

# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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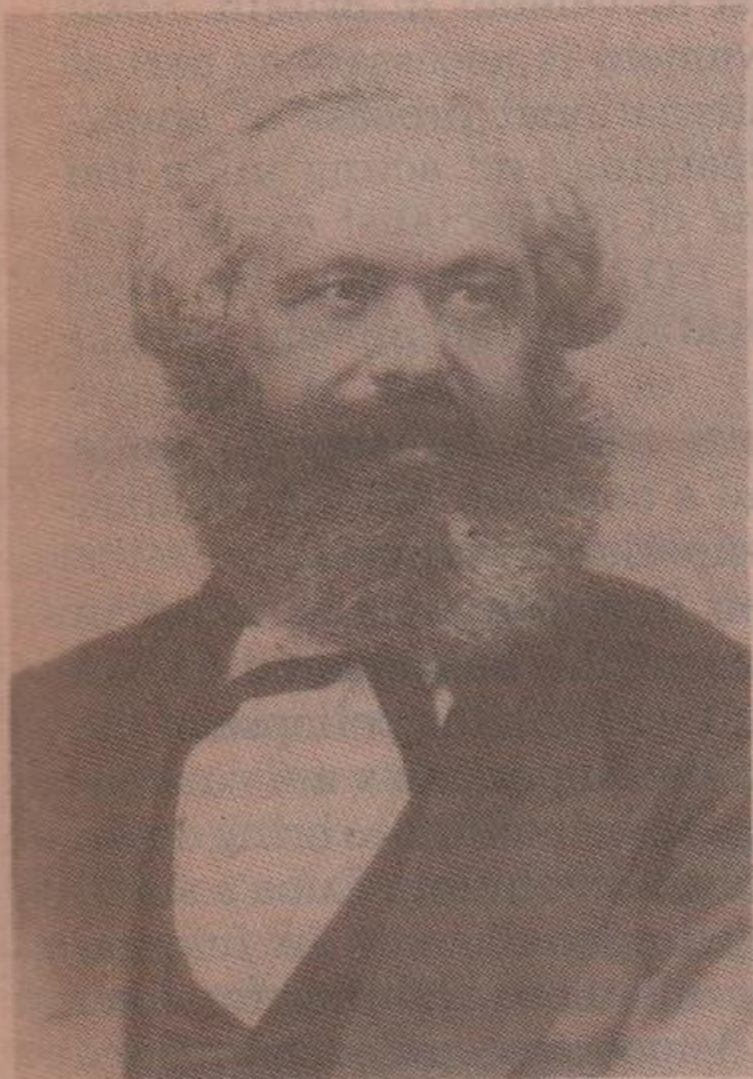
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# HANDS OFF



# CUBA

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# Uphold the banner of Communism

**The August 1991 counter-revolution in the USSR was a massive blow to the international working class and to the vast majority of humanity.**

**Only hardened anti-Soviet dogmatists and middle-class intellectuals of the imperialist countries, living in affluent conditions afforded them by imperialist plunder of the Third World, could argue otherwise.**

**The collapse of the socialist bloc, for the time being, leaves the imperialist economic and political system without rivals, all the more able to subjugate challenges to its aggressive and expansionist drives.**

Far from moderating imperialism's predatory character, the collapse of the socialist bloc has removed all constraints on its drive to carve up and divide the world. The danger of war now looms larger as three powerful capitalist economic blocs - USA, Japan and German-led Europe - compete for the spoils of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. As the crisis of the capitalist world intensifies these major world powers will seek once again to divide and redivide the world according to the balance of economic power. Unless imperialism is destroyed humanity will be threatened with a new imperialist war.

The counter-revolution is a calamity for the Soviet people. Its consequences are terrifying, and promise in the words of Russian socialist Boris Kagarlitsky 'a new Brazil just waiting to be Latin Americanised'. Whilst a small minority will prosper, millions will be driven into destitution. Malnutrition, unemployment, homelessness and social deprivation will become rampant as the gains of the October Revolution are rapidly dismantled. The disintegration of the Soviet Union heralds a return to vicious and bloody national conflict and a resurgence of Great Russian chauvinism, reactionary nationalism, racism and anti-semitism. Only hardened reactionaries could welcome this counter-revolution.

Internationally the collapse of the Soviet Union leaves all socialist, progressive and anti-imperialist movements vulnerable. Despite its problems, the Soviet Union was a force for democracy and freedom. It defeated fascism and Hitler. Without it the revolutions in China, Korea, Vietnam and Cuba would not have survived for so long. Without it the liberation struggles in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America would have paid an immeasurably higher price. As Alexander Cockburn, an honest voice opposing ingrained Western mendacity, so rightly remarks: 'Without the Soviet Union, just such a relatively independent country as India could have taken instead, the course of fascist Argentina... It was communists who spearheaded the fight for civil rights in the United States in the 1930s, and without the threat of the Soviet model for the Third World, the US probably would not even have bothered to desegregate the army after the war... There would never have been International Brigades... to defend the young [Spanish] republic against Franco, fascism and the complicity of the Western powers.' (*New Statesman*, 30 August 1991) As Cockburn says, you can write your own list.

## The collapse of Soviet socialism

The imperialists and their social democratic allies are celebrating what they regard as the demise of communism. Their celebrations are premature. Unlike capitalism, whose foundations go back many centuries, socialism is in its infancy. Marx and Engels initially envisaged socialism being built on the basis of the most advanced economic achievements of capitalism. Historical developments, and in particular the transformation of capitalism into imperialism, dictated otherwise.

The world's first socialist state was established a mere 74 years ago and in a backward semi-feudal country with a tiny working class. From its inception it was encircled by economically more powerful enemies and received little of the expected support from the mass working class movements in the imperialist countries. Lenin's hopes of building and consolidating Russian socialism in alliance with victorious revolutions in Western Europe

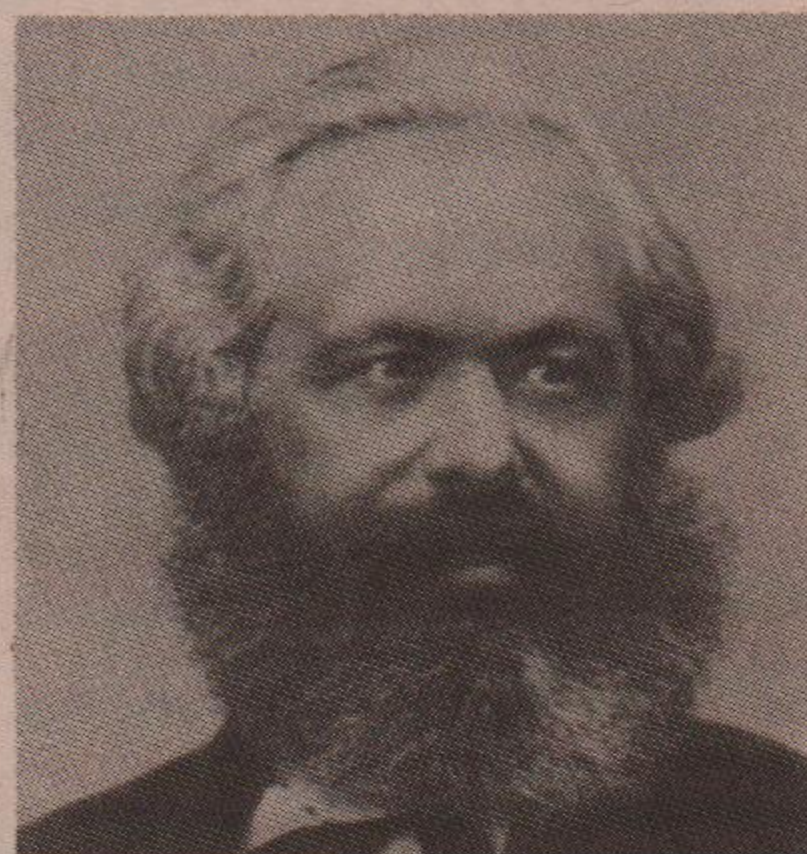
floundered on the national chauvinism and backwardness of the organised working class movements in the more developed capitalist countries. As Rosa Luxemburg succinctly argued:

'All of us are subject to the laws of history, and it is only internationally that the socialist order of society can be realised. The Bolsheviks have shown that they are capable of everything that a genuine revolutionary party can contribute within the limits of historical possibilities. They are not supposed to perform miracles. For a model and faultless proletarian revolution in an isolated land, exhausted by world war, strangled by imperialism, betrayed by the international proletariat, would be a miracle.' (*The Russian Revolution*, 1918)

In these circumstances, the Bolsheviks had no choice. Against enormous odds they had to hold on to political power and take the first tentative steps to build socialism. The alternative was handing over Russian workers and the oppressed peasantry to the merciless revenge of a bloody counter-revolution. Yet today such a surrender would have been, it seems, the preferred option of middle class socialist intellectuals who have rediscovered the renegade Kautsky.

During the struggle for survival, the revolution was forced to retreat. It was to face foreign military intervention, civil war, world war and relentless imperialist economic and political aggression. Inevitably, this took its toll on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. As the revolutionary impetus dwindled the Party lost its connection with the masses, time serving careerists replaced revolutionaries and privilege replaced sacrifice and eventually communism lapsed into social democracy.

In these conditions the Communist Party could not tackle, let alone solve, the critical questions of the relationship between the Party, the working class and democracy; between the centralised economic plan, the market and socialist democracy; and between the defence of Soviet power and proletarian internationalism. But new revolutionaries following the path that the Bolsheviks dared to tread, are learning and will continue to learn from the lessons of this historical experience, enriching it through their own struggle to build socialism. Real revolutionaries follow the traditions of Marx and Engels. After the bloody defeat of the Paris Commune they did not condemn them for daring to seize power. Rather they drew the lessons of that experience for future generations who would follow the same



courageous path in attempting to build a just and humane society.

One critical lesson to be learnt is argued in Che Guevara's study of Soviet economic planning. Che rejected the view that economic planning could be separated from the production and reproduction of communist social relations and consciousness. The planned economy and socialism would develop successfully only if it ran parallel with the development of a new communist social consciousness. The latter does not arise automatically, it flows from the ideological and political work of a communist leadership.

Such leadership had long ceased to exist in the Soviet Union. The consequence was an attempt to solve the crisis of the Soviet economy by capitalist methods. Hence *perestroika* - the resort to so-called 'market socialism', the law of value, competition, market forces, material incentives and private enterprise. These created the conditions for producing and reproducing capitalist social relations in the Soviet Union. The resistance to this by the working class and sections of

the *nomenklatura* led to a paralysis and subsequent catastrophic collapse of the Soviet economy. Pro-capitalist forces supported by sections of the Party and the privileged stratum of professionals, managers and intellectuals now recognised that the old state had to be destroyed as a condition for the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. The coup created the opportunity for this to be done. Yeltsin and his followers seized the opportunity presented by the staggering incompetence of the 19 August coup leaders to take state power - the counter-revolution was underway. He was assured of the backing of the main imperialist powers.

## The British left and the counter-revolution

With few exceptions (eg, *The Leninist*), the British left joined in the imperialist celebrations of the counter-revolution. How could *Militant* tell us that 'workers around the world are cheering'? How could *Socialist Worker* not only support the Yeltsin counter-revolution but, staggeringly, celebrate 'the destruction of the statues of Marx and Lenin - those symbols of oppression for millions of workers'? (*Socialist Worker* 7 September 1991). How is it that the once staunchly pro-soviet CPGB praises Yeltsin's 'courage' in carrying out the counter-revolution? To understand this we have to understand the relationship that these organisations have to social democracy and imperialism.

Social democracy is the product of imperialism. Its social base is the privileged layers of the working class. These privileges arise from the sustained prosperity of the major capitalist nations, a prosperity dependent on the super-exploitation of oppressed nations. Social democracy's opposition to the Soviet Union rested on the Soviet Union's fundamental break with imperialism. By removing whole areas of the world from the sphere of imperialist exploitation and profit making the mere existence of the USSR made it an intractable enemy of social democracy.

The post-war boom created a new privileged strata of predominantly educated and salaried white collar workers in the imperialist nations. Their privileges rested on the continuation of imperialism. The British left draws its membership primarily from these strata. This explains its unbreakable bond with social democracy and its refusal consistently to oppose imperialism. This is why the Trotskyists and the 'Stalinists' can end up on the same side supporting Yeltsin's counter-revolution. The Trotskyists' hatred for the Communist Party of the

Soviet Union and their opportunist ties to social democracy, blinded them to the USSR's essentially anti-imperialist character. It forced them, at all critical turning points, into the imperialist camp.

The 'Stalinists' pro-Sovietism on the other hand, was always of a formal character retaining as it did unbreakable ties to social democracy since the 1930s. Indeed, recent evidence shows that even Stalin criticised the CPGB for its unprincipled support for the Labour Party in its draft programme *The British Road To Socialism*. Its opportunism, as always, arose not through its relationship to the Soviet Communist Party, but from its close bonds with social democracy. Parallel with its abandonment of any links with the communist tradition, the CPGB abandoned even a formal pro-Soviet stand and degenerated into a support group for Neil Kinnock's Labour Party.

British Trotskyism and 'Stalinism' are mirror images - anti-Soviet and pro-Soviet left wing covers for social democracy. The collapse of the CPSU, ending an era of world politics, has forced these trends to expose their real character - has forced them into the counter-revolutionary pro-imperialist camp.

## Uphold the banner of communism

Capitalism is incapable of solving the vast problems of poverty, inequality and economic underdevelopment confronting the overwhelming majority of humanity. Neo-liberal solutions - privatisation and the free reign of market forces - have already created a catastrophe for the peoples of the Third World. They now threaten the same for the working class of the former socialist camp. In the imperialist countries unemployment, poverty and homelessness is growing. The class struggle must therefore continue.

Despite the huge setbacks and demoralisation of recent years communists have a duty to work towards the reconstitution of a genuine non-sectarian communist movement. Such a movement will be internationalist, anti-imperialist and will break with the reactionary traditions of social democracy. The Revolutionary Communist Group calls on all those - organisations and individuals - who have opposed the counter-revolution in the socialist bloc to come together to discuss the formation of a new communist movement in Britain. Such a movement is necessary as part of an international process of studying, learning and acting upon the lessons of the socialist experience since 1917. There can be little justification in the present critical period for socialists of different political trends refusing to unite around a common internationalist, anti-imperialist platform.

Their first task must be to act in defence of the beleaguered Cuban revolution. With the collapse of the USSR, the imperialists are concentrating all their efforts to bring down the Cuban revolution. Cuba's stand against imperialism is an inspiration to all those fighting for freedom, democracy and social justice throughout the world. It shows that socialism offers a solution to problems of poverty, inequality and economic underdevelopment which afflict the majority of humanity. That is why the imperialists are determined to destroy it. We must be determined to defend it. As a first step we urge all - organisations and individuals - to support the 'Boat for Cuba' appeal on this page. It will be an act of internationalism in solidarity with the Cuban Revolution. Joint action towards this end would be a first small step in reconstituting a communist movement in Britain.

## Defend the Cuban Revolution

Help FRFI raise money for the **Boat for Cuba** initiative, organised through the Britain-Cuba Resource Centre to raise £700,000 to charter an oil tanker to Cuba.

As well as raising money, the 'Boat for Cuba' campaign is demanding:-

- An end to the 30-year old US blockade of Cuba
- recognition of Cuban national sovereignty
- an end to all foreign interference in Cuba's internal affairs.

By supporting 'A Boat for Cuba' you can make a very real political and material act of solidarity with the Cuban Revolution.

Yes, I would like to help FRFI raise money for **A Boat for Cuba**

Name

Address

Donation

Please make cheques/POs payable to 'A Boat for Cuba' and send to FRFI, BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX.



# Counter-revolution in the Soviet Union



*The 19 August 1991 abortive coup attempt in the USSR and the Yeltsin led counter-coup which it precipitated constituted a crushing victory for bourgeois counter-revolution. By 22 August the stunningly incompetent 'putsch' by the State Emergency Committee was over. Its only function was to have unleashed a furious anti-communist witch-hunt. As mobs dismantled statues of Lenin, Sverdlov and Dzerzhinsky, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was subjected to a fatal onslaught. EDDIE ABRAHAMS examines the events which sealed the counter-revolution.*

Almost overnight power passed from the CPSU which had ruled the Soviet Union since 1917. The Soviet Communist Party has been more or less demolished. On 24 August Gorbachev resigned as CPSU General Secretary and demanded dissolution of the Central Committee. And by 5 September 1991, the Soviet Union was itself dissolved as the once-socialist USSR was transformed into the USS (Union of Sovereign States).

The CPSU meanwhile has been 'suspended' 'pending investigations' into its role in the coup attempt - in fact it played no role. In the Ukraine and the Baltic states it has been banned. Elsewhere its assets have been seized and its newspapers prohibited. Communist Party factory offices have been closed and workplace political organisation forbidden. Thousands of party workers and administrators are being thrown onto the streets.

Despite the fact that the corrupt and careerist-dominated Communist Party apparatus had long ceased to represent the Soviet working class, the campaign against it has nothing to do with opposition to party 'tyranny', 'dictatorship', or 'corruption'. With the dismantling of the entire CPSU, the banning of workplace political organisation and the destruction of statues of the founders of world's first socialist state, it is the heritage of 1917 and working class power which is under attack.

The 'radicals' who have seized power fear the working class more than they fear the corrupt elements of the CPSU (with whom, it should be remembered, they frequently merge). One 'radical' newspaper recently wrote:

'Market reforms begin to be threatened not so much by the machinations of the nomenklatura as by the workers' movement which is gaining momentum spontaneously, and by the radicalisation of the population's sentiments due to price hikes.'

Despite the character of the CPSU, inside it, there are hundreds of thousands of workers, including genuine communists, organising to defend the gains of the working class. Within the Soviet industrial and state apparatus tens of thousands of militants are engaged in bitter struggles against corrupt managers and would-be capitalists. The banning of the CPSU is designed primarily to undermine these workers' capacity to organise among the mass of the working class - where opposition to market reforms and privatisation is profound.

In Russia, the largest republic, with 50% of the former USSR's population and 70% of its resources, the Yeltsin camp is now moving to consolidate its political power. The most reactionary anti-working class elements are being rapidly moved into positions of power and privilege and as the army, the KGB and the militia are purged and reorganised into anti-working class instruments. Boris Yeltsin, a Russian socialist

assesses recent developments correctly:

'Yeltsin has announced the triumph of democracy but we have the opposite. We have the end of the democratic intermezzo. We have the transition from the communist dictatorship - which degenerated into democracy - into an anti-communist dictatorship. This anti-communist dictatorship is more dynamic and more capable of suppressing the people.'

## The social and political character of the counter-revolution

Against the forces of the Emergency Committee Yeltsin was able to mobilise the ambitious, pro-capitalist forces of a privileged stratum of professionals, intellectuals and sections of the managerial apparatus of the state and industry. The coup offered them the opportunity of removing the CPSU whose vast bureaucratic apparatus is seen as a competitor in the struggle for power and privilege. With the marginalisation of the CPSU, this layer hopes to extend and secure its own privileges through a rapid transition to capitalism.

The imperialists portrayed Yeltsin and his supporters as people fired by profound democratic and humanitarian ideals. The sordid reality is different. Yeltsin and the social stratum which propelled him to power are inherently and fundamentally anti-democratic. They form part of a parasitic and non-productive section of society which can extend its privileges only at the expense of the working class. They recognise that only capitalism can create conditions where the working class works harder for the benefit of a parasitic minority. This reactionary force therefore wants to dismantle socialism, reverse all socialist gains and destroy independent working class political organisations.

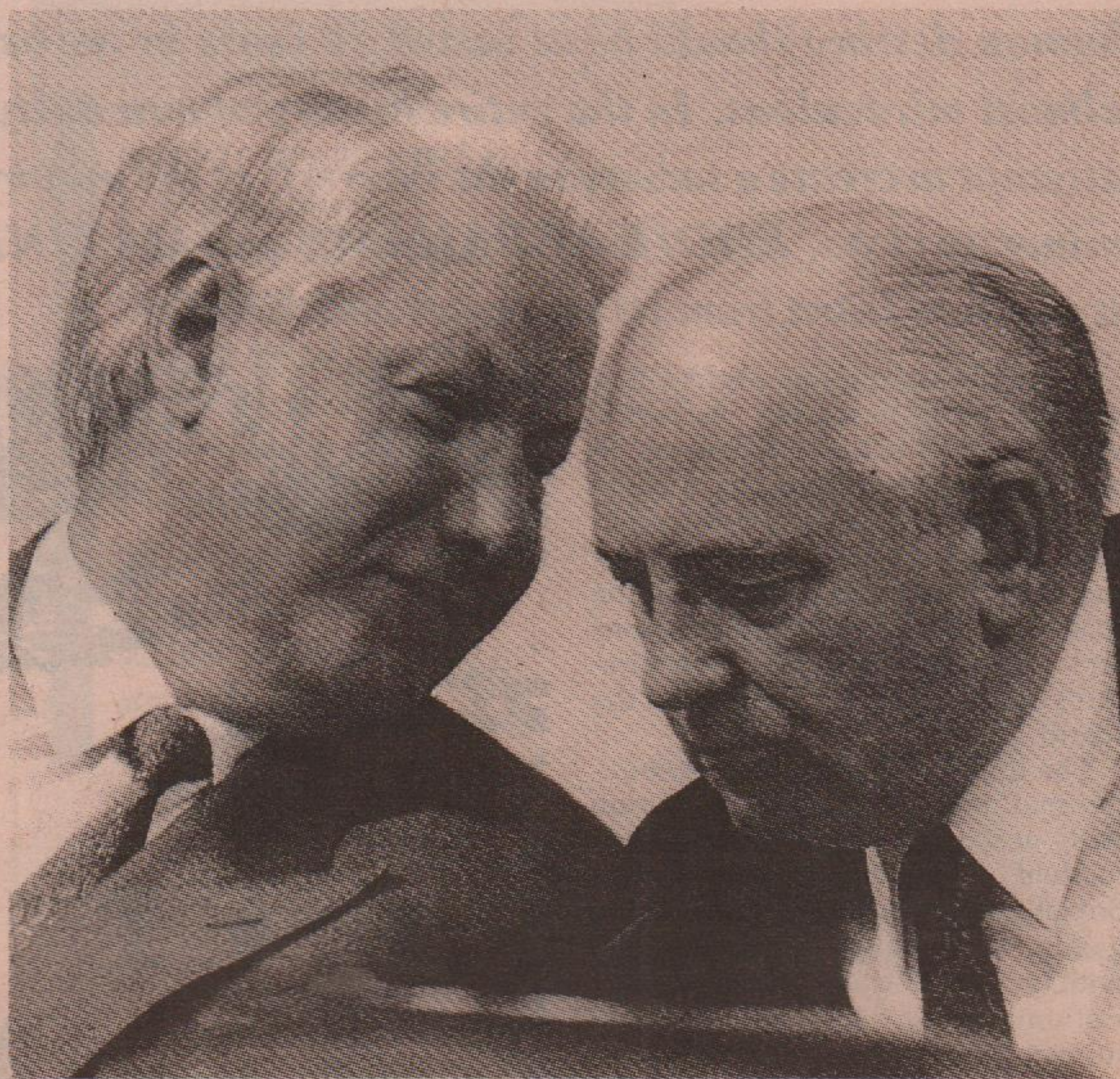
**The working class will not passively resign itself to the 30 million unemployed, hyper-inflation, homelessness and extreme poverty which will be necessary to restore capitalism**

Nikolai Shmelyov, an 'educated' spokesperson for these elements, argues that guaranteed employment is at the root of Soviet economic ills.

'We must also not close our eyes to the economic harm that results from our parasitical certainty of guaranteed employment.'

He believes that 'drunkenness and shoddy workmanship' 'owe much' to 'overemployment' which has transformed Soviet workers into 'a lot of fearless loafers'.

During the Brezhnev years wage differentials between intellectuals



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and the working class narrowed. Intellectuals are now demanding, in the words of Zaslavskaya, a 'reordering of the wage structure' to restore 'deep' wage differentials between the working class and 'socio-professional groups' who had been 'systematically discriminated against'.

Driven by hatred for egalitarianism and collectivism they perceive socialism as a disease. Soviet society is 'contaminated by an egalitarian psychology and the aggressive rejection of all manifestations of individualism, independence, personal initiative, and the successes which are bound up with this.' Aleksandr Sevastianov believes that socialism has brought about the 'devaluation of intellectual labour' and attacks socialist educational theory claiming that the 'creation of equal conditions for all ran counter to the law of nature.' He wants the dismantling of an educational system founded upon 'romanticised notions about the boundlessness of talent in our people.' Limited talent is, naturally, concentrated among professionals!

Given such a 'democratic' spirit, is it surprising that the new powers want to destroy all the achievements of 70 years of socialism?

## Why the coup failed

The reactionaries grouped round Yeltsin represent a minority of the population. Nevertheless they overwhelmed the Emergency Committee. The latter, so-called 'conservatives', were thoroughly isolated - socially and politically. Interested primarily in defending their own privileges

which were being challenged by the so-called 'radicals', they were incapable of calling upon popular support. There were, and still are, millions of Soviet workers who would happily fight, by any means, to rid themselves of Yeltsin, Gorbachev and other pro-marketisers. But not on behalf of those they perceive as privileged members of a ruling party which does not serve working class interests.

News of the coup was greeted with fleeting hope by many who yearned for the suppression of Gorbachev and Yeltsin. But they rapidly realised that the task was beyond the Emergency Committee. This body's staggering incompetence led Kagarlitsky to argue that the coup attempt was engineered by an alliance of 'conservatives' and Yeltsinites to impose a strong state during the transition to capitalism.

This committee of 'hardliners', allegedly seeking to restore communist 'tyranny', did not take over communication and transport facilities, allowed railway and metro stations to broadcast Yeltsin's call for a general strike, and, while arresting Gorbachev, did not arrest Yeltsin. The Russian 'White House' which became the focus of resistance did not have its phones or electricity cut off and was open for people to enter or leave at will. And to top it all the troops and tanks sent into Moscow were, to begin with, unarmed.

In fact the 'hardline communist' coup was a figment of media imagination. Sober bourgeois commentators such as Peregrine Worsthorne understood better:

'Renouncing communism is no longer the secret of reform. Even the hardline junta did that. There was no mention of communism throughout its manifesto. Nor is embracing market economics enough. Almost certainly the junta was prepared to do that.'

The Emergency Committee had no progressive programme and no social vision. In fact its social and economic outlook was remarkably like that of Yeltsin's supporters. The Committee was committed to 'support private enterprise'; but it favoured 'urgent' and 'resolute' measures hinting that 'mass manifestations of spontaneous discontent with devastating consequences' were threatened by an uncontrolled imposition of market reforms.

In its foreign policy, the Emergency Committee assured the imperialists that no changes would be made. There would be no reversal to 'Cold War confrontation' and no resumed support for anti-imperialist movements. Its entire outlook was tainted by a reactionary Great Russian chauvinism. It declared that:

'ties (between Soviet nations and peoples) being condemned and severed... were established on the basis of far broader popular trust which has stood the test of many centuries.'

Given socialism in the USSR was only established this century, the 'many centuries' of 'broad popular trust' refer to the despotic Czarist oppression of nationalities in its empire!

## Capitalist restoration promises poverty, chaos and instability

With the crushing of the coup attempt the entire process of bourgeois restoration will now be accelerated. Imperialist pundits and their Soviet hangers-on are hoping Yeltsin's current popularity will enable him to 'impose protracted economic suffering' on the working class as he takes 'radical' measures to open the country up to imperialist capital. 'Economic reforms' - ie the restoration of private property in production, the impoverishment of the working class for the benefit of a new bourgeoisie - which were delayed by working class opposition will now be foisted upon the country. Whilst the working class will not passively resign itself to 30 million unemployed, hyper-inflation, homelessness and extreme poverty which will be necessary to restore capitalism, the counter-revolution has made capital's task that much easier.

The Russian Republic has now emerged as the major force in the region. In the face of its power and wealth, pretensions to national independence by the other republics will soon be moderated and tempered. The Russian government has already unleashed its mighty whip warning its neighbouring Asiatic republics not to go for total independence on

*continued overleaf*





# Legacy of the BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

*The Russian revolution of 1917, born amid the hope of millions, has finally collapsed. That this colossal and noble effort consciously to seize and control human destiny should have lasted 74 years in the beleaguered Soviet Union is almost miraculous. In the entire history of humanity, it was the first sustained attempt to create a society in the interests of the majority rather than a dominant minority class. EDDIE ABRAHAMS and MAXINE WILLIAMS argue there is much to learn from its successes and failures.*

continued from page 3

pain of losing slices of Russian-populated territory to the Russian Republic. Meanwhile in the smaller republics, nationalist governments are preparing pogroms against minorities and against each other. As the disintegration of the USSR continues apace, it is the working class and poor who will pay with their blood and lives, as aspiring bourgeois factions prepare, even by war, to seize a share of their new capitalist paradise.

Political disintegration is being accompanied by devastating economic collapse. Before the coup, then Deputy Prime Minister, Vladimir Shcherbakov warned of famine in the Soviet Union. This year's grain harvest is expected to drop to 195-200 million tonnes. Edward Shevardnadze, former Gorbachev Foreign Minister warned that 'people could take to the streets', creating a crisis which could be exploited by 'dangerous people' meaning of course workers fighting for their rights. Soviet economists are also predicting hyper-inflation by the year's end. In 1988 the state printed 11.5 billion rubles. By August 1991, 150 billion had already been printed. Production levels are set to fall by a massive 15 to 20 per cent this year.

**As economic crisis and political conflict sharpen, the entire area could explode**

Imperialism, allied with Gorbachev, had hoped to secure a stable transition to capitalism in the USSR. Today, with Gorbachev much diminished and Yeltsin ascendant, it is confronted with the prospect of a disintegrating cauldron of national, economic, social and political forces. As economic crisis and political conflict sharpen, the entire area could explode into chaos, violence and even war. The disintegration of Yugoslavia, in comparison, could appear benign. Imperialism will nevertheless negotiate and respond to these problems from a position of greater self-confidence and arrogance. For they have laid low the greatest challenge so far to capitalism – the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

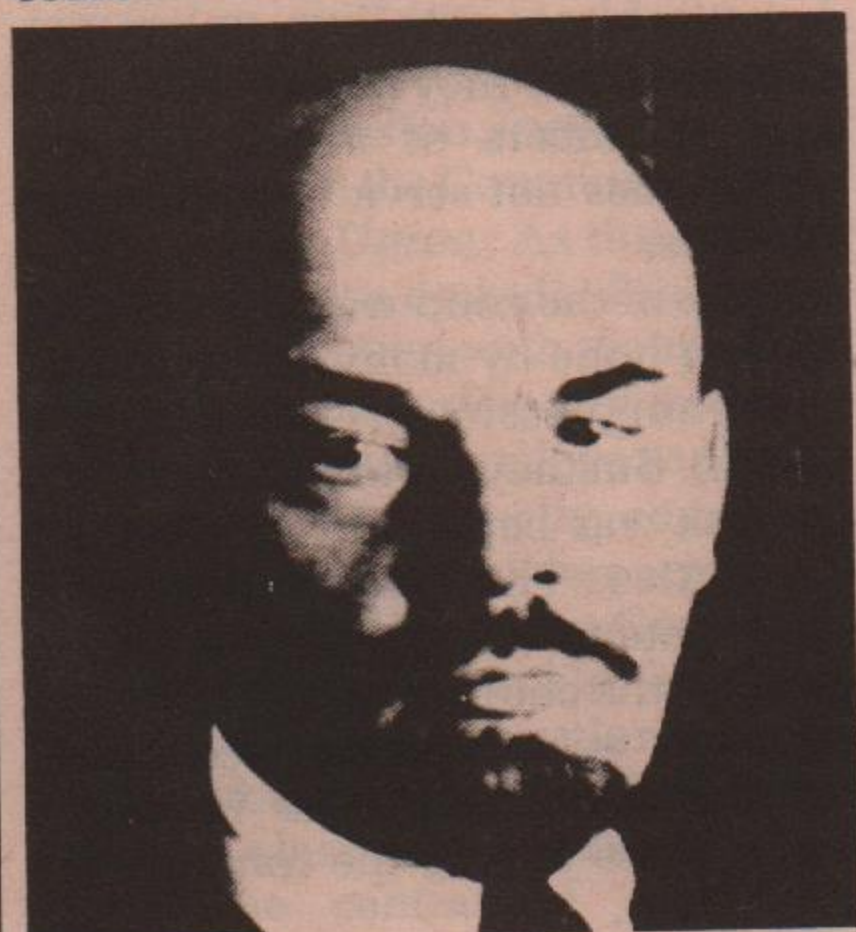
Yeltsin's counter-coup is a major setback for the working class. The Soviet state, despite everything, stood as a bastion to anti-imperialist movements throughout the world. From Cuba to Vietnam, from China to Nicaragua, from Mozambique to Palestine – the working class and oppressed benefited from its existence. As imperialist economic crisis, debt strangulation, unequal exchange and ruthless plunder compel millions to once again challenge imperialism, the struggle, without the USSR, will be immeasurably harsher.

This is why imperialism, despite all the potential problems in the USSR, is today so triumphant. It is now, in full confidence, preparing to eliminate all challenges from the poor and oppressed, targeting Cuba in particular – a living example of the legacy of working class power represented by the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. ■

This fragile vessel, the world's first socialist state, navigated uncharted waters amidst a host of dangers. It was holed many times, its timbers became rotten and finally it succumbed to attack from within and without. But not before it had transformed the lives of millions of its own citizens and given substance to the aspirations of billions more throughout the world.

The imperialists greeted the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union with ecstasy. They always feared, loathed and waged war against Soviet power. In unrelenting propaganda they equated communism with tyranny, the destruction of civilisation and the denial of individual human nature. They tried to bury the revolution in this dunghheap of abuse precisely because of the simple and terrifying truth it proclaimed – the poor, the majority, can take power from their oppressors.

From day one of the revolution, when they heard that workers and peasants had taken charge, that foreign debts had been cancelled, that the property of their rich Russian cousins had been confiscated, the capitalists declared war. It began with the 1918 invasion by no less than 14 capitalist powers, with Britain at the head. That war has never ceased.



VI Lenin

But their current, grotesque dance upon the grave of the revolution is quite futile. The grave contains only old bones. Its flesh and blood, its life and spirit, have long since passed to other parts of the world. There, the oppressed know only too well that capitalism, far from representing the pinnacle of human civilisation, represents poverty, dead children, hungry bellies and murdered freedom fighters. They have heard the message that once heard is never forgotten – poor people can take power. That is the gift that the Bolsheviks bequeathed to history. They tried, against all odds, to give life to the most liberating and noble ambitions of humanity.



*They tried to bury the revolution in this dunghheap of abuse precisely because of the simple and terrifying truth it proclaimed – the poor, the majority, can take power from their oppressors*

## Communism and human liberation

'Philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point however is to change it' – Marx

Every age has produced thinkers who have fashioned ideas to free humanity from material and spiritual poverty, unleashing its creative potential. In some periods they remained isolated thinkers and dreamers. But in others, periods of turbulent social change, those ideas were taken up by vast masses of people and used to shape new institutions. Voltaire, Rousseau and others saw their ideas emblazoned on the banners of the 'French revolution as 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. When that revolution had consolidated the rule of the capitalist class, such dangerous ideas ceased to have any appeal to the rich and privileged. Henceforth they would devote themselves to the protection of their riches and their philosophers would be paid to pronounce only that we lived in the best of all possible worlds.

From the mid-19th century the task of pushing forward the ideas of progress fell to quite different forces.

Marx and Engels forged the communist outlook during the youth of the working class. This class produced by the capitalist system:

'is driven directly to revolt against this inhumanity [of capitalism]... The proletariat can and must emancipate itself. But it cannot emancipate itself without abolishing the conditions of its own life. It cannot abolish the conditions of its own life without abolishing all the inhuman conditions of life of society today which are summed up in its own condition.'

Marx and Engels elaborated the fundamental principles of scientific socialism and communism. They proved that capitalism, based on production for profit, could neither fully develop the forces of production nor meet the needs of the majority of humanity. The institutions of the capitalist state, however democratic, expressed only the interests of the minority who owned the means of production. A central condition for emancipation from the horrors of capitalism was proletarian power – the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Paris Commune of 1871 furnished the first brief experience of work-

ing class power and the guidelines which inspired the Russian working class of 1917.

## The Bolshevik achievement

Perhaps only those alive in 1917 can fully understand the earthquake of the first socialist revolution. Its shockwaves swept the world, a world of war, suffering and starvation. Through the trenches, in the stinking slums, in the factories and the streets the thrill was felt. Men and women who previously rotted in the Czar's gaols were now creating the first socialist state. Soviets, councils of workers and soldiers, were now making the political decisions that previously were the province of a tiny elite.

The Bolshevik programme was Bread, Peace and Land, simple demands that still today represent what two-thirds of human beings in the world lack. This essentially modest programme is precisely what capitalism cannot give them. When the people took power the Russian bourgeoisie resisted with every weapon at its disposal. The majority had spoken but the bourgeoisie, who only talk of democracy to disguise their own dictatorship, resorted to civil war to suppress them. But the lesson of the Commune had been well learned.

'The working class cannot simply lay hold of the old state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.' (Marx)

'It must destroy the old capitalist state and use its own organs of power – the people armed – for the forcible suppression of the resistance of the exploiters, ie an insignificant minority of the population, the landowners and the capitalists.' (Lenin)

It was precisely these measures that the bourgeoisie has always called 'tyranny'. It is not 'tyranny' to starve millions of people, to keep them illiterate, to turn women into chattels, to drive millions into beggary and prostitution? Apparently real 'tyranny' was to execute the Czar, to divide aristocrats' land among poor peasants, to take the mansions of the rich to house the poor, to forbid the publication of fascist propaganda, to confiscate factories and prohibit individual enrichment through the work of others or speculation.

The achievements of Bolshevik 'tyranny' include: huge strides towards the elimination of poverty, hunger and disease; the education of a previously illiterate population; the survival and cultural advance of nationalities threatened with extinction; the nationalisation of land; and the industrialisation of this vast, backward country through the planned economy.

## The torch is passed on

But perhaps the greatest achievement of 1917 came not in the Soviet Union itself but in its international impact. Lenin recognised that capitalism had entered a new stage – of imperialism and parasitic decay. Competing imperialist powers had divided up the world between them, drawing every corner of the globe into their web of exploitation. Henceforth the world was divided between oppressed and oppressor nations. A large section of workers in the imperialist nations had benefited from imperialism and become infected with the diseases of chauvinism and opportunism. The opportunist workers' movements of the imperialist nations had become a major obstacle to the struggle for socialism and against imperialism. The Bolsheviks understood that in this century the torch of revolution would pass to the peoples of the oppressed nations who:

'will participate in deciding the destiny of the whole world and will cease to be simply an object for the enrichment of others.'





The Red Army captures Hitler's Berlin in May 1945

Reality has confirmed this. The Russian revolution swept through the Czarist Empire to produce the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The revolutionary torch passed to Germany, whose workers' revolution was only defeated in blood in 1919, with the complicity of the opportunist Social Democrats. The impulse towards socialism may have begun in Europe but it moved inexorably elsewhere. It is no accident that after 1917 the most authentic socialist revolutions took place in China, Vietnam, Korea and Cuba. The existence of the Soviet Union, its material aid and political support, has been a major factor in allowing these revolutions to survive for so long in the face of such enormous imperialist opposition.

Communism was an international force for democracy. In the 1930s as the threat of fascism grew, the progressive forces of Europe, led by communists, turned to the defence of the Spanish Republic. Huge anti-fascist and Resistance movements were formed and with the prolonged sacrifices of the Soviet people laid the basis for the defeat of Nazism.

In the post-war period communists stood on the verge of power in Greece and were a serious threat in other European countries. In the wake of liberation by the Red Army and national resistance movements, socialist governments were established in the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, Rumania and Bulgaria. The peoples of Asia, Africa and the Arab world continued their resistance to colonialism. Communist North Korea was established in 1948, China in 1949 and North Vietnam in 1954. In 1961 socialist Cuba was established and with Vietnam provided the focus for imperialist aggression which continues to today. The post-war period saw the overthrow of colonial regimes in most of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The 1970s witnessed the establishment of revolutionary regimes in Grenada, Nicaragua and Afghanistan. And these are just some, by no means all, of the changes which came in the wake of, and drew strength from, 1917. As Marx once said, 'Well grubbed old Mole'.

### Only the first steps

The current round of setbacks, defeats and surrenders may tempt some to say that the old Mole is dead. They are quite wrong. Imperialism has plunged much of the world into terr-

ible poverty. The people of the oppressed nations simply cannot survive in the existing international order. And in the imperialist countries a growing number of people live in poverty, insecurity, pollution and cultural privation. The imperialist countries are armed to the teeth and limbering up through economic competition for redividing the world. There is no peace, progress or security in the new world order. It is as inevitable as day following night that socialism will revive anew.

And it is thanks to the efforts, sacrifices and hard-won lessons of the Bolsheviks and the revolutions which have followed, that the next round of the socialist revolution will begin from an incomparably higher stage. Future socialist efforts will not blindly follow the Soviet model. Its gains, and there were many, were made in the most difficult of circumstances (including a war in which 25 million Soviet citizens died) and against the most concerted imperialist opposition. These pressures exhausted the revolution. The leaders and masses alike were drained, and lost their connection with each other. The impetus dwindled and development became ossification; timeserving careerists replaced revolutionaries; sacrifice became privilege; communism lapsed into social democracy.

But as Marx said of the Commune:

'The working class did not expect miracles from the Commune. They have no ready-made utopias to introduce *par decret du peuple*. They know that in order to work out their emancipation, and along with it that higher form to which present society is tending by its own economical agencies, they will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historic processes, transforming circumstances and men.'

The twentieth century has been the century of first steps in this 'historic process'. There is much for socialists now to learn from the successes and failures, the tragedies and sacrifices. There is an indescribably rich tradition which this international effort has left us. All the revolutions and uprisings adapted their programmes to suit their conditions and fought to produce solutions to immensely varied problems. But all took their inspiration from 1917. It is now the task of communists everywhere to study those lessons, absorb the contributions of nearly a century of international effort before we can go forward again. ■

'Across the horizon spread the glittering lights of the capital, immeasurably more splendid by night than by day, like a dike of jewels heaped on the barren plain. The old workman who drove held the wheel in one hand, while with the other he swept the far-gleaming capital in an exultant gesture. "Mine!", he cried, his face all alight. "All mine now! My Petrograd!"'

JOHN REED  
TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK  
THE WORLD

'In the colonies Lenin opened a new era which is truly revolutionary . . . He was the first to realise the full importance of drawing the colonial peoples into the revolutionary movement. He was the first to realise that without the participation of the oppressed peoples, the socialist revolution could not come about.'

HO CHI MINH 1926

'The women who took part in the Great October Revolution - who were they? Isolated individuals? No, there were hosts of them; tens, hundreds of thousands of nameless heroines who, marching side by side with the workers and peasants behind the Red Flag and the slogan of the Soviets passed over the ruins of tsarist theocracy into a new future. . . . When one recalls the events of October, one sees not individual faces but masses. Masses without number, like waves of humanity. But wherever one looks one sees women - at meetings, gatherings, demonstrations . . .'

ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI  
BOLSHEVIK CENTRAL  
COMMITTEE

'But, when the first socialist revolution took place in this country and the revolutionary movement was crushed in other parts of Europe, the general circumstances were difficult and the Bolsheviks were faced with one alternative. What was it? The alternative of surrendering or that of building socialism even under very difficult conditions. This historical challenge, this enormous task, was imposed on them. They didn't surrender; they didn't consider themselves defeated by the fact that the revolution had been defeated elsewhere, and, considering the natural resources and the size of the country they opted to build socialism.'

FIDEL CASTRO

'Are you glad about the Russians? Of course, they won't be able to maintain themselves in this witches' Sabbath - not because statistics show that their economic development is too backward, as your clever husband has worked out, but because Social Democracy in the highly developed West consists of a pack of piteous cowards who are prepared to look on quietly and let the Russians bleed to death. But such an end is better than "living on for the fatherland"; it is an act of world-historical significance whose traces will not be extinguished for aeons.'

ROSA LUXEMBURG  
TO LOUISE KAUTSKY

'And we also, as Negroes, mourn for Lenin. Not one but four hundred million of us should mourn over the death of this great man, because Russia promised great hope not only to Negroes but to the weaker peoples of the world.'

MARCUS GARVEY, 1924





**'I've been watching communists and socialists all my political life. They won't give up. They will quietly sit there, waiting for opportunities'**

MARGARET THATCHER

# The Emperor's new clothes

**Boris Yeltsin is the West's man of the moment. But bourgeois politicians do not like unknown quantities. Specifically they feel uncomfortable with populist politicians who have, however fraudulently, established a link with masses of people. Hence the plethora of articles attempting to understand Yeltsin. Will he take the unimaginably harsh measures that the reimposition of capitalism in the Soviet Union will require? Will he, if it comes to it, pass the true test of a bourgeois democrat and shoot the workers in the streets?**

Yeltsin the bully has already been on display in his humiliation of Gorbachev, his threats to the non-Russian republics and his amassing of previously all-Union powers into his own hands. What will he do next?

His autobiography *Against the Grain* offers some insight into the man. Most autobiographies are self-serving, but Yeltsin's is crudely so. Its tone is the relentless 'I'm no intellectual, I'm a basic, honest chap but I know what's what' much beloved by right-wing British trade union leaders.

'When analysing situations and events, I ignore whatever went well and concentrate on my shortcomings and mistakes. This is one of the basic traits of my character. I don't know whether it is good or bad.'

'At school I stood out from my classmates by my energy and drive.'

'my main arguments in the battle for discipline were my own total dedication to the job.'

'There began a period of furious activity and, as always, I spared myself less than anyone.'

This tone persists throughout. The cumulative effect is singularly repellent. This man's lack of any clearly expressed political principle, alongside his egomania, should make one fear for the future of those he now leads.

And what are his ideological beliefs?

'I am in favour of the creation of National Fronts, but only on condition that their programmes and actions do not run counter to accepted human values.'

Here is a thing. What are 'accepted human values'? Clearly in the Soviet Union of 1991 'accepted human

values' are in short supply, especially in nationalist circles. Most ominously, given the history of Czarist Russian expansionism, deeply embedded Russian chauvinism has again surfaced. Yeltsin has not only refused to counter this but with his threats to alter borders, is the embodiment of such views.

Aside from his 'human values', what does Yeltsin think?

Under Reagan, 'major improvements, especially in the American economy were there for all to see'. Obviously Yeltsin has not heard of the plight of the millions of poor in the USA. When he visited the USA, he met with representatives of the Cuban-American community and promised them he would cut off aid to Cuba. Today he is keen to inflict Reaganomics on the Soviet people:

'A quite different prospect was offered to us by the promised demo-

cratisation of society, in which individual interest and individual responsibility would be paramount, to which should be added a withdrawal of state subsidies from industry ...'

Yeltsin appears to have no care at all about the catastrophic effect of such actions - tens of millions would be unemployed overnight. He is, of course, for private ownership of property, including land and no limits on private enterprise.

Yeltsin's contribution to the struggle against privilege was, as he proudly boasts, to belatedly refuse his right to get food from Party shops and instead ... to send his wife out queueing for two hours a day. He instinctively knows what a bourgeois politician means when he talks of 'sacrifice'.

He spits with venom on even the idea of socialism:

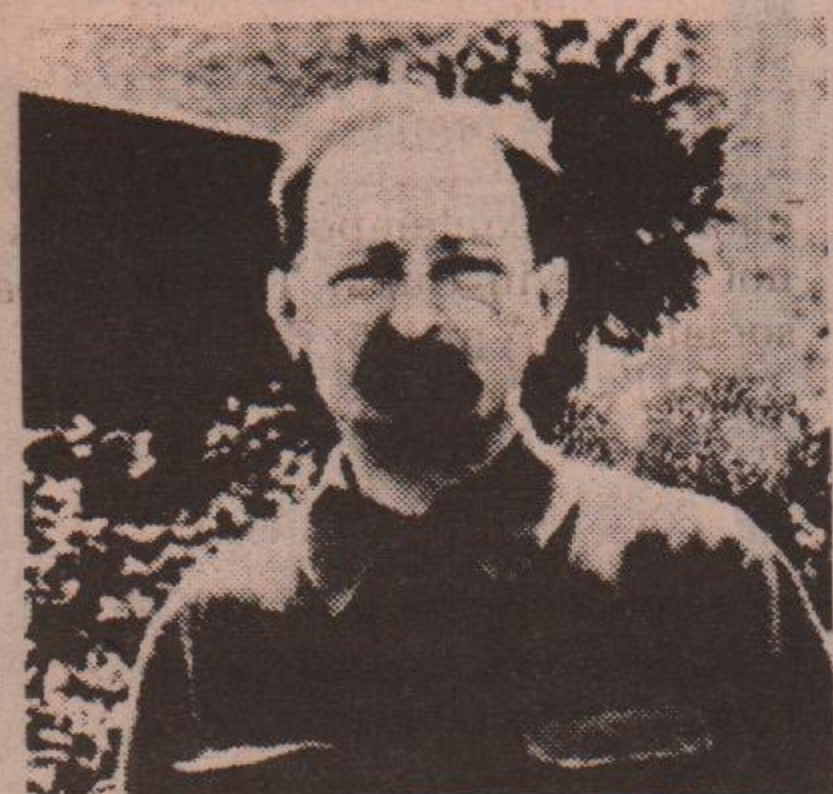
'We shall soon realise that we are practically the only country left on earth which is trying to enter the twenty-first century with an obsolete nineteenth century ideology; that we are the last inhabitants of a country defeated by socialism ...'

The real question is how such a man, whose ideological partner is Thatcher, could not only have risen so far in a 'communist party', but could finally have defeated it.

Maxine Williams

## HEROES OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

The SWP applauded the mobs in the USSR who tore down statues of, among others, Felix Dzerzhinsky, first head of the Cheka, and Yakov Sverdlov, effectively the first president of the Soviet Union at the age of 32. Both gave their lives selflessly to the revolution, both served on the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee which organised the October insurrection. We reprint an appreciation of each published in Victor Serge's *Year One of the Russian Revolution*.



**FELIX DZERZHINSKY**  
1877—1926

The man to whom the party has entrusted the difficult mission of unmasking the permanent conspiracy, of serving the proletariat as the epitome of vigilance, severity and terror, is called Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky. His mortal enemies - and he has no other sort, since the struggle between him and them is to the death - admire his ascetic honesty, his unbreakable self-possession, his amazing capacity for work. Forty one years, a Pole of bourgeois origin. A Marxist revolutionary since his eighteenth year. Five times imprisoned, thrice deported, thrice escaping, sentenced in 1912-14 to 10 years of forced labour, a political prisoner for five years, liberated on the fall of Tsardom, member of the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee which organised the insurrection of 1917, Chairman of the Committee for Repression of Counter-Revolution (Vee-Cheka) since it was first set up. Dzerzhinsky is a man of faith. Since adolescence he has devoted his life, with a poet's ardour, to the transformation of man and of life. His *Prison Journal* is suffused with a profound idealism. 'He had the deepest imaginable love for men,' wrote Karl

Radek, 'and it was only the conviction that any weakening would be calamitous for the masses that enabled him to strike so inflexibly with the sword of the revolution.'

**YAKOV SVERDLOV**  
1885—1919

The biography of Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov is that of a dauntless revolutionary. Born of an artisan family in Nizhni-Novgorod, a pharmacist by profession, Sverdlov was a Bolshevik militant, working in illegality, ever since 1903. Five times arrested, condemned first to two and a half years in fortress confinement (a sentence he served to the full), then to four years exile in the remote icy region of Naryn, he was placed under the most rigorous conditions there after a demonstration of exiled prisoners and nearly died of cold and hunger: he survived only by a miracle of endurance. Five attempts to escape, two successful escapes at the risk to his life. He returned in 1912 to Petrograd to organise the party's clandestine network, and was delivered to the authorities by the agent-provocateur Malinovsky. He was again exiled, this time to the Turukhansk region inside the Arctic Circle, where he stayed three years until the fall of Tsarism.



On the news of the revolution he made a journey of 5,000 miles by sledge over the Yenisei, at the risk of being caught by the thawing of the ice, and influenced the Krasnoyarsk Soviet in a Bolshevik direction; he then returned to Petrograd, where he became one of the most valued organisers of the party. After the government crisis at the beginning of November 1917 he replaced Kamenev as Chairman of the All-Russian Soviet Executive Committee. He died in 1919, of tuberculosis, at the age of 34.

## British left rejoices with imperialists

**The British left, with few exceptions, has reacted with joy at the collapse of last month's coup against Gorbachev. According to Militant, 'Workers around the world are cheering.' Meanwhile there has been fulsome praise for Yeltsin's 'courage' (SWP, CPGB) in taking the side of 'democracy' (Socialist Organiser). The SWP has particular claim to have adopted the most reactionary position: 'Communism has collapsed', screamed their headlines, 'Now fight for real socialism'. The article underneath continues: "Communism has collapsed" our newspapers and TV declare. It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing.'**

Communism is the fusion of Marxism with the revolutionary movement of the working class and the oppressed. The politics of the British left are an attempt to unite Marxism with the reactionary interests of the most privileged stratum of the working class and its middle class allies. Such an impossible union leaves their theory full of internal contradiction, often to the point of incomprehensibility. Thus the SWP's Alex Callinicos on the destruction of statues of Dzerzhinsky and Sverdlov:

'Those involved no doubt believe that in doing so they are repudiating 1917 and all its works. But exactly the same destruction - this time of Tsarist symbols - took place after the revolution of February 1917 ... In other words, the logic of revolution is driving those radicalised by the August days to behave, despite their professed hatred of Bolshevism, in a remarkably Bolshevik way.'

It is novel to find statue destruction to be a hallmark of Bolshevism, or that such destruction in 1917 makes subsequent destruction in 1991 equally revolutionary. But why use logic when all you need is empty sophistry to turn counter-revolution into its opposite? Militant is less crude: but after declaring workers around the

world are cheering at the defeat of a coup, it immediately adds 'but the capitalists are cheering too.' So apparently everyone's happy! The more obscure *Socialist Organiser* adds:

'Not working class socialism has been won in the East, but freedom for the working class to remake itself: and that is the greatest thing won in the world for many, many decades.'

In other words, counter-revolution is great because it enables the working class to start all over again. In fact, it's so good it's even better than the success of the national liberation movements since 1917.

With the SWP declaring that the August events 'bring the working class closer to the spirit of the socialist revolution of 1917, not further from it', and the CPGB arguing that in fact they raise the issue of the historical legitimacy of 1917, the confusion is complete. Not so confused is White Guardist (not for nothing is the Russian parliament called the White House) Tatyana Tolstoya in the *Guardian*:

'Yeltsin surrounds himself with democratic forces and people tired of communism ... Yeltsin issues decrees to loosen the deadly grip of the party ... the smartest people take Yeltsin's side.'

Well, to think that the British left are the 'smartest people' ...!

The left are united in prettifying counter-revolution, and turning it into its opposite, whatever details they may quibble over, and however much they now seek to draw back from their earlier endorsements of Yeltsin. Their meeting with White Guardism betrays the fact that what is decisive for their politics is the standpoint of the labour aristocracy. For whilst the left rejoice in the collapse of the CPSU, they react with hysteria against those who would applaud the destruction of the Labour Party. They could always wax indignantly against 'Stalinism', but the murderous history of the Labour Party was a minor historical footnote, and certainly not one to make waves over come election time. In other words, whether they regarded the Soviet Union as a workers' state or state

capitalism didn't matter a jot: it was their relationship to imperialism that did.

The split in the working class created by imperialism at the turn of the century found its political expression in the split between the Communist International and the opportunist Socialist International. The October revolution was made possible because the Bolsheviks recognised the split and destroyed the opportunists' leadership of the working class. To recognise the existence of the split is to recognise the parasitism and reactionary nature of the labour aristocracy. The very existence of the Soviet Union was a testament to it. Hence the labour aristocracy could tolerate neither the existence of the Soviet Union nor the communist movement, however degenerate that might have become. The British left cushioned by imperialism from the realities of poverty and oppression as they are, have merely taken the side of opportunism.



**The British left rejoices. Soviet citizens go hungry, but McDonald's is open in Red Square, Moscow**

The Soviet people stand on the edge of a holocaust. The triumph of counter-revolution will bring immense oppression and impoverishment. White emigrés, with their thirst for revenge, will return to reclaim their heritage. An explosion of internecine wars and racist pogroms will occur, as 'independent' republics fight for survival. Revolutionary Cuba will be isolated. All this will be the result of a 'revolutionary' a 'democratic', a 'socialist' movement, if we are to believe the British left. Logic and the defence of parasitical self-interest never made comfortable bed-fellows.

Robert Clough



# CASTRO DEFENDS MARXISM 'the most just ideas in human history'

The collapse of the socialist bloc and the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union has inevitably focussed attention on the future of socialism in Cuba. Capitalist propaganda portrays Fidel Castro as an isolated and lonely figure and the Cuban revolution facing its last days. But those rushing to write the epitaph for communism underestimate Fidel Castro and the Cuban people. 'To those who think that there could be no future for [Cuba], we have to answer that the only thing that could never have a future would be a country without independence, without revolution and without socialism.' (*Granma* Editorial 8 September 1991)

Fidel Castro was able to attend and address the 1st Ibero-American Summit in Guadalajara, Mexico, in July, against the expressed wishes of the United States, and positions advanced by Cuba, on the democratisation of the United Nations and the right of every nation to choose its political system and institutions, were in the final document of the Summit. Chile and Colombia took advantage of the Summit to establish diplomatic ties with Cuba. This shows the enhanced standing Cuba has among the Latin American countries.

In two recent speeches\*, including that to the Ibero-American Summit, given before the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union, Fidel Castro confronts the triumphalism of US imperialism and the headlong retreat of a great proportion of the world's left forces with a sustained and eloquent defence of socialism. He argues that the problems of economic development, poverty and inequality cannot be resolved by capitalism in a world which is divided between immensely rich capitalist countries and the majority of extremely poor countries, precisely as a consequence of capitalism, colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism. 'In this world to think that neoliberal formulas are going to promote the miracle of economic development... is an incredible delusion' (B p12). **DAVID REED** reports.

\* Speech to 1st Ibero-American Summit *Granma* 4 August 1991 (A) and speech on 26 July 1991 *Granma* 11 August 1991 (B).

## A NEW WORLD ORDER WORSE THAN THE OLD?

A substantial restructuring of international relations is taking place as a result of the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The conflict between two antagonistic blocs is no longer the focus of those relations. While this has significantly reduced the danger of nuclear holocaust, and confrontation between the two major military powers, the new world order could well be worse than the old, especially for the peoples of the Third World.

While a new type of relationship is being established between the superpowers, acts of brutal intervention can take place in the Third World as the invasion of Panama and the Gulf War demonstrated. 'An unscrupulous hegemonic perspective and practice prevails' in US ruling circles, 'which see themselves as the victors of the so-called Cold War'. The greatest threat to the principles of international law and, above all, to a permanent halt to interference in the internal affairs of other countries is the political and military hegemony of the United States. With the so-called 'Soviet threat' gone, the US ruling class, under the guise of strengthening US national security, believes it can face the challenge of regional conflicts, low-intensity wars, the drug trade and subversion, by any means it sees fit and according to its own interpretation in each case. 'The most likely scenarios for all the above - but not the only ones - are in the Third World.'

'In the end the new world order could be worse than the old order, a unipolar world in which the cessation of antagonism between blocs, exalted by some as the end of ideology and the triumph of universal values, is due above all to the extinction of the socialist community, while the imperialist system of economic and political relations continues, now without rival, subjugating and maintaining the principal contradiction with the Third World.' (A p5)

## THE ECONOMIC DECLINE OF US IMPERIALISM

While the United States is more powerful than ever in military terms and politically has enormous influence, economically it is weaker than ever and is facing serious problems. Castro tells us that when a US journalist interviewing him said that the USSR had been ruined by the arms race with the United States, he replied: 'The USSR might be the first to be ruined, but you will be the second... Don't sing victory songs' (B p13).

After World War II, the United States was the centre of capitalism, the richest and most competitive of all countries. It enjoyed complete hegemony, and now it has lost this position. The powers defeated in World War II have emerged as poles for the concentration of economic power, defying US supremacy (A p5). The US cannot compete with Japan nor a Europe dominated by Germany.

The following economic statistics illustrate the economic problems facing the United States. In the years after World War II the rate of return on US capital was as high as 24%. Now it is about a third of that rate, about 8%.

Historically the United States has had a high savings rate. Today this has fallen to about 5 cents out of every dollar earned. This is to be compared



with savings as high as 30 cents in some European countries.

The total debt in the United States - federal and private - is \$10 trillion. The federal government accounts for about \$3 trillion and the rest is owed by businesses and individuals. The country has a debt double the size of its GNP. As a result of the recession that began in the middle of 1990, it has been announced that the budget deficit for the fiscal year which begins in October will be \$350bn - an amazing statistic even for as large an economy as the United States.

The United States not only has a trade deficit of \$100bn but now has an overall foreign debt of more than \$600bn. Only ten years ago it had a credit of some \$140bn with the rest of the world. In having such a large budget and trade deficit, the United States does exactly what it prohibits other countries from doing.

The economic indebtedness of the United States will have enormous consequences for the rest of the world - especially the former socialist countries and the Third World, desperate for capital to develop their economies. 'According to experts, the demand for money in the world is over \$200bn more than what is available.' There is not enough capital to satisfy the demands of Latin America, the Middle East, the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union. 'The United States has become an octopus, sucking up huge quantities of money, and they themselves need more than anyone else.' (B p13)

The United States' foreign trade and debt position is that of a country losing ground to its competitors in Europe and Japan. To reverse this position it will be necessary to reinforce its area of influence, its economic space, and to reaffirm its dominion (A p3). This is the context in which its recent initiatives for the Americas should be seen - in particular the proposal to create a free trade zone. Castro, in his speech to the 1st Ibero-American Summit, said that if Latin America is going to integrate into the economy of a financially ruined country it is going to get the worst end of the deal.

60% of Latin American exports to the United States are fuel and raw materials, while less than 30% are manufactured products. The situation has deteriorated over the last 20 years. In 1970 38.2% came into this category compared with 29% in 1988. The main cause of this drop was US protectionist policy, which tended to block the most finished pro-

ducts and favour raw materials. This protectionist policy, based on non-tariff barriers, would not be affected by this 'free trade' initiative, which is nothing more than an attempt to control Latin America's trade, using the US's technical and scientific superiority and competitive capacity. It will reinforce the neocolonial structure of the region's foreign trade. (A p4)

Compared to its trade with the United States, trade among Latin American countries is insignificant, accounting for only 13.9% of total Latin American exports. During his speech Castro argued that Latin America had no alternative but to integrate economically if it was to develop in the face of the increasingly powerful and protectionist economic powers, the United States, the European Community and Japan, and that Cuba could be part of this process without renouncing socialism. (A pp4, 6; B p13)

## CAPITALISM AND LATIN AMERICA

1991 is the tenth consecutive year of Latin America's worst economic crisis in the current century. 1990 per capita GNP was equal to that of 1977. Latin America's foreign debt is payable - a point made by Fidel Castro in 1985. Latin America, which owed \$222.5bn in 1980, paid out in principal and interest \$365.9bn in the last decade. But by 1990 the debt was \$423bn. So the debt nearly doubled in spite of the enormous amount paid back. Inflation, which averaged 56.1% in 1982, in 1990 - after several years of neoliberal policies - reached the nearly incredible average of 1,500%.

There are 270 million poor people, 62% of the population, of whom 84 million are destitute. This poverty of the majority drastically contrasts with the opulence of small minorities. In some cases 5% of the population receives up to 50% of the income while 30 or 40% of the population receives 10%.

Between 20 and 30 million homeless children roam the streets of Latin America. 30 to 40% of the workforce is unemployed or underemployed, malnutrition affects 80 to 100 million people. Life expectancy is 68 years, seven years less than in the developed countries. The infant mortality rate is 55 per 1,000 live births. 21% of the population have no access to safe drinking water, and 41% lack adequate health facilities. Only 44 children out of 100 who enrol for elementary school across Latin America finish it. The critical situation of

housing and its rapid deterioration over the past few years has led to the proliferation of shanty towns and slums throughout the continent. With the rapid growth of the urban population, housing covered only 24% of the needs between 1985 and 1989. It has been estimated that some \$282bn would be needed to bring health, housing and education to adequate standards in Latin America (A pp2, 3).

All this poverty from which the Latin American countries suffer is the direct result of capitalism. Yet we are confronted with more and more theories that private enterprise creates wealth, and that social justice requires capitalism, private enterprise and the market economy. The reality is quite different, as a comparison with socialist Cuba so clearly demonstrates.

## SOCIALISM AND CUBA

Throughout its existence socialist Cuba has had not only to confront the many obstacles facing any development process in a Third World country but has also had to face a rigid economic blockade of the country imposed by the United States since 1961 - depriving the country, on the basis of the most conservative calculations, of \$15 billion of resources over the last 30 years. The construction of a more just and humane society in these circumstances is an historic feat of the Cuban people and Cuban socialism.

The catastrophic social conditions which exist throughout Latin America do not exist in Cuba. The infant mortality rate in Cuba at 10.7 per 1,000 live births is better than in many developed countries. Life expectancy is 76 years of age and rising. Illiteracy disappeared some time ago. Nearly 100% of the children who enter elementary school finish and more than 90% of those of the appropriate age are in secondary school. There are no shanty towns. Malnutrition is almost unknown in Cuba. Unemployment is practically nonexistent. The whole population is protected by social security, has the right to education and to free health care, even if they need a heart transplant. There are no beggars in the street nor abandoned elderly people; and the generalised climate of violence which characterises the great majority of contemporary societies is not found in Cuba. That is Cuban socialism. (A pp4, 5; B p13)

Since the second half of 1989 Cuba has had to deal with the collapse of the socialist countries. Three quarters of Cuba's trade had been with those countries under just and reasonable conditions. As a result, Cuba has been forced to introduce an emergency programme to survive, a special period, starting in the last quarter of 1990. Living standards have fallen and increasingly severe rationing of basic goods is becoming necessary. Cuba now faces very serious economic problems. The measures it is taking to cope, however, have nothing in common with the well-known adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund. They have been adopted according to the principles of adequate protection for all citizens. No one will be put out on the street, no one will be unemployed. 'We distribute what we have and that is socialism, that is social justice... if we have a lot we can distribute a lot and if we have little, we distribute a little, but we'll distribute what we have, we won't abandon anyone'. (B p13)

Throughout its existence Cuba has demonstrated in practice the meaning of socialist internationalism. Cuban socialists have given their lives for the struggle for freedom and democracy in other parts of the world, especially in Latin America and Africa. Today, with US imperialism accelerating efforts to strangle Cuba, internationalism must focus on defending the revolution - it is the greatest service that not only Cuban socialists but socialists everywhere can offer humanity. ■



# Kurdish people embrace the revolution

15 August marked the seventh anniversary of the launching of the national liberation struggle and the founding of the ARGK (People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan). A European delegation was invited to join the celebrations at the Academy Mahsum Korkmaz (a martyr of the PKK/ARGK) training camp in the Lebanon. **TREVOR RAYNE of Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!** and member of the Kurdistan Solidarity Committee in London gives some impressions of his visit and selections from conversations with PKK General Secretary, Abdullah Ocalan (Apo).

High above the Bekaa Valley, deep in the embrace of the Kurdish Revolution. 11 o'clock at night and I am in a tent with the German delegation: the tent allocated to me is crammed with twenty women suckling their babies. A messenger arrives, Apo's speech is tonight.

We scramble down the mountain towards the Centre which doubles as a parade ground and football pitch. The rostrum is floodlit. In front, a space of thirty metres, then a row of guerrillas to attention, Kalashnikovs pointing skyward. Behind them row after row of Kurds crosslegged on the ground, interspersed with the occasional guerrilla. Bonfires burn in the surrounding mountains and figures flicker around them. A salvo of three rockets fired from a nearby Palestinian camp races through the darkness above.

11.15pm, APO - Abdullah Ocalan - appears: 'Biji Apo, Biji Apo' (Long live Apo); the crowd's chant has the rhythm of marching feet through the mountains of Kurdistan. Apo utters his first sentence, punctuated by an explosion of gunfire from the mountains behind. 'Biji Apo, Biji Apo'. This is Kurdistan, this is revolution.

At the sixth anniversary Apo spoke for six hours. It is cold and windy tonight, 4,500 feet above the Bekaa. We European delegates are getting a bit apprehensive; our translator, a guerrilla, is on security duty and Apo is speaking in Kurdish. He picks his words carefully, painfully and the night gets colder still. The people, maybe 20,000 Kurds, many from Syria, have found their way here over deserts and mountains, many journeying hundreds of miles. They listen

with rapt attention, all ages. Half an hour passes before the first shouts of 'Biji Apo'. This time Apo is mercifully brief, by now it is bitterly cold. The speech ends at 1.48 am. The people dance arm-linked-to-arm in great circles.

8.15am, later that morning, and now the crowds are closer to the rostrum, no longer in rows but spread all over the centre; milling around, talking, shaking hands: where are we from, what do we think? Individuals with a smattering of English or German improvise translations. I list the crimes of the British state: the Treaty of Lausanne 1923 which tore their homeland apart, the RAF gas bombing of Kurdish villages, the destruction of the Mahabad Republic in 1946, the arming of Saddam, the support for Turkish colonialism and fascism... They nod vigorously, shake my hand, embrace me, say something about anti-imperialism and proletarian internationalism, making victory salutes in the air.

Apo reappears and resumes his speech. Now it is warm and he speaks more easily. He is no flamboyant orator. A man jumps up from the crowd and begins his own speech. Apo listens, the man concludes his speech to applause. Apo carries on. Someone else rises to speak. Apo listens, applause, resumes. Then a boy age seven or eight shouts out a speech. Applause. Apo resumes.

'Everything comes out of itself here... For me, socialism is people coming here, a serious socialism: a people that had no name, no speech found a name, found speech; an identity. This is socialism for me.

Socialism makes them free and independent.'

## TO BARR ELIAS

On the day before Apo's night speech travelled with the European comrades and our Kurdish guerrilla guides down the mountains into the Bekaa Valley for a festival. As we arrived the bus drew towards an enormous throng of people. We stepped out into this chanting, singing, exultant mass that swirled about us. Suddenly, from what seemed to be chaos, the crowd parted and formed a perfect square and gallery leading off towards the hall that would house the festivities. They chanted 'Long live Kurdistan', 'Kurdistan or Death', 'Long live Apo' they clapped to that beat of marching feet, they released ululations like a crescendo of horns driving out the order from our senses. Here was the upwelling of a mass unconscious directed by a rational, critical awareness. The self-discovery of a people who had no name, no language, no identity - Kurdistan, Revolution.

## THE GUERRILLAS

Over 450 guerrillas were in the Academy during our stay. In that time approximately 150 returned to do battle in Kurdistan. The majority of guerrillas were men in their twenties and thirties, but I counted over 12 women. Total ARGK strength is over 10,000 guerrillas, approximately 1,000 are women.

'Many, many women come to the guerrillas wanting to fight, a stream of them, but they in particular have been held back in their development by feudal society and that is a problem... many cannot read or write.' - Apo

The guerrillas insisted on being called 'guerrillas' and not 'peshmerga': 'Peshmerga fight and then they return to the feudal life. We are revolutionaries. We want to change society.'

No restrictions were placed on the delegations' movements, except the warning not to wander off in the direction of the nearby Golan Heights. I visited the Academy Library with its pictures of Che, Apo and the Kurdish and Turkish martyrs, many killed in Turkish jails. The first book I saw was *Marx, Engels and Lenin On Ireland*. When I returned a few days later the book was out. Along with the Marxist classics were volumes by Apo on party building, dialectics and tactics of the struggle. There was Stalin Dimitrov from Bulgaria, Cabral from Guinea, Ho and Giap and a rich seam of Middle Eastern revolutionaries that I had never heard of. The guerrillas spend half their day in political education. They try and survive on three or four hours' sleep and wash once a month, simulating the conditions they will endure in the field. This too is education.

Part of the political education are self-criticism sessions and trials. In their self-criticisms guerrillas assess their performance and attitudes. Close friends joined in the criticism which were conducted in front of large numbers of guerrillas. Typical self-criticisms related to voicing dissent to restricted groups of friends and not to the entire camp, (normally consisting of twenty to thirty guerrillas). 'Careerism' was another fault meaning to act arrogantly and with



Barr Elias: A revolutionary festival. 80 per cent of Syrian Kurds support PKK

## Visit to Kurdistan

**FRFI supporter WILLIAM MARTIN recently visited Kurdistan and sent us this report of oppression and resistance.**

The warmth, kindness and hospitality extended to me by the Kurds of the village of Yesilynva contrasted sharply with the realities of daily life in this part of north west Kurdistan. Close to the town of Uludere and hugging the mountains straddling the Turkish/Iraqi border, Yesilynva is literally in the front line of resistance to the Turkish state. In defiance of Turkicisation, the Kurdish population still call Uludere and Yesilynva by their Kurdish names of Qilaban and Rapin.

The colonial oppression of the Kurdish people extends to every corner of people's lives. It may be difficult to imagine that Kurdish parents cannot name their new-born child with the (Kurdish) name of their choice. Yet if they do this the Turkish state will not register the child's birth. Kurdish names like Nictimán (Patriot), Azad (Freedom) and Berxwedan (Freedom struggle) are extremely popular names with mothers and fathers.

Yesilynva, like countless other settlements, is beset by chronic underdevelopment and poverty. Many children receive no schooling at all. Older boys and girls often develop their first literary skills when they join the ARGK.

There is not a family or household in the village which has not suffered the arrest, imprisonment or death of a family member. Many people carry injuries from beatings or shootings. Others have died when Turkish soldiers fired wildly and randomly at

people's homes.

To be caught in possession of a political paper, such as *Yeni Ulke* (New Land), or the word of an informer is sufficient for someone to be abducted and taken to the Turkish army base in Uludere, where detainees are kept in cold, unlit dungeon-like pits. A large military post, several kilometres west on the road to Sirnak, is a known torture centre. Detainees here are systematically tortured. Electric shock torture to the genitals is also carried out there.

It is Sunday 17 August. In the cooler hours of the morning people begin their chores. Children play, animals graze. A typical day begins peacefully, but the peace is shattered as 300 armed Turkish soldiers ring the village and a jeep-mounted loudspeaker rasps an order for all males over 15 to assemble on the main road. While homes and gardens are searched, the men's identity cards are examined. An informer has touted in-

formation about an 'Ali' or a 'Mehmet'. 50 men are arrested and abducted from their families. Their fate - certain beatings and torture, and detention for weeks, months, maybe years. These raids on Kurdish villages can happen at any time. In August 1990 the nearby village of Siris had been surrounded by Turkish troops. The villagers were ordered to become 'village guards', under the control of the Turkish army. When they refused their homes were burnt with their possessions inside. The villagers of Siris were deported from the land they had lived on for hundreds of years. 'There is no middle road for us. Either you are with the PKK or you are a collaborator', said one villager.

Diyarbakir, the largest and most important city in north west Kurdistan, was a day's journey from Yesilynva, passing through countless Turkish army checkpoints.

Since the abduction and murder (by a police death squad) of Vedat Aydın on 4 July, and the massacre of mourners at the funeral procession on 10 July, repression has intensified, 58 of the 2,000 Kurds arrested remained in custody and were due to appear in court on 29 August. Hundreds of people are still recovering from serious injuries, others have been too afraid to go to hospital to seek treatment.

Activists have been arrested as the hated MIT secret police have stepped up their activities. The 17-24 August

issue of *Yeni Ulke* was banned from sale.

The morale and spirit of people is unbroken. Countless young people have left home to join the ARGK. In the tea gardens and cafés the talk is of not being defenceless when attacked and fired on next time.

With this background and with the Turkish forces continuing their attacks on PKK bases in northern Iraq, there was anger at Talabani's meeting with Turkish officials in Istanbul where he stated his commitment to the strengthening of 'Turkish national security'. Turkish government spokesmen quoted Talabani as saying 'if we had the sort of democracy which you enjoy in Turkey, we would not ask for autonomy from the present Iraqi regime'.

The following message given to me by an ARGK patriot and fighter indicate that the Kurds are not seeking 'deals' with their oppressors. Rather they seek solidarity from British people:

'We don't want the British people to believe the lies of the ANP (Turkish government news agency). We want British people to help and support the Kurdish people. We are suffering very bad oppression from the Turkish government. We need political and material support. We want you to demonstrate and force the Turkish government to stop the brutal treatment of the Kurdish people.'



# brace



out sensitivity in front of the people. The guerrillas are taught that life is a moment and they must catch people in those moments when circumstances enable them to recognise possible ways to liberation; careerism is to act as though people will blindly follow. For some readers such sessions may have echoes of the excesses of China's Cultural Revolution or 'brain-washing', but they are conducted in a calm and methodical manner. They help to create the unity and trust necessary for guerrilla units to operate in the midst of possible imminent death. Unlike the destruction of the personality that is the preliminary to training a British Army commando this is the positive socialisation of the individual, not its degradation.

Revolutionary trials are conducted with open debate among all the guerrillas who serve collectively as defence, prosecution and jury, voting on the verdict, with a majority decision determining the outcome. Where the sentence is severe, such as execution, then it must be referred to PKK headquarters for ratification. A recent PKK Congress determined to stamp out arbitrary or unwarranted harsh punishments as part of a process of eliminating feudal practices from its ranks. Cases I witnessed involved endangering individual and group security, countermanding orders and creating confusion in relations with a Turkish left group. Punishment was chiefly some form of labour or confinement to the camp while the performance of the accused is reviewed.

## MULLAH ABDULLAH MOHAMMED

The Kurdish Revolution encompasses all sections of Kurdish society other than the feudal aristocracy that compromises with colonialism and imperialism. Revolutionary mullahs mixed with guerrillas and the thousands who came to the Academy.

'Socialism and religion should both be in the service of humanity. They are not contradictory. Socialism is a science of social struggle on Earth, religion has its laws too... When we look at socialism we see the same conceptions... everyone should have land and property in equality with each other... In the PKK and religion you can see the same values, the same human striving.' - Mullah Abdullah Mohammed

Mullah Abdullah is 98. He fought Turkish chauvinism in the 1920s.

## 'NEW PEAKS WILL ARISE' - ABDULLAH OCALAN - APO

Apo is a revolutionary, a spiritual leader trying to hold all the contradictions of his people and lead them into freedom.

'Lenin had the traditions of Russia to work with, Mao had the history of China and Ho Vietnamese patriotism. What do I have?... Kurdish people are complex - all the invaders and colonisers.'

I ask him if there was a moment in his life that has set him on the course he has followed? 'There are many moments... Here I am, there you are, all these people,' he gestures about him. 'This! I am astonished.' He is difficult and playful at times, enjoying teasing the *Der Spiegel* reporter, 'I know German philosophy. I am complex, like your Nietzsche', an intense look, the moustache and the mountains. Then he switches to deadly seriousness, 'I have lived for ten years with a rope around my throat.' It is true.

Above all Apo knows the significance of the struggle he leads:

'To solve the problem of Kurdistan will be to solve the problem of the Middle East. To solve the problem

of the Middle East is to influence the whole world situation. This situation in the Middle East is a special juncture of global politics.'

He is scathing about what the Kurdish people have experienced in the name of 'socialism'; a cloak for Turkish, Iraqi or Iranian chauvinism:

'It is clear that my source is socialism, but it is also clear that I have many problems with it. I can't say that this is a normal development of socialism. If I say that I reached something with socialism it is certainly not anything to do with the "real" socialism. If it had been the so-called "real" socialism I would have abandoned everything before now. What I can say is this, if I had been in the TKP (Communist Party of Turkey) I would never have been able to consider or discuss the Kurdish problem and I would never have been able to call myself a Kurd. This kind of socialism is very dangerous and contradictory and I am opposed to it. This is an important point. What we have achieved today we achieved despite "real" socialism.'

*Der Spiegel* senses a crack in Apo's socialism: 'Yesterday you said that neither socialism nor capitalism had given support to the Kurdish people. Socialism is now dead yet you keep your hammer and sickle?'

'The important thing is not to look at these signs, for example the cross of Christianity or the various symbols of Islam. The sign is not the important thing. The dream of a socialist utopia is not just Marxist-Leninist, it is as old as humanity.'

'Humanity can only go forward with socialism, it is the socialisation of the people. Marx analysed the issue scientifically and Lenin applied it in a particular context. Society is so confused that socialist change is necessary. The problem is that socialism was made into a religion in the Soviet Union...'

'You cannot understand us with dogmatic concepts... Our people are close to antiquity and in them you can see signs of the first steps of humankind. I try to encourage in them the most positive aspects towards socialism. This allows strong possibilities for creating the socialist ideal... Our reality is very specific and contradictory and it is very difficult to explain us with dogmatic language. We are not just making a national liberation struggle, and it is not Stalinism as people say.'

How did socialism degenerate into a religion in the Soviet Union?

'Vulgar materialism became a religion, an inverted form of religion. Religion is based on metaphysics and socialism in the Soviet Union is based on vulgar materialism.'

'The thing you can say about the socialism in the Soviet Union is that it must be criticised in the same way as metaphysics was before. The extreme critique of metaphysics turned into a vulgar materialism.'

'There is another side to consider. Great Russian nationalism was masquerading as socialism. Socialism was nationalistic there and Lenin identified this as Great Russian chauvinism. Do not look hopelessly at the Russian experiment. Do not look at the Soviet Union as the God of Socialism and the last God at that. There is a sentence from the Prophet Mohammed, "I am the last prophet and Islam is the last religion". Soviet socialism has a similar approach: they claim that they have said everything which can be said for socialism and that they are the biggest of all prophets, but I do not take all that seriously. At one time it was a dogma of the French Revolution as well, the cult of the supreme being at its peak. They did not want to see that there was something after that. Every revolution has something of this in it, imagining itself to be the very pinnacle of development. It is my opinion that the Soviet Union has fallen from its peak and that new peaks will arise.' (Abdullah Ocalan 17 August 1991)

# Kurdistan Freedom Party speaks on its role

**Over 40 guerrillas from the newly-formed PAK (Kurdistan Freedom Party) were training with their PKK/ARGK comrades. A leading PAK member described how, in the 1980s, the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) had prevented Kurds from south Kurdistan linking up with the PKK. However, Saddam's brutal repression undermined the credibility of Barzani's KDP and Talabani's PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) leadership.**

PAK: 'Following Halabja in March 1988, which was a disaster for Kurdish liberated areas, developments in north west Kurdistan allowed people in south Kurdistan (Iraq) to form direct relations with the PKK. Many people began to join in the ranks of the PKK. Some came from east Kurdistan (Iran) and some from towns in south Kurdistan and Iraq proper.'

'At the time of the Spring risings after the Gulf War there were possibilities to organise the people, but there was a political vacuum. We were not strong enough to fill this political gap. The other organisations, KDP and PUK, moved among the people with the help of the Coalition Forces which sought to promote them.'

'These organisations captured some of our people and wanted to kill them, but with the people's support we stopped them. We had organisation among the people, but were not well enough known. Our propaganda showed the nature of the KDP and PUK and we warned the people that their leadership would result in further massacres. When the Spring rising was crushed, the people began to see that our analysis was correct.'

'Along the borders and with the support of the PKK we conducted widespread activities among the people. These were the people who had fled the towns and Saddam's army. Iraq and Turkey had a plan to crush the Kurdish people, but with the strong PKK presence in the border regions they didn't dare attempt it. The people had found a way out of their impasse with the PAK and they began to organise around it. We made preparations for a conference, assisted by the PKK, and held it among the mountains of Kurdistan in Spring 1991. This changed many things: we formally announced the formation of our Party and began systematic work. We now have units throughout south

Kurdistan and the mountain region is in our hands. We are growing in strength in the towns.'

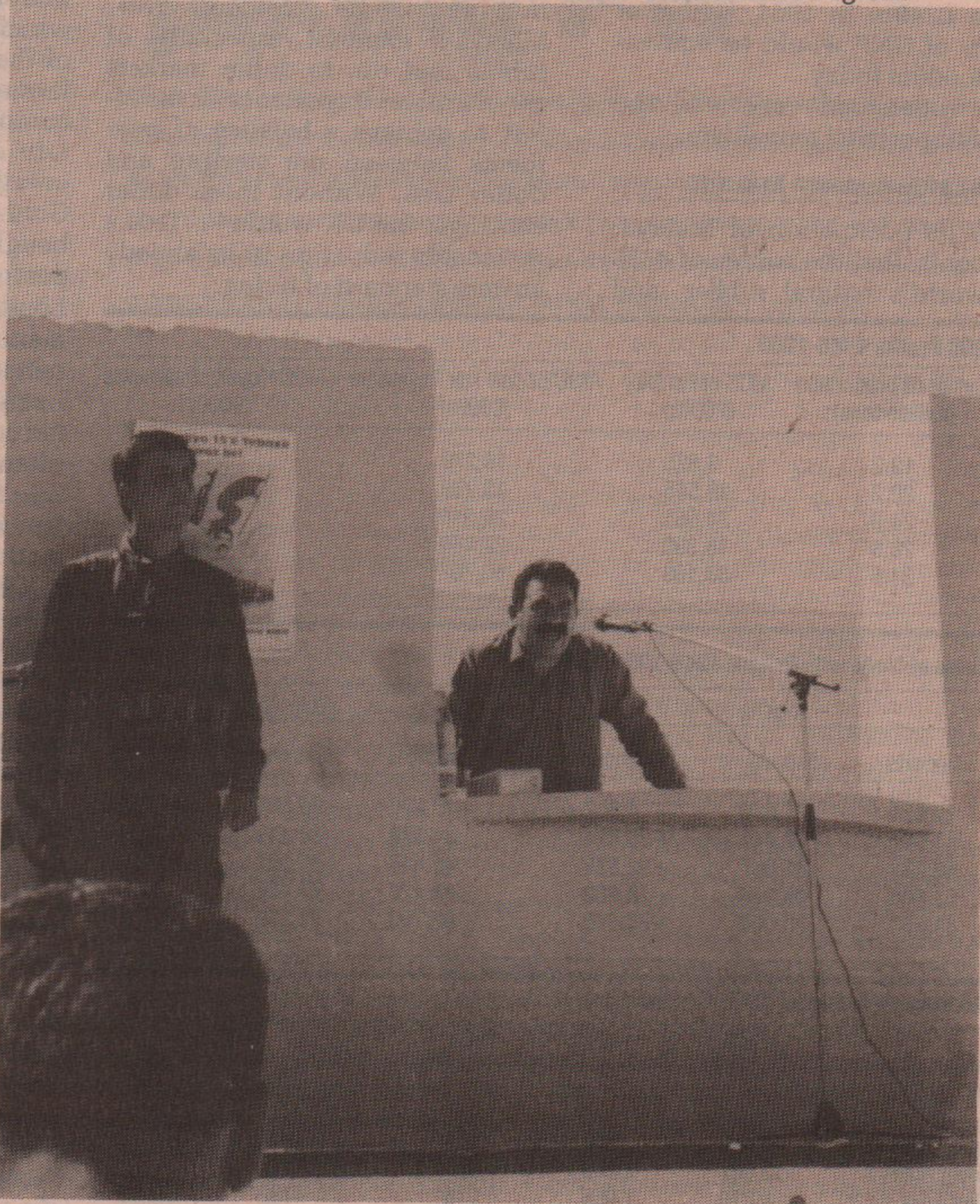
'Barzani and Talabani see that they're losing the support of the people and are attempting provocations. They want to shoot Coalition Forces and blame it on the PAK or PKK. We do not want military confrontations with either the Coalition Forces or the KDP and PUK; we want to defeat Barzani and Talabani politically.'

'Let me give you some recent examples of the situation. In Zakho and Suleimanieh the other organisations tried to capture our people. In Zakho they succeeded, but the people attacked their offices and now in Zakho and Kirkuk Barzani's offices are closed. You will have heard that some Iraqi soldiers were arrested, that was our work. The KDP complained that at the time it was negotiating with Saddam and that the PKK was a foreign force. For this the people attacked the KDP offices in Irbil and Suleimanieh and closed them down.'

'There is great potential now in south Kurdistan and especially after the Turkish military raid across the border in pursuit of the PKK and the recent risings in Dahuk and elsewhere. These are the first politically organised risings in south Kurdistan. With the support of the PKK in the north we can move more quickly in the south.'

'The Turkish raid (August 1991) has paved the way to new developments. It was a victory for PKK and PAK. The Turkish forces were unable to control the border and divide north west from south Kurdistan. In practice there are no borders anymore. The conditions are ripening for a united government. In the coming days you will witness our intentions.'

**FRFI: How do you view the role of the Coalition Forces in the region?**



APO: 'A people that had no name, no speech, found a name, found speech - Kurdistan'

'We consider the March rising to have been a provocation to drive the people into the arms of the KDP-PUK. However, when these risings were so convincingly crushed, the KDP and PUK were exposed as inadequate to defend the people. We, the PAK and the people, know that these Operation Hammer forces are not here to protect the people but rather provoke them. For example, the Hammer forces were provoking the people into saying 'We don't want you to go'. The KDP-PUK also tried to get the people to rise up to ask the Coalition Forces to stay. These Coalition Forces have three aims: i) to keep Barzani and Talabani in place; ii) to crush the liberation struggle in north west Kurdistan; and iii) to have a security area for use against all the peoples of the Middle East.'

'In the Spring rising the massacres were terrible, people were finding corpses everywhere. They needed some relief. When the Coalition Forces entered the area the people knew that these were not their liberators, but they also knew they had to be tied to them for survival.'

'In north west Kurdistan it is different: people there know that Turkey is a member of NATO and that these Coalition Forces are NATO. Consequently, they will have nothing to do with them. So the Coalition Forces say that "the people of south Kurdistan love us, but those in north Kurdistan do not".'

'After all the developments people's consciousness is awakening: many incidents have shown the south Kurdish people that the Coalition Forces are not really against Saddam, but just out as such for a short time.'

'Our aim is to organise the people in south Kurdistan, create a liberated zone and fight against the Turkish state, but if Saddam attacks we will fight him too. No force can crush us because our area of manoeuvre is wide. The Turkish raid gives evidence. It is the most important defeat for the Turkish state in its history, even though not all our forces acted in this operation and only some of the PKK. The information is that over 500 Turkish troops were killed. Now Turkish General Tolon says that it was not Turkey's intention to kill PKK forces, but to show that the Turkish state has the ability to carry out such operations! We believe we will have the support of humanity who do not want to see the Kurdish people massacred.'

**Why doesn't the PAK join the PKK, as a single party?**

'As a leadership and ideology we are one: Abdullah Ocalan is our leader. However, there are social differences because south Kurdistan has been under an Arabic state and north west Kurdistan under the Turkish state. There are also international and regional differences and conditions which would tend against the PKK in south Kurdistan and because of these we formed the PAK. Of course, the PKK has an important role to play for us in ideology and practice. Further, we won't fight only in south Kurdistan, we have members of the PAK in north west Kurdistan, getting experience of guerrilla war. We also train together. The KDP-PUK accuse us of being PKK, but it is not so, they are different organisations.'

## KURDISTAN

Labour Party Conference fringe meeting  
6-7.30pm Monday 30 September  
Brighthelm Church Community Centre,  
North Road, Brighton

Talk: **Jeremy Corbyn MP**  
Kurdistan Solidarity Committee





Ernest Bevin

# Labour and the reconstruction of British imperialism 1945-51

**'I am not prepared to sacrifice the British Empire, because I know that if the British Empire fell... it would mean that the standard of life of our constituents would fall considerably.'**

**Thus spoke the architect of the post-war reconstruction of British imperialism, Ernest Bevin, a few months after the Labour Party's 1945 election victory. The next five years were to prove that it was no idle boast. Indeed, at the time that he spoke, Labour was already directing armed action against the people of Greece; they were helping re-establish French control of Vietnam, and attempting the same for the Dutch in Indonesia. Shortly, they would sanction a brutal military campaign against the Malayan freedom movement, shoot down unarmed demonstrators in the Gold Coast and Nigeria, attempt a military adventure against Iran, and send thousands of troops to Korea. ROBERT CLOUGH examines Labour's imperialist roots.**

Bevin was a straightforward Labour imperialist. He had no qualms in stating openly what the left today are at pains to deny: that the Labour Party and British imperialism are inseparable. In the context of the immediate post-war period, the connection between Labour and the Empire was particularly critical. In 1945, British imperialism was almost bankrupt; its external debt of £3,650m was 40% of GNP; it had had to sell off £1,000m of overseas investment. It was heavily dependent on the USA, the undisputed master of the imperialist world. In December 1945, it negotiated a loan of \$3,750m with the US to tide over the termination of lend-lease; the real relationship between the two was evident over the next two years when British imports from the US amounted to £1,000m whilst exports were a paltry £180m.

Dollar-indebtedness was the particular expression of the British imperialist crisis. To resolve it the Labour government turned to the one major asset it still retained: the Empire. From 1948 in particular, the Empire was to be milked of all the dollars and superprofits it could earn. Resistance to this was to be ruthlessly and murderously put down. Three areas were to be critical: the Middle East, Malaya and West Africa. Such plunder was to cushion the British working class from the worst effects of the crisis, and help prevent a repetition of the revolutionary struggles that occurred after the First Imperialist War.

## OIL AND THE MIDDLE EAST

British oil interests in the Middle East were still enormous: the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) controlled all Iranian oil output, and owned the biggest oil refinery in the world at Abadan. It owned 25% of the Iraqi Petroleum Company (with Shell owning a further 25%), and 50% of the Kuwaiti Oil Company (with Shell again effectively having a 25% holding through an agreement with Gulf). The average cost of producing Middle East oil at this time was around \$0.10 per barrel, compared with \$0.50 per barrel in Venezuela, then the largest oil exporter, and \$1.10 in the US. But through their monopoly control of the world's oil resources, the seven US and British oil giants set the selling price of oil at a level sufficient to ensure the profitability of domestic US production. Hence fabulous profits could be made in the Middle East. As post-war production of oil boomed to meet increasing demand, so did the profits of AIOC (see Table 1).

Total declared remittances to Britain came to some £54m in 1946-7, and climbed to £177m over the next three years, while royalty payments to Iran came to less than £40m. Even this is an underestimate: gross profits in 1950 were £147m. The Iranian government received little more than 10% of this total. Not for nothing had Bevin declared of the Middle East:

'His Majesty's Government must

maintain a continuing interest in that area if only because our economic and financial interests in the Middle East are of vast importance to us... If these interests were lost to us, the effect on the life of this country would be a considerable reduction in the standard of living... British interests in the Middle East contribute substantially not only to the interests of the people there, but to the wage packets of the workpeople of this country.'

The nakedness of this plunder incensed the Iranian people to the extent that they forced the Mossadeq government to nationalise AIOC in 1951. The response of the Labour government was immediate: a cruiser and destroyers were despatched to Abadan and a world-wide oil embargo imposed on Iran. It was left to the subsequent Tory government to organise with the CIA the coup which eventually destroyed Mossadeq and brought Iran and its oil back under imperialist control.

British control of Iranian oil was not only vastly profitable, it also avoided expenditure of dollars. However, if AIOC was brazen about its profitability, its larger cousin by a factor of four, Royal Dutch Shell, was far more secretive. Its holdings lay traditionally in Dutch East Indies - where Labour attempted to reinstall the Dutch in 1946 - and Latin America. But its increasing Middle East interests also boosted profitability to a level which dwarfed AIOC: gross profits were £190m in 1950 and no less than £249m in 1951, which at about 2% of GNP would be equivalent to £9,000m today.

Bevin understood very well the nature of imperialist parasitism.

## MALAYA: RUBBER AND TIN

Through its occupation of Malaya, Britain controlled the source of 45% of the world's natural rubber, and



Members of Anglo-Iranian staff leaving Abadan in October 1951 take a last look at the refinery

30% of the world's output of tin. It possessed a resource not available to US imperialism, since most of the remainder of the world's rubber and tin reserves lay in Indonesia. Plunder does not even begin to describe how this was used.

From 1946 to 1951, total British exports to the US amounted to £515m. Over the same period, total Malayan exports to the US came to £460m. In 1950, when British exports to the US came to £127.3m, Malayan exports came to £122m; in 1951, the respective figures were £154.7m and £166m. A US Mission despatched to Malaya in 1950 noted the high rate of return on British investment in Malaya and stated:

'[Malayan] exports to the US were valued at \$215,426,831 in 1948 and \$172,809,000 in 1949. The area is the largest net dollar earner in the whole sterling area. Malaya's exports, especially of rubber and tin, to dollar markets are of critical importance in the effort to achieve a balance of payments between the sterling and dollar area. Without these dollar earnings, the UK would... face a noticeable reduction in its already austere standard of living.'

Table 1: AIOC Profits 1946-1950

Year	Iranian oil production (million tons)	AIOC net profits (£000s)	AIOC British Tax Payments (£000s)	AIOC Royalty Payments (£000s)
1946	19.2	9,625	10,279	7,132
1947	20.2	18,565	15,266	7,104
1948	24.9	24,065	28,310	9,172
1949	26.8	18,390	22,480	13,489
1950	31.8	33,103	50,707	16,032

Table 2: Value of trade with Britain 1946-1951 (£000s)

Year	Nigeria			Gold Coast		
	Imports	Exports	Balance	Imports	Exports	Balance
1946	19,824	24,626	+ 4,802	13,220	20,303	+ 7,083
1948	41,947	62,741	+20,524	31,378	56,115	+24,737
1949	58,231	81,067	+22,836	45,416	49,927	+ 4,511
1950	61,866	90,168	+28,302	48,129	77,407	+29,278
1951	84,554	120,064	+35,510	63,793	91,900	+28,197

Table 3: UK Sterling Balances 1945-51 (£millions)

	1945	1948	1951	Increase	
UK Sterling Debts to:				Total	%
Sterling Area: Colonies	446	556	964	+518	+116
Other Sterling Areas	2,007	1,809	1,825	-182	- 9
Non-Sterling Area	1,210	1,055	1,018	-192	- 16

There is no doubt as to why Labour responded to the threat of national liberation from 1948 on with such viciousness; as the then left-wing MP Woodrow Wyatt asked, 'What would happen to our balance of payments if we had to take our troops out of Malaya?' From 1948 to 1951, Labour organised the suppression of independent trade unions, hanged trade union leaders, tortured and assassinated those suspected of having sympathies with the liberation movement, and used the RAF and Dyak headhunters to ensure the flow of rubber and tin dollars into British coffers.

## WEST AFRICA: COCOA AND VEGETABLE OIL

The two major West African colonies - Nigeria and the Gold Coast - were sources of cocoa, and palm-nut and ground-nut oil. During the War, British imperialism had set up a system of Marketing Boards in these colonies which acted as monopoly purchasers of the cash crops grown by African farmers. The Boards would buy the complete annual crop, ship it to Britain, and then re-sell it on the world - or rather, the US market. In 1947, the Gold Coast Cocoa Marketing Board bought the entire cocoa crop at £67 per ton in sterling, and re-sold it all in London in dollars to the US chocolate manufacturers at £177 per ton. This netted the British government £16m in 1947, and together with the Nigerian cocoa crop £38m in 1948. By simultaneously holding down imports into these colonies, British imperialism was able to build a huge surplus on their trade (see Table 2).

The net surplus from 1948-51 from these two colonies came to over £190m. The plunder was naked: in 1946-7, the West Africa Produce Board bought palm oil from farmers at £16.15.0d per ton and resold in London at £95 per ton; in the same year, ground-nuts were bought at £15 per ton, while their oil was realising £110 per ton.

No wonder Stafford Cripps, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had argued during the acute crisis of November 1947 that 'the whole future of the sterling group and its ability to survive depend, in my view, upon a quick and extensive development of our African resources'. This view was echoed by the former 'extreme' left John Strachey, by now a far more 'realistic' Minister of Food:

'By hook or by crook the development of primary production of all sorts in the colonial territories and dependent areas in the Commonwealth and throughout the world is a life and death matter for the economy of this country.'

One outcome was the Tanganyikan ground-nuts scheme. This projected the development of a 3 million acre groundnut plantation in Tanganyika in association with the West Africa Company to supplement West African production and make Britain fully independent of US-controlled resources. Defending the scheme just before it was abandoned as a complete fiasco with a loss of £36m, Strachey said:

'The scheme is a thoroughly hard-headed and not philanthropic proposition... painful readjustments for the African population... this is not a philanthropic scheme started purely and solely for the African's benefit.'

Quite.

## STERLING BALANCES AND OVERSEAS INVESTMENT

The massive trade surplus of the colonies did not just mean superprofits for the companies involved let alone dollars for the British Empire. Labour was able to use Britain's financial control of its colonies to retain part of the payments for the colonies' exports as loans whose rate of interest was determined by British imperialism without any obligation to repay except at a time determined by British imperialism. Such balances owing to the colonies doubled between 1945 and 1951. As Palme Dutt observed:

'This post-war increase in the colonial sterling balances represents a further volume of goods drawn from the colonial countries, and used in practice to meet Britain's dollar deficit, without any current payment to the colonial peoples other than a depreciating and irredeemable paper credit in London... The increase in the colonial balances is a measure of the increase in the special intensified exploitation of the colonial peoples during these years, additional to the "normal" flow of colonial tribute.' (See Table 3.)

The increase in these forced loans coincided with a huge increase in overseas investment by British imperialism - a total of £659m between 1948 and the first half of 1951 alone. Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of Exchequer before Cripps, wrote the following fictional conversation with an Indian as a description of the relation:

'For years you have been in debt to us, and you have paid up: our political control of you ensured that. Now the wheel of fortune has turned full circle: we are indebted to you. It is true that you are poor and we are rich, and that you need our funds for your economic development. But I am afraid we are not going to pay up.'

Oliver Lyttleton, shortly to become Tory Colonial Secretary, was moved to comment during the October 1951 election campaign that 'the Socialist Government seems to be the first government which has discovered how to exploit the colonies'.

## THE RESULTS OF LABOUR IMPERIALISM

Labour's plunder of the Empire was then the envy of the Tories. Well might it be: it had offset the worst effects of the post-war crisis, and helped to lay the basis of the post-war boom. Without it, the resolution of the crisis would have required a far more severe attack on the conditions of the British working class, with the attendant political instability. For those on the left who, like the SWP, are moved to write off the significance of the imperialist character of British capitalism and the British Labour Party, the record of the post-war Labour government is a bloody refutation. ■



# Apartheid's secret army

**On 9 July, Inkatha supporters were killed in an attack which bore all the marks of having been instigated by the South African security forces: the attacks unleashed a wave of horrific 'revenge' killings by Inkatha. CAT WIENER examines the links between Inkatha and the apartheid regime.**

Up to 100 people have died so far in massacres on commuter trains throughout the Transvaal, and other attacks. The apartheid regime has launched a massive campaign of destabilisation which if unchecked will, according to ANC General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa, 'set in motion cycles of violence that would be uncontrollable... a war of immense proportions.' The ANC has called a 2-day strike in the Transvaal to protest against the continuing violence.

The bloody carnage of the last week is a direct result of the apartheid regime's determination to hang onto minority rule at all costs: the South African police force allied with Inkatha are to be the new UNITA, the secret army of the racists. 'Inkathagate' barely scratched the surface of the sinister alliance.

On 19 July, South African Law and Order Minister Vlok was finally forced to admit that the South African state had funded the Inkatha Freedom Party and its scab union UWUSA to the tune of some R380m from a secret slush fund.

Additional evidence from former SADF agents shows the extent of the financial and political collusion between Inkatha and the apartheid state. The result has been 2,000 deaths at the hands of Inkatha and the security forces this year alone. The campaign of terror they have waged has devastated black townships, undermined the liberation movements, especially the ANC, and strengthened the racist myth of 'black on black' violence.

However, while 'Inkathagate' may have embarrassed the de Klerk government and its backers - the British feared the scandal would damage the 'peace process' - and shocked those within the anti-apartheid movement who, absolving de Klerk of direct responsibility, accused 'rogue elements' within the security forces -



Buthelezi: on apartheid's payroll

the collaboration of Buthelezi's Inkatha movement with the apartheid state is nothing new.

● 1974 Inkatha was set up to counter the growth of the Black Consciousness Movement by appealing to ethnic - Zulu - loyalties. BCM teachers came under severe pressure to conform; it became impossible to hold office, work or even travel on public transport in KwaZulu without the Inkatha card.

● 1976 A student leaflet of the time referred to 'servants of the system like Gatscha Buthelezi who is paid by Vorster'. During the student and worker uprisings and strikes which shook South Africa after the Soweto massacre, Buthelezi called for the setting up of vigilante groups to counter 'lawlessness'. He is widely believed to have incited the Zulu hostel workers to massacre Soweto students and residents during the August stay-away.

● By 1978, Buthelezi was well-known as a collaborator: when he attended PAC president Robert Sobukwe's funeral the youth contemptuously threw coins at this Judas.

● 1979 Buthelezi praised Botha for 'abandoning apartheid', welcomed the formation of a scab 'Constellation

of South African states' and announced his willingness to serve on such a council.

● 1986 Buthelezi formed scab union UWUSA in opposition to the newly emerging trade union giants, COSATU and NACTU on 1 May. In June UWUSA broke an NUM strike, killing 10 NUM members and injuring 15. UWUSA was used by BTR viciously to attack the SARMCO strikers.

● From 1986 onwards, as the sanctions campaign gained international momentum, Buthelezi seized every opportunity to denounce sanctions. He sent a telegram to Margaret Thatcher to congratulate her on her anti-sanctions stance. He was the only black leader in South Africa prepared to meet Howe on his ill-fated trip in July 1986.

● In 1987 Buthelezi appeared in government-funded advertisements to argue against the imposition of sanctions.

● During this period, Inkatha initiated violent attacks on UDF supporters in the Pietermaritzburg area - its murderous campaign has continued to this day.

It was no accident that the largest police grant to Inkatha was made in Spring 1990, at the time of the unbanning of the liberation movements should the ANC not prove amenable to negotiations, the Nationalist Party was ensuring it had other cards to play.

Today the NP rejects the demand for one person one vote put forward by the liberation movements, and offers its own proposals, designed to protect white racist rule. It wants to see a 'multi-party' conference, dominated by its own 'moderate' alliance. Yet it faces the threat of the liberation movements united around the demand for majority rule. So, while two Ministers, Vlok and Malan, have been demoted (under pressure), and an 'investigation' into Inkathagate promised, the state-sponsored violence in the townships escalates.

Inkatha and the ANC have signed a new 'peace accord'. Such an accord can only fail. The PAC and AZAPO have declined to attend, indicating that the participation of any section of the liberation movement can only give 'legitimacy' to the Nationalist Party and the security forces. ■

## TRIBUTE TO COMRADE TANTALA

Templeton Nzukisi Tantala (TM), PAC Chief Representative for Uganda, died peacefully on 29 July 1991, in his home in Transkei. After attending the PAC Conference in December 1990, where FRFI comrades met him, he ignored de Klerk's limits on indemnity and remained in the land to whose struggle he had devoted his life. The African revolutionary Kari Essack writes:

'TM belonged to that grouping that orientated itself to the peasants and workers who were most oppressed. He left South Africa after the 1963 Sharpeville uprising. He understood that the only road to freedom for the oppressed was through armed struggle... he rose within the ranks of the organisation and became Commander of the military wing of the PAC. This position he held until 1978.'

TM travelled widely through 'the Ghana of Kwame Nkrumah, Algeria of Ben Bella and China of Mao Tse Tung. Yet it was Vietnam that left the most indelible impression on him - his heroes were Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, Giap and Truong Chinh... it was this example of a small people who can become supermen and women, score great heights, work miracles once they are inspired by the righteousness of their cause, that became his guide in political life.'

FRFI extends its deepest sympathies to Comrade Tantala's family, comrades and friends.

## A new South Africa? - history rewritten

**Foundations of the New South Africa** John Pampallis, Zed Books 1991 £9.95 (pbk) £29.95 (hbk)

**Originally written as a textbook for exiled ANC students, the stated purpose behind this book was to document the real history of South Africa, as opposed to the 'traditional' history approved by the South African regime. This it attempts to do in 20 chapters, covering the period from colonisation up until February last year when the liberation organisations were unbanned and Mandela released. CHRIS JAMES reviews *Foundations of the New South Africa*.**

As a general introduction to the history of South Africa, this book has its uses, but as a platform from which to analyse and comprehend the current balance of forces in South African politics, it has major shortcomings.

The liberation movement is, to all intents and purposes, portrayed as consisting solely of the ANC and its allies committed to the Freedom Charter. Mention of liberation forces outside this alliance is at best grudging and at worst derogatory. The uprising at Sharpeville in 1960, historically attributed to the PAC-led anti-pass campaign, is here described as a mere PAC 'attempt to pre-empt' the ANC's earlier plan to stage its anti-pass campaign. The account of the uprising at Soweto in 1976, likewise lays considerable emphasis on the role of the ANC, although it is conceded that the ideology of Black Consciousness, whilst having 'limitations', did activate the students to some extent.

This refusal to acknowledge the important part that both Pan-Africanism and Black Consciousness have played and are playing in the liberation struggle of South Africa, not only displays an alarming sectarianism, but also, by not even superficially examining the impulses behind the evolution of Pan-Africanism and Black Consciousness, ignores the vital question of the relation between black and white in South Africa. Instead, the term 'non-racialism' is continuously employed and no distinction is drawn between a black person involved in essentially a struggle for a future and the white person who participates in the struggle for whatever cause.

In essence, the weaknesses of this book all stem from the politics of the author, politics which certainly seem to represent the section of the ANC which has controlled the political arena for the last year and a half. Peculiar weight is attached to the role outraged international opinion has played in weakening the regime. The 'changes in Eastern Europe' are welcomed because they led to 'an emphasis on solving international problems

by political rather than military means'. Here the scene is clearly set for the cessation of the armed struggle and the finding of a peaceful settlement by means of negotiations. Assertions as to the ANC's leading role in the liberation movement are substantiated by claims that this was recognised 'even by leaders of big business' and groups such as 'Afrikaner intellectuals' who 'visited Lusaka for talks with the ANC's exiled leaders'. No reference is made here to the fact that the interests of these groups are diametrically opposed to the interests of the black majority. Along with the desperate insistence on 'non-racialism', this political outlook ultimately points in only one direction. The author, John Pampallis, does not see the black majority in South Africa as the force for real and fundamental change.

The usefulness of this book vis-à-vis its historical facts is definitely undermined by the bias which dominates the latter half of the book. Its portrayal of the legitimate liberation movement as being solely that which is Freedom Charter-aligned neglects and in fact denies a whole area of South African history. This, combined with the little insight it provides into the current crisis in South African politics, leaves little to recommend it. ■

## FREE THE SASOL 7

On 3 September, seven of the 800 South African Chemical Workers Union members dismissed by SASOL in 1987 (see FRFI 101) were arrested and detained by SASOL management.

They were arrested during a sit-in called to protest at SASOL's refusal to reinstate all the dismissed workers and to withdraw the subcontractors called in to replace them.

SASOL has stated that they will remain in detention until they abandon their demands.

The SASOL Strike Committee is calling for the reinstatement of all 800 workers and the immediate release of their seven comrades.

## 'You must be joking FW'

**On 4 September, South Africa's white-only President de Klerk unveiled the National Party's proposals for a constitution for the 'new South Africa'. Supposedly based on universal suffrage regardless of race, an examination of the 'checks and balances' reveals the proposals to be yet another cynical ploy from the Liar de Klerk, designed to keep power in the hands of the white minority and its puppet allies. CAROL BRICKLEY reports.**

Introducing the constitutional proposals de Klerk claimed: 'Nobody can assert that it does not offer every South African full political rights on an equitable basis.' This was the rhetoric. Far from proposing a straightforward constitution to bring universal suffrage in a united South Africa, de Klerk was more concerned to 'check the abuse of power' - the power of the black majority that is.

Sounding every inch like his predecessor President PW Botha, de Klerk assured his audience: 'We are certainly not prepared to exchange one form of domination for another. Black domination is as unacceptable as white domination.'

Like Botha's sham 'Tricameral' constitutional reforms, de Klerk's new constitution will effectively mean a white veto on all legislation, in this case by the proposed 'upper house' on legislation from the 'lower house'. The upper house would be composed of representatives from all parties gaining more than 10% of the vote in nine separate regions. Each party with more than 10% would get

an equal share of the representatives regardless of whether its vote was 11% or 80%. Understandably the upper house would be known as the 'House of Minorities' - the white minority that is. Overall the proposals leave plenty of scope for the sort of gerrymandering practised by the British in the north of Ireland.

All the liberation movements roundly condemned the proposals as designed to maintain minority privileges and to undermine the majority party. The *Sowetan* headline read: 'You must be joking FW'.

Arrangements are now going ahead for the inaugural conference of the Patriotic Front in Cape Town. The Front has opened an office staffed by representatives of the PAC, the ANC and AZAPO. It is expected that the conference will be held in October, and will further the united front calling for an elected Constituent Assembly. Now that de Klerk has revealed the regime's plans, this conference will be vital to establish a cohesive opposition. ■



# Riots: a little local difficulty

CAROL BRICKLEY

In the space of two weeks at the beginning of September, rioting broke out in Cardiff, Oxford, Handsworth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Bristol, with a high probability that more will follow. Politicians, police, criminologists, sociologists, clergy and the royal family were immediately at work attempting to pin-point the causes and the solutions. In most respects they were wrong.

There seemed little on the face of it to connect the riots: in Cardiff, an Asian shopkeeper with a monopoly on bread sales; in Oxford, racing stolen cars; in Handsworth, a power-cut; in Newcastle, the death of two young joyriders. The police were a factor but not necessarily the target.

Nonetheless politicians were united in their response: 'If they have problems and concerns there are other ways of dealing with it' (Major); 'It was a criminal attack on the community. There is absolutely no excuse for them' (Kinnock); 'Yobbery' (Patten). The Police Federation called for a return of the 'Riot Act'. The vicars called it 'evil'.

Roy Hattersley, the Shadow Home Secretary, spelled out Labour's message while calling for massive increased funding for the police: 'The... disturbances are only connected by one single fact. They are the result of lawless behaviour which cannot be excused and must be severely punished'. With an impending general election all the political parties are competing for the 'law and order' ticket. For Labour, in particular, the police vote is worth more than the youth on Britain's decaying housing estates.

No amount of bombast, harsher punishments, police recruitment, or invocation of the Gods is going to solve the problem,



however. A decade of Thatcherism shifted the social and political consensus which allowed a few crumbs of wealth, health, education and social security to be distributed (albeit unequally) across the board to the British working class in return for political quiescence at home and unfettered robbery abroad. The Labour Party was founded on this deal, hired to distribute the crumbs. But in the 1980s Labour and the Trade Union leadership have joined the Tories to consign ever larger sections of the working class to the political, social and economic wasteland. British capital can't afford the crumbs for them any more.

So in the last decade the poorest half million in Britain lost 23% of real income (the richest half million gained 72%). In the three months to June 1991, homelessness rose by 11%, mortgage arrears accounting for 12% of these. Unemployment - not a new factor on the estates of Newcastle - has grown. Meadow Well has 86% unemployment and was identified in the early 1980s as the North East's poorest area with every pupil in the local primary school receiving clothing grants. After ten years of free market, slashed welfare benefits, job wastage, health and welfare cuts, the poll tax and housing decay, Britain's poorest families, and in particular the children and youth, have no stake in 1990s Britain.

At the forefront of managing the 'law and order' adored by politicians, the police have a pragmatic response. For two years the youth of Blackbird Leys in Oxford staged car races every night on the estate, with at least some appreciative audiences (one pensioner described them as good drivers). The police only moved in when police cars became a target. Time after time in the 'riot' areas, frightened residents point to the slow response of the police. The majority of victims of crime (which rose by 18% last year) are the working class poor who cannot afford alarms, taxis, insurance and all the security paraphernalia of the middle classes. Kinnock's 'community' is an expensive luxury. The police, who are cynically sensitive to the political climate, are content like the political parties to let the poor rot until the unrest threatens their better-off constituency.

The writing is on the wall for 21st century Britain. No amount of specially targeted schemes, phoney training programmes, crimewatch, riot acts, new prisons or tooled-up police, are going to hide fundamental class divisions, even supposing that British capital could afford them any more. September's 'mini-riots' are the rumble before the earthquake. What is required is a movement which represents and unites the interests of the poor and oppressed. Barbarism is the alternative. ■

## Sara Thornton fights life sentence

LORNA REID

Sara Thornton, gaoled for life for killing her drunken, violent husband, protested against her sentence by going on hunger strike for three weeks. Announcing her decision to fight she said: 'I have no wish to die... I love life... but I cannot let this issue pass by without making a stand and my life is all I have left to fight with.' She came off hunger strike at the request of her 11-year-old daughter but continues to protest against her sentence.

Sara Thornton's drunken husband had knocked her unconscious, threatened to kill her and her daughter, punched her on the head and eye, broke a glass over her, threatened to throw her through a plate glass window and smashed furniture. On the night she killed him, he threatened to murder her in her sleep.

Sara received the mandatory sentence for murder because, according to the prosecution, the time she took to sharpen a kitchen knife, the murder weapon, was a 'cooling off' period. She therefore could not claim that she had acted in a moment of severe provocation, 'snapped',

and thus face a charge of manslaughter which can carry a shorter sentence.

Redefining provocation, however, is not what the gaoling of Sara is about. It is about teaching women a lesson. Forty per cent of women who kill their husbands receive life sentences compared with 25 per cent of husbands who kill their wives. Just days after Sara lost her appeal, Joseph McGrail was given a two-year suspended sentence for killing his wife, whom he claimed was an alcoholic. The trial judge agreed that her drunken behaviour, 'would have tried the patience of a saint'.

Capitalism requires women to take on the unpaid burden of caring for workers and to bring up the next generation of workers fit to serve the demands of capital. The stereotyped image of women as submissive, caring, feminine, has been carefully nurtured as justification for a woman's 'natural' role in life as wife and mother.

A battered wife is expected to accept her lot, to assume blame for provoking the violence. The woman who cannot sustain self-restraint and loyalty to a violent husband and takes matters into her own hands - as Sara Thornton did - commits the worst

crime of transgressing the stereotype. So she gets the maximum punishment. Men, on the other hand, are allowed to be violent and ill-tempered.

The violence Sara suffered is not unusual. In 90 per cent of divorce cases brought by women, physical abuse is a factor. In London every year 1,000 women call the police for protection. The actual number of wife-beatings in London every year is estimated at 750,000.



Sara Thornton

Women who kill their violent partners are often asked why they did not leave. But many women, particularly working class women, have nowhere to go. They face an immediate future of homelessness. In 1981 the Department of the Environment recommended 900 refuges should be set up but there are today only about 200, most of

## THE TUC CONFERENCE 'Alien to the interests of the working class'

BOB SHEPHERD

The theme of this year's Trades Union Congress was the need for a 'social partnership'; according to Norman Willis, 'this is the air they breathe in many parts of Europe'. The social partnership envisaged by the TUC is with a Labour government, and that was the other 'theme' running through the week: not doing anything that could remotely upset Labour's chances at the general election.

This meant that the resolution moved by the NUM calling for the repeal of all anti-union laws was rejected in favour of a resolution supporting Labour Party policy. It meant that a motion was passed supporting a national minimum wage, which linked pay bargaining with a so-called 'National Economic Assessment'. This is the green light to a future Labour government to introduce pay restraint with the tacit support of the TUC.

The Congress ended with an attack on no-strike single union deals being imposed by Japanese firms moving into Britain. Singled out for criticism were the EETPU, no

longer an affiliate of the TUC, and the AEU, who are in the forefront of signing these agreements. Ken Gill, general secretary of MSF, ex-member of the CPGB and *Morning Star* supporter, attacked the single union deals, referring in his motion to the 'alien approach to trade union organisation' by Japanese firms.

The reality of the single union, no-strike deals is that it is the logical conclusion of the quest for a social partnership. To give it its correct term, class collaboration. The real 'alien approach to trade union organisation' is the TUC's. An approach alien to the interests of the working class. ■



Scargill opposes Tory laws

## Poll Tax: amnesty now!

LORNA REID

Amidst evidence that the Poll Tax is hitting hardest at the poor, over 60 people so far have been gaoled for non-payment. Of those gaoled, 47 have been gaoled by Labour Councils. Labour-controlled Burnley Council, Lancashire, has gaoled 16 people, nearly a quarter of the total.

The number of people whose Poll Tax is deducted from social security benefits has risen by 63 per cent from 36,000 in June to 58 per cent now. So far, 4.5 million summonses have been issued for non-payment with the number likely to rise to 7.5 million by the end of this year.

The government's insistence that the poor pay 20 per cent of their Poll Tax is one of the main reasons for non-payment within inner city areas. The poor simply cannot afford to pay - a fact recognised by the Tory-controlled London Boroughs Association which is calling for the abolition of the 20 per cent rule.

Prosecutions, gaolings, attachment of income and the use of bailiffs are having no effect in persuading one in four adults to pay. The Audit Commission has said that the cost to councils of trying to recover

20 per cent Poll Tax from the poor costs more than what is actually collected.

In Scotland, increasing non-payment means that only £11.50 per head has been collected instead of the average £230 per head. Across the country, local authorities are counting the cost of huge deficits in their anticipated collection rates. At least £1bn is owed to local authorities in England, many of whom believe that eventually £500m will have to be written off.

Whilst Tory and Labour councils compete to imprison the poor - with Labour clearly in the lead - cuts in services as a result of non-collection of the Poll Tax will hit the poor first. The Poll Tax has been defeated. It must be repealed now and all Poll Tax prisoners released immediately.

Saroosh Ayendeh was gaoled for three months by Nottingham magistrates. On 7 September his supporters held a 200-strong demonstration outside Lincoln prison where he is being held. 'In case of any trouble' (the prison's explanation), Saroosh was moved to solitary confinement on 6 September and held there until 9 September. Saroosh was not charged with any disciplinary offence to justify holding him in solitary confinement. ■

them operating on a shoestring. To go to social services means risking your children being taken into care, and the police, despite claims to the contrary, are reluctant to intervene, ranking domestic violence with 'stranded people, lost property and stray animals', according to one Assistant Commissioner of the Met police.

Sara Thornton is not asking to

be set free. She is not claiming she is innocent of killing her husband. She is demanding that the severe provocation she suffered is recognised as a critically important factor. By openly sympathising with the man who kills his 'nagging wife' and punishing the woman who kills her violent husband, the courts are justifying the continuing brutalisation of women. ■

## IN BRIEF

### Deaths in special hospitals

#### BROADMOOR

Orville Blackwood is the third young black person to die after being forcibly sedated in Broadmoor hospital since 1984.

Orville, aged 31, was detained in Broadmoor in 1987 during a four-year sentence for armed robbery involving a toy gun. Last year, on release, he was detained further under the Mental Health Act.

Orville's mother has claimed that 12 members of staff, including a doctor, were involved in administering Orville's sedation by injection.

The first of the three Broadmoor deaths was that of Michael Martin who choked on his vomit after being injected with tranquilisers and left alone in a seclusion room. An inquest recorded a verdict of accidental death aggravated by lack of care.

The second death, in 1988, was that of Joe Watts, aged 30, who was also left alone after being sedated with twice his usual dose of Largactyl. The hospital claimed he had thrown himself at six 'nurses' wearing helmets and carrying riot shields.

#### ASHWORTH

A public inquiry to examine allegations of brutality at Ashworth hospital is underway. 600 complaints of brutality at Ashworth have been lodged over a 10 year period.

The inquiry has begun with the case of Sean Walton, aged 20, who died in a locked seclusion room 16 hours after allegedly being beaten on the head with a snooker cue by a member of staff and then being sedated with a double dose of pimozone, an anti-psychotic drug.

The public inquiry has been obstructed by an 'extraordinary' series of actions including the cremation of Sean's body before a public analyst's report on samples from the body had been completed.

In the three top security hospitals - Ashworth, Broadmoor and Rampton - the majority of 'nursing' staff are members of the Prison Officers' Association (POA). Covering up the racism and brutality dished out to 'patients' is common place.

The Commission for Racial Equality has launched an investigation into the experience of black people at the hands of mental health services, including why so many end up in special hospitals. The incidence of diagnosis of schizophrenia is believed to be up to seven times higher among people born in the Caribbean. Second generation Afro-Caribbeans aged 16-29 are 16 times more likely to be diagnosed schizophrenic than their white contemporaries. One in five patients at Broadmoor is Afro-Caribbean and one in three of these is held on high security wards like Orville Blackwood.

### Living it up

The average cost of holding a prisoner in a police cell is more than a night at some of London's exclusive hotels. The £220 bill the police present to the Home Office for every night a prisoner is held in one of their cells would pay for a night at the Savoy (£175), or the Ritz or Claridges (£190) or the Dorchester (£211).

A year in one of Britain's prisons costs the same as funding a student through Eton.

Lorna Reid



# No quarter for fascists

CHRIS JAMES

When the fascist British National Party mobilise nearly 800 racists and fascists against a south London anti-racist march and then rampage through the streets of Bermondsey attacking black people, who is attacked as 'foolish and bound to be provocative' (Simon Hughes, MP for Southwark), 'crazy' (Searchlight), 'stupid, provocative and politically immature' (Southwark & Bermondsey News)? Certainly not the fascists who were spared these racists' spleen. Whose provocation?

On 24 August 400 people, including a south London RCG contingent, joined the march, called by Southwark Black Communities Consortium to protest against the rise in racist attacks from both police and fascists in the Bermondsey and Rotherhithe areas.

From Peckham to the Old Kent Road in south east London, the march was lively and confident, with slogans of 'Under attack, we fight back!' and 'Black people have the right, here to stay, here to fight!' Trouble began as we neared Bermondsey, an almost exclusively white working class area. The march was halted several times along the route as groups of fascists shouting abuse - 'Black people are scum!' 'Send them back!' 'We run Bermondsey!' - were



dispersed by the police.

Moments later, as we passed the Tropics pub, a group of young white males burst through the doors to hurl such vitriolic abuse and insults that the march came to an abrupt halt. As marchers attempted to confront the fascists, police herded them back into the pub. 'Who protects the fascists?' one marcher called. 'The police protect the fascists!' came the unified response.

As we approached Southwark Park, we were confronted by a sea of Union Jacks hanging from balconies on the Silwood Estate, and came face-to-face with the BNP's counter-demonstration, cordoned-off by police. Their placards said 'Rights for Whites!', 'Immigrants, send them home'. Struggling started as fascists and anti-racists tried to reach each other. One marcher seized a Union Jack and within seconds it was in flames - a cheer of elation went up from the marchers!

As we turned into Southwark Park, we found the fascists waiting, allowed to come in by the police. The numbers of the fascists were swelling: frustrated and impotent, we had to leave the park and march back the way we had come.

The march was a defeat: it did little but strengthen fascism in the area, and was unable to protect the local black community from what followed: black-owned shops were smashed up, a family's front door was hacked off with an axe and a driver was dragged from his car.

But the attack that is being launched by the press is an attack on the right of black people to mobilise against the threat of racist violence, whether from the police, fascists or other racists. The answer is not to concede to the apologists for racism and ban the marches, but to build a real anti-racist, anti-imperialist movement that gives fascists no quarter. Under attack, we fight back! ■

## Gunned down by police

LORNA REID

Ian Gordon, a young black man, was hunted by armed police for four hours before he was shot dead in Telford.

Ian was carrying an unloaded air pistol. He had not threatened anyone with violence. He was known to the police, who knew he had a history of psychiatric problems. They also knew he was harmless.

The police began to chase Ian after he stopped at a petrol station. Two white youths spoke to Ian and played with the air pistol for a few minutes before Ian moved on. The police claimed they received a report of 'an armed nigger on the loose' but did not stop to question the two youths on Ian's pistol nor listen to a local man who confirmed Ian had an air pistol but told them he was harmless. They ignored Ian who shouted seconds before the fatal shooting, 'It's only a toy gun'.

From the petrol station Ian ran to The Mount psychiatric centre. The police made no attempt to stop him there. They waited until he left the centre and chased him half a mile to the railway station where, having cornered Ian, they killed him with two shots to the chest.

A meeting of 200 people was held in Telford to protest at the killing. Fighting against the police erupted and continued for two nights and hundreds marched in Telford the following weekend. Black people have had enough of relentless racist policing in the town, and black and white stood together to protest at Ian's killing. ■

## More British terror



Padraigh O Seanachain: murdered by loyalist hit squad

PAM ROBINSON

Behind the phoney 'peace' initiatives so hyped in the British press, the reality of British terror in the Six Counties of Ireland is vicious attacks on the nationalist community at the hands of the official and unofficial security forces.

Friday 26 July to Thursday 1 August, Fermanagh RUC arrested and detained 23 people in Castlereagh. Those held included Monica Boyle, a diabetic who is six months pregnant. The other detainees were slapped about the head, forced to stand with their arms raised against a wall whilst being beaten and denied rest and water over a seven-day period.

Saturday 10 August, Falls Road West Belfast Jim Carson, the proprietor of a 7-Eleven shop, was murdered by loyalists who entered the shop and shot him at point-blank range. A group calling itself Loyalist Retaliation and Defence Group said the killing had taken place because the



RUC tried to force Nigel McNally to be an informer in a shoot-to-kill-operation shop sold APRN.

Monday 12 August, Killen nr Castleterg, Co Tyrone Padraigh O'Seanachain, a Sinn Fein worker, was murdered by a loyalist ambush as he drove to work.

Wednesday 14 August, Newry/Armagh Road A loyalist ambush along the Newry/Armagh Road opened fire on a minibus taking women and children to visit republican prisoners in Long Kesh. Two women were injured in the attack.

Friday 16 August, Derry Tommy Donaghy, a Sinn Fein activist, was shot dead by loyalist gunmen as he arrived at work. Tommy had been released from Long Kesh in 1989 after serving a 19-year sentence.

Monday 19 August, New Lodge Road, North Belfast Bernadette O'Neil, a single parent, was lured to Queen Street RUC barracks. She was told she was wanted for questioning about an alleged civil action, but that the charges could be dropped if she agreed to inform. She reported the incident to Sinn Fein.

Friday 23 August, Lisburn, Co

# Deadly conflict in Yugoslavia

LOUISE MANNERS

'The power of Balkan nationalisms that have been unleashed in Yugoslavia is terrifying and awesome in its potential. What began as a power struggle between competing national elites has burgeoned into a civil war that could burst loose of the crisis areas any day now. If it does, darkness will descend upon Europe' (Misha Glenny, *New Statesman*)

The calamity of Yugoslavia's break-up has grown more acute. Fighting has intensified in Croatia, the northern republic of Yugoslavia, where the federal army and Serbian nationalists are outgunning the Croatian nationalist forces. Towns have been destroyed and dozens killed.

The EC attempts to impose several ceasefires have come and gone with no pause in the fighting. The EC's claim to act as a 'neutral' arbiter is deeply suspect. Germany and Austria's early support for Croat and Slovene declarations of independence have, as Yugoslav intellectual Milovan Djilas said:

'had negative repercussions: they encouraged Croats to continue the civil war as a way to win international recognition, but the possibility of an independent Croatia only frightened the Serb minority further prompting them to step up their revolt'.

Djilas goes on to say:

'Regardless of their ideological pretences, there are no essential differences between regimes in the six Yugoslav republics. While the governments are democratically elected the parliaments are ineffectual and the oppositions weak. The means of information are tightly controlled. In Belgrade and Zagreb, as well as in Skopje and Ljubljana, we now have autocratic nationalist governments.'

The civil war has diverted attention from an acute economic crisis which the war is only exacerbating. Living standards are falling in both Croatia and Serbia. Croatia will lose \$4.5 billion this year because of the war, much of which is earned from tourism. Yugoslav industrial production is expected to fall 23 per cent on last year, and unemployment is running at 20 per cent. The Federal government also has to renegotiate the rescheduling of 30 per cent of Yugoslavia's \$14.6 billion external debt.

Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian President, has no solutions to the economic crisis and is pursuing Great Serbian nationalism as the means by which he can hold on to power. Additionally all other nationalist forces are pursuing fundamentally reactionary and anti-working class policies. For example, President Tudjman's nationalist campaign in Croatia has included the racist expulsion of Serbs from the civil service and industry.

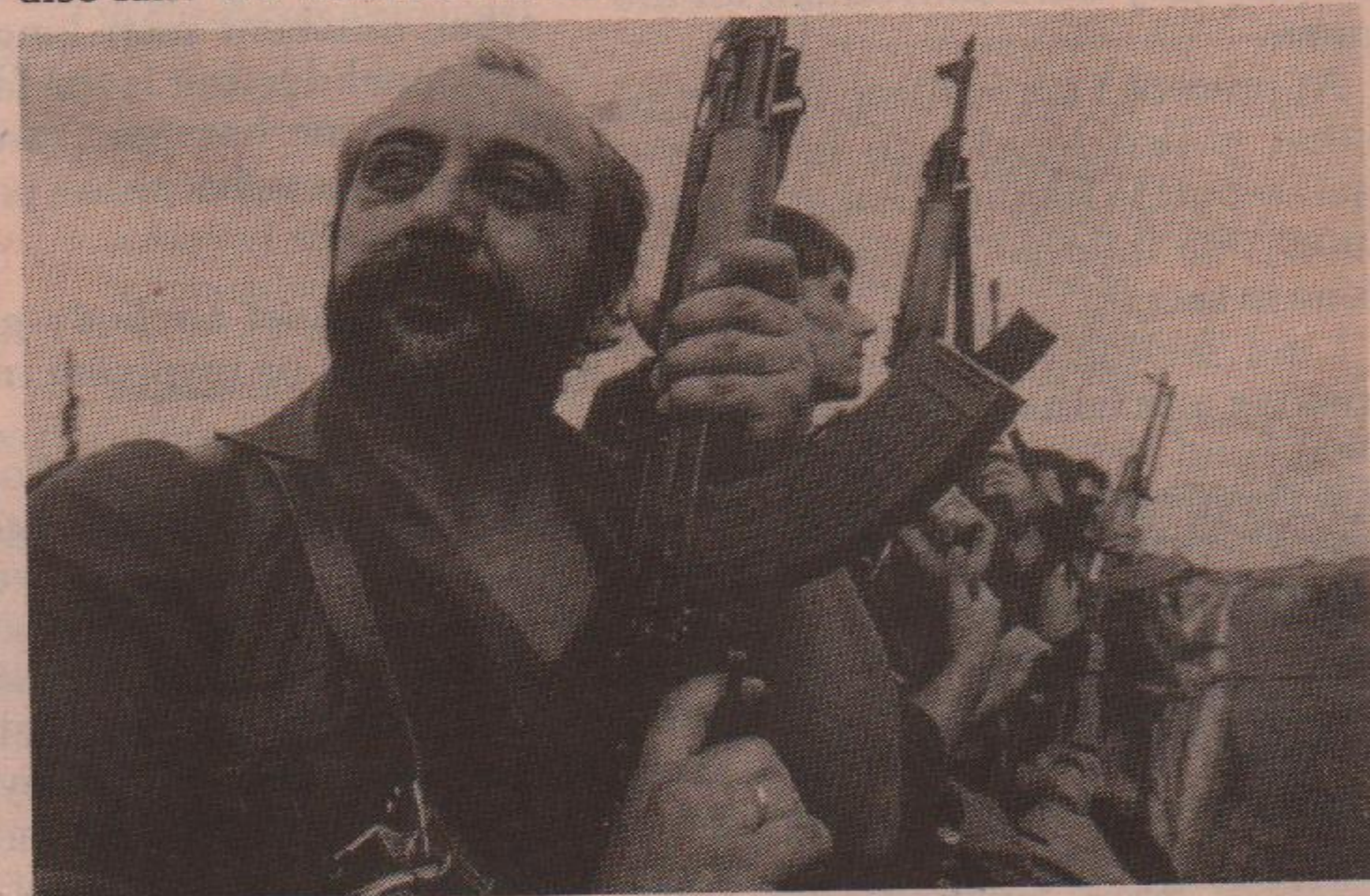
Following weeks of bitter fighting national disintegration is sweeping the rest of Yugoslavia. The Albanians of Kosovo are now rejecting their previous aim for republican status, and are pursuing separatist objectives. Shaqir Shagiri, a leader of the Democratic League for Kosovo clearly expresses the change in mood: 'If the Berlin Wall has fallen, why can't the border dividing our nation in two parts also fall? We want an Albanian

republic in Yugoslavia, but if things continue as at present... it is quite normal that the border imposed to divide us (from Albania) will also disappear.'

In Macedonia, Yugoslavia's southern-most republic, 70 per cent of the electorate turned out on 7 September in a referendum on independence. The clear victory for separation clearly shows Macedonian fears of Serbian hegemonism. Right-wing Serbian Orthodox nationalists call Macedonia 'South Serbia' and argue for it to be dismembered between Serbia and Bulgaria. The threat of a major conflict also hovers over Bosnia-Herzegovina where Muslims are the largest group, alongside large populations of both Croats and Serbs.

The conflict could easily spill over to the countries bordering Yugoslavia. Of the 100,000 refugees created already, 15,000 live in camps in Hungary. Hungary considers itself the protector of the 450,000 Hungarians who live in Yugoslavia, mostly in Serbia. Should Serbia make any claims on Macedonia, Bulgaria would probably follow suit. Greece, which refuses to recognise the existence of Macedonia, itself fears the latter's territorial ambitions.

In this terrible conflict where the most backward nationalist passions have taken centre stage there can be no winners. Those who will pay the highest price will be the working class. ■



Antrim Martin Watters was murdered by loyalists who beat and kicked him to death before dumping his body in the River Lagan.

Tuesday 27 August The RUC was granted wider powers including the right to seize digging equipment used for reopening the border and a declaration that construction of by-passes or new crossings is a scheduled offence.

## IN MEMORIAM

This month *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* remembers IRA Volunteer Raymond MacLaughlin who died 9 September 1985. Ray spent 10 years in British prisons between 1974 and 1984. Throughout his life both inside and outside prison he fought as a Republican, a socialist, an internationalist. He will always be an inspiration to us.

Jim Reilly, Luton and Home Counties Sinn Fein (Britain) organiser devoted his life fighting as a revolutionary Republican to free Ireland from British imperialism. He died 26 September 1980. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* salutes his dedication and courage.

## US out of Korea

TREVOR RAYNE

The US government, backed by Japan, is conducting a determined war of attrition against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

While accusing North Korea of producing nuclear weapons and demanding access to its nuclear facilities, US military has amassed in South Korea the greatest concentration of nuclear weapons the world has ever seen. The US has brought to South Korea 504 nuclear bombs, 271 nuclear shells, 293 nuclear heads for missiles, 60-plus neutron bombs, 150 nuclear mines and 500 nuclear backpacks. This is a combined explosive power 1,750 times that of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

North Korea has stated that it has neither the intention nor the ability to produce nuclear weapons and that it would accept a 'simultaneous' 'nuclear inspection' of North and South Korea, and not a unilateral inspection of the North'. The US Defence

Department has discussed a 'preventive forestalling attack' on North Korea and is expanding its nuclear facilities in the East Asian region.

In 1950 US imperialism, with British Labour government support, launched a war on Korea which took 4 million lives. Imperialism sought to hold communism's advance in Europe by rolling it back in Asia. Korea and China were threatened with nuclear attack in order for the US to hold onto South Korea. Now the status quo in Europe has been broken in imperialism's favour, it is attempting to do what it failed to do in the 1950s. Further, Japan is using the US campaign against North Korea as a pretext for its own militarism and is also demanding inspections of North Korean nuclear sites in order to promote its own nuclear programme.

Socialists must defend the Democratic People's Republic and support the Korean people's call for the withdrawal of all US forces from Korean soil and the reunification of the country. ■



## Free Winston Silcott!

**Winston Silcott is now in his sixth year of unlawful imprisonment, framed up for the killing of PC Blakelock on Broadwater Farm Estate. Recent 'ESDA' tests on Winston's alleged 'confession', the only scrap of evidence produced against him in court, have backed what Winston and his supporters have always maintained – that he never uttered the remarks attributed to him. Winston spoke to FRFI (via letter – his visitors are closely vetted) about his current situation.**

**FRFI:** Could you describe the situation you find yourself in at the moment? What is the legal position following the ESDA test results and the commissioning of the internal police inquiry? And how do you feel – optimistic, cautious?



**WS:** The only way I can define the plight of the Tottenham Three is by telling the truth. Me, Mark and Engin are hostages held illegally by an immoral British legal system that allows guiltless people to be incarcerated because they were convenient for the frame.

At present I am waiting for the internal police inquiry to hand over their report to Kenneth Baker. As you know, the internal police inquiry is done in secret.

I am feeling very confident and positive since the ESDA test proved what I and my family have been saying about my innocence over the years. I did not say certain words which make up my alleged 'confession'. It's good to know there is proof backing up what we have been telling the world. I am also extremely wary that the police who are carrying out the inquiry may try to limit the damage or cover up the police blatant malpractice in my case.

**Do you assess the frame-up, in your case, as arbitrary or a deliberate attack on you as a known face in the community?**

What happened to me could have befallen any black person. Picking

me as one of the Broadwater Farm scapegoats was an added bonus for the police in Tottenham. I wasn't very well liked by Tottenham's Met force because I was part of a community which vocally opposed the police when they were breaking their own laws, those the police are supposed to work by. Harassing the Broadwater Farm residents and youth in general was typical behaviour by Tottenham police. If one spoke out against the police bad treatment in Tottenham the police would mark the person down for special targeting.

**What support did you have during your trial and during the last six years?**

We had very little support outside the Broadwater Farm community during the showtrial. Support is slowly growing now since the new developments. I must add FRFI supported our struggle from the beginning.

**How have you been treated by other prisoners?**

Fellow men who are incarcerated treat me well. Most of them know the score – they are living the reality. Many have also been framed similar to the Tottenham Three. The only difference between me and the many other innocent men languishing in the penal dustbin is the force used to railroad me has been prominent in the public eye because a police officer was killed.

**Have you met anybody particularly interesting or inspiring in your time inside?**

I've met many innocent hostages who have given me encouragement and inspiration over the years: John McGranaghan\*, James Robinson, Patrick Hill, Billy Power, Dicky McKenny, Peter Mitchell, Michael Branhall and Paul Shirley. The man who has influenced me the most, I've only read about his plight, the living legend Nelson Mandela.

**What has given you the strength to survive the past six years' imprisonment?**

My family and the good people who have supported me are the backbone of my strength that wills me on to prove my innocence. If I was fool enough

to give up the struggle the police would see green and continue blatantly framing blameless people without using evidence like they did with the Tottenham Three.

The Police Federation, with the help of the gutter press, has mounted its own counter-campaign to stop your release. How do you feel about this kind of propaganda?

The Police Federation/media hate campaign is typical behaviour from the police who abuse their power of authority. What common sense people have to understand is that the police propaganda 'What about the PC victims?' has nothing to do with the so-called evidence that was used in my sham or the fabrication of the interview notes. It seems the Tottenham Three are not victims in this matter. The police know that Britain is a racist society, they know the majority of this country are more inclined to believe the falsehoods the media have portrayed about a black person. The police propaganda has been quite successful with ignorant people who are already biased against me due to the colour of my skin. Common sense thinking people who are aware of the facts will see through the police smear tactic.

**What effect do you think the release of the Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6 has had on your case?**

The Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six have shown the general public the two faces of the law that operate.

The Guildford Four release had a great impact on me. When I heard the news on the radio that the Guildford Four had been freed I had to shout out of the cell window to ask another inmate if it was true what I was hearing. When the voice replied the Guildford Four have been released tears suddenly came to my eyes and a big grin stayed on my face all that day.

I was ecstatic when the Birmingham Six were freed. I watched their release on the TV. I was so happy that day I had a private party by myself in the cell and celebrated with a drink of orange and pineapple Quosh. ■

\* John McGranaghan, framed in 1985 for rape, is finally getting his appeal heard on 14 October.

### REMEMBER GEORGE JACKSON! REMEMBER ATTICA!

**FRFI** remembers the revolutionary, George Jackson who was murdered by the US state in San Quentin prison on 21 August 1971.

We also salute all those prisoners who took and held D Yard at Attica State Correctional Facility from 9 to 13 September 1971. We mourn the 39 murdered by the National Guard and we send our solidarity to those still serving punitive sentences for their part in the uprising.



rested in connection with the Intifada and 120, including children, were shot dead. Torture of detainees was standard practice and punishment for the perpetrators derisory:

'Methods included beatings with

## Brixton: end the terror

**Following the escape of the alleged IRA 'terrorists' from Brixton, attention has focused on the security lapses within the gaol. What has not been highlighted are the wretched conditions which made Brixton the worst remand prison in the country.**

Brixton was/is a 'bad' prison, and like all such places it is so mainly because of staff attitude and behaviour. Brixton was run by the screws – aided by an authoritarian and remote Governor who let them get on with it.

I visited Brixton shortly after the escape. I spoke to an inmate who had been there for six months. The only time he had seen the Number One Governor was when the latter's photograph appeared in the newspapers after the escape.

I spent three months in Brixton this year. From day one I railed against conditions and attitudes there. There

were some good screws in Brixton but their efforts to improve matters were thwarted by the 'slashed cap brigade' who strutted the landings looking for trouble.

These bullies in uniform have it easy in remand prisons of course; there is little solidarity among the prisoners, whose main concern – not unnaturally – is their impending trials.

The problem of bad staff is not confined to Brixton of course. These men represent a cancer which is spread throughout the system. The POA does nothing to challenge them and indeed closes ranks to shield them from criticism. Instead of more gaols and words about change, if the Home Office wants anybody to believe it is even remotely serious it must take action to end the reign of terror at Brixton and other prisons. ■

Eric Allison

## Troops out of Ireland! Prisoners out of gaol!

### Appeal refused

William Armstrong, Paul Holmes and Robert Walsh, gaoled for life in 1973 for the car bombings of the Old Bailey and Scotland Yard, lost their appeal against an indeterminate life sentence and for an immediate release. Their six co-defendants have all been released, some more than ten years ago. They plan to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights.

### Irish POWs in Germany

One hurdle has been cleared for the two Irish POWs in Germany. Gerry McGeough and Gerry Hanratty have



Gerry Hanratty

Gerry McGeough

finally been cleared of charges relating to the bombing of a British army barracks in 1988 due to a complete lack of evidence. Gerry Hanratty was released and immediately rearrested pending possible extradition to the Six Counties. Gerry McGeough still faces other trumped-up charges in Germany and possible extradition to the US.

### Donna Maguire

Donna Maguire, the Irish woman cleared of the murder of two Australian tourists in Roermond, lost her appeal against extradition from Holland to Germany where she faces murder charges arising from an incident in which a member of the British army was killed by a car bomb in Osnabruck barracks in 1989.

Pam Robinson

## POWs Birthdays

- Vincent Donnelly 274064**  
25 September, HMP Full Sutton, York, YO4 1PS
- Harry Duggan 338638 31 October**, HMP Full Sutton
- Roy Walsh 119083 1 November**, HMP Gartree, Leicester Road, Market Harborough, Leicester LE16 7RP
- Sean Kinsella 758661 5 November**, HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Brasside, Co Durham DH1 5YD
- Paul Norney 338532 11 November**, HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs WR11 5TZ
- Brendan Dowd 758662**  
17 November, HMP Full Sutton

## REVIEW

## Amnesty Report 1991

**The introduction to the 1991 Amnesty International Report gives an optimistic welcome to the New World Order, applauding 'dramatic political changes' in Eastern Europe, where, 'Respect for fundamental human rights was at the heart of events.' and former 'prisoner of conscience', Vaclav Havel, rose to become President of his country. However, the majority of the Report itself only serves to demonstrate that the Old (imperialist) World Order is alive and kicking. NICKI JAMESON reports.**

At the end of 1990 2,300 people were on death row in the US. The Amnesty Report gives the horrific details:

'... Charles Walker was executed by lethal injection. Three physicians reportedly inserted an intravenous line through which non-medical staff later injected the lethal medication.'

'... flames and smoke emitted from Jesse Tafero's headpiece during his electrocution in Florida in May. Three applications of high-voltage electricity were required before he

was pronounced dead, owing to a malfunction caused by use of the wrong type of sponge in the headpiece. Executions in Florida were temporarily suspended until the state declared the electric chair was working properly.'

This is the land of freedom and democracy, the guardian of peace, the example to the world – racist, barbaric and sadistic.

In 'Israel and the Occupied Territories' 25,000 Palestinians were ar-

truncheons and rifle butts; hooding with dirty sacks; sleep deprivation by prolonged shackling in contorted positions; confinement in small, darkened cells... and squeezing of testicles.

'Scores of babies needed urgent treatment after tear-gas canisters were thrown into a Gaza maternity clinic... A soldier received a 10-day prison sentence in connection with the incident.'

The hypocrisy of the imperialists is overwhelming. In 1990 Iraq annexed Kuwait. Since 1988 Amnesty had been appealing to the UN for urgent action to stop atrocities against the Kurdish people. There had been little interest and no action. Now:

'Suddenly the telephones... were busy with inquiries about Iraq's human rights record... Exiled Kurds who had battled for so long to have their stories heard, were invited to speak to the media.'

The section on Britain exposes the activities of the occupying army and 'security forces' in the north of Ire-

land, particularly the shooting dead of young, unarmed, 'joy-riders' at non-existent checkpoints.

As always, Amnesty's annual Report is full of useful information. But, also as always, Amnesty's specific view of human rights, slants the Report. Amnesty seeks the 'release of prisoners of conscience'. It defines these as, 'people detained for their beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin, language or religion who have not used or advocated violence'. And, in response to 17 years of campaigning by gay organisations, Amnesty is finally preparing to consider men and women gaoled for their sexuality as 'prisoners of conscience'. The result of Amnesty's pacifist stance is that if you live under an oppressive regime and you speak out and are arrested, Amnesty will plead your case. If you take action, take up arms, join a liberation movement Amnesty will consider you a 'political prisoner' and deserving of a 'fair and prompt trial' but it will not advocate your release.

Amnesty International Report 1991 Amnesty International Publications.



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

### FRFI Readers Groups in your area

If you would like to meet regularly to discuss the contents of FRFI please contact us for details of an FRFI Readers Group in your area. Write to FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX or phone 071 837 1688.

### National Demonstration for a Poll Tax amnesty

For all Poll Tax debts to be written off, for an amnesty for gaoled non-payers and those gaoled for the Trafalgar Square demonstration March 1990.

Saturday 19 October 1991. Assemble 1pm at Caledonian Park, Market Road, Islington, London N7 (Caledonian Road tube). March to Trafalgar Square via Pentonville Prison.

Called by Prisoners Support Group, Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign and local anti-Poll Tax groups. For more details write to TSDC, c/o Brixton Law Centre, 506 Brixton Road, London SW9 or phone 071 738 7586.

### Justice for the Tottenham Three March

Saturday 5 October, assemble 12 noon, Civic Centre, Wood Green, London N22 (nearest tube Wood Green). Rally in Finsbury Park.

### Public Meeting: Justice For Dessie Ellis

Wednesday 25 September, 7.30pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn)

Speakers: **Ken Livingstone MP, Paddy Joe Hill (Birmingham Six), Piers Moslyn (Haldane Society).** Called by Justice for Dessie Ellis Campaign, c/o Haringey IBRG, Hornsey Library, Haringey Park, Crouch End, London N8.

## Support the FRFI Fund

As the imperialists, the media and the petit-bourgeois British left crow over the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, the RCG defends the legacy of the Soviet Union, highlights its achievements for the people of the Soviet Union and for the millions of oppressed peoples across the world and pledges to continue the fight against imperialism.

Our work takes on an added significance and urgency as we work to keep alight the spirit of communism and hold it up as the means of progress for humanity. Our newspaper is our main tool in getting across our political message. To continue our work we need your support.

We need our readers to contribute financially to FRFI. We need you to take copies of our paper to sell around your area, your workplace, your college. We need you to help us in our fundraising efforts.

All efforts are vitally needed to support the only revolutionary, anti-imperialist newspaper in Britain.

Please make cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications and send to Larkin Publications, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

I/We enclose £ \_\_\_\_\_ donation to FRFI.

I/We would like to be informed of fundraising events taking place.

I/We would like to take \_\_\_\_\_ copies of FRFI to sell.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No \_\_\_\_\_

# L E T T E R S

## Poll Tax prisoners

**B**urnley, Lancashire, is the town which has gaoled the most people for not paying the hated Poll Tax. Burnley is a Labour-controlled council.

People have been refused a McKenzie's friend when appearing before the magistrate – it seems like the people on the bench are all Tory supporters.

A woman was threatened with gaol because she could not afford to pay the ridiculous sum of £20 per week. She has a mentally handicapped daughter – sick isn't it? Another woman of 50 received a 14 day sentence and was released after her daughter had a baby. She had to wait before she

could see her first grandchild. A young married couple who were both unemployed each received a 14 day prison sentence and the Tory magistrate didn't even ask who was going to care for their 16 month old son. The little boy's grandfather had to move into the house to care for him.

That's four people I've mentioned who have been gaoled innocently. There are still 12 others who I have not mentioned.

I am waiting to appear before Burnley magistrates for non-payment of my Poll Tax. I'm not paying: I can't pay and I won't pay.

Yours in solidarity,  
Angela Heaton  
Burnley

## Ultra-Left lies

**I**would like to deal with several points in your article in No 102 'Ultra-Left lies from The Leninist'

Regarding your rebuttal of the charge that you gave support to the Iraqi bourgeoisie during the Gulf war. You have only yourselves to blame, due to your failure to categorically and cleanly declare position in FRFI during the course of the war; it always appeared to me that you have a very ambiguous position. For instance, although in Fisher's abbreviated quote from your press he makes it appear that you were declaring that you would '... fight alongside the Iraqi army', nonetheless, politically, in substance he is correct, insofar as you quote the unnamed 'Middle East revolutionaries' both uncritically and approvingly. In other words, did you not agree

with the 'Middle Eastern revolutionaries' that they should 'fight alongside the Iraqi army?' because, in your estimate, 'They have correctly identified imperialism as the main danger of the period'. Coupled with this position, your policy that it would be wrong to pursue a policy of revolutionary defeatism against the Iraqi bourgeoisie, means surely that you were for the military – and as you would admit, also the political – defence of the Iraqi nation, against the attacks of imperialism? I cannot see any other conclusion that one can come to.

You also state approvingly that 'they' [the Middle Eastern revolutionaries] 'see this' [fighting alongside the Iraqi army against imperialism] 'as a necessary and preliminary stage in achieving their ultimate aims', this being their liberation from the Saddam dictatorship. Surely,

## Armley brutality

**I**would like to make an appeal through FRFI to prisoners and their families for information and evidence regarding brutality and staff violence at Armley prison in Leeds. I am myself pursuing legal action against the Home Office over brutality at the prison and I want very much to gather as much evidence as I can. This would greatly assist my own legal case and more generally help me to highlight and expose the sort of barbaric treatment suffered by prisoners at Armley, especially younger prisoners. I particularly want to highlight the very high incidence of suicide amongst young prisoners and the part

played by prison staff in driving young and vulnerable prisoners to kill themselves.

I would be most grateful if prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families with experience of brutality at Armley prison would write to either me or my solicitor with any relevant information. Letters should be sent recorded delivery.

Many thanks,  
James Hayes 687  
HMP LONG LARTIN  
Evesham, Worcs, WR11 5TZ.

My solicitors are:  
Burt, Hart and Pratt  
135 Front Street  
Chester-le-street  
DURHAM D43 3BL, Tel 091 388 2735

even in hindsight, one must admit that once Saddam and co were free from fighting against imperialism, and with their connivance he was at liberty and strong enough to beat both the Kurdish and Shia uprisings. If these uprisings, in unity with the Iraqi workers and the demoralised soldiers had taken place during the war, Saddam and the Iraqi bourgeoisie could have been overthrown. Is this not so? Surely we must learn the lessons of our history, so as to equip ourselves for future struggles.

Comradely,  
Tom Cowan  
London

## Reply to Tom Cowan

Iraq is an oppressed nation.  
Against the imperialist assault we

were quite right to stand 'in defence of the Iraqi nation'. Does fighting alongside the Iraqi army constitute 'giving support to the Iraqi bourgeoisie'? The Bolsheviks fought alongside the bourgeois Kerensky against the reactionary Kornilov. But they were not giving support to the Russian bourgeoisie. When necessary communists adopt the tactic: march separately, but strike together.

Speculation is a poor substitute for argument. The fact is that Iraqi and Kurdish revolutionaries did not agree that uprisings during the war could have overthrown the Iraqi bourgeoisie. Thus they did not call for such uprisings. They understood that Saddam's mainstay was imperialism. A fact proved since the war. Without imperialist connivance Saddam would not have been able to crush the post-war uprisings!

## The true enemy

**R**obert Clough fails to differentiate the interests of the Third World working class from those of its ruling class.

To infer that Chilean activists, many of them Stalinists like himself, had anything in common with Pinochet and the Chilean ruling class is just crass Popularism [*sic*] and a lie that spits in the face of workers' struggle internationally.

The SWP derives its position from an internationalist stance. We hope for international revolution. We do not rely on one section of the working class to deliver it as opposed to any other.

To make predictions that Third World 'people' can only bring about revolution denies the role of the Third World ruling classes (often in collusion with Western ruling classes) in stamping out the working class struggle eg Peru today and Chile under Pinochet.

It also goes against those 'scientific Marxist principles' that Clough is always referring to. Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky never relied on predictions to assess the revolutionary potential of the working class internationally and they certainly never focused upon one section of the international working class to bring about revolution as opposed to any other.

Of course, it is true to say that they did focus on organising their own national working class on a day to day basis, and always agitated within their own working class around issues raised by working class and national liberation struggles internationally. The Russian Revolution was an outcome of this strategy.

Did the events of 1968 pass Clough by, I wonder?  
American soldiers returning

home from Vietnam were spat on by people in the street. As American losses in Vietnam increased, opposition in the West amongst working class people grew so strong that it forced the US to pull its troops out of Vietnam.

That is why, during the Gulf War, it was so important for the US ruling class to smash Saddam and to destroy the 'Vietnam syndrome' that had held US imperialism in check for so long after its defeat in Vietnam.

That is why, during the Gulf War, it was so important for revolutionaries in the West to agitate and highlight the difference in class interests between workers in the West and their own ruling class.

That is why it was so important for revolutionaries to join a mass anti-war movement in order to agitate successfully.

The enemy that the SWP was fighting against was our own warmongering ruling class – not the peaceniks in the CND, nor the anti-war reformists in the Labour Party, nor the Stalinists in the RCG.

The SWP differentiated itself tactically and politically from the CND. We were able to confront the reformists and win many people to revolutionary politics. We were also able to agitate, without compromising our revolutionary principles, on a level which left the RCG, RCP and Workers Power in the shade.

Who, I ask your readers, has made the mistake of failing to identify the true enemy of working class people at home and abroad?

Yours fraternally,  
Ray Farley  
Hackney and Stratford SWP Branch

## Reply to Ray Farley

**I**t requires an astounding feat of

imagination to claim I equate Chilean activists with Pinochet, since I did not mention Chile either in the original article or in my reply to Cde Wall.

Cde Farley says the SWP hopes for an international revolution. Fine, but hopes are not the foundation for any kind of strategy. What FRFI has done is analyse the impact that imperialism has had and continues to have on the international working class movement. It is a matter of fact that there has not been a significant revolutionary struggle in an imperialist nation for 60 years. It is also a matter of fact that there have been revolutionary struggles during that time in Vietnam, China, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa, Algeria, Cuba and so on.

Those struggles led to a sharp differentiation between the interests of the working class and the oppressed and the comprador bourgeoisie. But what is at issue between us and the SWP is whether it is imperialism or the comprador bourgeoisie which is the mainspring of reaction. In other words, would Pinochet have been anything without Kissinger and ITT, Unita or Renamo without Reagan and South Africa? When Cde Farley argues that the Third World ruling classes play a counter-revolutionary role 'often in collusion with Western ruling classes', he is attributing a secondary role to imperialism. We repeat: imperialism is the organ-grinder, not the monkey.

Marx's position on the relationship between the Irish and British revolutions changed between the height of Chartism in the late 1840s and the growth of the labour aristocracy in Britain in the 1860s. Formerly, he thought that Irish independence would be a by-product of the English revolution. Latterly, he understood that the stultifying effect of opportunism on the British working class

meant that nothing would be achieved in Britain prior to Irish independence.

But the SWP would have us believe that any triumph of revolutionary forces in the oppressed nations has depended on the privileged sections of the working class in the oppressor nations, and that those victories anyway don't mean anything, since their aim is to install a new bourgeoisie.

The fictions continue in their assessment of what actually happened in the campaign against the Gulf War. Once again, where was this 'mass anti-war movement' other than in the imagination of the SWP? Cde Farley says that the enemy the SWP was fighting was 'our own war-mongering ruling class'. Fine – but how are you fighting it if you build a campaign which opposes the withdrawal of the war-mongering ruling class's troops? And did that 'war mongering ruling class' include Kinnock and Kaufmann? If it did, why then did John Molyneux argue the need to vote for them just before the war started? Did that differentiate the SWP from the 'peaceniks in the CND' or 'the anti-war reformists in the Labour Party'?

Cde Farley says the SWP confronted the reformists – but if Cde Callinicos' immediate public acceptance of 14 of the infamous 15 conditions represents 'confrontation' then someone needs to look at the dictionary – and that someone is not I. It is ironic that Cde Farley chooses to accuse me of 'Popularism' when in practice it was the SWP against whom such an accusation could be justifiably levelled. After all, it was they who united with the petit bourgeoisie of the imperialist nation on a platform chosen by that petit bourgeoisie and then pretended that this was the essence of anti-imperialist struggle.

So in conclusion, I would invite Cde Farley to consider what I did write, rather than attempt to infer

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### Eye-witness report from Kurdish Guerrilla Camp – The Rising Revolution

Speaker: Trevor Rayne  
FRFI editorial board

Wednesday 16 October, 7.30pm  
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,  
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(nearest tube Holborn)  
Entrance £1/50p unwaged

### South London RCG Public Meeting

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Speakers: **Eddie Abrahams, Britain-Cuba Resource Centre** (invited)

7.30pm Wednesday 2 October  
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what I didn't. He himself is silent on the nature of imperialism, the split in the working class in the imperialist nations, and the relationship of the Labour Party to this in the British context. The strategy leading to the victory of the Russian revolution was the outcome of Lenin's original analysis of these subjects. Perhaps therefore Cde Farley could enlighten us on what he and the SWP think about the struggle against opportunism?



## When all else fails, resort to sheer terror

We've just seen John Major in China with his human rights activist cap on, castigating the Chinese for their treatment of prisoners. In the very same week Amnesty International issued its first 'urgent action' appeal on the North of Ireland, specifically regarding the treatment of a teenager tortured and beaten in the notorious Castlereagh interrogation centre. While the British establishment's vicious hypocrisy and audacity speaks for itself, the re-emergence of internment and torture in recent months needs 'urgent action' by more than just Amnesty International. SEAN Ó MAOLDHOMNAIGH reports.



## Peace train to nowhere

With Peter Brooke's peace initiative an abysmal failure and British repression continually increasing, we see the re-emergence of British government-sponsored peace campaigns. N GARLICK and P TINNELLY of H5 Long Kesh examine the real background and role of the 'peace train'.

All aboard the Reactionary Express, or as it is more commonly known, the *Peace Train*. The latest development in this sad saga was the bringing of this media-hungry circus to London in an attempt to garner some credible support. In Ireland the organisers of the *Peace Train* are small-time players on the Irish political scene. Right from the beginning, their strategy has been to attract the support of Establishment figures, primarily from the Church and political fields. The main body which acts as a front for the *Peace Train* is New Consensus, a vehicle for pro-British elements.

One of the major influences in New Consensus is the Workers Party, although other pro-British elements also exist. A sister organisation to the *Peace Train* group is Families Against Intimidation and Terror (FAIT), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Workers Party; which since its inception has only ever criticised IRA activity, with the exception of one token picket outside the UDA Headquarters, and has never yet criticised the massive levels of state violence and intimidation.

Financial support for these groups is coming directly from the British government. Brian Mayhew, Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, admitted in Parliament that he signed cheques for more than £12,000 to support the *Peace Train* and FAIT. This money was paid out through the Central Committee for Community Relations. The same Committee has axed funding to much-needed community projects such as the Falls Women's Centre and Glor Na Geal. These community resources were victims of the Northern Ireland Office's political vetting system.

The *Peace Train* initiative stemmed directly from IRA activity on the

Border where it intersects with the North/South railway line. In recent years the British military has massively fortified the Border with permanent checkpoints on all main roads, hilltop forts, helicopter gunships and the large-scale closure of secondary roads. To counter this the IRA has endeavoured to draw the military out into the open and away from their fortified bunkers, by placing obstacles on the road and railway line which then have to be cleared by the British military. This has inevitably led to occasional closures of the rail link between Belfast and Dublin. This financial and political cost and not a desire for real peace was the primary reason which motivated the *Peace Train*.

This campaign which was started by New Consensus immediately took the shape it has maintained to the present day. New Consensus, which is anti-Republican, directed their appeal towards pro-Establishment figures. Further, in creating the *Peace Train*, they purposely created a media 'bandwagon' knowing pro-Establishment figures would opportunistically seize the issue and use it as a stick with which to beat Sinn Féin. Parties allegedly as diverse as the Workers Party and the Official Unionist Party have come together under the banner of peace in order to attack Sinn Féin.

To this end they judge their involvement in every northern Irish issue, not on the basis of the rights and wrongs involved, but on how much damage they think they can inflict on Republicans. This point is dramatically highlighted by their point-blank refusal to become involved in the Border Roads Campaign. The permanent destruction and closure of up to 40 cross-border roads by the British military causes more hardship and inconvenience to local com-

munities on both sides of the Border than any occasional disruption to the North/South rail link. This is further demonstrated by the activities of FAIT who allied themselves with criminal elements rejected by their own communities. We refer specifically to FAIT's support for the two hoods who sought sanctuary in Newry Cathedral. These self-imposed limitations are necessary because the groups involved cannot criticise British government involvement in the Six Counties. They cannot criticise the closure of Border roads nor the massive intimidation and murder campaign against Irish citizens: to do so would be to criticise the nature of British involvement in Ireland. It is because of this that they have failed to gain popular support amongst the grassroots.

The *Peace Train* and FAIT, under the umbrella of New Consensus, are not interested in civil liberty issues nor national rights, nor are they pacifists. Those involved in the above-named groups have been active politically, some of them for more than twenty years. They have adopted a pro-British stance, which denies Irish people the right to national self-determination. Furthermore they endorse the various methods of oppression freely exercised by the British military. It is ironic to see the likes of Ken Maginnis MP on the *Peace Train* calling for peace, when his usual rhetoric is supportive of a shoot-to-kill policy. Fellow travellers on the *Peace Train* include the Workers Party, who have recently been exposed in a BBC documentary (*Spotlight*), using evidence from journalists, civilians, the Gardaí and the RUC. The BBC concluded that the Workers Party/Official IRA were the only Irish paramilitary organisation to go over completely to criminal activity.

The primary concern of the *Peace Train* group is not peace but the destruction of Sinn Féin. In adopting this pro-imperialist position they are following in the long line of other counter-revolutionary forces used by the British to undermine the freedom struggles in all its former colonies.

Britain's record in Ireland is a known catalogue of shame. History provides endless examples of their human rights' abuses. Reports and rulings by various bodies, from Amnesty to the European Court of Human Rights, make lengthy reading. The list of Britain's derogations of those rulings is equally long. As recently as July the judicial system was modified to avoid bad publicity from the European Court's condemnation of seven-day detentions under the PTA.

Recent events point to a sinister change of strategy to subdue the nationalist population. The seven-day detention period is in fact the cornerstone on which the whole arrest and torture conveyor-belt system hinges.

Proof of this is the case of Damien Austin, a 17-year-old Belfast youth and son of recently elected Sinn Féin councillor Joe Austin. While modifications to the Emergency Provisions Act were being carried out, this young man was being interrogated and tortured for days on end by the RUC in Castlereagh. As he says himself, he had been subjected to intensive interrogation with only short breaks for meals and sleep. He had been slapped and punched in the head, had his genitals squeezed and severe force applied to body pressure points. He was refused medical assistance even after four stitches had been ripped from an ear wound.

This is not an isolated example. It is but one case that indicates a major policy shift in the recent period that has seen the RUC/British forces specifically target sections of the youth, some as young as 15 years old. Several youths have been brutalised in order to obtain 'confessions'. Many are in hiding to avoid the same fate as nine boys already on remand for attacks on Crown forces. 'Crumlin Road gaol's C-wing now resembles a youth training programme,' says a spokesperson for a campaign called 'Voice of the Innocent', set up by relatives of the youths.

What we are seeing is an all-out attack on the nationalist community. The reversion to the systematic beating and torture during interrogation is one facet of an overall rise in repressive measures across the Six Counties. Sinn Féin's legal affairs spokesperson, Paddy McManus, emphasises the same point: 'This year



Damien Austin: tortured in Castlereagh by RUC

has seen a dramatic increase in the policy of incessant raiding across nationalist areas.' While full figures are not yet available, all the evidence suggests that raiding this year has increased on that of the previous two years, which were the worst experienced by nationalists since the early 1970s.

It is obvious that orders to this effect come right from the top of the British establishment. Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin representative, points out that: 'If the RUC now believe they can torture suspects with impunity, and that internationally-respected organisations like Amnesty can be ignored, then such a decision can only have been arrived at by Hugh Annesley, in consultation with his political masters.' (emphasis added)

The masters in question, Peter Brooke and Co, are only intensifying their two-pronged attack on the Republican Movement. As we've pointed out before, this involves sustained naked repression on the one hand; and at the same time, government funding for peace campaigns and other propaganda exercises to create the lie that the republican struggle is isolated. The various peace campaigns are already exposed for their deliberate failure to challenge British terror. Peter Brooke is threatening to drag the carcass of his failed peace talks into the open again, hoping that they might be mistaken for a living initiative. But whatever they attempt to conjure up, the horrifying reality of recent events speaks for itself. When all else fails, resort to sheer terror. ■



**Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!** once again organised a successful delegation to West Belfast this August. On Sunday 11 August we took part with Friends of Joe Doherty (London), in the 20,000-plus march and rally to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the introduction of internment and 10th anniversary of the H-Block Hunger Strike. This year's march had extra significance because of the success of the 'Break the Ban' campaign. For the first time in 200 years nationalists marched through Belfast city centre and on to join the rally in the Falls Road. An important victory to build on.

An eventful weekend included attending a commemoration in Newry, participating in the events of the annual West Belfast festival, a celebration of the culture of resistance to British rule in Ireland, and of course delegates visited POWs in the H-Blocks and met a number of others out on parole. We would like to thank all the local families whom we stayed with in Ballymurphy for their warm hospitality.

This year we witnessed more British army/RUC activities than in previous years, including house raids and arrests. Several delegates were stopped and harassed by foot patrols and on one occasion two were stopped by armoured carloads of RUC and British army.

300 copies of *FRFI* were sold and many copies of *Murder on the Rock*.

Paolo Cowan