addressed from the Marxist-Leninist standpoint.

#### THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT:

its relevance today  
Speaker: Andy Higginbottom  
Sunday 16 February, 2.30pm

#### HANDS OFF CUBA!

Speaker: Cat Wiener  
Sunday 15 March, 2.30pm  
Both at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1 (tube: Holborn)

### City of London Anti-Apartheid Group

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 1 March, Millman Centre, Millman Street, London WC1 (tubes: Holborn, Russell Square)  
All those committed to continuing the struggle against apartheid welcome to join!  
Tel: 071 837 6050 for details

### Rolan Adams Family Campaign

#### STOP RACIST ATTACKS! CLOSE DOWN THE BNP HQ!

Saturday 22 February, assemble 12 noon outside St Nicholas Church off Plumstead High St, London SE18.

For transport details out of London contact ARA, PO Box 188, London SW1A 0SG or tel: 071 607 3988

### Double Punishment: Black prisoners and deportation

#### NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Saturday 22 February 1992, 11am-6pm West Indian Social Club, Westwood Street, Moss Side, Manchester

Details from: Campaign Against Double Punishment c/o Barbara, Partners of Prisoners (POPS), Black Resource Centre, The Old Library, Cheetham, Manchester M8 7SN  
Tel: 061 740 8500

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#### LABOUR: A PARTY FIT FOR IMPERIALISM

by ROBERT CLOUGH

As we approach the next General Election this book provides an invaluable historical analysis of why the Labour Party has never been a party of the working class. From formation and dependence on alliance with the Liberals to today's 'Made in Britain' campaign, the Labour Party has always championed the rights of a specific, better-off stratum of the working class. It has never defended the poor and has always espoused the same imperialist foreign policies as the Tory Party.

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## The housing crisis

**The housing crisis now stands alongside the NHS and education as major issues likely to determine the outcome of the next general election. The current crisis has forced the government to act – but only to protect those whose support the Tories cannot afford to lose: namely mortgage holders. For the thousands of homeless who have never had nor will ever hope to have a mortgage the government is happy to sit back and watch as families struggle to stay together without a home. An estimated 300 homeless people died on the streets in 1991. LORNA REID reports.**

Homelessness more than doubled throughout the 1980s, with 168,000 families registered without homes in 1990 – a 13 per cent increase on the figure for 1989. Figures for households accepted as homeless in England in the first half of 1991 were 74,000 – a four per cent increase on 1990.

The public's perception of the homeless as unfortunate elderly 'down and outs' has been forced to change as increasing numbers of young people and families make their homes on the streets or in inadequate bed and breakfast hotels, hostels or caravans. Over 60,000 families currently live in these conditions. 760,000 families are forced to live with relatives or friends.

These figures are, however, just the tip of the iceberg. Not every homeless person is automatically accepted on local authority registers. Young people whose reasons for leaving the family home do not comply with strict definitions will not be accepted onto the register. People released from hospital care into non-existent 'Care in the Community' will not

necessarily feature in the figures. Similarly, thousands of single people who end up on the streets will not feature because they are not accepted as officially homeless. It is indicative of the government's response to the housing crisis that no official figures for the total number of people homeless actually exist. Research into this is left to the charities. At the end of 1991 they estimated that 7,000 people were sleeping rough across Britain.

### Houses stand empty

Lack of housing stock, whilst a dominant factor, is not the sole reason for the current housing crisis. Some 586,000 private houses stand empty right now and around 140,000 new homes will be completed this year. That's over 700,000 empty private homes that could be rented out immediately. They stand empty because no-one can afford to buy them or because they are the second or third homes of the rich. 100,000 council houses stand empty as cash-strapped local councils are either unable or un-

willing to renovate them so they are fit to let.

But, undoubtedly, lack of local authority housing stock is the single most important reason for the phenomenal rise of homelessness amongst the working class in this country. The enactment of the Housing Act in 1980 allowing council tenants the right to buy has had the sole most devastating effect on local authority housing stock. Nearly one million properties have been sold in England alone in the last eleven years accounting for one fifth of 1980 stock. In Scotland, over 140,000 have been sold off – 13 per cent of existing stock – and 80,000 have been sold in Wales – over a quarter of stock. Local authorities are not permitted to use money from sales of council houses to build new houses.

At the same time, local authorities built less than 9,000 new dwellings in 1990 compared to over 16,000 in 1988 and 65,000 in 1979. In London the number of new dwellings built in 1990 was 60 per cent less than in 1988. A nine per cent cut in government housing grant to councils this year means that even fewer new dwellings will be built.

Over the same period, the number of new dwellings built by housing associations has grown by about 20 per cent which means that housing associations built almost twice as many new dwellings as local authorities in 1990. However, because housing associations are forced to borrow 40 per cent of their spending from banks, the rents charged are almost as high as mortgage repayments, thus denying access to those who cannot afford to pay these rents.

In the south of England, where the recession has been most severe, the number of homes built by the private sector has fallen by 50 per cent between 1988 and 1990.

Rising rents in both private and public sector housing is leading to lack of access to housing or a build-up of rent arrears leading to eviction. Over 1,000 of the families accepted as homeless by English local authorities last year lost their homes through rent arrears. The abolition of the Fair Rent Office, a local authority watchdog on private sector rents, has given free reign to private landlords to charge whatever rent they like – in many cases rent has been doubled in the last three years. A rise in council rents well above inflation, with many inner city council tenants facing increases of 50 per cent or more, is seen by many councils – Labour and Tory controlled – as a convenient method of squeezing tenants to make up for cutbacks on other budgets.

In a further attack on council tenants, the government has issued 'guideline' rent figures to local authorities across the country. These guidelines are an attempt to introduce a 'market rents' policy on the public sector.

### Home owners get help

The rise of homelessness amongst the poor is an embarrassment for the government; but that is all it is. The factor which has really shaken the government into action has been the 80,000 mortgage repossessions carried out last year. The vast majority of those whose homes have been repossessed by the building societies are families who took advantage of the housing boom in the eighties.

The government bought the electoral allegiance of the better-off sec-

tions of the working class by providing access to home ownership. Now that the bubble has burst, the government is confronted with the prospect of an electoral backlash unless it can prevent the fate of thousands of families threatened with losing their homes, and to ensure the building societies don't lose out in the current crisis, the government has agreed to allow income support payments to cover mortgage payments to be paid straight to the lender. In return, a barrel of other measures intended to alleviate the current hardship has received £1bn worth of pledges from banks and building societies.

There is no such aid, or indeed national press interest, for the thousands of poor who find themselves without a home. Instead, the government is pushing ahead with measures to make life for the poor harder – particularly when it comes to housing.

### Attacks on the young and poor

The effects of the Social Security 1986 Act, which denies Income Support to young people aged 16 and 17 unless they have a Youth Training place, are starkly visible in the shop doorways of nearly every town and city across Britain.

Young people leaving local authority care or leaving home to escape physical and sexual abuse, to find work in other towns or simply spreading their wings to make a life on their own find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty. Lack of public housing is forcing young people to seek rented accommodation. But without work or access to Income Support, young people are unable to afford the high rents demanded by the private sector. Without an address it is virtually impossible to gain secure employment.

Squatters are now threatened with the prospect of gaol for the crime of finding a roof to put over their heads. Houses stand empty and gaols are already bursting at the seams with prisoners – but criminalisation is a major facet of the government's attitude to the poor.

### Labour won't act

The Labour Party shows the same contempt for the homeless as the Tories. Labour councils are encouraging tenants to opt for Housing Action Trusts to take over estates rather than meet their own responsibility for the upkeep and management of council estates. Some Labour councils are parroting the government in blaming squatters and tenants in rent arrears for the current housing crisis. Labour's proposed scheme for a National Housing Bank which would allow councils to channel revenue made from the sale of council houses into new buildings is little more than lip service to solving the crisis. Many inner-city councils have none of this money left.

Labour's attitude to housing is the same as it is to health and every other area of working class concern: there will be no extra money 'until the country can afford it'. The Labour policy document 'A Welcome Home' warns councils not to take on 'more than they can afford'.

As with health, education and other working class concerns the answer to the housing crisis does not lie in the election of a Labour government. Instead it depends upon action by the working class to fight for what is rightfully theirs – the right to a home. ■



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### HOTEL PARADISO

The Hotel Paradiso is not a hotel, but for the 100 plus residents of this makeshift hostel at Waterloo, London, it is the first semi-permanent home they have had in years. Hotel Paradiso is actually a disused ambulance station which was taken over by homeless people in December. Despite threats of eviction and no funding outside of public donations the Hotel's residents are determined to hold onto their 'home'.

Graham Baldwin, who set up HELP (Homeless Emergency for London People) in 1990, was approached in November last year to help transport people to various temporary shelters over the Christmas period. Faced with a vanload of people with no more night shelter space available, one evening Graham decided that it was time to take action. He told *FRFI* that he had seen the ambulance station many times and had considered taking it over and that evening he decided to enter it rather than despatch people back onto the streets. Graham said: 'There are hundreds of people dying on the streets from cold and illnesses. I am not prepared to sit back and watch this happening. The charities open shelters for seven days at Xmas but homelessness goes on 365 days a year. Something has got to be done because the government is not going to do anything for us.'

Graham is calling on people to defend the right of Hotel Paradiso to exist and to resist any attempts to evict the residents. He wants to see more direct action by the homeless and the public together to make homelessness the major political issue this year. 'If necessary we will take over more disused buildings. Our priority is to put a roof over people's heads'.