# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

**Revolutionary Communist Group** 

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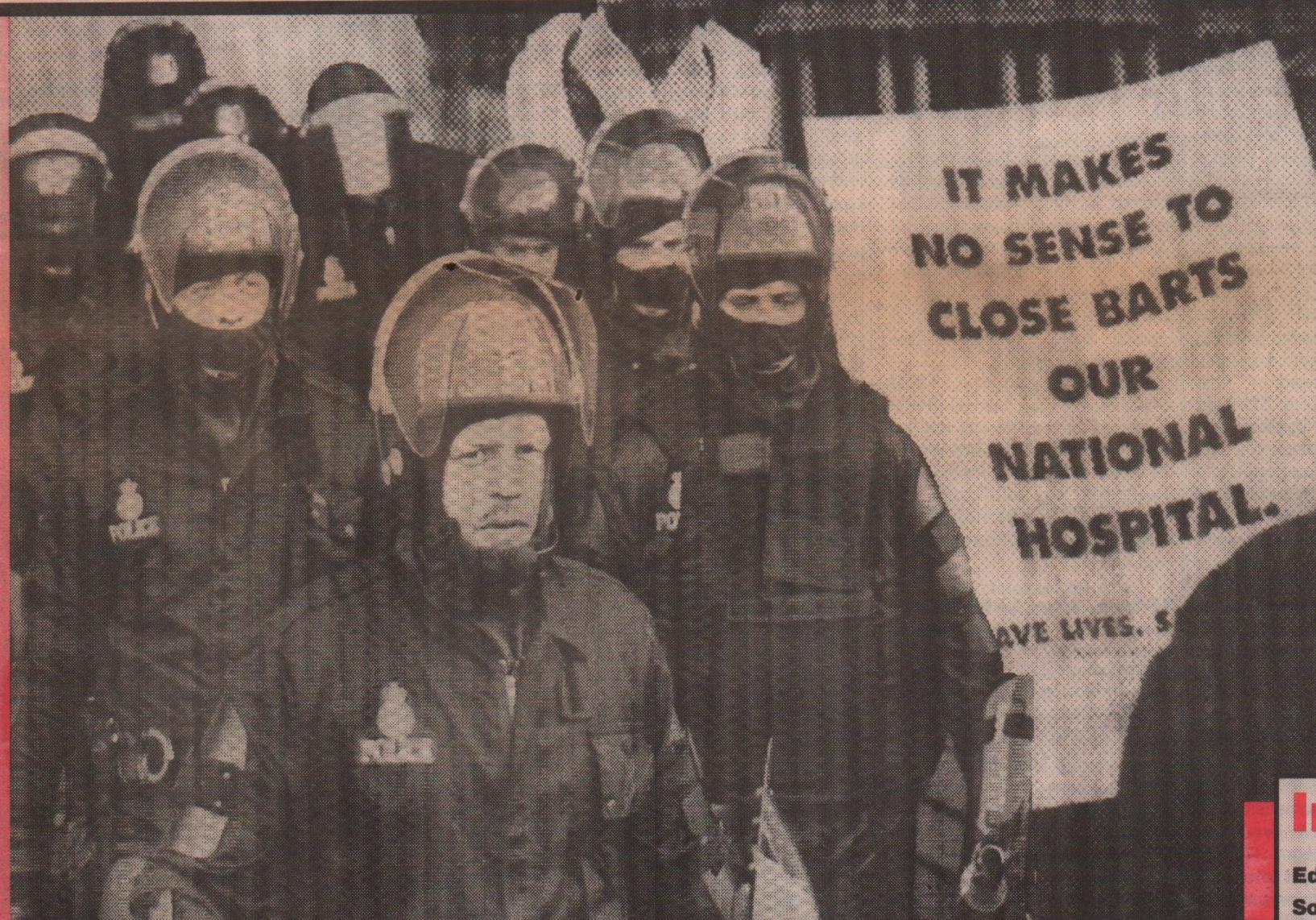
Solidarity

price

# CRISISHING PRISONS

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# Cutting HEALTH



Protecting MEALTH

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# Socialism is good for you

Despite the relentless propaganda about the 'failure of socialism', experience since 1989 has shown that socialism remains unquestionably superior to the capitalist free market for the vast majority of the world's population.

Since 1989 the dominant drive throughout the capitalist world has been to slash essential social spending - on health, education, pensions, welfare benefits, transport, housing and other social services vital to the livelihood of billions of people. Even wealthy Sweden, heralded as the model capitalist economy, is not exempt from this process. The resulting poverty, unemployment and the vast increase in inequality is necessary to feed the insatiable demand for profits of the multinational corporations which control the world's economy.

Since 1989 nearly all social and economic statistics from every corner of the capitalist world reveal the catastrophe capitalism is creating.

What has happened in the Soviet Union since socialism, however flawed, collapsed? In Russia in the last three years industrial output has halved. In 1993 inflation was a staggering 842% and GDP fell by 12%. In Georgia it fell by a massive 40%. This represents a tragedy for millions. Since 1989 male life expectancy at birth in Russia has plunged 5.2 years to 59. 800,000 more people in the region have died than would have done if the 1989 death rates had been maintained. 23% of the population now lives in absolute poverty. A small minority lives in luxury at the expense of the majority. The top 10% of the population earn 14 times the income of the poorest 10%. Finally, vicious nationalist, chauvinist and racist wars are destroying the infrastructure of large parts of what was the Soviet Union. Tens of thousands are dying, millions have lost homes and livelihoods and ethnic hatreds overwhelm and mutilate entire communities.

In Latin America, where neoliberalism reigns supreme, the story is much the same. The debt to multinational banks and corporations, the IMF and World Bank, continues to grow despite massive transfers of wealth to the imperialist countries. Last year it rose a further 5.8% to \$534bn - \$1,335 for every man, woman and child. No fewer than 196 million Latin Americans live below the poverty line -45.9% of the total population. Out of this total around 22%, some 93.5m, live in abject misery with income not even enough to cover basic needs. Infant mortality rates go from a low of 14 per 1,000 live births in Costa Rica, to 27 in Mexico, 52 in Brazil and 85 in Haiti.

Cuba, forced to survive a total US economic blockade and the collapse of its main trading partner, the socialist bloc. No one is homeless; no one is unemployed; education and health are free to all; all children attend primary and secondary

school. Infant mortality, in spite of the Special Period, is still below 10%, the lowest by far in Latin America and the Caribbean and lower than some cities in the USA and Britain. Life expectancy at 75 years in Cuba compares with 66 in Brazil, 59 in Bolivia and 56 in Nicaragua. Cuba has the highest number of doctors, teachers, art instructors, sports trainers per capita in the world.

Like Cuba, all previous socialist countries gave priority to the social needs of their populations in contrast to capitalism which always prioritises profits. In East Germany, for example, until 1989, 80% of children under three had a creche place; 95% of over threes were in kindergarten; 80% of six to ten year olds received free afterschool day care; 90% of children attended cheap holiday camps. With the restoration of capitalism these services, crucial for women's liberation, have vanished. Not surprisingly abortion too is now illegal, as it is in Poland. In socialist Cuba abortion remains legal and free.

It is no surprise that in spite of the difficulties facing the Cuban people they remain staunchly committed to socialism. Even a survey conducted by the US Miami Herald and CID Gallup in November 1994 showed 58% believed that the revolution's successes outweighed its failures, 48% described themselves as revolutionaries and 50% said that equality was the main social value with only 38% believing that 'freedom' was more important. Only 3% said that the political system was Cuba's main problem.

Those in Britain engaged in a fight against the injustices of capitalism, against the Criminal Justice Act, against racism, against hospital closures and environmental destruction must also fight to bring about socialism – the only social system capable of giving real freedom and economic security to the majority of people.

Today Cuba carries the banner of socialism in a world dominated by a vicious and rapacious capitalism. It has demonstrated what socialism can bring to the people even in a country under siege. That is why we all must fight to ensure that Cuban socialism survives. In doing that we will advance our own struggles for a better world.

#### **COMMUNIST FORUMS**

A new series of public discussions of communist politics introduced by Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!

#### LONDON

Sunday 19 February:
Defend Cuba! Defend Socialism!
Speaker: Cat Wiener
2pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn).
Entrance £1 waged, 50p unwaged.

#### MANCHESTER

Wednesday 15 February: Communism and anarchism 7.30pm Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.

#### News:

**BILL HUGHES** 

The £250m M11 Link Road will mean a three-mile corridor of noise, pollution and asthma for the east London communities it will divide when finally built. Hundreds of houses and trees have now been bulldozed, and many acres of green space razed forever. The Tory government may live by the maxim that might is right, but the 500 peaceful protesters who defended Claremont Road in Leyton for four days last November had other ideas.

The spirit, ingenuity and creativity of the anti-road resistance at Claremont Road showed again that we are the many – and when we act together we are not condemned to the selfishness and consumerism that capitalism decrees we should live by.

#### **Operation Garden Party**

Early on 28 November, more than 500 riot police, 400 security guards and 200 bailiffs surrounded Claremont Road in an operation costing more than £1m. For several months, the protesters had been preparing for this moment, and had constructed a remarkable defence system.

A steel net bridge linked the trees with the roof tops. Underground tunnels and bunkers were constructed to link the barricaded houses and a 100-foot tall greased scaffolding tower sheltered protesters welded into a metal cage.

After blocking the surrounding streets, the police and bailiffs moved in. Observers from Liberty were expelled, and network news camera crews told to leave the site. The protesters were slapped, pushed and abused as they were dragged away – each person being forcibly video-filmed by the police.

The last protester, Phil McLeish, having braved freezing weather and having had no food or water for 18 hours, descended from the tower on 2 December. The bulldozers and earthmovers moved in swiftly to demolish the remaining houses and trees.

#### U-turn, what U-turn?

Despite the much-publicised government U-turn on road-building following the publication of the Royal Commission on the Environment, just six major road schemes have been postponed. These schemes are mainly those in middle-class constituencies, where protest would be a potential electoral

#### No M77

MIKE TAYLOR

Wimpey construction are poised to move at any moment to begin the construction of the M77 motorway route out of Glasgow to Ayre, passing through parkland much prized by local working class communities for its amenity and wildlife. Already at the bottom of western health tables, the resulting flow of thousands of vehicles per

# Opposition to road programme spreads

liability to the government. Elsewhere, new roads are still being built and the campaigns to stop them are multiplying.

The No M65 Campaign has occupied trees in Stanworth Woods near Blackburn. It will be interesting to see how Tarmac and the bailiffs negotiate the steep valley sides and the River Roddesworth with their cherry pickers.

In Glasgow, the No M77 Campaign is fighting to stop a motorway being driven through Pollak Park, a much-loved and much-used open space (see below).

In East London, Waltham Forest Residents against Traffic are backing the newly-formed No New Lea Valley Roads Campaign, to campaign against the proposed Leyton Freight Road.

In January, 20 protesters occupied the offices of the Highways Agency in London. Telephone callers to this unelected quango were informed that they had got through to the Bicycle Lane Agency, and that all roadbuilding had stopped.

#### Cars first, health last

The threat which mass individual car ownership and use poses to our health was underlined again over Christmas, as reports emerged of the dangerous smogs which blanketed British cities. Extremely harmful levels of nitrogen dioxide were recorded almost everywhere. In London, over 23-24 December, there were 27 hours of continuous nitrogen dioxide pollution. As is customary, no public health warnings were issued.

The only people who (predictably) welcomed Environment Secretary John Gummer's announcement of a 'clear air package' were the AA, RAC and the Freight Transport Association, delighted that there will be no legislation or statutory powers to curb pollution.

#### Which way now?

The anti-roadbuilding campaigns have forced people to reflect on the ways forward to defend our communities, our health and our environment. There are possibilities of new

alliances being forged (eg with railway workers resisting privatisation), and a sharpening awareness of those forces that will isolate and undermine what people build.

Labour councils, for example, are in the forefront of roadbuilding initiatives in Strathclyde, Cumbria, Lancashire and elsewhere. Official Labour Party policy extols the 'genuine economic benefits of roads' and desires to see 'more people owning cars but using them less'. Transport consultant John Whitelegg has accurately commented that this is 'a recipe for environmental disaster influenced more by concern for the vehicle manufacturing industry than for the social damage it causes.'

At a recent debate in Oxford, the writer George Monbiot argued that the roads protests should 'move on from environmental protection to social, cultural and ecological justice'. Genuine communists will find no disagreement with this sentiment, and support moves to build even greater unity against the threat that the capitalist culture of waste and environmental degradation poses to our communities and our health.

Road Alert: PO Box 5544, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5FB tel 0635 521770

No M65 Campaign: 154 Miller Road, Preston PR1 5QS tel 0772 704103, 01254 776642

No M77 Campaign: 0860 728244, 041 636 1924

A30 Action (Exeter-Honiton) P0 Box 185, Exeter EX4 4EW tel: 0392 424469

No M11 Link Road: 081 558 2638



Claremont Road in November as bailiffs moved in to evict the protestors

day will further undermine the health of citizens, particularly children and old people.

Most vocal in arguing for the road have been Labour councillors for Strathclyde region who talk of 'economic benefits' to flow from the development. In effect the road is a fast track for suburban yuppies to head in and out of Glasgow and Ayrshire, one of the few stalwart Tory constituencies in Scot-

land. No surprise then to find a Jim Stevens, described in a TV debate as an economist, pushing for the M77. He is an Ayre businessman and a Labour Party activist whose kind stand to gain in terms of personal economy from this monster road.

Opposing the development are Earth First and other environmental groups who, following the examples of anti-road struggles in England, have declared a 'Pollock Free State' and have vowed to stop the bulldozers. The campaign is supported by the Scottish campaign against the Criminal Justice Act. There will be a mass demonstration against the road on Saturday 25 February 1995, assembling in George Square in Glasgow at 12 noon. Messages of support to Pollock Free State, Glasgow. For anti-M77 info call: 0141 357 4469 or mobile (hanging from a tree!) 0860 728 244.

#### Detentions illegal

**BILL HUGHES & MAXINE WILLIAMS** 

The High Court recently ruled that Home Secretary Michael Howard had broken the law in detaining refugees while their asylum claims were pending. The government, appalled that this judgement would upset the whole basis of its policy of detaining and deporting asylum seekers, immediately lodged an appeal against the decision.

Since the Asylum Act was passed in 1993, the rate of detention has doubled. There are almost 600 asylum seekers currently detained. Between October and December 1994, 18 of these were children. In

Campsfield detention centre, two children are currently being held. This contravenes the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Britain is a signatory. The 'crime' for which these children are held is that of fleeing persecution and claiming asylum. In a further graphic illustration of its ruthless attitude to asylum seekers, the government is threatening to deport two Zairean orphans, aged 11 and 12.

In a recent TV interview, Labour spokesperson Jack Straw did not call for the release of detainees, nor categorically rule out the detention of children 'in some rare cases'. Labour's only departure from government policy would make the situation worse. It wants adjudicators placed at Ports of Entry to make on-the-spot decisions. This would only make successful asylum claims more difficult, and increase the refusal rate of asylum applications, already standing at 76 per cent. That would mean even more people being detained pending deportation.

It has now been revealed that immigration officers have been given a quota for refusing immigrants to Britain. If their refusal rate fails to reach the quota set for each port, they lose pay. British immigration policy now resembles bounty hunting.

#### Kingsway victory

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM

'Victory! Student Occupation Wins!' runs the headline of the latest Kingsway College Student Union newspaper.\* The students had occupied the library in protest against victimisation of the union's president Nick De Marco.

At the beginning of December De Marco was elected by 68% of the votes cast, on a programme of:

- · action against the cuts;
- independent and democratic student organisation;
- · link up with teachers and other college workers;
- · fightback against racism, fascism, sexism and anti-lesbian/ gav bigotry.

All the candidates standing on this same Kingsway Student Action programme were elected.

Although the students, about 70% black, had elected their union officers, the college management immediately launched a political witchhunt to get rid of De Marco. The governors started an 'investigation into Nick (claiming to be concerned about his attendance as a stu-

education debate

Nothing exposes British hypo-

The great



dent) as a smokescreen for their actions. Kingsway students realised that this management attack on our Union threatened all our rights'.

The college has been rocked by struggles for the last year as the unelected businessmen governors have tried to force through their capitalist programme. Kingsway managers have time and again shown disregard for the students: they brought in a privatised canteen which doubled prices; set up an 'Open Learning Centre' which charged students 10p a sheet for computer printouts of their own

The next step forward for

pensioners now must be to con-

sider standing pensioners' can-

didates in local elections, to

represent the pensioners' move-

ments in their area, since the

parliamentary parties do not.

Note, for example, the failure of

the Labour Party to include

pensioner representation in the

recent Social Justice Commis-

sion. So our own candidates

would be a step in the right dir-

ection. Such candidates should

stress the need for unity within

the pensioners' movement ag-

ainst the common enemy, and

the need to build unity amongst

other oppressed groups - single

parents, the unemployed, dis-

ability rights groups, those

fighting against racism, envi-

work; imposed a complete smoking ban without consultation; they even plan to privatise the gym!

The students, who had been active in support of an Iranian lecturer victimised for fighting racism in the college and mobilised against racist attacks in Tower Hamlets, went into top gear to defend their own union. A series of demonstrations culminating in the three day work-in at the library, forced the college to back down and recognise their President.

Hundreds of students got involved and felt their own strength through militant collective action. As one of them, Marlana Diedrick says, 'Being able to do something, not only for ourselves but for generations to come really makes me feel that something great has been achieved'.

Now the Kingsway students are convening a London-wide FE Student Conference 10am-6pm Saturday 25 February (further details from the address below).

\* All quotes are from Union Gazette, which is available from c/o Kingsway College Student Union, Sidmouth Street, Grays Inn Road, London WC1H 8JB Telephone/Fax: 0171 837 4641, Mobile 0956 365393.

#### **Pensioners** notes

RENE WALLER

crisy more than the Great Education Debate. Middle class All pensioners are to be con-'socialists' are for the state sector gratulated on the continuing until they face the prospect of fight - in particular the sending their little Barnabys and tremendous victory achieved Mirandas to these illiteracy facwhen the government was tories. For Labour Party-types forced to back down on VAT this is a cruel dilemma - it would look very bad to send them to on fuel. As we know, we can-Eton but equally dreadful to send not depend on anyone else, so their budding barristers and jourwe must defend ourselves nalists to Sludge Comprehensive. and this showed that when we organise, we can win!

The solution is, of course, the Grant-Maintained opted-out sector which is financed by taxpayers but services the elite. So the likes of Tony Blair send the fruit of their loins to the London Oratory, a boy's Catholic school seven miles away. Its headmaster has close ties to the Tories, and it operates a covert selection procedure, with references from local priests and interviews. Another Labour MP, Paul Boateng sends his daughter to a girls' grammar far from Brent where he lives.

No chance then that these offspring will join the ranks of the 40% of 14-year-olds with a reading age of 11. The current debate about testing and choice is designed to obscure the real solution: ban private education and bus middle class children, including Blair and Boateng Jnr to Sludge Comprehensive - miracles will then be seen.

ronmental campaigners, the youth and the homeless.

The Greater London Pensioners are holding a campaign meeting in defence of the welfare state on Monday 20 February, 11am, at the Interchange, Dalby Street, London NW5 (tel 0171 267 6151). A spokesperson stated: 'We firmly reject means testing as the most expensive and inefficient way of dealing with poverty, missing those most in need...we must fight to maintain universal benefits.' urge you to support this.

Recent Gas Board proposals to charge pensioners and disabled people for services like documents in Braille and adapted equipment have been defeated. This time, they backed down - but it is a taste of what is to come. We need to organise now to defend our basic rights.

Rene wishes to thank all comrades and friends for their soli-Cooksey Rehabilitation Ward, East Dulwich Grove, London

#### Clause 4: much ado about nothing

ROBERT CLOUGH

'Shit' and 'bastard': thus Ken Coates, Labour MEP, described Tony Blair only a couple of weeks ago. At the same time, The Guardian carried an advertisement by Labour MEPs, denouncing Blair's attempts to revise Clause 4. A couple of days later, and most of them sign a letter to the same paper, saying they didn't really mean it. One can hardly be surprised. After all, it costs £900,000 to keep a Euro-MP in the field for one year. Are they really going to forfeit this over a tiny little phrase which has never had any practical consequences anyway?

The Great Debate on Clause 4 is revealing itself for what it was bound to be: a complete farce. In the red corner, the SWP, Ken Coates, Tony Benn et al, fighting for a phrase which all of them acknowledge in their different ways never meant anything any-

inhuman treatment.

aid, remission or appeal.

Universal condemnation? Not

quite. Ms Cherie Booth, wife of the

'new' Labour leader Tony Blair,

earns her living arguing for the

imprisonment of defaulters, inclu-

ding at least one whom she admit-

ted had no apparent income. She

has also, for a fee, lectured to law

enforcement agencies advising

them on the best means of extract-

excuse which echoes down the

ages, from Nazi concentration

camp officials to the police who

beat up the public in Brightling-

sea. No one should be allowed to

hide behind such an excuse. We

all have a choice - and middle

class barristers who call them-

selves socialist have more choice

than most of us. But, of course, the

Labour Party never did oppose

Next time you're out lobbying

against council cutbacks, just

bear this in mind: whilst council

spending on services has been cut,

the amount they spend on top jobs

grows relentlessly. There was a 60

per cent increase in senior man-

agement posts between 1987 and

1993 whilst the number of manual

workers (you know, the ones who

It's not enough just lobbying

against cuts - we should identify

local, overpaid executives, hound

them from office and get the

money spent on things like educa-

tion, health centres and libraries.

Dispatches TV programme in-

disciplined and patients' beds

vanish when they go to the toilet.

actually do something) fell.

The gravy train

the Poll Tax.

'I was only doing my job' is the

ing their pound of flesh.

way. In the blue corner, most of the rest of the Labour Party, mostly rather well off, concerned to jettison anything that may offend the middle class whose votes they are so desperate to secure. Outside of the ring - the mass of the working class, for whom this debate means nothing.

This debate is no more than a middle-class conceit. So what if Tony Blair loses? Will it change the Labour Party programme one iota? No. Will it divert Labour's drive for the vote of the middle class? Get a life. Water, gas, electricity, we know they will remain in private hands under a Labour government, and that's with Clause 4 still in the constitution. The only industry that might be brought back into public ownership is the railways - but that's no problem: it's one nationalisation that will win plenty of votes in southern commuter belts.

The left is engaged in a battle something else altogether.



Tony Blair: New Labour, Old Rope

to defend a constitution that was established as a rallying point for those who wanted to resist the revolutionary upsurge following the first imperialist war of 1914-18. From the start it was anti-working class - but this has not stopped the left from constructing their own virtual reality, where everything is upside down, and Clause 4 has become the essence of socialism. We cannot afford this illusion, which is why we regard the debate with contempt. Clause 4 or not, the issue is still how we are to build an independent working-class movement. The Clause 4 debate is about

#### **Poll Tax Private Clegg is** jailings illegal guilty, OK! The European Court of Human



After the shooting the Paras celebrated in the canteen, with a mock-up of the car

SARAH BOND

Lords, generals, Prince Charles, politicians both Labour and Tory are all falling over themselves to express their outrage at the case of Private Lee Clegg, the soldier serving life for murdering an Irish Catholic 18-year-old. It now looks as if Clegg will be very shortly released.

Clegg was convicted in 1991 of murdering Karen Reilly, one of three joy-riders. The driver, 17year-old Martin Peake, also died. When their car accelerated past a checkpoint, Clegg says he was 'confronted with what I thought were terrorists' He fired four shots. Despite evidence to the contrary, three of the shots were held to have been fired either in self-defence or in defence of Clegg's companion, Barry Aindow. The fourth however was held to have been fired after the car had passed by and the self-defence claim was unsustainable. This fourth shot killed Karen Reilly. If you shoot with intention to kill or seriously injure and death results, that's murder. Clegg was duly convicted and received the mandatory sentence of life imprisonment.

Clegg's campaigners have constructed a version of these events which is a mixture of half-truths and outright lies. They say Clegg only had a split second to decide whether to shoot; he thought it was a car full of terrorists; he was acting in self-defence. In these circumstances, how can he be guilty?

What Clegg's campaigners have not said is that Clegg was on a joint army/RUC patrol whose specific brief was to catch joy-riders. They have not mentioned that Clegg's companion, Private Barry Aindow, was convicted of perverting the course of justice for the story he concocted to cover up the truth. An RUC officer gave evidence that he saw an unidentified officer kicking Aindow's leg to produce a bruise which Aindow and others claimed was caused by the speeding car in order to support Clegg's claim of selfdefence. The campaigners also fail to mention that, according to the other teenager in the car, Karen Reilly was beaten by the soldiers as she lay dying. Clegg's campaigners are right

about one thing: he has been treated differently to other soldiers in Ireland who have killed with impunity, such as those involved in premeditated murder in shoot-to-kill operations . But Clegg needn't worry. Even if the Lords and Generals were not wielding their power on his behalf, he wouldn't be facing the 13 years most murderers serve and certainly not the 16 years endured by the innocent Birmingham Six. He need only cast his mind back to the case of Private Thain, the only other British soldier to have been convicted of murder: given a life sentence for killing a Catholic, Thain was released and returned to duty after just 26 months. The lesson is clear: if you want to be a murdering thug and get away with it, join the British army.

#### vestigation has shown that many NHS consultants spend their time darity and support since she swanning around Harley Street was taken ill on New Year's Day and private hospitals whilst we with a stroke. She is now in pay them lavish salaries for NHS Dulwich Hospital in the Frank work that they are too busy to do. Meanwhile ill-paid nurses are

SE22.

## Britain steps up pressure on Irish nationalists

**SARAH BOND** 

The British state is using the 'peace process' in Ireland to weaken the nationalist movement in the Six Counties. Having secured an IRA ceasefire with the promise of talks, Major has now introduced a new precondition for those talks: the decommissioning of arms. He has won the support of the Clinton administration for this move, a blow to Sinn Fein, whose alliance with wealthy and influential Irish-Americans has been an important aspect of its current strategy. Yet while Major insists that the nationalist people of Ireland disarm, Britain's own armed forces in the occupied Six Counties are terrorising hardline Republican areas such as Tyrone and Armagh.

Six Counties are terrorising hardline Republican areas such as Tyrone and Armagh.

In these areas local people say the harassment from British troops is 'worse than before the ceasefire'. Denise Sutton, 21-year-old Sinn Fein councillor for Cappagh in Tyrone, commented that when the IRA were

active in the area British soldiers 'never felt that safe walking around here'. All that has now changed. In Cappagh there were recently 20 incidents in a five day period. Michael White, a nationalist from South Armagh, was beaten by Marine Commandos in front of his two young children. The house of wellknown Republican family the O'Donnells was raided by over 100 army and RUC. A young mother has fled to the Twenty Six Counties from RUC attempts to recruit her has an informer. Gardens have been dug up on the pretext of arms searches. People on the way to Mass have been stopped and detained.

It is significant that while such activity is intensified in these rural Republican areas, in Belfast British troops are now confined to barracks in daylight hours. Belfast nationalists still face harassment from the RUC: one recent incident involved the beating by RUC officers of a disabled man, whose artificial limb was 'yanked off' during the assault. But the decision to

leave British soldiers, the symbol of the occupation of the Six Counties, on some streets and not others is part of the British state's attempts to foment divisions within the ranks of the Republican movement. Britain's dirty tricks department appears to have been seeking to fuel such divisions: in December a bomb found in a shopping area of Enniskillen produced rumours that a break-away faction was involved. But no group claimed responsibility and Sinn Fein believes that British intelligence may have planted the bomb.

Meanwhile Labour has a new Shadow Secretary for Northern Ireland. Mo Mowlam has taken over from Kevin MacNamara and has immediately made clear that Labour's priority on Ireland is to woo the Loyalists. She has personally visited in their constituencies Unionist MPs including Peter Robinson, David Trimble, John Taylor and Cecil Walker. No such favour has been bestowed on Sinn Foin

#### Palestine: genocide continues

**EDDIE ABRAHAMS** 

After a few days of spectacular press coverage, the suicide-bomber is forgotten, all the hyperbole about terrorism and human tragedy subsides and things return to 'normal'. And so it has been with the 22 January Hamas suicide bombing in Israel which killed 19 Israeli soldiers and wounded some 60 others. But 'normality' for Palestinians is a relentless expansion of Israeli settlements, continuing expulsion from their land and the very destruction of Palestine itself. 116 Israelis have been killed by Palestinians since the 1993 Israel-PLO 'peace' agreement was signed in Oslo. For Zionism this has been a cheap price to pay for silencing the Palestinian Intifada. It has been a cheap price to pay for creating conditions for an accelerated colonisation of Palestine with minimal Palestinian resistance.

Since the Oslo agreement, under Rabin's Labour Party, Zionist settlements in the Occupied Territories have expanded at a faster pace than during the Likud years. Since 1993, Israel has confiscated over 40,000 more acres of Palestinian land. Confiscations continue unabated with the use of an 1855 Ottoman law allowing land lying beyond the earshot of the nearest village to be taken over by the state. A massive building programme is underway to encircle and isolate East Jerusalem's 150,000 Palestinians from their natural hinterland in the West Bank. Meanwhile a 400km network of roads is being built that will create, as one Israeli journalist described, 'a veritable Swiss cheese of isolated Palestinian population centres surrounded by Israeli settlements and roads'.

The peace process is leading inexorably to Zionist annexa-



Palestinians occupy a West Bank hill marked for Zionist settlement at Maale Amos

tion of whole chunks of the occupied territories and an extension of the Zionist apartheid. Rabin, the man of peace with whom Arafat deigned to shake hands, said so clearly: 'We want to reach a separation between us and them...and ...we will achieve separation, though not according to the borders which existed before 1967'.

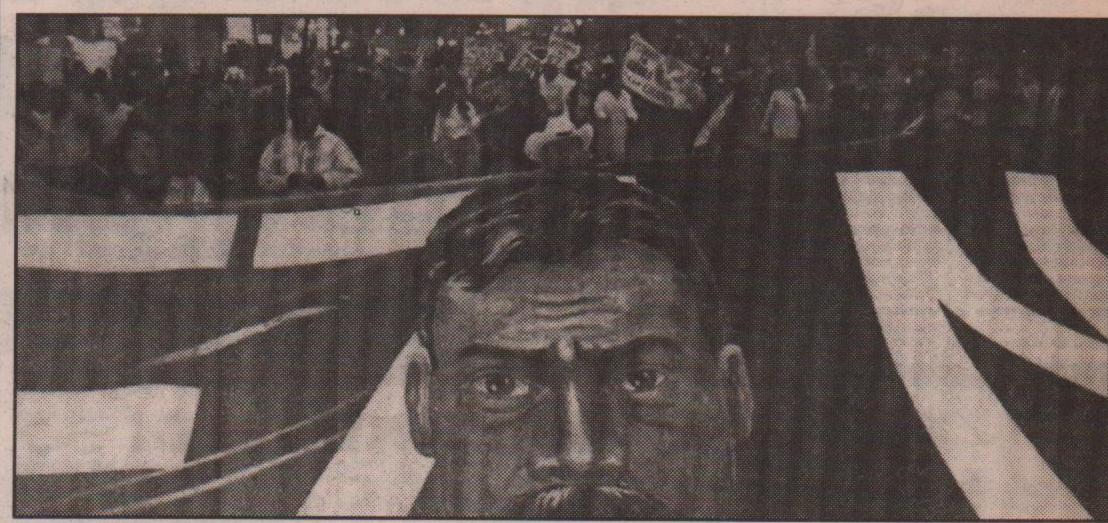
At every crisis, whether it is generated by a suicide-bombing or the more frequent Israeli slaughter of Palestinian civilians, policemen or Popular Front militants or by resistance to land confiscation, the cry is raised to save the 'peace' process. But this process is genocide for the Palestinians. It has terminated the mass popular movement and further isolated and marginalised Palestinian people as the regional Arab ruling classes used the Oslo agreement as the pretext for reestablishing relations with Israel.

Today the Palestinian opposition to Zionism and to the collaborationist forces now headed by Arafat is in serious crisis. The latest suicide bombing marked Hamas' definitive displacement of the secular left as

Israel's and Arafat's main opposition. But it is not a progressive or democratic opposition. As a function of its pro-capitalist, anti-democratic and sectarian character, Hamas is unwilling to mobilise a popular mass movement which alone can effectively breach the curtain of normality which conceals the Zionist genocide. The masses, their suffering and their rage, are only pawns in their secret dealings with Zionism and Arafat. Hamas fears a renewed Intifada as much as Arafat or the Zionists. It fears a mass movement which during all uprisings begins to construct its own instruments of organisation and struggle which challenge all sectarianism and reaction.

The Palestinian people are passing through a bitter page of a long and bitter history. At this moment, they need international support more than ever. In Britain, with its pro-Zionist history, the socialist movement must mount a boycott of all relations with Zionism – economic, political and cultural – and where possible act to damage and weaken Zionist inter-

#### Mexico: on borrowed time



Zapata lives! - demonstrators in Mexico City against the government's economic policy

TREVOR RAYNE

In the 1890s the British merchant bank Barings accepted Argentina's bonds on condition that the country's customs receipts served as collateral. In 1995 the US government proposes a \$40 billion loan guarantee to Mexico on condition that its future oil revenues serve as collateral.

The New Year Mexican peso crisis, during which the currency has devalued 40% against the dollar, sent shock waves through Latin America and the so called 'emerging markets' of the Third World. It is as significant as the emergence of the Zapatistas from the forests of Chiapas a year ago (see FRFI 117). It puts a huge question mark over the North American Free Trade Agreement and it demonstrates that imperialism will not be able to carry out a smooth incorporation of major Third World economies.

Overseas portfolio investment into Latin America reached \$57bn in 1994. This is speculative investment in stocks and shares, mainly by fund managers, rather than direct investment in production by multinationals. Latin American shares doubled their dollar value in two years as US funds flowed in seeking high returns.

Peru and Mexico all maintained strong currency rates linked to the US\$ to push inflation down and attract foreign capital. High inflation and falling currency rates mean lower dollar earnings for overseas investors whose holdings are denominated in the local currencies. The attempt to tie the currencies to the US\$ has lead the

Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador,

regional current account (traded goods and services) deficit to increase by a third to \$50 billion in three years as imports grow more competitive and exports become over-priced. For Mexico the trade deficit grew from \$5 billion in 1989 to about \$30 billion in 1994, 8% of the national product.

Rather than dampen domestic demand to cut the import bill the Mexican government allowed bank lending to increase. Anxious about the impact the Zapatistas are having on Mexico's peasantry and working class in a country where half the population live below the poverty line, the government was unwilling to impose further reductions in consumption and increase unemployment.

The Mexican government spent \$25bn propping up the peso before the 20 December devaluation. Last year it had to attract over \$2bn a month from overseas to cover its trade deficit. This was done by issuing dollarindexed bills denominated in pesos called tesobonos which were taken up by US business. This is another form of borrowing. \$25bn of these bills came due for payment in 1995, but the coffers were almost empty. The government had to devalue and as it did so the economic and political weakness of the Mexican state was exposed: foreign capital took flight, the fund managers called it 'the tequila effect and started selling. Brazil's stock market fell 26%, Argentina's 16%, the Thai and Indonesian currencies were threatened, the Hong Kong dollar dived, the Spanish peseta, Portuguese escudo and US dollar all fell.

To placate the parasites of the world financial system Mexi-

co's finance minister met US financiers at a Manhattan hotel. Mexico's railways, satellite communications, ports and airports and toll roads would be sold off along with power plant holdings. Telecommunications would be available for competitors and increased foreign participation in Mexico's domestic banking was welcome. But no, the oil industry was not for sale. Not enough! exclaimed the parasites. The peso continued to fall and US politicians doubted whether the \$40bn loan guarantee would get through Congress. Seeing the victim at their mercy they demanded that Mexico turn against Cuba and potential migrants to the USA.

So, the oil was served up. Every time the Mexican government uses any of the \$40 billion a corresponding amount from its future oil revenues will be deposited at the Federal Reserve. Any default on loans will result in oil revenue deposits being used to pay the debt.

The security of the US funds will mean insecurity for Mexico. Lending is being cut, government investment projects halted, real wages driven down. This will be a year of crisis. Already Mexico's middle classes are being hit as import prices rise. President Zedillo and the PRI government are using the offer of new elections in states where last year's results are disputed to try to broaden the government's support and draw the social democratic Party of Democratic Revolution away from supporters of the Zapatistas. Factions of the military are linking up with landowners to establish private armies to combat peasant land seizures - the death squad formations typical of the region.

## Intensifying attacks on Kurds

PAUL BROWN

MI5 and Special Branch attacks on the Kurdish community are being intensified. There is also strong evidence that the Turkish state is operating a hit squad aimed at Kurds and their sympathisers here in Britain.

The Turkish state has declared its intention to 'wipe out' the PKK 'at home and abroad'.

On 10 October Kurdish prisoner Cafer Kovaycin was attacked at Swaleside prison (see FRFI 122). The attackers are believed to have been paid by the Turkish embassy in London.
On 17 November photographer Richard Wayman whose work showing Turkish state

brutality has been published in the British press was attacked in central London and pushed into the path of oncoming traffic.

 On 29 December Ali Ozturk was shot and seriously wounded leaving a shop in Hackney.
 The real target is believed to have been Nafiz Bostanci, a supporter of the Kurds, who had received death threats from, he believes, the Turkish Intelligence Service (MIT).

• Turkish embassy officials have been making uninvited visits to the homes of Kurds in the Croydon area. They tell the Kurds that literature they find in the homes is illegal and that their possession of it could jeopardise their families still in Turkey. These visits have been

followed by visits from British police.

 Special Branch has offered passports and nationality in this country to Kurds and Turks if they will act as informers and provocateurs.

 Members of the Kurdish community have been arrested under the PTA.

Kani Yilmaz, European representative of the PKK, is still imprisoned in Belmarsh awaiting deportation.

 The three Kurdish prisoners convicted of criminal damage and sentenced to 15 years and 12 years imprisonment have been refused the right to appeal.

It is urgent that a campaign is mounted to put a halt to these attacks. Attend the meeting on Saturday 18 February 2.30pm University of London Union, Malet Street, London.

Stop criminalising the Kurds Release Kani Yilmaz and other political prisoners

4 • FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM! FEBRUARY/MARCH 1995

# The re-emergence of Russian imperialism

**EDDIE ABRAHAMS** 

Russian military operations against the small Caucasian republic of Chechenya turned into a direct invasion on 11 December 1994. Systematic pounding by planes, tanks and artillery has caused massive loss of life and material destruction. Grozny, the republic's capital, has been reduced to rubble and up to a third of its 400,000 people have fled into the country. Despite the Russian capture of Grozny, Chechen resistance, led by General Dzokhar Dudayev, continues.

Whilst absolutely opposed to the Russian invasion of Chechenya, communists do not support any of the factions in this war. Both Yeltsin, as head of the Russian government, and Dudayev are pursuing ends designed to enrich and benefit only a tiny minority of the new elite emerging from the collapse of the Soviet Union. As for the population suffering the privations of economic collapse and military destruction, neither Yeltsin nor Dudayev cares one jot.

The Yeltsin government has sought to conceal its true war aims by claiming it is engaged in an internal affair designed to restore law and order to an integral part of Russia, and bring to book a notorious bandit. In fact, Chechenya is not part of Russia and was only annexed by Tsarist forces in 1859, after oil was discovered there in 1823. Its importance for the emerging Russian ruling class rests in its strategic geographic location. Based in Chechenya, itself rich in natural resources, are the oil pipelines and refineries which will be used to export millions of tons of oil from the lucrative Azerbaijani oil fields that imperialist multinationals, including BP, are preparing to exploit. Whoever controls Chechenya is guaranteed a portion of that fabulous wealth. Yeltsin wants it



Grozny has been reduced to rubble

for the Russian capitalist class, Dudayev for the emerging Chechen capitalist class.

The British press, echoing statements made by Major and Hurd have expressed 'concern' that a long war could endanger Russian democracy! This is sick when one recalls that in 1993 the British government along with the US, vociferously backed Yeltsin as his tanks pounded the democratically elected Russian parliament! The British government's real concern, like that of Yeltsin and Dudayev, is oil profits. They want a rapid conclusion of hostilities, not because democracy or the people are suffering, but because the multinationals are suffering. The Russian military operation, marked by indecisiveness, by splits in the government and the military, threatens to create long term war and instability which will endanger multinational control and profits from Azerbaijani oil.

Within Russia there has been significant democratic opposition to the invasion. Among them is the Russian Communist Workers Party who stated: 'We must fight for the defeat of Yeltsin's army. It is no longer the army of the people, it is the army of the bourgeoisie.'

The statement went on to add that: 'Politically there is no difference between Boris Yeltsin and Chechen President Dzokhar Dudayev. They both helped to destroy socialist property and Soviet power.'

The destruction of socialist property has had devastating consequences for the people of Russia and Chechenya and all other regions once part of the socialist bloc. Production has collapsed as gangs of thieves engage in appropriating national resources for themselves whilst poverty and unemployment for the majority soars. In Russia alone, production has dropped by more than 30 per cent since 1989. A United Nations Children's Fund report says that the number of people living in extreme poverty in Russia (including Chechenya) rose from 2.5 per cent in 1991 to 23.2 per cent in 1993. People are eating less protein and fat due to shortages of milk, fruit and vegetables. The death rate is rising, life expectancy falling and diseases once vanquished are returning.

These facts are of no concern to the imperialists, to Yeltsin or Dudayev as they struggle for a share of the oil. On our part we demand the withdrawal of all oil multinationals from the region and extend our support to those Russians and Chechens who are opposing this war and are fighting for the interests of the people.

## South Africa: unity of government tested

**CAROL BRICKLEY** 

months after acclaimed first democratic election, the South Africa 'government of national unity' - a coalition of the African National Congress (ANC) and the former apartheid regime's National Party - threatens to split. The honeymoon period may be over, and President Nelson Mandela is exerting all his influence to patch over the differences which have emerged on the question of indemnity for crimes committed under apartheid.

On 15 January it emerged that secret indemnities had been given, only days before the April 1994 election, to 3,500 policemen and two former National Party ministers against prosecution for crimes under apartheid rule. FW de Klerk, former President, and now Mandela's deputy, claimed not to have known about the indemnities, and threatened to pull out of the government claiming that he and the NP had been insulted by Mandela. Within days of this flurry, secret talks produced a joint statement from Mandela and de Klerk expressing 'our acceptance of one another's good faith and integrity' and agreeing to make a 'fresh start'.

This is not the first time there have been mutual expressions of felicity between the two leaders, but there is unlikely to be a 'fresh start' on the issue of indemnities. Parliament is now

debating the setting up of a much-vaunted 'Truth Commission' which will investigate apartheid crimes and, on the basis of full disclosure, will grant indemnities.

The terms of the Commis-



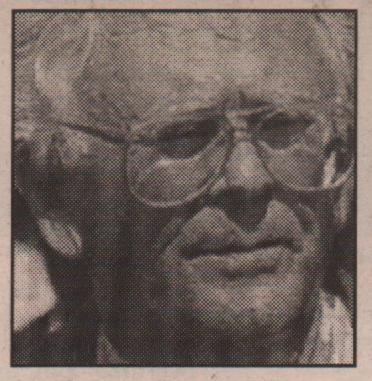
**Nelson Mandela** 

sion, however, are now publicly contentious. The proposed legislation allows for secret hearings and protection from prosecution for human rights abuses, and makes no allowance for any action whatsoever against the perpetrators. Civil rights activists are rightly angry at these proposals which will cover up long-standing crimes. On the other hand, the police have made submissions to Parliament demanding complete secrecy, blanket indemnities, protection from extradition if the crimes were committed abroad, and no time limit. If their demands are not met, they threaten to expose the crimes committed by 'leading politicians' and compromise relations with foreign intelligence agencies.

The ANC is caught in a trap of its own making: it has courted the old regime and entered into partnership with a gang of racists and criminals. It is now ill-equipped to expose its new allies, with whom it hopes to remain in partnership until the turn of the century. Its grassroots support, however, is demanding public accountability for the crimes which were committed.

This is only the first issue which will test the government's unity. The reconstruction and development programme has not achieved much for the majority. The ANC's programme is reliant on job creation through foreign investment which will not be forthcoming if human rights, decent wages and conditions and high taxes are top of the agenda. South Africa has seen a long series of strikes and disputes as black workers attempt to improve their standard of living, but the ANC has made it clear that it will not hesitate to crush such action when the chips are down.

Some measure of grassroots expectations was revealed at the ANC Congress in December, which was held in secret session. An attempt by the top leadership to 'appoint' a list of favoured candidates for the NEC was blocked, and several 'unfavoured' candidates like Winnie Mandela, Harry Gwala and Peter Mokaba came high in the polls.



Joe Slovo, architect of the compromise with apartheid's rulers, and leading figure in the South African Communist Party, died on 6 January 1995. His final report as General Secretary of the SACP stated: 'We are confident

that the mass of the world's population, which has been treated as a pawn of history, will truly reenter it and use its power to mould a just society which will serve people and not merely profit. It is a vision which predates Marx and which animated humanists and all that is best in the ethic of the great religions from the beginning of time.'

A Marxist of course would know that a just society can only be achieved in opposition to profit and the capitalist system. A Marxist would also know that the agenda of the 'great religions' is to oppose socialism and the aspirations of the masses with rhetoric about justice. Slovo's

late career as compromiser is marked by similar fudging of Marxism and Leninism, and in the final dash for power a complete abandonment of Marxist principles in favour of social democracy.

On his death, thousands of black people remembered the man who gave much of his life to the liberation struggle. Others were concerned at his role as a 'communist'. Asked to respond to the announcement of Joe Slovo's death, Ben Dikobe Martins, regional secretary of the Midlands branch of the SACP was quoted in the Natal Witness: 'Slovo was our greatest enemy'.

Carol Brickley

#### Sierra Leone – on the brink

Sierra Leone has been in the news because six Britons have been kidnapped by rebel forces who are devastating the country's economy. In the last week, two mines were seized which together provided 60% of foreign currency earnings. The crisis is both more serious and more longstanding. The multinationals which control Sierra Leone's mineral wealth, and a series of corrupt government's have reduced the population to direct poverty; civil war in neighbouring Liberia, together with rebel activities, threatens the countryside. CHARINE JAMES, a Sierra Leonean, analyses the crisis.

With rich deposits of gold, diamonds, titanium and bauxite, lush green forests and breathtakingly beautiful coast, Sierra Leone ought to be paradise. Yet infant mortality is amongst the highest in the world, the literacy rate is appalling at 13%, and life expectancy varies from a low of 42 years to a 'high' (last year) of 47 years.

In the period leading up to the mid-1980s, Freetown, the capital city founded by freed slaves, saw a series of mass demonstrations led by students from Fourah Bay College University (FBC). Once dubbed the 'Athens of West Africa', FBC's decay reflected the decline of Freetown's infrastructure, with pot-holed streets, frequent power cuts and soaring inflation caused by increasingly-stringent IMF dictates and the corruption of government and

multinationals.

Mineral wealth was squeezed from the country, while the student-led demonstrations were suppressed by the Siaka Stevens government, who were responsible for the imprisonment and torture of hundreds of human rights activists.

Stevens later handed power to Brigadier Momoh. Hardly a triumph for democracy. Momoh was a totally ineffectual leader, subject to the whims and fancies of the ruling clique.

In December 1989, the civil war in neighbouring Liberia took off in earnest, and early in 1990, hundreds of thousands of Liberians were forced to flee the barbarity of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Forces of Liberia (NPFL). Sierra Leoneans feared the so-called 'rebel' war would spill over into Sierra Leone and, in March 1991,

these fears became reality when an attack was launched in the Eastern province of Kailahun, bordering Liberia, A new group calling itself the Revolutionary United Front claimed responsibility. Its leader, Foday Sankoh, went on the BBC to announce that the RUF wanted the Momoh government to be overthrown in favour of democracy.

Fair enough, we in Freetown thought – except the killings in Sierra Leone began to take the same form as the Liberian war, with innocent civilians being killed, villages razed to the ground, and the agricultural and mineral productive areas systematically taken over. The government in Freetown responded by sending poorly-trained, poorly-paid recruits to fight the 'rebels'. Once in the rebel zone, the government soldiers were abandoned. Often

forced to fight in flip-flops and to share weapons, they went unpaid for months on end, and eventually decided to take their complaints to Freetown.

In April 1992, a contingent of these coldings lad by 25 years ald.

Provisional Government began to make crucial mistakes. The rebel war was used to settle old scores and many innocent civilians were accused of being rebels and summarily executed. In

In April 1992, a contingent of these soldiers led by 25-year-old Captain Valentine Strasser overthrew Momoh who fled to Guinea. The nation rejoiced. In response to a spate of summary executions of corrupt officials later in 1992, Britain withheld aid, a move which led to mass demonstrations in Freetown.

Campaigns were waged for citizens to help clean up Freetown, mobilise support for the battle against the rebels, and improve the lot of the poor. These attempts may have succeeded had they had any support internationally. Instead, an inexperienced group of army officers found itself desperately trying to overcome decades of neglect and corruption.

Meanwhile, rebel attacks continued, the poor fled the countryside to Freetown and the rich fled abroad. Floundering, the Provisional Government began to make crucial mistakes. The rebel war was used to settle old scores and many innocent civilians were accused of being rebels and summarily executed. In Freetown, foreign diplomats fiddled while the countryside burned, continuing to make lavish use of the beach resorts and cheap Sierra Leonean labour. True to form, the American Peace Corps withdrew all its volunteers from the countryside: they joined the small contingent of Marines lounging around the beach waiting to be sent home.

News of the rebel conflict hit Britain when the first two VSO volunteers were kidnapped in November from Kabala, a region we had previously thought outside rebel domain. These were followed by two more VSO kidnappings and attacks on mines owned by the Sierra Rutile of Britain and Alu-Suisse of Switzerland, some 130 miles from Freetown. As we go to press, contact has been made with the

two volunteers kidnapped in November. The rebels' demands remain completely ambiguous, as does their political programme and source of funding.

Rumours abound as to who their backers are – some say they are funded by the old guard who want their power back, and this seems to be the most likely theory, for they certainly do not have the interests of most Sierra Leoneans at heart.

Those poor Sierra Leoneans who have managed to flee to Britain have been reviled by articles in the tabloid press, notably the Daily Mail and Daily Star, calling for their deportation (the rich, of course, are welcome — Michael Howard has now named a price for rich foreigners to be able to settle in Britain).

Civil war is devastating the lives of the poorest, in a country which already ranks as one of the poorest in the world. This is the real face of imperialism – barbarity. The outlook for Sierra Leone is bleak.

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## BRITISH PRISONS a different sort of crisis

The first weeks of 1995 saw prisons hitting the headlines on a daily basis. There was widespread talk of crisis and calls from all sides for the resignation of the Prison Service Director General and the Home Secretary. But was this crisis real or was it largely fabricated by the media and other interested parties? NICKI JAMESON examines the issues.

ince the courageous attempted escape from Whitemoor in September 1994, the media has been full of 'scandal in our prisons'. The News of the World ran its coverage of the Whitemoor escape (entitled 'How did the scum get the guns?') straight into another article about the apparently easy life in Kirkham open prison. The Kirkham article included a photograph, supposedly of drunken prisoners partying in a cell, surrounded by bottles of spirits. And the paper set up a hotline for readers to report further instances of prisoners leading a cushy life at the taxpayer's expense. Tales of luxury, lobster and long-distance phonecalls abounded until the Home Secretary could publicly 'joke' that the contract for a new private prison would not be awarded to Butlins, and Tony Blair could respond that in the past it had not been Butlins which had run the gaols, but the Savoy. This kind of garbage surfaced everywhere - from The Sun to Panorama, which entitled its programme on the Whitemoor breakout 'Carry on escaping'.

Although such publicity was embarrassing for the government and Prison Service, it was also of use to them as they sought to further crack down on prisoners' rights and entitlements. Indeed for varying reasons a high profile but profoundly dishonest examination of the apparent failings of the prison system suited the Prison Service, the Prison Officers Association (POA), the government and the opposition parties.

At the beginning of January alleged serial killer Frederick West committed suicide in Winson Green prison, Everthorpe prison in Humberside was beset by riots on two consecutive nights and three prisoners described as 'extremely dangerous' escaped from Parkhurst, remaining at large for five days. In a different climate these events would not even have been discussed in the same breath. The death of Frederick West would inevitably have made headlines but had it occurred at some other time, the 'prison neglect' aspect would probably never have been mentioned. Prison riots on the scale of the one at Everthorpe occur at least once a year and often receive scant national news coverage. Escapes from high security gaols, such as Whitemoor and Parkhurst, are much less common but the degree of publicity when they do happen is also extremely variable. Ronnie Pewter's 1991 escape from Parkhurst Special Security Unit was accorded hardly a murmur compared to the saturation coverage given to Keith Rose, Matthew Williams and Andrew Rodger.

#### The Prison Service - modern, technological repression

The subtext to the 'crisis' is a battle which has been raging for several decades between the government and its Prison Service and the Prison Officers Association. Lining up with the latter in the current round are the

Labour Party and increasingly large sections of the media.

Today's Prison Service sees itself as modern, managerial, stream-lined, an industry for the 1990s. It wants clean, efficient and cheap electronically-locking penitentiaries, neatly packaged, ready for privatisation if necessary, and will cut manpower and other costs wherever possible, relying instead on state-of-the-art technological repression. The Prison Service is no longer a government department but a separately managed Agency. This has caused huge rows

38 Republican prisoners made a spectacular escape from The Maze, the POA had the gall to blame lack of resources: The Maze at that time had approximately 600 prisoners and 1,000 prison officers. It is widely acknowledged that 'militant' prison officers have actively encouraged prisoners to riot in order to fuel their own disputes.

The antagonism between the different branches of the prison power structure has existed for many years but during the Thatcher era the Prison Department slowly began to

Parkhurst - the search for escaped prisoners

about the degree to which the Home Secretary can be held responsible for its actions.

Those who run the Service are not naive enough to assume automatic co-operation from prisoners and have embarked on a programme to maximise divisions and buy compliance. Prisoners, however, are not the only obstacle standing between the Prison Service and its vision of a perfect punishment industry. The other fly in the ointment is the Prison Officers Association.

#### The POA old-fashioned brutality

The Prison Officers Association gets on even less well with the new Agency than it did with its predecessors, the Home Office Prison Service and Prison Department. The POA does not want managerial interference in the running of the gaols; it wants its members to rule the roost, with complete power over prison regimes, staffing levels and how prisoners are treated. Like the Prison Service it wants compliant prisoners, but it prefers the tried, tested and labour-intensive techniques of thugrepression.

In defence of its members and their jobs, the POA will make any claim, no matter how wild, about the dangers from murderous prisoners (a prison officer was last killed by a prisoner in 1923) and will attribute any crisis to understaffing. So persistent is the refrain that in 1983 when

defeat the POA. In 1987 it introduced Fresh Start, ending prison officers' overtime and enforcing a 39-hour week. Overtime rewards had been enormous and the long shifts ideal for men happy to grumble about how long and hard they worked but equally keen to work the hours and receive the money.

Today the POA has its back to the wall. Fresh Start, the outlawing of industrial action by prison officers under the Criminal Justice Act, the loss of escort duties to private companies such as Group 4 and Securicor, the opening of private gaols staffed by members of other unions or no union: all these have sliced away at its power. In the light of other privatisations and the wholesale attack on trade unions over the last 15 years, some on the left will doubtless fall into the trap of viewing the POA as progressive and defending it against the government. But the POA is no ordinary trade union. Even by the deplorable standards of British trade unionism, it is a vicious, racist, anti-working class organisation, notorious for the brutality of its members against prisoners.

Since the removal of the power to gery to the more 'modern' methods of strike, the POA has resorted to sabotage tactics, such as 'by the book manning', described by a prisoner at Walton gaol as 'opening two cells at a time to feed, no exercise, no showers, no visits, no phonecalls ... they say it's not a work to rule and it isn't industrial action either'.

POA spokesmen have never been reticent but now they are never

absent from TV, radio or newspapers, endlessly repeating the same message: 'understaffing' and 'danger to our members' and insisting, whatever the incident, that they had already warned it would happen. At Everthorpe staff had uncannily warned of serious undermanning hours before the first riot. At Parkhurst they apparently told management two days before the escape that prisoners might be in possession of a duplicate master-key: particularly disturbing since no keys had been reported lost or stolen, so the only people capable of getting a copy made were prison officers. The implications of this have so far been ignored, except by one-time Parkhurst prisoner Frankie Frazer, who pointed out on radio that the POA was quite capable of organising an escape if it furthered its own agenda, and by right-wing Tory MPs who claimed 'the Prison Officers Association and governors ... have come close to actively encouraging the current crisis.'

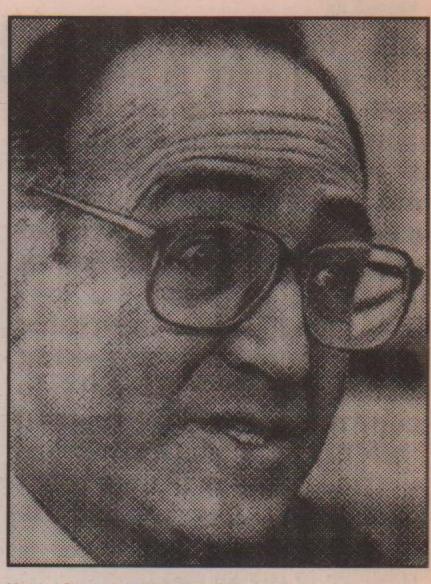
#### **Prisoners' rights under** attack

Whoever wins this round of the battle between the Prison Service and the POA, the result for prisoners will be the same: yet more attacks on their rights. And the more vitriolic the media coverage of the 'crisis', the easier the attacks can be made. Thus, Michael Howard can decide at a stroke to stop all rehabilatitive trips for the 3,500 men and women detained under the Mental Health Act, following a Sun article which 'exposed' an incident-free escorted trip by a man who had been in custody since being convicted of multiple manslaughter in 1976. Similarly home leave from prison was cut by nearly half in response to a manufactured 'public outcry'.

Other attacks are being introduced more gradually; some are even disguised as improvements. For example, the Woolf Report into the 1990 uprisings recommended that all prisoners receive a 'contract' or 'compact':

'If the prisoner's expectations were not fulfilled, he would be entitled to enlist the aid of the Board of Visitors or to invoke the grievance procedures to ensure that the prison did not unreasonably depart from the "contract". As a last resort, the "contract" could provide a platform for judicial review. If the prisoner misbehaves then, as a result of disciplinary proceedings, he could be deprived of certain of his expectations under the "contract"."

'Compacts' are now being introduced in a very different way from that intended by Woolf. All notion of redress or review has gone and prisoners are being compelled to sign an undertaking to conform or lose all 'privileges'. Almost all Category C gaols now have such compacts and prisoners refusing them are being moved to higher security dispersal



**Home Secretary Michael Howard** 

prisons. In the dispersal gaols the system has been less successful as prisoners are more organised to resist. At Full Sutton the prison management attempted to force prisoners to sign compacts before Christmas, threatening that they would be unable to spend private cash if they refused; this cut little ice and almost nobody signed up, with the result that prisoners sent to the punishment block for any reason at all are now being told they must sign before being allowed to return to their wings. The potential outcome is an explosive one.

To add insult to injury, at some gaols prisoners who would willingly sign up for six months good behaviour in return for a move nearer to their families, have not been permitted to do so.

The 'incentives' and 'disincentives' suggested by Woolf are also being moulded to fit the more repressive mood. In December Howard used the publication of the Woodcock Report into the Whitemoor escape to hammer home the message:

'Idle and disruptive prisoners should not enjoy exactly the same regime conditions as those who are diligent and co-operative. Privileges such as additional visits or extra time out of cells should be earned by good behaviour and lost by misbehaviour.'

Prisoners from around the country have told FRFI about increasing repression. At Parkhurst collective retribution for the escape is being exacted, with prisoners, especially those classified as Category A, being 'ghosted' daily to other gaols, far from their families. Those who remain are on what the BBC quaintly referred to as a 'Sunday regime': in other words, a virtual lock-down.

At Whitemoor the segregation unit is 'full to the brim every day ... the atmosphere is hostile and very tense and a small spark could ignite the place.' Prisoners there have been denied access to books, newspapers and radios and some who witnessed a recent suicide say they have been prevented from giving statements to the police. Both main wings saw protests and lock-downs on 2-3 anuary.

In Full Sutton brutality in the segregation unit is once again rife, having abated slightly following pickets of the prison, a police inquiry and adverse local publicity in the summer. One prisoner was recently beaten up by sadistic prison officers who scraped keys along his back.

This escalating repression, together with intensifying overcrowding as the numbers gaoled continue to rise rapidly, is a recipe for a different kind of crisis in the near future. This one will not be manufactured by the media and the POA but will be led, as was the wave of uprisings in 1990, by prisoners who decide to expose the reality currently being implemented behind the smokescreen. The task of communists and progressive people will be to support that struggle.

This article was sent to FRFI by the Republican POWs in the Full Sutton Special Security Unit (SSU):

#### Republican prisoners protest in Full Sutton SSU

As we enter the fifth month of an IRA ceasefire when the whole of Ireland is expecting movement from all sides involved in Britain's war in Ireland, the British government, as usual, is showing a crass disregard for the peace overtures of Republicans, democrats and all those who want peace in Ireland.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in that government's response to the issue of political prisoners in both Irish and English gaols. Far from moving towards an amnesty for all those prisoners involved in the war, now the war is over, that government has reiterated a position, ridiculed by the H-blocks and Armagh gaol blanket protests in the 1970s and the hunger strikes of 1980-81, arguing that it has no Irish political prisoners in its gaols. In fact, since the IRA ceasefire began on 31 August 1994, rather than reciprocating, the British government has deliberately pursued a highly provocative policy of increased harassment, repression and victimisation of Irish Republican prisoners in gaols in England.

Some examples of how the British government has acted towards Irish prisoners in English gaols, since the ceasefire include:

· the brutalisation of the Whitemoor escapees (including an English non-Republican prisoner);

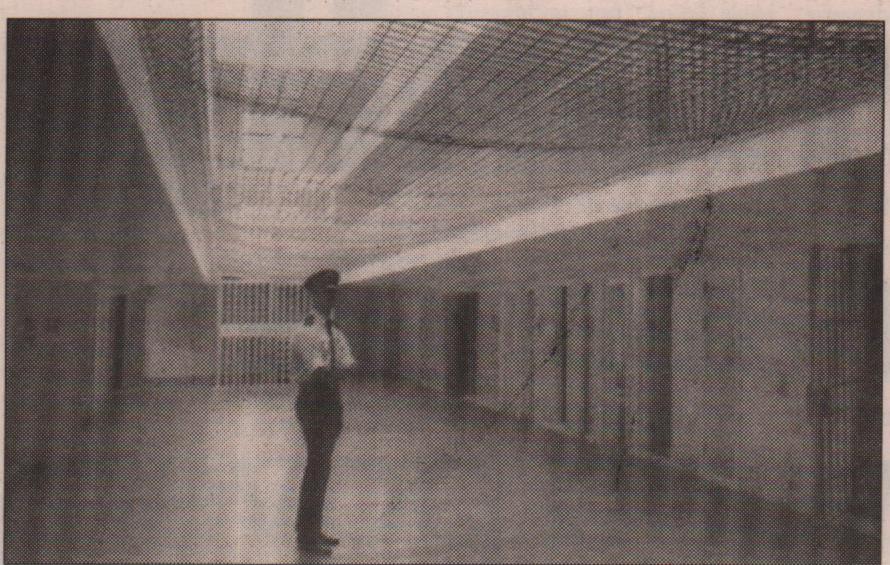
· the cancellation of all transfers of Republican prisoners to gaols in Ireland on the political direction of Michael Howard and Patrick Mayhew;

 the denial of compassionate parole to Brendan Dowd to bury his mother, despite having spent 20 years in gaol and being due for release soon;

· the ghosting of Republican prisoners out of Parkhurst prison to different gaols throughout England, disrupting education, visits and friendships;

· the cancellation of Christmas visits to Jimmy Canning and Sean McNulty in Full Sutton.

Of course, it has not only been Irish prisoners who have borne the brunt of British policy. Using as an excuse the escape from Whitemoor, Cat A



Whitemoor prison: the SSU there is now closed

prisoners generally, but particularly those in the SSUs, have been subjected to increasing deterioration in conditions and removal of rights. The major role of SSUs, of course, since the 1970s has been to house Irish political prisoners. Since Full Sutton SSU is the only SSU housing political prisoners left open after Whitemoor, this drip-drop loss of rights has particular significance there.

This is the backdrop to the events which eventually led the Irish prisoners here in Full Sutton SSU to make a stand against SSUs generally and to link this to their own political demands for repatriation to gaols in Ireland and an amnesty for all Irish political prisoners gaoled as a result of the war.

On 14 December 1994 prisoners in the SSU were informed of further petty changes in the prison regime which amounted to a further reduction in what little privacy exists for prisoners. As a result, the Irish prisoners there adopted a policy of nonviolent non-cooperation with the

prison authorities, starting on 15 December.

refusing to do any work, such as cleaning the SSU or cooking. They are also refusing to attend educational classes provided by the gaol or to deal with the prison other than through their elected representative.

On 16 December a new telephone system was introduced into the unit which dramatically increases the costs of a telephone call for all prisoners (for the Irish prisoners by four times). Each prisoner also received a handout from the governor explaining the conditions of the new telephone system, including the instruction that all calls must now be in English. This means that a Turkish prisoner (Erhan Kanioglular) and an Irish prisoner (Feilim O hAdhmaill), whose family language is Irish, are no longer able to phone their families.

In Feilim's case, therefore, not only is the British government refusing to transfer him to a gaol in Ireland, nearer his family, but while he is here they are limiting even further his ability to remain in contact with his family and, in particular with his children. He has never spoken any language other than Irish with his children. A similar situation exists for Erhan.

If this policy were implemented in a gaol elsewhere in the world against English people, particularly at Christmas, the English media and government would go berserk. The decision seems even more diabolical in Feilim's case since he is in gaol because he rejects the British government's claim to sovereignty over the North of Ireland, where Irish is an indigenous language. If the North of Ireland is an integral part of the UK as claimed by the British government how come Irish is treated differently in the prison system than other than other languages indigenous to the UK, such as English?

The four Republican prisoners in Full Sutton SSU are demanding the closure of all SSUs on the grounds they are inhumane and damaging to the physical and psychological Basically this means that they are health of prisoners. They are also stopped last week because she whis demanding immediate transfer of all Republican prisoners to gaols in Ireland nearer their families, pending release through amnesty as a result of the ending of the war in Ireland.

> The POWs in the SSU are: Feilim 0 hAdhmaill, Patrick Kelly, Michael O'Brien, Damien McComb.

Feilim O hAdhmaill sent us further information in January:

On 26 December we were kept locked up while the Unit was searched. That night we all received a note under the door, saying we'd been placed on Good Order and Discipline (GOAD) ie segregation/solitary confinement and one hour's exercise per day out of cell.

After a week on lock-up, the three English prisoners were allowed out, after saying they would accept the new regime, followed a few days later by the Turkish prisoner. None were involved in the original protest and had been victimised by being

locked up with us four Irish prison ers. The Irish prisoners remain lock ed up and have been told they wi remain on GOAD until they give written guarantee to conform to th new regime. The other prisoners ma as well still be on GOAD as they hav access to TV and the gym one after noon a week and, like the Irish pris oners, no access to workshops, sports a librarian or library books, religiou services or meaningful work oppor tunities and extremely limited acces to educational facilities.

We have been informed that dis cretionary visits for close relatives of Cat A prisoners are to be discontin ued. In December 1993, after a cam paign by Irish prisoners in Belmars over the length of time (3-6 months it was taking the Home Office to 'clear' close relatives like wives and parents for visits, discretionary visit were introduced, whereby governor could allow very close relative access to prisoners before clearance.

There is now a ban on speaking any language other than English dur ing visits. My visit from my wife wa pered to me. I was then charged with speaking Irish on a visit and lost fortnight's canteen. It is clearly racist policy and it would be interest ing to know if any other prisoners in England are affected by it. My family has not received any of the 16 letters have written to them since before Christmas and my family's contac with me is severely affected by the refusal of the Home Office to allow me the same rights as English speak ers. The Turkish prisoner here is sim ilarly affected.

The Irish prisoners are currently taking legal cases against the Home Office over its refusal to transfer us the use of SSUs and, in my case, the blatantly racist policy preventing my family staying in contact with me.

#### **POWs' birthdays**

Paul (Dingus) Magee BT3783 HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, Thamesmead, London SE28 0EB

30 January Nick Mullen HMP Whitemoor, Longhill Road, March, Cambridge PE15 0PR

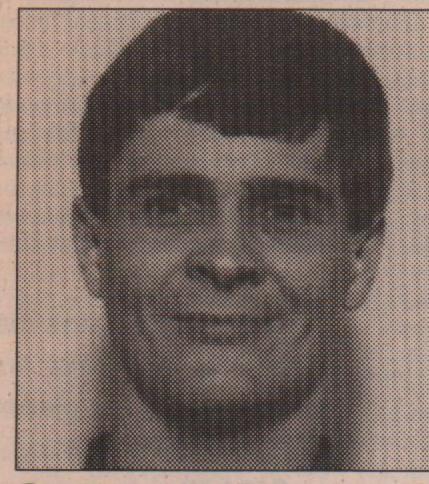
Liam Quinn 49930 **HMP** Whitemoor 6 February

2 February

Joe McKenny L46486 HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Brasside, Durham DH1 5YD

7 February **Patrick Hayes EN1978** HMP Frankland 27 February

#### **Charlie McGhee**



#### Sentenced to death

Charlie McGhee died of a heart attack on 8 January on C wing of Frankland prison, aged 37. The treatment he received in prison amounts to nothing short of murder.

Charlie was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum recommendation of 25 years for shooting an off-duty policeman during an armed robbery, a charge he always denied.

In August 1991 he wrote to FRFI from Albany about his experiences in the previous three months:

'At Full Sutton I was attacked by the screws in the block, where I spent a night in the strongbox, followed by five days punishment before being moved to Frankland. After 16 days ... I was sent on GOAD to Long Lartin,

then moved to Wakefield and held in a cage until August when I was moved here to Albany and put on GOAD for a month. I was placed on a wing for five days, then put back on GOAD for another month.'

While in Wakefield Charlie was visited by a solicitor, Charles Cooper, who later wrote:

'... I found the circumstances of my visit to be quite extraordinary. I was shown to a special room which had a secure door at one end and a flimsy door with perspex surround at the other end. I was kept waiting for a considerable time and whilst I was waiting a prison officer informed me that Charlie was a "cop-killer" ... [he] then said to me something like "if he goes for you, throw yourself to one side and we will be in straight away" ... When Charlie was finally brought to the room, through the secure door, he was surrounded by upwards of eight prison officers and I found, to my surprise, that he was a very small,

In February 1992 Charlie was moved to Long Lartin where he was charged with a succession of petty disciplinary offences such as covering up the spy-hole in his cell door and swearing at a prison officer. In April he finally responded to the constant harassment and was charged with a series of assaults on prison officers.

thin man who seemed to hardly merit

all the attention ...'

These came to court in October 1993. Charlie pleaded not guilty to affray, ABH, wounding and four counts of GBH with intent. He fought the case on the basis that he had

acted in self-defence, called other Category A prisoners as witnesses and was acquitted on all but one charge. Two months later he was charged with another string of offences, including three ABHs and attempted escape. Again the court found in his favour.

Shortly before Christmas 1993 Charlie was in Whitemoor but, following a mass protest there on 20 December, was moved to Belmarsh on the first leg of his final tour of the prison system. By September 1994 he had been in 12 gaols in nine months; at all he was subjected to aggression by prison staff; at Birmingham they openly threatened that if he was sent back there again he would not leave alive. In November he was finally allowed out of segregation and onto a prison wing, at Frankland.

The exact sequence of events prior to Charlie's death is not yet clear. We know he was taken ill ten days earlier while playing badminton and that five days after that began complaining of severe chest pains. Charlie's family would like to hear, via FRFI, from any prisoners who can provide details about this period.

Charlie McGhee was as popular with his fellow prisoners as he was unpopular with prison staff and will be remembered for a long time to come for his irrepressible spirit, friendliness and humour. He was never cowed by his treatment, never 'buckled down' or accepted the inevitability of imprisonment. News of his death was met with grief and anger throughout the long-term prison system.

#### **John Wright**

John Wright was found dead in Everthorpe prison on the morning of 24 March 1993; a verdict of death by misadventure was returned at the inquest. His brother, James, has applied to have the inquest reopened and would like to hear, via FRFI, from any prisoner who was on D wing of Everthorpe on the evening of 23 March.

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# Acjainst aumanity Multinationals and world poverty

500 multinational companies rule the world. Together they produce 30 per cent of the planet's output, account for 70 per cent of global trade and 80 per cent of international investment. The biggest have annual revenues greater than the national products of all but a handful of countries. Never before has so much power been concentrated in so few hands and never has it been so out of control. TREVOR **RAYNE** analyses the latest United Nations report on the multinationals.\*

thiopia is exporting flowers: roses, carnations, chrysanthemums to brighten our buttonholes and liven up our sitting rooms. Kenya already exports 23,000 tonnes each year and Zimbabwe 6,000 tonnes. The Colombian drug cartels established flowers as that country's second major export. The world flower trade is worth \$5 billion a year. A Third World grower gets 10 per cent of the wholesale price, the rest is divided up between the freight, wholesale and auction firms of the USA and Europe.

Healthy flowers consume vast amounts of water: 30,000 litres per acre every day. The cheerful flower business grows sinister. Just 19 per cent of Ethiopia's people have access to safe drinking water. The average Ethiopian gets 71 per cent of their required calorie intake and Ethiopia grows flowers. Food production in Ethiopia is 15 per cent lower than it was 15 years ago. And the inventor of the global flower business is Brooke Bond, a subsidiary of Unilever, known for its Persil, Walls, Stork (or, if you are from Turkey) Sana brands.

Brooke Bond established the largest flower plantation in the world in Kenya. The adjacent lake is shrinking as water is drained from it. 30 per cent of Kenya's people have safe drinking water. The average Kenyan consumes 85 per cent of the required calorie intake. Kenya once exported grain, now it imports grain and exports flowers. 90 per cent of the world grain market is controlled by five companies. The grain and the flowers are grown from seeds. The world's seed trade is monopolised by 11 firms including Shell, ICI/Zeneca, Volvo and Ciba-Geigy: the agri-chemical monopolies.

To grow blemish-free flowers requires pesticides and fertilisers, but these render the land unfit for crop cultivation years after their use. The 20 largest pesticide producers, including the firms above, hold 94 per cent of the world's agri-chemical sales.

So the madness goes on and every way you turn they are there - the multination-

As communists we are concerned with finding solutions to the problems of humanity. Why should the aesthetic and emotional value of giving flowers, of decorating our ceremonies with them, turn into a nightmare for people thousands of miles away? Why when we can photograph 12 billion light years of time and space, when we can fly flowers from Nairobi today to adorn City foyers tomorrow, do we live in a world where almost one in three people do not have safe drinking water? Why, when science seems so full of potential, giving powers only possessed by the gods of ancient mythology, are so many lives becoming more crude and hopeless?

Because we live in a class society

divided between capital and labour, and we live in an imperialist world divided between a handful of rich oppressor nations and a mass of poor oppressed nations. In this world science and technology are turned against the majority in order to extract from them profit for the few who own the means of production, the Lords of Money that own and direct the multinationals. Once they just wanted cheap raw materials, cheap labour and world markets. Today life itself must obey the commands of profit as the genes of plants, animals and humans are privatised to be sold back to

#### The spectacular lie

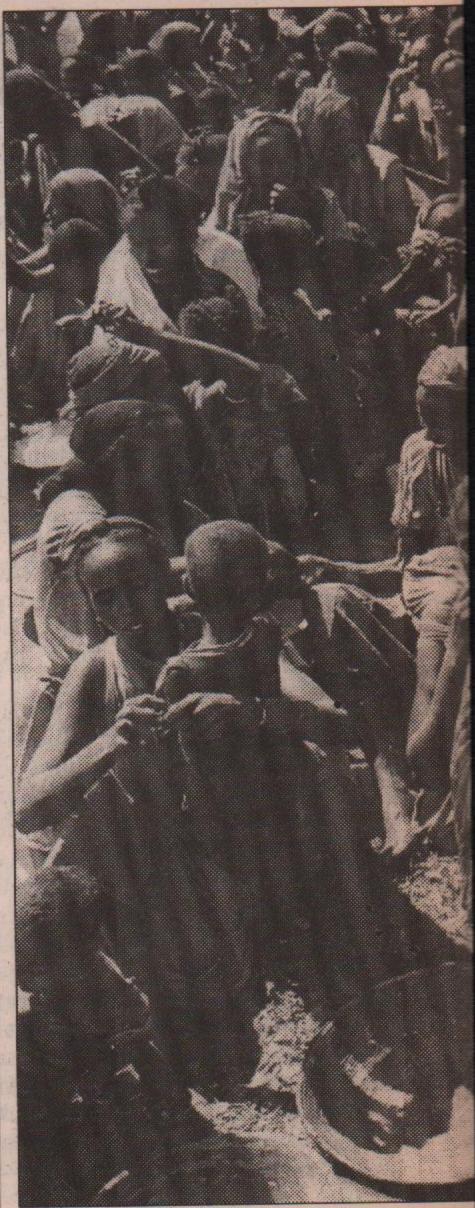
The 17 biggest companies make sales each year in excess of the combined annual output of half the planet's 5.7 billion people. These 17 companies employ just 4.25 million people: about 0.006 per cent of the world's workforce. Never has such a concentration of power been held by so few.

15 companies control the market of 20 of the world's key commodities. They have 90 per cent of the wheat trade, 70 per cent of the rice trade, 80 per cent of the tea and coffee trade, 90 per cent of timber, cotton and tobacco, 80 per cent of copper, 60 per cent of oil, 90 per cent of iron ore...and if you like pineapples they have 90 per cent of that trade too.

At college they tell you about free markets and competition, the message is repeated on television and in the press. What a spectacular lie! The glass in the mirror when you get up, the tea, the sugar, the radio, the cars are all produced by multinational monopolies. As Lenin said, 'The rise of monopolies as the result of the concentration of production is a general and fundamental law of the present stage of development of capitalism.' It is the multinational companies that

are behind the World Bank and its Structural Adjustment Programmes, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the World Trade Organisation, the European Union, Maastricht and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Just as they penetrate ever more areas of our lives here in Britain, so across the globe since the collapse of the socialist bloc they are pouncing like tigers in their pursuit of raw materials, cheap labour and markets, unrestrained, re-inventing colonialism. They are headquartered in the metropolitan heartlands. The top 100 multinationals are based in the developed industrial countries: 38 in Europe, 29 in the USA and 16 in Japan. In a recent article in The Independent

Anthony Sampson described the impact of international finance on Britain: 'Everywhere we see the effects of exploding individual ambition...measuring everything in terms of cash. The MPs rep-



Ethiopia - people starve and flowers for export grow

resent the highest bidder, directors remunerate each other to the limit, the Princess of Wales calculates her price for divorce.

'Concentrations of capital overwhelm national institutions and government constraints... Media empires grew up outside effective controls...[Murdoch's] could use its access to information and publicity to bargain with governments across the globe.

'The imbalance between global operators and national governments is the natural accelerator of corruption.

'National politicians or administrators begin to look more like local councillors confronting big time developers.'

Suites at the Ritz, weekends at Longchamps, Douglas Hurd bribing the Malaysian government for British Aerospace, Mark Thatcher converted into a millionaire to get £20 billion of Saudi orders for the same company, illegal arms sales to Iraq...It is not that British politicians and institutions were not corrupt before, but now with multinational money on (or under) the table and the firms rampant it is the scale of corruption that is breathtaking.

The UN calculates that to provide safe water and sanitation for the planet would cost \$9 billion a year. \$40 billion is spent each year on golf!

'Yes well,' people tell you, 'there is corruption, there always has been, but capitalism works, it delivers the goods, at least for most of us.' Not so, never so, not since capitalism's dawn over a blood red ocean of slavery down to today has it ever delivered the goods for the majority. Capitalism has always meant privilege for a few and destitution for many.

The developed countries, with a quarter of the world's people, have three-quarters of its income. The underdeveloped countries, with three-quarters of the people, have a quarter of the income. And every year the gap between them widens. Over 800 million people in 40 countries are poorer than they were a decade ago. A fifth of the world's population have less than 1.5 per cent of its income. 1.2 billion

\*UNCTAD World Investment Report 1994: Transnational Corporations, Employment and the Workplace



people rot in absolute poverty on noomes of less than a dollar a day. The JN calculates that to provide safe water and sanitation for the planet would cost by billion a year. \$40 billion is spent each

rear on golf!

The globalisa

The globalisation of capital creates nstability and extremes of wealth and poverty everywhere. It entails a 'turbuent process of birth and death of firms, he rise and fall of whole sectors of activty and the re-allocation of production vithin, as well as between, regions and ountries... As many as one in 10 jobs a 'ear have been destroyed by this process' the Organisation for Economic Cooperaion and Development). One in three British companies collapsed or were aken over in the 1980s. Wages in Britain re now more unequal than at any time ince the 1880s when comparable records egan. The richest 20 per cent got 37 per ent of post-tax income in 1979; by 1992 his had grown to 44 per cent, with the tax ate on their income cut from 83 per cent 40 per cent. The poorest 20 per cent ad 9.5 per cent of income in 1979, 6.5 per ent in 1992. While the heads of privatised tilities put themselves in the pay league f the multinational bosses they aspire to e, the ranks of the poor swell with unemloyed and pensioners. The International abour Organisation put the level of global nemployment at 30 per cent in January 994. It described this as a crisis worse nan the 1930s. Unemployment in the uropean Union is 11 per cent.

To maintain privilege for the few capidism casts millions of people to their eaths. Since 1945, British forces have ngaged in at least 93 separate military atterventions overseas. 26 of these interentions have been in the Middle East to efend the profits of Shell and BP, ritain's two biggest multinationals Royal Dutch Shell is Anglo-Dutch).

In the year following the collapse of the Soviet Union the number of major ars underway in a single year reached a cord 29 with more deaths than in any ear since the height of the Vietnam war. Tho is behind the SAS in the Philippines? What are British police and milipines? What are British police and milipines are ported funding mercenaries in zerbaijan and then winning a major entract to move back into Baku 70 years there the Bolsheviks threw them out? Who old the planes to Indonesia to bomb East

Timor? What purpose have the RAF reconnaissance flights over South East Turkey/Kurdistan? Behind all the killing are the hands of imperialism and the multinationals.

#### The scene today

In Capital, Karl Marx described how 'One capitalist kills many', how capital has a necessary tendency to concentrate into ever fewer but larger units. The accompanying acceleration in productivity forces it to expand beyond national boundaries into a global market.

30,000 companies are classified by the UN as transnational corporations. Their 1991 sales totalled \$4.8 trillion, double the early 1980's figure. The return on overseas investments in 1991 of US multinationals investing in Asia and Africa was over double that made on investments in developed countries.

Britain's share of overseas investment has fallen from 45.5 per cent in 1914, 16.2 per cent in 1960, 12.9 per cent in 1978 to 11.4 per cent in 1992. From 1978 to 1992 the US share fell from 41.4 per cent to 25.3 per cent, Japan's share has grown from 6.8 per cent to 13 per cent. and the combined French and German growth has been from 11.1 per cent to 17.5 per cent. Britain's share is still greater than either France or Germany alone. These changing shares of overseas investment mean increasing inter-imperialist rivalry and the danger of World War Three.

For much of the second half of the 1980s Britain was the leading overseas investor. However, in 1993 Britain was behind the USA, France, Japan and Germany. Nevertheless, the total invested by British firms grew by 61 per cent from 1991 to 1993. The total value of British overseas holdings was \$539 billion, almost 70 per cent of the size of the British economy. This places Britain third behind the USA and Japan in foreign holdings.

British multinationals constitute 11 of the top 100 ranked by overseas assets. Royal Dutch Shell is the biggest in the world. Others are BP, Unilever, Hanson, BAT Industries, Grand Metropolitan, ICI, Glaxo, RTZ, SmithKline Beecham and Lonrho. By 1981 for every four people employed in manufacture in Britain one was employed by a British multinational overseas. Today the ratio is closer to 3 to 1 or less.

In 1993 Third World countries received 40 per cent of total overseas investment, a proportion not surpassed for decades. Over the past three years there has been an average fall of 10 per cent each year in investment between developed countries and 37 per cent growth each year of investment into Third World countries. Almost 80 per cent of this investment goes to 10 countries: China, Singapore, Mexico, Malaysia, Brazil, Hong Kong, Argentina, Thailand, Egypt and Taiwan.

Recent multinational investment in Africa averages \$3 billion a year, less than Malaysia alone receives.

Multinational investment in Latin America and the Caribbean is now double that of the 1980s.

#### Privatisation

The acceleration of investment into Third World countries is linked to the neo-liberal programmes being forced on these countries by the World Bank and the IMF at the behest of the multinationals. Trapped in \$1.3 trillion debt and without the counter-balancing force of the socialist bloc these countries are being raided.

Over 80 countries are privatising their state-owned enterprises. In the words of one World Bank official it is 'the greatest transfer of public wealth ever into private hands.' Third World privatisations exceeded the value of those in developed countries in 1992. For example, Jamaica's telephone system was sold to Britain's Cable and Wireless headed by former Tory Cabinet minister Lord Young. Britain's Overseas Development Agency is organising privatisation programmes in Ecuador, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan.

Turkey has a series of privatisations planned. The first privatisation was of Teletas, a communications manufacturer. It was organised by two British accounting multinationals Arthur Andersen and

Price Waterhouse. In 1994 Price Waterhouse oversaw Turkey's two biggest privatisations. Shell is leading the hunt for the petrol refiner Petrol Ofisi. Morgan Grenfell bank is working on the privatisation of the tourist organisation Turban.

Faced with the multinationals' monopoly of capital and power, Third World countries are competing down their restrictions on foreign investment; removing subsidies that protect local producers and public sector enterprises, granting multinationals legal immunities, facilitating the free removal of profits, slashing corporation and capital gains taxes, removing health and safety standards, promoting 'intellectual property' rights, abolishing environmental protection measures and beginning to privatise education, health care and social security provision.

Between 1988-92 67 per cent of all multinational investment in Central and Eastern Europe was in privatised enterprises. However the cumulative total is still only \$13 billion, about as much as in Thailand.

#### Wages and conditions

One of the main attractions of investing in the the Third World and former socialist countries are low wages and poor labour safeguards. A British worker in the clothing industry, low paid by British standards, earns two and a half times as much an hour as the worker in Turkey and Taiwan, five and a half times as much as the worker in Mexico, nine times as much as the worker in Sri Lanka.

Noteworthy is the employment of young women. In the export processing zones of the Caribbean, Mexico and Asia 80 per cent of the labour comprises women aged 16 and above. The young women in these zones 'are often exposed to radiation, toxic substances and chemicals without warning or safety equipment ... production is often speeded up, working hours are 25 per cent longer than elsewhere and wages are lower (between 20-50 percent) than those of men working in the same zones. Sexual harassment by male supervisors and job insecurity can be other problems faced by these women workers.' (UN Report). The report says young women are chosen because they are unmarried, have no family responsibilities, little experience and are difficult to unionise.

Just as the local bourgeoisies share in the proceeds of the multinationals and privatisations so multinationals often pay wages above average local rates. Multinational investments are generally technology intensive with high levels of productivity so higher wages and better social security conditions can be afforded. In Turkey wages paid by multinationals are 134 per cent above the average paid by local firms. It is not unusual to find wages 50 per cent above local rates in different countries.

The impact of such differences tied to the productivity of the multinationals is to force local firms to drive down their wages to compete. Local firms often close thereby expanding the reserve army of unemployed labour. The country becomes dependent on the multinationals for exports and with local closures dependent on imports. In several Third World countries between a fifth and a third of all manufacture is done by multinationals.

Multinationals are creating a world in their own image; it is not just the products, brands and images that fill public spaces but whole education systems are being re-designed to meet the needs of the multinationals. Brazil, China, Mexico, South Korea and the Philippines all have more engineering graduates than Britain.

#### China and India

年,因為其軍事主義的支援的人對於大學的政治學的政治學的政治學的政治學的政治學的政治學的政治學的政治學的企业,但由自己的政治學的主義主義主義主義主義主義主義主義主

Together China and India contain 2.1 billion people, almost 40 per cent of the world's population. China is the biggest recipient of overseas investment and accounted for almost half the 1993 increase in Third World countries with \$26 billion. By October the 1994 sum was \$25.2 billion. Multinational companies account for over a quarter of China's exports. The average Chinese wage is approximately one twentieth that of Britain.

Intoxicated with visions of this

untapped market multinationals have flooded in. Volkswagen, Ford, Toyota, Nissan and Daihatsu intend to multiply the number of cars produced in China five-fold in as many years, regardless of the costs in oil resources, global warming or anything else. However, as the multinationals came in so Chinese state enterprises increased overseas borrowing to partake of the surge in production and profits. With foreign debt at \$83.5 billion Chinese state enterprises are delaying payments to their overseas creditors.

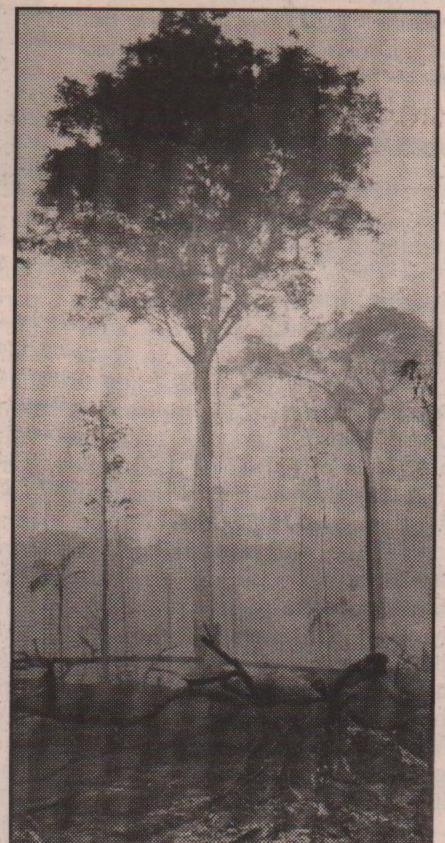
A critical moment is approaching when the Chinese state will either have to confront the multinationals, the World Bank etc or surrender to a subordinate position in managing the Chinese economy.

The value of Third World plants to pharmaceutical multinationals is put at over \$30 billion a year, but the Third World does not get a cent of it.

Restrictions on multinational investment in India have been steadily removed since 1991. The energy sector was opened up in 1992 and in came Shell, Mobil, Exxon, Gulf and Total. General Motors, Peugeot, Chrysler, Ford, Rover and Daimler Benz have invested in auto production. From 1990 to 1993 multinational investment in India increased forty fold to \$4.1 billion. The USA is the biggest investor followed by Britain and Germany. There is a concentration on computer software. Bangalore opened an Information Technology Park in February, its graduate engineers work for \$1,000 a month, a fraction of the equivalent job earnings in Britain, but a high wage in India.

In October the National Westminster Bank bought up 20 per cent of an Indian commercial bank. Indian company shares are now traded on the London and Luxembourg stock exchanges in an arrangement set up by British stockbrokers and merchant banks. With India primed for a foreign investment free for all, the spectre of another Bhopal threatens.

India has over 250 million people below the official poverty line, 70 per cent of people still live on the land. China has an estimated 200 million workers on



Amazon forest – plundered and despoiled

the land surplus to requirements for farming. The multinationals and imperialism hope to extend their existence by drawing from the labour power of these people.

#### Bougainville

China and India opened the doors to multinationals. What happens if people try to keep them closed?

Who reads about Bougainville? Bougainville is a Solomon island in the Pacific Ocean, 800 kilometres east of Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea. It contains one of the world's largest copper deposits described by the former head of RTZ as 'the Jewel in our Crown.' From 1969 to 1989 the Bougainvilleans resisted the destruction of their forests and poisoning of their rivers and beaches. Pitted against the Bougainvillean people were Papuan troops accompanied by Australian helicopter gunships.

In 1990 Bougainville declared independence and the company left. The Australian government began a blockade of the island. During 1993-1994 Papuan troops aided by Australian military personnel have attacked Bougainville. Between 5,000-10,000 Bougainvilleans have been killed, the islanders face an attempt to starve them into submission for the return of RTZ. You do not hear mention of this in multinational-owned media.

RTZ, BP, ICI and Lonrho are companies considered by the British state to be identical with the 'national interest' and they receive regular intelligence briefings from MI6 and GCHQ. The directors of RTZ include the chair of the National Westminster Bank and Lord Armstrong, the former Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service, who is a current director of Shell, BAT Industries, Inchcape and Vice Chancellor elect of Hull University. Other directors include a director of BOC and Reuters, deputy chair of Grand Metropolitan, the chair of ICI, a director and the deputy chair of Barclays Bank, a director of Marks and Spencers, deputy chair of Commercial Union Assurance and a director of the Bank of England.

#### Genetics

Today, the genes for a mouse, the Oncomouse, which is predisposed to cancerous tumours, are patented. The next step the multinational pharmaceutical companies want is to patent the human genome, the particles that form the hand, eye, mouth, whatever. They argue that the cost of research and development is too great if they cannot patent their discoveries and profit from them to cover these costs.

90 per cent of the world's bio-diversity is in the Third World. The multinationals are buying up the bio-diversity they do not destroy first. Bayer's steroid hormones are taken from the Arab medicinal plant spiraea, Syntex's steroid hormones are taken from barbasco roots in Mexico, a streptomycin-based antibiotic taken from Argentinian soil is patented as an animal feed additive by Mitsubishi. These are examples of bio-piracy where multinationals take what was naturally available, turn it into private property and profit from it.

The value of Third World plants to pharmaceutical multinationals is put at over \$30 billion a year, but the Third World does not get a cent of it.

In 1994 Indian farmers rioted because a patent had given the agri-chemical combines a monopoly over seeds that they had used for generations, threatening their livelihoods. They also rioted because patented drugs put the price of treatment for disease beyond their reach. These people understand what multinational capital means. The people of Chiapas understood when they rose up on the day that Mexico entered NAFTA.

The multinationals' scramble for profits is as much an indication of the crisis that capitalism is in as it is of their strength. When a trillion dollars can be wiped off the New York stock exchange in a single day in 1987, when the current crisis of the Mexican peso can send shudders through markets across the Third World, we see confirmation that as capital accumulates into vast concentrations of wealth so its foundations constantly narrow and the contradictions that govern its existence become ever more inescapable. In Britain those who fought the Criminal Justice Act, the M11, the cruel shipment of animals, who want to save the environment, the education system, health service, jobs and wages, those who oppose the racist immigration laws and fascism will learn they must make common cause with each other and with the people of India and Chiapas against the new Moloch, the multinationals.

# Cuban socialism.

the social problems that they mentioned there [at the Miami summit of Latin American countries, from which Cuba was excluded] exist in Cuba. It's been a long time since they've existed, and they don't even exist now during the Special Period. And what country did they exclude? This country, a country that... has the highest number of doctors per capita in the world, the highest number of professors and teachers in the world, the highest number of art instructors in the world and the highest number of physical education teachers and sports trainers in the world. If we continue and analyse the per capita rate of university professionals and technicians, the conclusion we would reach is that we have too many.

We challenge the capitalists and neoliberals to achieve in 30 years in Latin America these levels that I'm talking about, because they don't even have them in the United States.

Fidel Castro, 14 December 1994

Imperialism's neoliberal offensive in Latin America has been achieved at appalling human cost. 80 to 100 million people are malnourished. Unemployment stands at 30-40 per cent. 21 per cent of the population have no access to safe drinking water, and 41 per cent lack adequate health facilities. Vast tracts of land have been desertified and rivers poisoned by the multinationals in their greedy drive to exploit the rich natural resources of the continent.

Today, capitalism is increasingly unable to meet the needs of the the working class in the imperialist countries. Against this background of human degradation and poverty, the example of the Cuban Revolution continues to stand as a bright beacon of hope to the poor and oppressed. Cuban socialism, in the face of a relentless offensive by the most powerful imperialist power in the world, continues to feed, clothe and house its people. Education and health care remain free and universal.

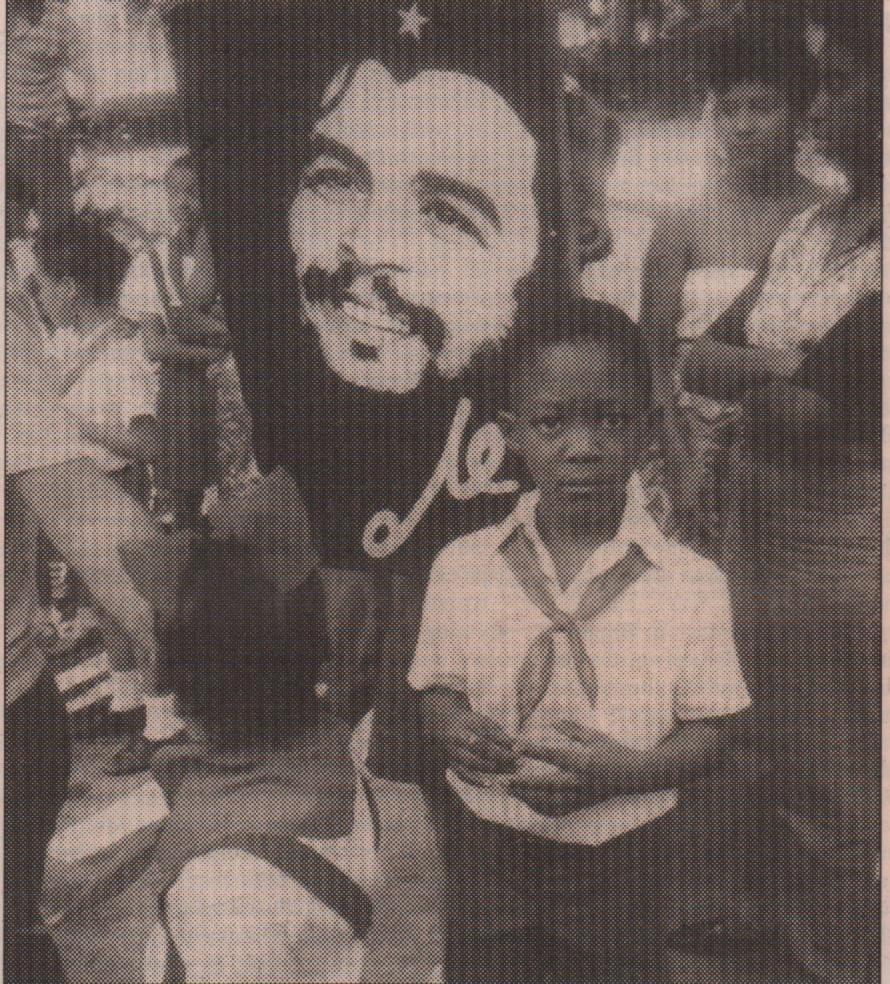
In early January, RCG/FRFI members CAT WIENER and NIGEL COOK took part in an international youth brigade to Cuba, hosted by the Union of Young Communists (UJC). We spent a week on a work camp in Ciego de Avila, and a week visiting hospitals, universities, day care centres and factories. What we saw, in spite of the severe economic hardship and shortages, was a nation mobilised to resist the onslaught of imperialism's power, and defend the hard-won gains of the revolution, and socialism itself.

uba is a country under siege. The Special Period, imposed when the socialist camp collapsed and Cuba lost 85 per cent of its markets, now affects every area of Cuban economic activity. Unmitigated by the trade at fair prices and mutual cooperation provided by the Soviet Union, the effects of the 36year illegal US blockade have been drastically exacerbated by the Torricelli Act, which prevents US subsidiaries in foreign countries from trading with Cuba and imposes harsh sanctions on ships which dock in Cuban waters. Added to this are the restrictions on money transfers and remittances from Cubans living in the US imposed by Clinton during the height of the refugee crisis in the summer. The resulting lack of hard currency and access to foreign markets means shortages in every sphere - the superb health service, for example, lacks such basics as aspirins and other analgesics; lack of fertilisers and pesticides compounds the disastrous sugar cane harvests effected by last year's hurricanes. There is universal education, but few exercise books.

#### Resisting the blockade

In this context, it is remarkable that, for the second year running, Cuba has achieved an infant mortality rate of below 10 per 1,000 live births. The 1994 figure of 9.9 per 1,000 remains the lowest in Latin America, compared with 14-15 per 1,000 in Costa Rica and Chile (at the lowest end of the scale) and 85 per 1,000 in Haiti. It is lower than the poorest areas of Britain. It is a source of justifiable pride to the Cubans that throughout all the rigours of the Special Period, not one school and not one hospital has been closed.

This is not to minimise the effects of the Special Period, most keenly felt in transport and food production. Alongside every road, beneath the brightly painted hoardings that carry UJC slogans - 'With everyone and for the good of everyone', 'Yes, you can do it!' - queues form for buses, or lifts. There is little petrol or spare parts, shops are bare, and rations only just adequate. In addition, the daily grind of life without soap or detergents, without paper, without luxuries of any kind, cannot be overestimated, nor the difficulties of adjusting to life with frequent cuts in water and electricity. Life, for the Cuban people, is hard - yet the responses are resourceful, imaginative, collective. The lack of transport has led to a mushrooming of millions of bicycles - mainly imported from China - designed to carry at least one other person on the back; we saw some carrying a third person on the



The slogan of the Young Pioneers is 'We will be like Che'

crossbars, children strapped to their parents' backs. In cities and towns, the queues are organised by state officials, the amarillos, who flag down state-owned cars and organise lifts. Many privately-owned vehicles stop voluntarily, too. The shortage of spare parts means that broken-down buses are welded together, fixed to lorries - and hey presto, a massive camion bus capable of carrying 300 people a time. Students at Havana University spoke of getting up two hours early to get the bus to college, or studying at 2am to beat the power cuts. Some felt that the crisis in many ways had brought out the best in the students - a determination to succeed at all costs.

This view was reaffirmed by Juan Fundora Lliteras, vice president of Arroyo Naranjo municipality in the province of Havana. 'The more they squeeze us, the more we find solutions to the problems from the Bay of Pigs to the Special Period. In trying to destroy us, they have in fact taught us how to live, so that at times we surprise even ourselves with what we are able to achieve.'

#### The market – a double-edged solution?

However, the desperate need for hard currency has forced the Cuban state to experiment with market solutions, which contain inherent problems of inequality and privilege. Fundora explained that measures such as, for example, the legalisation of dollars, had been economically necessary, and discussed throughout the country in community and work organisations for six months before implementation. Nevertheless:

"...this gives little benefit to the humble people of the region, the majority, the workers who sustain the country ... it introduces differences in a country where differences have been so few for 36 years."

Last summer, the government sanctioned the opening of farmers' markets, in response to chronic shortages and social unrest. They have meant that food is more widely available, and those who can afford it are able to supplement their basic rations. In addition, the Army of Working Youth - conscripts on general military service - attempt to provide produce at generally lower prices to a wider section of the population. However, as Carlos Lage, President of the Council of Ministers, has argued: 'We should not idealise the importance of the farmers' markets, nor their repercussions as a means of solving our problems. We are not pleased that the market cannot be for everyone, with the produce at such high prices ... our objective is to increase production.'

Joint ventures and foreign investment have made possible a rapid expansion of tourism, which represents a vital source of hard currency, and is now Cuba's second largest export, after sugar. Yet it exposes those who work in the hotels to dollars, the lure of consumer goods, and a privileged lifestyle. Communist youth on the camp told us, 'What can happen, is that between those who work with dollars and those who don't, there can be differences. I'm not convinced that the young people who work within tourism are committed to the working class.'

#### Cuban youth: 'Revolution is not just a word'

The UJC, in particular, has taken up the challenge of maintaining the socialist principles of the revolution even in such a potentially corrosive industry, and have a permanent representative at most tourist resorts. At the hotels we visited in Caya Coco, highly conscious young workers explained the necessity for tourism, and explained that they shared their tips with workers, such as gardeners and cooks, who do not receive tips, and every year, on a voluntary basis, donated a percentage of money received to the regional health service - \$400 in 1994.

Similarly, in agriculture, where the shortages are compounded by a lack of labour power – 80 per cent of the Cuban population is urban – the UJC takes a leading role in mobilising young workers to take part in work brigades, boosting food production for the state. The camp we visited was its flagship, run and organised entirely by its cadre. Around Havana, 15,000 workers participate in microbrigades to build houses (including their own) and day care centres using materials from defunct factories.

It works constantly with young people to remind them of the achievements of the revolution, encourage their participation in its development, and counter the siren propaganda of US Radio Marti broadcasts. On the camp where we worked, the young UJC workers had few doubts. Jorge is a young black railway worker who spent two years fighting in Angola before coming to the camp an act of internationalism he describes as 'an honour, not just for me, but for my family and my country.' Speaking of the refugees who left Cuba in the summer, he explained:

'They left because they don't understand what capitalism is, and what socialism is. They think they can have a soft life in Miami, while here you have to work hard. They were just seeking individual solutions, solutions for themselves, not ones which contribute to the development

# a step forward for humanity

of our country. For my part, I will live and die a socialist here in Cuba.'

Another young communist, Bernard David, added: 'They left because they don't really love their country, although it's given them everything free. Money is everything to them. Material things, clothes, to live well that's all they care about. If that's all they care about here, it's better that they live over there.'

That this level of consciousness has been maintained in spite of the difficulties is testimony to the work of the PCC and the UJC, and the extent to which the structures that exist represent and integrate the aspirations of the majority. Fundora described the democratic working of the Poder Popular, which allows every Cuban representation at local level: 'The revolution is based on the majority. It must have popular support. So all important decisions that affect the life of the people must be discussed by them, allowing them to make suggestions about how we can do things better.' At Havana University, students told us, 'We, the students, are also part of the revolution. We must walk forward ... Revolution is not just a word - it's a whole social process that you improve as you go along.'

'No one in Cuba has the right to say "I'm apolitical". Each one has a right and a duty to participate. It's not just up to the ministers and the government.'

#### Socialism: the world that could be

The Cuban revolution is marked, outstandingly, by its dedication to making society more just, more equal and fuller for every individual. That economic difficulties limit social development they frankly accept. (For example, women in Cuba enjoy equal legal, political and social rights with men. Maternity rights and access to cheap, adequate childcare far outstrip anything on offer in 'developed' Britain. Nonetheless, Fundora recognised that full equality - the freeing, for example, of women from domestic labour - depended predominantly on objective conditions allowing fuller social development.) Yet it is a society which has eradicated the childhood diseases that beset the rest of Latin America - tuberculosis, cholera, diphtheria, for example. There is still, in spite of chronic overcrowding, no homelessness in Cuba, and no beggars on its streets. In what other country would you find black people stating categorically, as Jorge and others did when we asked them, 'There is no racism in Cuba. In this people, black people. We are all equal.' This is a society which cares for and values the old, the young, the disabled.

Nowhere was this commitment to the ideals of justice and equality, this belief in human development

#### **Health in Cuba**

Despite the US blockade, Cuba has registered remarkable medical advances. Despite the shortage of medical equipment and drugs, medical treatment is free and available to anyone who needs it. No hospitals have closed and there are no long waiting lists for routine operations. Life expectancy - 62 years before the revolution - is now 75, equal to that of imperialist countries.

Advances in medical techniques and in the development of preventative medicines are still being made, as we discovered during a visit to the new **Immunisation Development Centre** in Havana. At the Chemical Pharmaceutical Centre we heard about the research being developed into the use of Cuba's rich natural resources in developing medical technology. The basic chemical structure of Qu-Ulcer, for example,

is contained in seaweed that grows around Cuba's coast, enabling it to produce the anti-ulcer drug cheaply both for internal consumption and export. The pharmaceutical industry is a rapidly developing source of hard currency for Cuba.

However, the US blockade severely hampers its ability to sell life-saving drugs, such as the vaccine for meningitis B and PPG, used to lower cholesterol (though more notorious for its aphrodisial qualities!) on the world market. Inevitably, at these centres, a discussion arose over the treatment of AIDS in Cuba. The director of the centre frankly admitted that the controversial sanatoria (used to isolate those who were HIV+, while providing them with health care, a protein-rich diet and counselling) had been closed down in 1994. A few sanatoria still exist, but only for the long-term care of the seriously ill. A massive, voluntary programme was initiated in which 4 million

Of the 1,000 or so HIV+ sufferers in the last ten years, 200 have gone on to develop AIDS. However, relatively few have died, and the death rate seems to have stabilised, compared with the soaring rates in the imperialist countries. Patients are now closely supervised at home by family doctors. A safe sex campaign, initiated by the Union of Young Communists, is gaining ground. Doctors also appeared confident that they have found a

Cubans were tested for HIV+.

within five years. Breaking the blockade will ensure even greater advances for Cuban medicine. You can help by supporting the Cuba Solidarity 'Medical Aid for Cuba' campaign, or by sending certificated medical equipment and drugs to Cuba via the Cuban embassy. If you travel to Cuba, take plenty of aspirin to leave

behind - every bit helps!

candidate for an AIDS vaccine. They

expect to start tests on humans

everyone, men and women, white mentally handicapped youth, near Havana. Here, amongst the organic vegetable plots and orchards, the jewellery workshop, the greenhouses, the young patients put on a show for us, with songs, dancing and music. They radiated hope and confidence in the future. To us, they encapsu-

and fulfilment, more overwhelming lated the possibility of the world socialism is both necessary, and poscountry we have socialist equality for than at the Castellana centre for that could be, a million miles re- sible - and that our task is to build moved from the spiritual and material brutalisation and hunger of the capitalist nightmare - its racism, its gaping inequalities, its denial of humanity. We came away with a profound consciousness of our debt to the Cuban people - for their struggle and daily sacrifice to prove that in history.

a movement for it in our own countries. Cuba is living proof, in the words of revolutionary student leader of the 1930s, Julio Antonio Mella, that the struggle for socialism is not a utopia of madmen and fanatics, but, rather, the next step forward

### GU = 3/4/51/4 Yankees: NO!

he highlight of the brigade was the week we spent on a UJC work camp. Young Cubans, mobilised from their normal jobs for a year, work on the banana plantations. The day starts at dawn with the raising of the Cuban flag and the singing of the anthem; the work in the banana plantations is arduous, and food and conditions on the camp are basic. However, the Cubans meet the hardship with conviviality and commitment, returning from the fields in the late afternoon to dance and party through the night.

The breaking of the US travel ban to Cuba by 70 young North Americans (the majority of the brigade), and the donation of 130+ pairs of work boots were an important act of solidarity. However, the atmosphere of collectivism was marred by persistent individualistic and arrogant behaviour and by political prejudice.

Every discussion, even at the immunisation centre, was dominated by the anti-Sovietism of the USbased Young Socialist (YS) brigade leadership, to the extent that the UJC felt compelled to hold a meeting to explain the irreplaceable contribution the Soviet Union made to Cuba's development. They made the point that today's economic crisis is a direct result of the loss of the support of the socialist countries - the blockade has always existed. Cuba is a country at war. One Cuban asked, pertinently, why there'd been no revolution in the imperialist countries.

A meeting organised for us by the Provincial Committee of the UJC, was dominated by ignorant and negative questions - eg equating the children who ask tourists for chewing

gum in Havana with destitute beggars on the streets of the major imperialist countries. The RCG's response put these issues in proportion and received warm applause from the Cubans.

After just one day's work in the banana plantations, 20 brigadistas went sick. They then asked that the loud music played all day on the camp be turned down so that they could sleep! The Cubans had to ask them to clean up, look after their belongings, and not wander off during visits. It was as though the brigade had expected a holiday camp, not a work camp.

Such behaviour, culminating in the singing of the Star Spangled Banner on the last night, is the prod-

many of the participants seemed entirely ignorant of the conditions confronting most Cubans - their main concern appeared to be their stomachs.

A refreshing contrast came from a young woman from the ex-GDR. Although she, like many others, had welcomed the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the brutal experience of the reintroduction of capitalism in East Germany made her far more aware of the issues confronting Cuba. She told us in Berlin, there are T-shirts reading: 'We want the Wall back ... only 10 feet higher.'

The RCG's political positions on the Soviet Union and Cuba were appreciated by the Cuban communists. We were honoured to receive from them, as a gift to our organisation, the large Cuban flag that had hung from the camp wall.

Our arguments also appeared to impress other brigade members who, appalled that at no point was follow-up solidarity work discussed, called their own meeting. The 20 members who turned up decided it was time to up the ante against the blockade. Ideas included: a Europe-



The Eduardo Delgado work camp in Ciego de Avila

uct of privileged and individualistic US society.

YS, the new youth organisation of SWP(US) which monopolised the brigade, must take a considerable share of the responsibility. Opposition to the blockade was not even a precondition for participation, and

wide boycott of Coca Cola; a video tour of colleges in the US and Britain with the aim of building active solidarity work; 'blockades' of Congressmen such as Torricelli who oppose Cuba; going on the offensive against newspapers who print lies about Cuba; and a newsletter.

#### ROCK around the BLOCKade

It is a truth universally acknowledged that young people need food, housing, education

...and music

uban youth are uniquely provided with the three former essentials. But in many areas, youth clubs lack adequate music centres and facilities. During our stay in Ciego de Avila, the RCG discussed with the UJC's Provincial Committee the possibility of raising funds in this country to provide the local youth centre with a tape deck, speakers, amplifiers and disco lights. We plan to organise this work over the coming year, culminating in a youth brigade to Cuba in December 1995, to donate the material and help install it.

In a country where 65 per cent of the population is aged under 30, the importance of engaging the active participation of young people in defending the Revolution cannot be overestimated. Part of the UJC's success (11 per cent of Cuba's youth make up its cadre) lies in its ability to combine political campaigning with exciting social events. Young people in this country, whose right to party is today threatened by the Criminal Justice Act, will be able to identify with the relevance and importance of this campaign. Anyone who is interested in raising material aid for Cuba and participating in this brigade should contact:

FRFI/RCG, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX or tel: 0171 837 1688.

The Revolutionary Communist Group extends its warmest thanks to all those whose generosity and hospitality made our comrades' participation on the brigade such a rich, informative and inspiring experience, in particular:

**The UJC Provincial Committee** in Ciego de Avila

**The UJC International Department** The Arroyo Naranjo municipal committee, Havana

and all our comrades and friends at the Eduardo Delgado workcamp in Ciego de Avila.

For a fuller discussion of the material on these pages, and an opportunity to find out more about the RCG's work in solidarity with Cuba, comrades are invited to attend the next

RCG COMMUNIST FORUM

#### **Defend Cuba! Defend socialism!**

Sunday 19 February, 2pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn) Entrance £1/50p Speaker: Cat Wiener MAXINE WILLIAMS reviews a new account of how the British state dealt with 'the enemy within'.

# WATER

On New Year's Day 1995 the few remaining coal mines in Britain passed quietly into private ownership. In the past fifteen years 200 mines have been closed, with a loss of 200,000 jobs. There are now only 7,000 miners left in Britain. Mrs Thatcher's final solution to the problem of the militant miners was to destroy their industry. It served not only as a dreadful revenge against the miners but also a terrifying warning to what remains of the organised working class.

eumas Milne's book The Enemy Within is the revealing and powerful story of the covert means used by a coalition of the rich, their state apparatus, their Labour Party allies and the media.

It is a shocking story. The NUM and Arthur Scargill were victims of a level of state violence and harassment more commonly used against the Irish people. Nor is the similarity coincidental. When Mrs Thatcher called the miners 'the enemy within', she effectively labelled them 'terrorists'. She said:

'At one end of the spectrum are the terrorist gangs within our borders and the terrorist states which finance and arm them. At the other are the hard left, operating inside our system, conspiring to use union power ... to break, defy and subvert the laws'.

As Milne says: 'As far as the Thatcherite faction in the Cabinet and their supporters in the security services were concerned, the NUM under Scargill's stewardship was the most serious domestic threat to state security in modern times. And they showed themselves prepared to encourage any and every method available - from the secret financing of strikebreakers to mass electronic surveillance, from the manipulation of agents provocateurs to attempts to "fit up" miners' officials - in order to undermine or discredit the union and its leaders.' (p5)

#### MI5's 'Get Scargill' campaign

To all who witnessed the methodical and violent police operation against the miners' strike, it was clear that the government had prepared and mobilised unprecedented resources. Indeed Nigel Lawson (former Chancellor of the Exchequer) was later to say: 'It was just like arming to face the threat of Hitler in the late 1930s'. 11,000 miners were arrested, thousands suffered severe beatings and pit villages were under police occupation.

It is now clear that an equally well resourced covert operation was underway. In 1990 disaffected employees at GCHQ (the government's communication monitoring organisation which employs 11,000 people to tap phones and faxes) told The Guardian that Thatcher personally authorised a 'Get Scargill' campaign both during and after the strike, aimed at destroying him 'politically and socially'. This was run by MI5, GCHQ and the Special Branch. The MI5 campaign was organised by Stella Rimington, whose sterling work led to her promotion to head of MI5.

Throughout the strike, MI5 leased a building directly opposite the NUM's Headquarters in Sheffield. The phones of NUM leaders, local officials and activists were tapped. The scale of the tapping was so great

that at one point, in what was codenamed the Tinkerbell Operation, the overloaded system ground to a halt.

The GCHQ employees said that the operation included an unsuccessful attempt to deposit £500,000 in a Scargill-linked bank account in Dublin with the aim of making Scargill look like an embezzler.

Thatcher had personally authorised a vast electronic eavesdropping operation, using GCHQ and US National Security Agency facilities across Europe to trace the miners'

intelligence gathering was conveyed. She urged them to set up a Public Order Intelligence Unit to monitor and infiltrate groups and activities which, although legal, 'threaten public order'.

#### Another finger in the pie

One of the major propaganda tools used against the miners was the existence of the working miners. The main financial backer and organiser of the scabs was David Hart, a millionaire with close personal and political ties with Thatcher and the intelligence services. Touring pit areas in his Mercedes, he put together twenty five cells of dissident miners under the auspices of the National Working Miners Committee. From this came the 'political roots of what would later become the Union of Democratic Mineworkers'. (p266)

Hart reported regularly to Mrs Thatcher and was virtually inseparable from Coal Board Chairman, Ian MacGregor. Using his own money and half a million pounds raised from sources such as Sir Hector Laing (United Biscuits) and Lord Hanson, Hart devised a strategy aimed at paralysing the NUM. He used legal actions by working miners to get the strike declared unlawful and the NUM fined. When the union refused to pay the fines they were declared 'in contempt' and their assets subject to sequestration.

The government came closest to defeat in the autumn of 1984 when it looked as thought the pit deputies



Neil Kinnock joins in the celebrations: when Mirror journalists won the British Press Awards 'Reporter of the Year' for their article 'Scargill and the Libyan money: the facts', Kinnock rushed to congratulate them. The article was later castigated by the Lightman Inquiry as 'entirely untrue'.

funds. Banking operations in Europe were monitored, particularly those involving named NUM members and also transfers from socialist countries. By these means, following the sequestration of their assets by the courts, NUM funds were traced and seized and those running the strike were forced to spend much time and effort raising money and disbursing it in cash. The information that enabled Price Waterhouse to trace carefully hidden NUM funds came directly from GCHQ. It was no accident that it was on the issue of funding that the second stage of the 'Get Scargill' operation, the 1990 accusations of theft/corruption, was centred. The GCHQ workers confirmed that MI5 had set up the Mirror campaign against Scargill.

It is worth noting that before approaching The Guardian with this information, the GCHQ employees had given details of it to a Labour MP close to Kinnock. They were surprised that nothing had happened as a result.

So widespread was MI5 interference during the strike that police feathers became ruffled. Scottish officers repeatedly complained to Tam Dalyell MP about interference by the intelligence services. One Chief Constable reported that at one meeting of Chief Constables, Mrs Thatcher's dissatisfaction at the poor level of police

union, NACODS, might join the strike. Hart made frantic efforts to prevent this, meeting with right-wing members of NACODS. The pit deputies decided not to strike for reasons which Thatcher said were 'unclear'. Others believe that some NACODS officials were offered money, jobs and special pensions to ensure that the pit deputies stayed at work and thus the working mines sonal mortgages. The Mirror paid remained open.

Throughout, Hart maintained close links with MI5's Stella Rimington. He stiffened the resolve of McGregor not to pursue a negotiated settlement, convincing him that the fight against the NUM was a crusade for democracy against Marxism. 'It was essential, Hart believed, that the miners should be forced to return to work without a settlement - which, at the initiative of Kim Howells (now a Labour MP) and others in the NUM's South Wales Area, is what eventually happened.' (p270)

And Hart? Since the strike he has acted as an adviser to Michael Portillo and been employed as a consultant to Minister of Defence, Malcolm Rifkind, advising on defence privatisation. Apparently he also made £1m on property deals for British Coal's pension fund. Oh yes, and he has been publishing British Briefing, 'an intelligence analysis of the activities of the extreme left.'

#### MI5 inside the NUM

In 1993, Roger Windsor, former Chief Executive of the NUM, was named by MPs as an MI5 agent sent into destabilise the NUM. They based this on information from previously reliable senior Whitehall sources. Windsor previously worked for over 10 years for Public Services International, an international trade union body with long-standing CIA links. His behaviour both while he was Chief Executive of the NUM and after, when he sold his fictional revelations about Scargill to the Daily Mirror, certainly show a man who was adept at causing trouble.

He came to public attention when during the strike, in a gift to government propagandists, he was shown on TV embracing Colonel Gaddafi of Libya. The NUM's aim in sending Windsor to Libya was merely to try to cut Libyan oil supplies to Britain during the strike. Windsor apparently insisted on meeting Gaddafi and embracing him on TV. His other coups as Chief Executive included: forging a UDM member's signature, an act which cost the union £193,000 in damages and costs; obstructing negotiations and, after the strike, collaborating with the Eurocommunist wing of the CP in the NUM on fomenting splits.

It is known that MI5 had been actively seeking an agent to 'park... alongside Scargill' in preparation for the coming strike. MI5 officer Cathy Massiter revealed that MI5 had considered Harry Newton for this role. Newton, an MI5 operative for 30 years, masqueraded as a socialist and was active in the Institute of Workers Control, CND and the labour movement. He knew Scargill well but was too ill to undertake a post with the NUM. But MI5 definitely placed someone 'high up' according to Michael Bettaney, former MI5 agent currently serving 23 years for trying to pass information to the Soviet Union. (Interestingly Bettaney also said MI5 had an agent in the union TASS whose identity remains unrevealed).

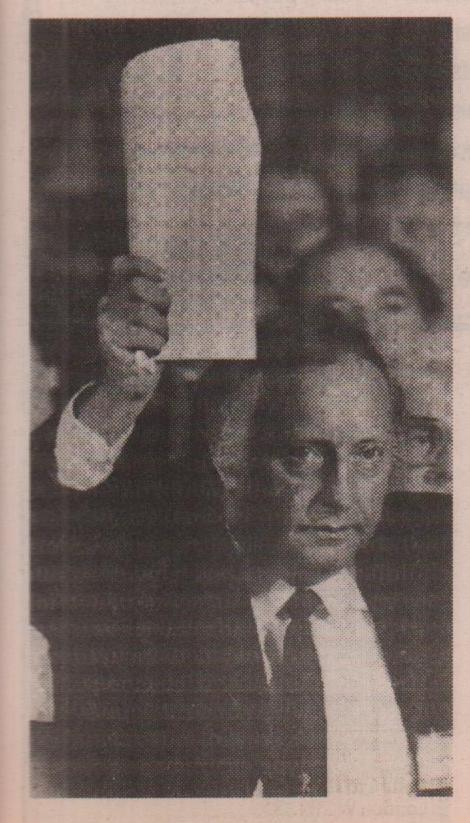
But it was Windsor's work afterwards that was to prove most deadly. The allegations that he made in 1990 caused enormous problems for the NUM at the very time when the next stage of the government plan to close the mines and destroy the union was in preparation.

#### **Enter Maxwell**

In 1984 Robert Maxwell bought the Daily Mirror and rapidly turned its editorial line against the miners. As the Mirror was the only mass pro-Labour newspaper this was of considerable value to the ruling class. But it was in 1990 that Maxwell turned in his finest performance for them. Roger Windsor, having left the NUM, approached the Mirror claiming that Scargill and Peter Heathfield, the General Secretary, had used Libyan money to pay off their per-Windsor £80,000 for this nonsense and ran it as a huge story with an editorial personally signed by Maxwell.

The Mirror story was used to attack the NUM, and Scargill in particular, in a media frenzy. A Cook Report programme for Central TV (in which Maxwell owned 20 per cent of the shares) elaborated the fictions and added a few more. Scargill had sought not just money but guns from Libya.

The major problem with the Libyan money story was that it was immediately and easily shown to be false. Scargill had paid off his mortgage out of his own savings months before Windsor's Libyan trip. Heathfield's home was owned by the Derbyshire NUM. At the time of the strike both houses were in the process of being bought by the NUM and to keep them from being seized by the sequestrators there were some financial transfers made. All were transparently above board.



With the Libyan story damaged the Mirror turned to that good old standby - Soviet gold. They accused Scargill of diverting Soviet donations to an international fund set up to further his personal ambitions. The Soviet story is a very complex one but is revealing. Soviet mining unions had provided material aid to the miners during the strike and had ended oil and coal exports to Britain from the Soviet Union. Scargill visited the Soviet Embassy and asked

Labour Party's actions against the NUM. Yet it is clear that the Labour leadership wanted Scargill finished off as much as the Tories did. When the Mirror/Cook Report allegations broke, Kinnock and Willis lost no time in calling for a public inquiry. Labour coal spokesman (and NUMsponsored MP) Kevin Barron, and former NUM worker Kim Howells, both Kinnock lieutenants who had appeared in the Cook Report, joined the chorus of calls for investigation.



Gorbachev assured Thatcher that there would be no money for the miners

the unions to send urgently needed money and an amount of just over \$1m was agreed. This money, never having been received by the NUM, proved a continuing source of rumours. The money had in fact been paid not to the NUM but to an international miners' solidarity fund. This, it later turned out, was the result not of NUM wishes but of a split in the Soviet Central Committee. The darling of the Western world, Gorbachev, was against sending aid to the miners in Britain, fearful that it would offend his friend Mrs Thatcher. Behind the scenes such much-vilified figures as Gromyko lobbied for the British miners. In vain. Soviet money was never sent to the NUM and most of the money which was sent to the international solidarity fund came after the strike was over. Eastern European countries did send money during the strike.

Several points emerge from this. Firstly, it was clear that from its earliest days the Gorbachev faction was anti-working class on an international scale. Secondly that, whatever faults could be found with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, there were forces there still in the 1980s which were socialist and which did provide a serious source of support for the international working class.

A Moscow gold story is always a good one for the British intelligence services and the hounds unleashed by MI5 and Maxwell were many and various. Labour MP Kim Howells demanded that the Fraud Squad be brought in and by July 1990, seven vestigations were launched against Scargill, Peter Heathfield and the NUM.

Milne gives enormous detail in rebutting all the charges against the NUM. In the course of it, he shows that MI5 was the hidden hand behind the Windsor story and subsequent media onslaught and legal actions that so split and exhausted the NUM.

It is a supreme irony that whilst the story about Scargill and the NUM was shown to be false, his two main accusers have been shown to be dishonest. Maxwell stole £400m of pension funds and Windsor actually did use NUM funds to pay off his mortgage. The NUM is taking proceedings against him in the French courts for the return of this money.

#### **Enemies in the camp**

The least publicised part of Milne's book is that which deals with the

Kinnock was widely known to loathe Scargill and all he stood for (ie the working class), describing him as the 'labour movement's nearest equivalent to a First World War general.' (p196) He carefully avoided all picket lines and rallies whilst holding regular private press briefings against the strike and blocking parliamentary debates. He condemned the 'violence' of the miners whilst ignoring the overwhelming evidence of police violence. As Kinnock purged



Maxwell - acclaimed as 'one of us' by Thatcher

the left out of the Labour Party and made his famous appeals to semidetached Britain, the militant miners became a political obstacle. With Scargill still undefeated in 1990 and a possible merger between the NUM and TGWU on the cards, Labour wanted to finish off Scargill.

Who better than Labour's old legal actions, prosecutions and in- tween embezzling pension money and sacking union members at his plants, provided the Labour Party with funds, practical help with electioneering and a newspaper. The Labour leadership knew in advance about the Mirror smear and the active involvement of Howells and Barron showed that the smear campaign had the full backing of the Labour leadership. Both had been previously identified with the left of the Labour Party and NUM during the early part of the strike. Towards the end, Howells had called for a return to work without a settlement. That this meant abandoning the sacked miners did not disturb them. Howells was part of the South Wales group which planned the back to work move with support both from Kinnock and the Eurocommunist wing of the Communist Party. During the Mirror smear Howells and Barron 'were ready whenever necessary to provide a Labour face for the media campaign'. Kinnock later, even after

the Mirror stories were discredited, presented the British Press Awards 'Reporter of the Year' prize to the Mirror smear team.

For Kinnock's Labour Party, the miners were the real enemy. They represented a fighting spirit that was a continual threat, having come closest to defeating Thatcherism and providing a lead to the rest of the beleaguered working class. As Milne comments: 'The Scargill Affair depended on a coincidence of purpose between an exotic array of interests, foremost among which were the Thatcher administration and the Labour leadership'. (p24)

It is interesting to note that the Eurocommunist wing of the Communist Party played a major part in fighting for Kinnock's line in the NUM. Martin Jaques has since boasted about this. He has not, to my knowledge, boasted about the fact that after Roger Windsor fled to France, where he set up business as an estate agent and translator: 'one British network he was able to draw on for his business was a group around the Democratic Left, the organisation set up by the Eurocommunist faction of the old Communist Party...Peter Carter, the CPGB's ex-industrial organiser who played such a key role in stoking the internal opposition to Scargill's leadership during and after the 1984 strike, even did some building work for Windsor in France'. (p168)

#### Not the first time

Shortly after Milne's book was published, the 1964 Cabinet Papers were released under the 30-year rule. They showed that when Macmillan was Prime Minister, the government funded a secret anti-trade union organisation - the Industrial Research and Information Service (IRIS) to build anti-communist cells in the unions, target left-wing activists and 'inspire' media stories culled from 'secret sources'. They were keen to enlist the help of the Daily Herald and, later, the Daily Mirror. A committee of industrialists, bankers and 'outsiders' working with the 'security people' was set up. The funds came from the secret vote, an unaccountable budget used to finance MI5 and MI6, as well as from Ford, Shell and other companies. It was set up by Lord Shawcross, a former Labour Cabinet minister who defected to the Tories. He boasted that it had influenced elections in the National Union of Mineworkers.

The Committee had US links and fed Labour Party officials information about left-wing MPs and activists. It helped to defeat the left in the engineering unions and swing unions against unilateral disarmament. It continued operating in the 1970s and '80s.

And, obviously, provided a model for the operation against the miners.

#### A warning

friend Robert Maxwell who, in be- Milne has done an excellent job in not only examining the forces that lined up against the miners but also warning of what will face other sections which fight back against the British ruling class. As MI5 daily discovers new internal foes which must be combated, all those in struggle should be alert to their methods. No doubt watchful eyes are there at the anti-Criminal Justice Act activities, Brightlingsea, the anti-roads struggles, the Kurdish events. And amongst the watchful eyes, doing deadly work for the state, are many newspapers and media outlets. The spies are, by definition, hard to spot. There are more obvious sources of trouble which can be dealt with at once. First and foremost - the Labour Party. They are the real enemy within and should be treated accordingly.

> The Enemy Within: MI5, Maxwell and the Scargill Affair by Seumas Milne, Verso 1994, £16.95.

#### In Focus: Venezuela

In Focus: Venezuela - A guide to the people, politics and Culture James Ferguson, Latin American Bureau (LAB) 1994, £5.99

The Latin American Bureau should be congratulated once again for this latest publication in an excellent series on Latin American and Caribbean countries. As the title indicates the booklet provides a valuable introduction to the country's history, its colonisation by Spain, the struggle for independence, its economy and the political movements that have shaped the country. It also shows clearly that even in a country with the massive oil wealth of Venezuela, the capitalist system does not work.

Venezuela currently produces 2.5 million barrels of oil per day. Despite this wealth Venezuela suffers the same problems as every other Third World nation. Much of the country's wealth flows to the imperialists in the form of debt payments which amounted to \$34 billion in 1984. What remains is squandered by the local ruling class. Meanwhile for the majority, social conditions are diabolical. The infant mortality rate stands at 35 per 1,000 live births, in mass graves. three times higher than Cuba and two and a half times higher than Chile. Medicine is not free and prices rose by almost 2,000 per cent between 1982 and 1992. Between 40 and 60 per of people live in slums which surround all the major cities, while the wealthy occupy luxurious hilltop villas. Many of the beaches are clogged with oil, litter and sewage.

In defence of this system, the local



Inside a shanty town home, Caracas

ruling class resorts to brute force and torture. International organisations claim that Venezuela is 'suffering an epidemic of human rights violations' perpetrated by organisations such as the police and the undercover Directorate of Intelligence. In 1993 Amnesty International detailed numerous examples of torture and murder. Following popular riots in 1989, hundreds were murdered and buried

However, Venezuela has a long tradition of democratic and revolutionary struggle, and despite the current prevalence of neoliberalism in Latin America, a new popular movement is emerging to challenge the economic and political system that denies the majority the right to enjoy the enormous natural wealth of the

Eddie Abrahams

#### Ubu – a mesmerising performance

Ubu, based on the original Polish play Ubu Roi, by Alfred Jarry. Adapted by Trevor Lloyd. A production by Graeae Theatre Company.

Ewan Marshall's astonishing production of this play has at its centre a mesmerising performance by Jamie Beddard as Ubu. Ubu kills the king, seizes the throne and embarks on a frenzied orgy of repression, giving the police and the army the sack because he wants to keep the money used to pay their wages. This production is superbly directed, crazily veering from the hilarious to the terrifying as the megalomaniac Ubu butchers his way through the country he rules, collecting the taxes himself.

All the actors in the production are disabled, yet no able-bodied actor could possibly execute these roles with the energy, commitment and individual style these actors have. The actor playing Ubu has cerebral palsy, yet somehow his constantlymoving body seems to personify a human being consumed and invigorated by the sudden acquisition of complete power.

This company challenges all preconceptions and respects no formal conventions. At the end of most performances, actors shuffle off the characters they have adopted for the evening, bow, then walk off. This is the cue for the audience to leave. The cast of Ubu remained on stage staring at us. 'Go home!' shouts the actor playing Ubu, 'go home!'

In a society where disabled people face constant discrimination and hardship, these performers gave the funniest, most invigorating and disturbing evening I have had in the theatre for years. Don't miss Graeae Theatre Company if you ever get the chance to go and see them.

Richard Roques

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# Communism & Anarchism





owever a precondition for joint action and serious discussion is a rejection, by both camps, of carica-tures that are widespread within the socialist movement. Communists do not dismiss all anarchists as a band of individualist and sectarian disrupters who are opposed to all organisation, discipline or collective action. Counterposed to Max Stirner's reactionary individualism (see FRFI 122) Alexander Berkman (1870-1936), a Russian revolutionary active in the Russian revolution, argued that:

'Man is a social being: he cannot exist alone; he lives in communities or societies. Mutual need and common interests result in certain arrangements to afford us security and comfort.'

Errico Malatesta, an early 20th century Italian anarchist, proclaimed himself a communist:

...because communism...is the ideal to which mankind will aspire as love between men, and an abundance of production, will free them from the fear of hunger and will thus destroy the major obstacle to brotherhood between them.'

On organisation, the British journal Organise! for Class Struggle Anarchism (Organise!) argues that:

'Not belonging to an...organisation hampers people's theoretical development as they have no regular contact with like-minded individuals to discuss current issues with, or to learn from other comrades' past experience.

Anarchism: an Introduction, a 1992 British publication, states:

... organisers and leaders are not the same as bosses. Anarchists have no objection to people following instructions, provided they do so voluntarily.'

Anarchists who, like Stirner, are removed from the working class and have no care for the interests of ordinary people do uphold a reactionary individualism. But for those committed to the working class, the necessity of organisation and discipline poses itself inevitably. The issue is - what type of organisation, discipline and action? In responding to these questions, anarchism and Marxism have totally different starting points.

#### Individual versus class

Marxists examine society from the point of view of the working class as a whole. They judge every question social, economic, political - on the basis of how it advances the interests of the majority. Communism is committed to the liberation of the individual, but recognises that such liberation demands the initial emancipation of the working class as a class.

In contrast to Marxism, anarchism

Within many of today's protest movements - on the environment, pollution, roads - anarchists sometimes play a significant role. Many young people, disgusted by the Labour Party and the sectarian drabness of Militant and the SWP, are turning to anarchism for direction. Conditions do exist for practical collaboration between anarchists and communists who share a hatred of the bourgeois state and the Labour Party. In the course of specific struggles differences will inevitably arise. But discussed and debated in a non-sectarian socialist movement they need not hinder and can even aid the revival of a revolutionary working class movement.

ise! argues that anarcho-communists: place the individual at the centre of its approach, for only active, thinking persons can ever be free.'

Anarchism: an Introduction states: Anarchists strive for a society which ... provides individuals with the widest possible range of individual choices.

For the anarchist, states, governments and political parties are coercive social organisations which suppress the individual and benefit only the few who control them. For Errico Malatesta government '...by its nature ... defends either an existing privileged class or creates a new

The state is loathed as 'an abstraction devouring the life of the people'; 'an immense cemetery where all the real aspirations and living forces of a country...allow themselves to be buried...' (Bakunin)

Condemning political parties, which strive for state power, Voline, another prominent Russian anarchist says:

'... no party, or political or ideological group...will ever succeed in emancipating the working class by placing itself above or outside them in order to govern or guide them.'

The anarchist starting point leads inevitably to wrong positions on actual revolutionary or progressive movements. For the anarchist, the Soviet Union was no different to Hitler's Germany, it:

'...has today grown into a frightful despotism and a new imperialism, which lags behind the tyranny of Fascist states in nothing.' (Rudolf Rocker)

On Cuba, the British anarchist journal Freedom Press set the tone as far back as 1960:

'Authority after authority - the more it changes the more it is the same. Fidel Castro had an opportunity to break the deadly pattern of tyranny, but by the time he had the power to do so, that power had corrupted him.

Examining the Soviet Union and Cuba from the standpoint of what is most essential for the working class and peasantry as a whole health, education, housing, diet, culture - it is impossible not to register the enormous advantages, even accounting for the drawbacks, that socialism secured. On any objective scale comparing the conditions of the Cuban and Soviet people with the

approaches society from the stand- majority of the world - the superior- it has no choice but to organise itself point of individual interests. Organ- ity of these systems over capitalism cannot be questioned.

Anarchists further equate imperialist violence with the violence of the oppressed fighting for freedom. Organise! condemns the IRA as just another 'body of armed men' alongside the British army. It welcomes the ceasefire because it 'means that Irish libertarian activists have one less body of armed men to dodge.'

From an anarchist standpoint, one can pick out this or that failure, reject this or that feature one dislikes and attribute it to the inevitably tyrannical state or government and the unavoidably elitist political party From then it is simple to condemn entire movements despite their undoubtedly progressive social and political significance for hundreds of millions of people. For after all, as Stirner put it, 'there is no judge but myself'.

#### Marxism, anarchism and the state

Communists are, like anarchists, uncompromisingly opposed to the bourgeois, capitalist state. They too think that liberation is: 'impossible...without the destruction of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class.' (Lenin)

Marx wrote that the task is 'no longer to transfer the bureaucraticmilitary machine from one hand to another, but to smash it.' This is 'a precondition for every real people's revolution'.

Marx and Engels repeatedly spoke about the transition from socialism to communism leading to the 'withering away of the state'.

Where Marxists part company with anarchists is on the nature and role of the state within class society, and the political struggle for state power that must arise between classes in a class society. In any society where a minority exploits and oppresses the majority, the minority can only maintain social order by suppressing the majority. The state thus emerges 'as an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another.'

Politics is the organisation of classes engaged in a struggle for state power. It is a product of class society, with each class fighting to assert its dominance. Individuals can escape politics, but not whole classes. The working class, exploited and oppressed by the capitalist class, confronts the state as the ruthless and bloody defender of the wealth robbed by the minority. In these conditions

against the bourgeois state, and thus organise itself politically to seize power in society.

In contrast, for the anarchist the state is not the product but the cause of class society. The state 'has to create certain artificial antagonisms in order to justify its existence'. It is imposed on society by authoritarian individuals for their own selfish ends. Destroy the state and classes, and all the ills that accompany them vanish. A working class state and political organisation is unnecessary.

History proves this wrong. Long after the workers destroyed the old Tsarist state, the old ruling class continued to exist. In alliance with imperialism, it launched a vicious civil war which exhausted the revolution. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas came to power and destroyed the old state. But the old ruling class, in conjunction with US imperialism, responded with the savage Contras. Without exception, in every revolution the old ruling class resorts to devastating warfare to restore its privilege.

Against such forces the working class does need its own state power. Lenin argued that:

'We do not at all differ with the anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state as the aim. We maintain that, to achieve this aim, we must temporarily make use of the instruments, resources, and methods of state power against the exploiters ... Marx chose the sharpest and clearest way of stating his case against the anarchists: After overthrowing the yoke of the capitalists, should the workers "lay down their arms", or use them against the capitalists in order to crush their resistance?'

#### The working class and the state

This attitude is condemned by anarchists as 'authoritarian socialism'. To sustain this charge they resort to outright distortions of the Marxist concept of the state and revolution. The introduction to anarchism quoted above claims Marxists believe that the first step towards a communist society 'is to impose a very strong government, of people of good will who thoroughly understand the theory.'

Malatesta thought:

Socialists...once in office, wish to impose their programme on the people by dictatorial or democratic means.

Marxism is as far removed from such 'authoritarian socialism' as chalk is from cheese. Based on the historical

and the commence of the contract

experience of the working class during the Commune of 1871, the state power of the working class and its allies is an entirely new form of state. All old forms of state power reserved the use of force and violence for a minority and their lackeys. The new working class state would consist of the self-organised and armed majority. The state would be the whole people organised and armed to suppress the old ruling class minority. In this sense it would be a state already beginning to 'wither away'.

The Paris Commune demonstrated the historic possibility of such a state. Its first decree was to abolish the standing army and replace it with the armed population. Lenin comments:

'The Commune was ceasing to be a state since it had to suppress, not the majority of the population, but a minority, (the exploiters). It had smashed the bourgeois state machine. In place of a special coercive force the population itself came on the scene. All this was a departure from the state in the proper sense of the word.'

The Paris Commune, though lasting only a few months, showed that during the period of transition to communism and a society without a state, the working class state will be:

Democracy for the vast majority of people, and suppression by force, ie exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters of the people...

Alongside the state as an armed people, the Commune eliminated bourgeois, bureaucratic and antidemocratic government, replacing it with revolutionary democracy: the abolition of Parliamentarianism and its replacement by direct working class democracy; the uniting of the legislative and executive arms of the state in the hands of an armed, selfgoverning working class; the payment of only the average working class wage to state functionaries and working class delegates; the right of immediate recall for all state and political personnel.

Karl Marx, in his brilliant pamphlet The Civil War in France, summarised the experience:

'The Commune was a thoroughly expansive political form, while all previous forms of government had been emphatically repressive. Its true secret was this. It was essentially a working class government, the product of a struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour.'

The anarchists reject this 'political form' or the need to develop a political movement to bring it about. However, today such fundamental differences between anarchism and Marxism need not prevent united struggles against the existing bourgeois state.

> Eddie Abrahams وال عاد و المالة المال والوادة المادد

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#### Don't destroy new forms of struggle

It was good to see your editorial in FRFI 122 advocating continuing resistance to the Criminal Justice Act and warning against the inevitable Labour Party attempts to defuse resistance. At a rally against the Bill here in Sheffield, the only speaker to be heckled and booed was one of our Labour MPs, who urged continuing opposition - so long as we never break the law, however viciously repressive of minorities it may be. After all, soon these members from the ultra-safe Labour seats here expect to be our rulers, and they want to preserve the effective instruments of government that the Tories have developed and will pass on to them.

But your calls for 'conscious political organisation' are more disturbing than the laughable



pretence by Labour politicians that they are in opposition to any government law and order legislation The strength and effectiveness of resistance to the Bill, and the only possibility for continuing resistance to its implementation, are due to its dispersed and unpredictable forms. Those involved are heavily

committed to sharing and spreading information, and it is the information networking system that needs support and development, so that we know what opportunities will appear to make local resistance effective. Old-style political organisation will exclude those people most heavily committed to, and able to carry out

resistance, and thus kill the opposition to this and associated state repression stone dead - just as surely as would the dead hands of the Labour Party and Liberty. A decentralised and uncontrolled resistance movement cannot be taken over by Labour or any other such organisation.

For many years, communists from various parties have entered developing struggles and used their energy and commitment to organise them according to preconceived notions of political practice, which have alienated those originally involved - and the struggles have stagnated and died as a result. I appeal to communist comrades not to destroy these new forms and expressions of struggle. Political organisation of them would, in itself, be the kiss of death - work in the service of Major and Blair.

**ANDREW GREEN** 

Sheffield

#### No vote for capitalism

he article in FRFI 122 on Labour concluded that young people, single parents and pensioners should stand as candidates in elections. This seems to be an utterly futile programme to build 'the party Pilger calls for'. The idea that the oppressed should look to bourgeois parliamentary democracy as the way forward isn't borne out by history, as Chile has shown. Those working class or communist candidates who have got into parliament have soon become disillusioned or corrupted. And anyway how could most people afford the £500 deposit, plus the costs of fighting an election?

Although I am not against standing in elections on principle, in practice there are today few occasions where it could conceivably be worth it. It may have been useful at the end of the last century when universal suffrage was just emerging in Europe and parties were either in their infancy or being transformed. Or when Lenin, largely as a technical and symbolic gesture, stood candidates to abolish the Menshevik-dominated Duma. But

nowadays it would be expensive, time-consuming and demoralising.

If putting up a candidate is the way forward then the future looks grim and capitalism is safe for a long while yet. A far better way forward would be to put the same time, money and resources into uniting all the various campaigns and groups against road building, racism, veal farming and the Criminal Justice Act, even set up a parliament of the oppressed and leave Westminster to Labour. People should look to revolutionaries like Tom Mann, Sylvia Pankhurst and George Jackson and not vote against capitalism but fight against it. JOHN WALKER Manchester

Robert Clough replies: Comrade Walker's response to my article misses the point, which is: how can we in today's conditions encourage the formation of a new independent working class movement? Clearly, involvement in the campaigns he mentions is vital. But in so far as those campaigns genuinely represent working class interests they must come into conflict

with the Labour Party. So at election time, should such campaigns just abandon the field to Labour? Or should they use the elections as another forum in which to confront that force which would seek to undermine and destroy them?

Comrade Walker may say he is not in principle opposed to standing candidates, but he is so dismissive of the tactic he might as well be. I would remind him that when Bobby Sands stood for election whilst he was on hunger strike, his victory definitely stimulated the campaign in support of the prisoners' demands, even if ultimately they lost. Bobby Sands of course represented a living movement. I would agree it is an irrelevancy when obscure left-wing organisations stand candidates as they sometimes do. But at the same time, we should remember that a more substantially-sized organisation like the SWP would be quite happy to use Comrade Walker's line of argument to duck out of any confrontation with Labour.

Hence we must deal with the issue of standing candidates concretely. The next general election will see the Labour Party openly espouse a middle class programme with the majority of the left urging support. There will be no room for working class politics unless these new campaigns create it. Standing candidates is one way they can do so. It will force the left to take sides: either they will go with Labour, or with those who are laying the basis for the new movement. If those campaigns have any roots, they will solve the questions that comrade Walker raises of finance and organisation. And if they were to win - well, we could certainly do with a Victor Grayson MP or two.

In conclusion, we never suggested for one moment that victory in a bourgeois election would begin to solve the economic problems of the working class. But as communists we have a responsibility to point out the ways and means by which an emerging working class movement may begin to challenge the domination of Labour and the support it gets from the petit bourgeois left. We are doing so by raising the issue of standing working class candidates at the next general election.

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#### Defending Cuban socialism

At the Scottish Cuba Solidarity Campaign AGM in December, Leila Haines dealt with the economic situation. Looking at Cuba's current crisis the way Leila Haines presented it, we only see a country so crippled by its lack of foreign exchange that it cannot even buy oil to run its industries and transport. What must Cuba do according to Leila Haines? Attract foreign loans and investment to strengthen the economy.

But look again. Cuba's 30 years of socialism has achieved for its people a security unimaginable in any Third World country. Cuba has exploded the myths of poverty, unemployment, racism and illiteracy. The people of Cuba are participants in the decisions the country makes about what to produce, how to produce and how to distribute what they produce. They have created their own reality, with their own hands. To point to but two of their more extraordinary achievements, they have gone out to

defend fellow socialists in Africa and welcomed in and nursed victims of Chernobyl.

What then is happening in Cuba today? I want to know more. I want to know something more about the debates going on inside the Communist Party of Cuba. The many measures taken to combat the current crisis range from food production brigades and co-operative farming to the tourist industry. Strange bedfellows, to say the least. But illustrative, I imagine, also of factionalism in the Cuban leadership.

What should we make of it all? According to Leila the solution is simple. Sell Cuba's labour-power to those willing to buy it, which in this case happens to be the new predatory transnationals operating around the globe, looking for cheap sources of skilled labour.

Is Leila blind to the implications of such a policy? The prices transnationals are willing to pay for

labour power are very low. They will demand a compliant workforce, over whom they will want absolute control. They will become a workforce at the mercy of capitalist accumulation, totally expendable when no longer profitable.

If the Cuban government is forced into joint projects and deals with the transnationals, we should recognise them for what they are; at best emergency measures, done in a crisis to be abandoned as soon as circumstances allow them. At worst the work of rightist factions frightened by the crisis trying to reintroduce capitalism. We, as socialists, should not be applauding this as a way forward for Cuba's revolution.

We should be trying to defend the people of Cuba from such degradation, defending the gains they have made over the last thirty years, their increasing self-sufficiency, their right to sell their products on the world market like any other free nation and, above all, defending Cuba's sovereignty.

**PAULA & KURU GUNAWARDENE** Scotland

#### A new vision is needed

n researching material for this letter, I looked through The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution. Although a collection of articles from FRFI, it was putting forward the RCG's public position on the former Soviet Union. But there is one glaring omission in the book which has been repeated further in FRFI and it is the absence of any analysis of Stalin's role in the development 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' (pp138-139). This is said without any qualification. When did this occur? Who or what was principally responsible for this change in the structure of the party? Unfortunately it 'appears' that the RCG is unwilling to wade into the murky waters of Stalin's legacy to the Soviet people and Soviet history. You don't have to be a Stalinist or a Trotskyist to tell the truth and present an honest Marxist analysis. How will it be possible to challenge capitalism with the truth of its brutal system if communists can't tell the truth about their own history?

I do not believe that the rapidly declining material conditions will inevitably lead to revolutionary struggle but will more likely lead people into even greater escapism a natural reaction especially when there is no powerful alternative being put forward. In the shanty towns of the world, they dream not of revolution but of the 'better' lifestyle portrayed on their TV screens. The situation is even worse in the developed nations where we have

been conditioned for over forty years to accept our extremist consumer culture. Now we have Cable TV, The Lottery and even virtual reality more mind-numbing rubbish to sugarcoat the bitter pill of existence under capitalism and it continues to work very effectively.

My question is how are socialist ideas going to compete with a system developing better means of information control and better fantasies as a means of anaesthetising populations from the dreadful reality of their lives? Communism has to offer the hope that human beings will be treated with respect and dignity in a culture of true equality where ultimately compassion and forgiveness are part of the foundations of society - not just cold economic theory. Marxism requires radical transformation into the present. As Marx said: 'Philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point however is to change it.' Surely we have to abandon tactics developed 100 years ago that bear no relationship to our present social and economic conditions. What is dialectical materialism for otherwise?

A new vision and new tactics are required now to challenge the lack of consciousness that is being eroded more rapidly than ever by the ruling class to ensure total compliance to the system in the future. The horror of an Orwellian future is partly with us already and even if you don't believe that is true, a question still remains unanswered. How do socialists compete for the minds of people who are so uninterested in change? How do you convince them to fight for the bakery when they are unconsciously settling for the crumbs? History is running out of time.

SIMON CLARKE **North London** 

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Monday 6 March, 7.30pm

#### No more roads!

Both above the Neighbourhood Centre, Greenland Road, London NW1 (off Bayham Street, 2 mins walk from Camden Town tube)

#### **SOUTH LONDON**

Wednesday 1 March, 7.30pm **Anarchism and communism** 

The Old White Horse, 261 Brixton Road, London SW9 (tubes: Brixton or Oval)

For further information, and details of discussion groups in Birmingham, Blackburn, Dundee and Manchester, tel 071 837 1688

#### **ERRATUM**

In the last issue of FRFI, 122, on page 10, two lines were inadvertently cut from the end of the article 'It's good to talk - good for profits', by lan Bradshaw. The last paragraph should have read:

'Modern capitalism cannot be egalitarian. Its development is based on deepening the division between the have and the have nots, it is technological apartheid.'

#### Imprisoned for a crime I did not commit

he recent measures introduced by Michael Howard to make prison life harder are not the answer to Mr Howard's problems! He would be wiser to realise the isolation and separation from loved ones is punishment in itself. He is creating ill feeling, discontent and indeed a very stormy atmosphere.

In issue 122, a letter was printed from the M25 Three. I too am fighting injustice, imprisoned for a crime I did not commit. The pain and hurt I feel is immeasurable, as this letter said. Michael Howard would do better to put his energies into

the proposed Review Body to investigate aileged miscarriages of justice.

To be incarcerated for a crime you did not do is unbearable, and the road to the Appeal Courts a very hard slog. Why?

Hopefully, the hard work put in by the campaigners for the Bridgewater men will go a long way to helping those who are wrongfully imprisoned. We owe these determined people an awful lot!

**SUE MAY RE0252** H Wing, HMP Durham, DH1 3HU

#### A Kurdish political prisoner writes

have got your meaningful letter and the newspaper FRFI which you sent me. I don't know how to thank you. I am glad and pleased we have friends like you who care about us.

Thank you very much for what you are doing for human beings. That is what we people do, but sometimes it is difficult to find people like you. I hope I will hear again from you.

Thanks. HIKMET BOZAT, (Kurdish political prisoner) HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs WR11 5TZ

#### Campaign against the Criminal Justice Act

Protesters at Shoreham, fighting the export of live animals, have faced a police operation involving vanloads of police from across southern England. This police operation has cost £8m and almost bankrupted Sussex police. At first it seemed that the protesters, mainly local people, had won a victory. But as we go to press, the pledge to stop live exports has been reneged on.

The issue is a clear one - popular revulsion at profiteers making money out of suffering. The fact that popular protest against this cruel trade has met with such a heavy response shows just how scared the ruling class are of any opposition.

Most significant about the events at Shoreham is the sheer viciousness of the police response to peaceful protest - over 80 people have been arrested and many more injured. A mother was arrested for protesting at the arrest of her son, while a father was arrested for protecting his five-year-old daughter as she was dragged off the road.

Shoreham is no one-off overreaction from the police - other protests have met with similar police state responses. In Brightlingsea the biggest public order police operation in Essex since the 1950s was launched after local people successfully prevented the transport of lambs through their town. The Mayor praised the protesters and attacked the police tactics as 'completely unjustified'. According to Maria Wilby, of Brightlingsea Against Live Exports, the police, some in riot gear, were truncheoning children, throwing them over walls and injuring and arresting dozens of people: 'People were petrified'. Welcome to 'freedom of assembly' in post-CJA Britain.

Effective protests will increasingly be met with police violence aimed at intimidating protesters into silent capitulation and criminalising anyone

who refuses to submit.

#### A movement in the making

The loose coalition of groups fighting

#### **Prisoner Support**

'We can't claim to be fighting the Criminal Justice Act if we don't defend the people who are going to be put in prison because of it' this was the clear message from a meeting in December that set up a prisoner support network for anyone arrested under the CJA.

Initially, the network is being coordinated by Justice?, who can be contacted on 01273 685913 or by writing to Justice? (Prisoner Support), c/o On-the-Fiddle, PO Box 2600, Brighton, East Sussex. Any information you have about CJA prisoners should be sent to this address.

Already two political prisoners have been contacted by Justice?: Sean Cregan is doing four months for 'threatening words or behaviour'. His crime? Climbing the gate at Downing Street! Sean wrote back to Justice? telling people to 'be careful out there. It seems they are handing out sentences for sod all. Well, they can chain the body, but they'll never chain the spirit...' Messages of support to Sean Cregan, EP3544, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, Thamesmead, London SE28

OEB. When Phil da Souza was arrested on the anti-Criminal Justice Bill march to Hyde Park in September, the police scoured their files and decided they wanted him in connection with the anti-BNP demonstration at Welling. Phil was charged with riot at Welling and affray in Hyde Park. He is awaiting sentence on the riot charge and awaiting trial for the

Show your solidarity by sending letters and cards to Phil at HMP Elmley, Church Road, Eastchurch, Sheerness, Kent ME12 40z. His prison number is EJ3496.

the CJA is growing every day as more and more people realise just how dangerous it is to leave politics to the politicians. Groups are coming together knowing that if you want to change things you get out and you do it! People who have been systematically excluded from the political process for years are getting organised and it terrifies the ruling class.

In December a national DIY conference in Sheffield brought anti-CJA activists from across the country together to discuss how to take the movement forward. Views and ideas were exchanged and hundreds of actions were planned.

The Brighton-based anti-CJA group Justice?, which squatted a courthouse last year (see FRFI 122), has moved from strength to strength. A weekly newsletter, The Schnews, is being published alongside pamphlets on all aspects of the CJA; stalls are run in the town centre and on estates bringing in money, new campaigners and support for future activity.

It would be difficult to find a greater contrast than that between the creativity, comradeship and sheer energy of this and similar groups throughout the country, fighting the real political battles of the day and the tired men (and occasional woman) of the Labour-Party-loving British left trying to get excited over whether 'New Labour' keeps Clause Four. Anyone who has not had their brain amputated for the last decade or so can see that the Labour Party and its little brothers in the slogan-shouting-soul-destroying left offer nothing to those concerned about action to save the planet.

#### The ruling class is after us...

Inevitably, the ruling class is desperate to discredit, isolate and destroy this growing movement. Over 100 people have already been arrested under the CJA, mainly hunt sabs. The police operations at Shoreham and elsewhere have given the police valuable experience in dealing with public disorder. Prisons are being built, security cameras put up everywhere.

The latest move is the concerted media campaign, orchestrated by the security services, to describe political activists as 'terrorists'. According to The Independent, road protesters are now viewed as a 'threat to national security' and the smashing of one windscreen at Shoreham leads the Sunday Mirror to state that 'having woken from the nightmare of Provo terror, it would be the cruellest of ironies for the British people if blood were now to be spilled on our streets at the hands of an ugly new band of terrorists.'

The security services are well known for their links to newspapers and the attempt to describe political organisations as 'terrorist' suits them very well. With the ceasefire in Ireland and the end of the Cold War, it helps them justify their enormous budgets; and attempts to split the movement by dividing 'fluffies' from 'spikies'. Just as the Prevention of Terrorism Act was used to harass political activists and Irish people who supported the Irish struggle, so the CJA and the current talk of 'terrorists' seeks to isolate a growing

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current of protest and pick off its activists.

#### ... and we are after them!

Like everything else thrown at the emerging movement it is being resisted. Links are now being made that will not be easily broken as groups travel across the country to support court pickets, trespasses and other actions.

There's a poster on the wall of the Justice? office that reads 'The world ity and of the planet. isn't dying, it's being killed and the people that are killing it have names and addresses'. Those people have a lot to fear from popular resistance to what they do. But for the rest of us, including communists, the emergence of such resistance should be celebrated enthusiastically - because, in the end, it's that resistance that is the only real

hope we have for the future of human-

Colin Chalmers

For a copy of The Schnews send stamps/donations to Justice?, c/o On the Fiddle, PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2XD (01273 685913). For a copy of Undercurrents 2 (an alternative news video with anti-roads, anti-CJA protests and green issues), send £9.50 to Small World, 1A Waterlow Road, London N19 5NJ (0171 272 5255).

#### Action in Scotland

#### **RCG** supports hunt sab protests

The first arrests and charges under the CJA in Scotland took place during a hunt sabs event in Ayrshire at the end of November. They had had to trespass on the land of Melvin Quorm JP to oppose the fox hunting barbarity. Mindful of this Tory's property, the police had organised a thorough operation complete with roadblocks, coachloads of police, helicopters and lashings of overtime.

In response to the arrests, the Scottish Alliance against the Act invited people to a garden party at the IP's manor, which FRFI was happy to attend.

#### Labour shows its face

The Dundee Alliance against the Act were described as a 'rent-a-mob' by our Labour councillor for having the nerve to picket a council meeting in December, in protest at their calling out the police against anti-CJA

activists who had been arrested previously for setting alight an effigy of John Major.

The councillors were unhappy about us having the protest during the big civic ceremony to switch on the Christmas lights in the city square! The council chambers above the protest echoed to chants which loudly pointed out that this was the face of a future Labour government. The DAA pursued the Labour Party again by noisily picketing a Scottish Party meeting starring deputy leader John Prescott. His thuggish response to a placard which described the Labour Party as the next 'rent-a-government' was an obscene gesture directed towards the ten-yearold holding it.

#### **HIV/AIDS** ward closure

The RCG/FRFI produced a leaflet for distribution at a public meeting called by nursing staff of Ward 1, Kings Cross Hospital. They have collected 13,000 signatures on a petition opposing the closure of this regional resource for

AIDS victims. A phoney consultation process and promises about 'care in the community' have convinced nobody, and hundreds of people - HIV and AIDS victims, relatives and friends, staff and supporters of the NHS and political activists - turned up to begin the campaign.

Tayside has the highest infection rate of HIV+ in western Europe, and people are rightly concerned at the loss of this resource. Crucially, prisoners from Perth prison who are suffering from AIDS are usually transferred directly to Ward 1. What hope for care in the community for those whose community and family links have been shattered by prison? Evidently the well-paid consultants have other priorities, and they have not endorsed the campaign.

After the meeting, we leafleted a showing of Philadelphia. Our message about the closure brought home the issue vividly to the audience: staff and patients alone can't save Ward 1. Nor will Labour MPs. The need is for the broadest possible campaign involving the people.

Michael and Karen Taylor