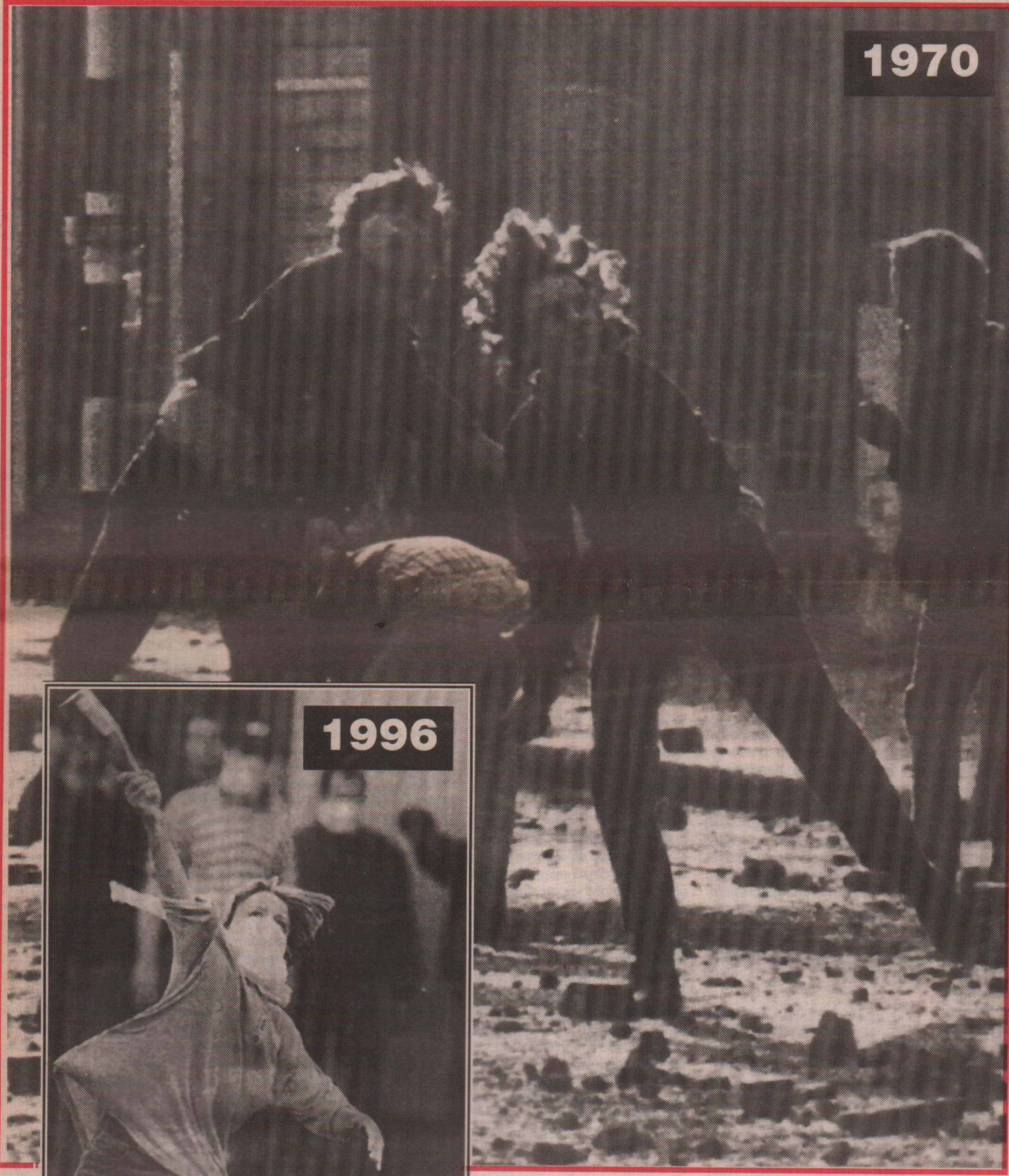


# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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# FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE

In July the fraudulent peace process in Ireland shuddered to a halt when the British government inevitably sided with Loyalism, and the nationalist community renewed their struggle for justice

ISSN 01435426



# New Labour's Manifesto: The road to social fascism

Labour's new manifesto was launched to a huge fanfare on 4 July. 'The Labour Party has changed', it announces. 'Now we are seeking the trust of the people to change Britain'. A ringing sentence indeed: but what does it signify? Nothing, for as *The Economist* pointed out, 'neither in economics, nor in health, nor in education, nor in welfare reform does this provisional manifesto justify the claim that [Blair] and his party make that they are seeking to change their country.' For *The Economist* and other ruling class opinion-formers, what is reassuring about New Labour is how little it differs from the Tories: '...the thrust of Labour's macroeconomic policies is much the same as that of John Major's Tories, differing only in detail. Indeed that is their appeal. Labour now embraces free trade, free markets, and fiscal and monetary stability...'

*The Economist* is absolutely right in its assessment. It could have added that the other side of such economic liberalism is social authoritarianism, and that this is present in the manifesto in bucketsful. What appears in the document confirms the oppressive conservatism of New Labour, its dedication to the defence of the status quo. At the manifesto's launch, Blair made much of five specific promises: a New Labour government, he said, would:

- Cut class sizes for 5 to 7-year-olds using cash from abolishing the assisted places scheme;
- Introduce fast track punishment for persistent young offenders;
- Reduce NHS waiting lists by 100,000 patients using £100 million from cutting NHS bureaucracy;
- Take 250,000 under-25-year-olds off benefit using cash from a windfall tax on private utilities;
- Implement tough rules for government spending, ensure low inflation and keep interest rates down.

In practice this means an infinitesimally small change for the daily lives of the working class. Implement tough rules for government spending? That's what we have had from the Tories these past 17 years. Introduce fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders? This is just another bid in the grotesque auction to find the party who can be the most vicious towards working class youth. Reduce NHS waiting lists

by 100,000? Everyone knows how waiting list numbers can be manipulated at will. And there is a world of difference if the waiting lists that are reduced are for serious, expensive operations such as heart surgery or hip operations, or whether they are for minor operations which require minimal investment. With 34,000 children on assisted places, the money released would make a minimal impact on class sizes, whilst the removal of 250,000 from benefit

• A vote for Labour is a vote for Trident. 'A new Labour government will retain Trident', the document says, and Blair has said he would be prepared to press the button. Only after there is 'verified progress' towards the elimination of nuclear weapons would New Labour 'ensure British nuclear weapons are included in such negotiations.' No wonder CND chair Janet Bloomfield has described it as 'a coward's manifesto'. We hope she will not be voting New Labour.

whose lives have been destroyed by capitalism, and Jack Straw's solution is to send them to prison quicker.

• A vote for Labour is a vote to keep working class pensioners in poverty. New Labour will not restore the link between the level of the state pension and the rise in earnings. Breaking this link has cost single pensioners £20.30 per week since 1980, and couples £33.00.

• A vote for Labour is almost certainly a vote to keep the Job Seeker's Allowance. Although officially 'under review', this is code that Blair wants to keep it even if others don't, and Blair always wins on the important issues. New Labour in government will target social security for cuts; its high-profile local government campaigns against 'benefit fraud' are a foretaste of the oppressive regime it will institute against claimants.

• A vote for Labour is a vote to retain Tory trade union legislation: 'The key elements of the trade union legislation of the 1980s - on ballots, picketing and industrial action - will stay'. Of course 'people should be free to join or not to join a union'. But since New Labour will not reduce the qualifying period for minimal rights at work to the old level of six months, it means that those who need a union most - those who have been employed less than two years - will still be sacked for union activities regardless.

• A vote for Labour is a vote to retain selection in education - 'We will not close good schools' - whether they be grant-maintained or grammar schools. 'The future of remaining grammar schools is up to the parents affected' - and since when have the middle class ever voted to give up any of their privileges?

• A vote for Labour is a vote to continue moves to privatise the NHS through the Private Finance Initiative, which they are now starting to support after earlier opposition. New Labour will not commit any new funds to the NHS, which will add to the pressure for it to seek private sources. Demagogic attacks on bureaucracy disguise the fact that most managers could be turned into nurses or other healthcare professionals by a simple change in job title.

• A vote for Labour is a vote to retain the Criminal Justice Act. It is not seen to be worth a mention in the document since it involves working class rights. New Labour abstained on the Bill as it passed through Parliament.

• A vote for Labour is a vote to retain the current immigration laws; it is a vote for racism. Again, Labour have abstained as the Asylum Bill has passed through Parliament, confining themselves to minor amendments which would make it an even more reactionary piece of legislation. The front cover of the

Road to the Manifesto has a picture of a nice white middle class family - two parents, two children - just to make clear where New Labour's concerns lie.

• A vote for Labour is a vote to continue the British military occupation of the North of Ireland. 'We have supported the present government strongly in the Northern Ireland peace process. We will continue to do so.' New Labour have been true to their word: their complicity with the government in attempting to isolate the Republican movement over the last two years has been unwavering.

In other words, a vote for Labour is a vote for more of the same - as one commentator Larry Elliott put it, 'New Labour's sales pitch at the next election looks like being the 1960s in reverse: instead of Harold Wilson's mixture of economic interventionism and social liberalism, we will have economic liberalism and social authoritarianism'. Should we be surprised at this when Blair announced during a visit to Singapore in January that the 'success' of the Singapore dictator Lee Kuan Yew 'very much reflects my own philosophy'. Such 'success' in Singapore includes the banning of trade unions, tight controls on the press and restrictions on all forms of individual rights. The so-called 'tiger economies' of the Far East depend for their success on extreme social control. It is illegal for young people to congregate in Malaysia for any purpose in a way that offends the authorities. Such a law would be like manna from heaven for Jack Straw as he contemplates his next bid in the repression stakes. It is highly unlikely he will remain satisfied with the Criminal Justice Act for long.

## Thumbs up for the middle class: two fingers to the working class

New Labour's manifesto has been accused of vagueness, timidity and conservatism. In reality, only the last point is true. It is certainly not vague when it comes to making a pitch for middle class votes, a point brought out by Blair in his comements at the press launch when he said that 'consistent with the high quality services we need, you should be able to keep as much of the money you have earned to spend as you like'. And it is certainly not timid in its proposals for dealing with any resistance from the working class. Within days of its publication New Labour came out against the striking underground drivers - they upset too many potential middle class voters in the marginal suburban constituencies. The document shows that between New Labour and the working class there is a gulf which no amount of words can bridge. Serious socialists should now be organising against New Labour and fuelling the hatred that the working class will undoubtedly develop for Blair, Straw and their sidekicks if they win the next general election. ■



Thumbs up for the middle class

will undoubtedly mean forced training with no guarantee of any job at the end of it.

## A manifesto for managers

Reading the document is like reading the latest management-speak. 'This is the era of learning through life', 'value-added performance tables', 'quality' this and 'quality' that; it is also full of meaningless gibberish such as 'New Labour will establish a new trust on tax with the British people'. Can anyone understand what this means? Does it mean that for instance Murdoch and his News International will now have to pay corporation tax having paid none on £1 billion profits over the past ten years? Pigs would fly - it's certainly not the reason Blair went to see him in Australia last year.

Under the Tories, there has been a major shift from direct tax on income to indirect tax on purchases. This means that the poorest pay proportionally more tax than the middle class. When the document says that 'under new Labour there will be no return to the penal tax rates that existed under both Labour and Conservative governments in the 1970s', it really means that nothing substantial will change. The poor will still be penalised.

## Voting Labour is a vote for...

As many on the left exhort us to vote New Labour, we need to remind ourselves what we are being asked to vote for.

• A vote for Labour is a vote to sell weapons of mass destruction to barbarous regimes through the world to preserve the interests of a handful of monopoly arms manufacturers such as British Aerospace. This includes the continuing sale of Hawk fighter-bombers to Indonesia. But then this is an example of continuity: it was the last Labour government which sold the first batch of Hawks to the Suharto regime, and these were used in the genocidal war against the people of East Timor.

• A vote for Labour is a vote to stigmatise and exclude working class youth. If they refuse compulsory and meaningless training they will be denied benefit. Jack Straw will declare open season on 'winos, junkies and squeegee merchants'. There will be curfews, since according to Jack Straw, punishment must take precedence over the welfare of the child. And what of those 'persistent offenders'? As one magistrate recently said, 'I have been a member of a committee that traced every aspect of the lives of all persistent young offenders in one part of the country; what emerged about every young person whose records could be traced was a history of massive disruption (many had moved school and home more than a dozen times by the time they were eight or nine), poverty, poor housing, ill-health and random or specific acts of violence and abuse.' In other words, persistent offenders are young people

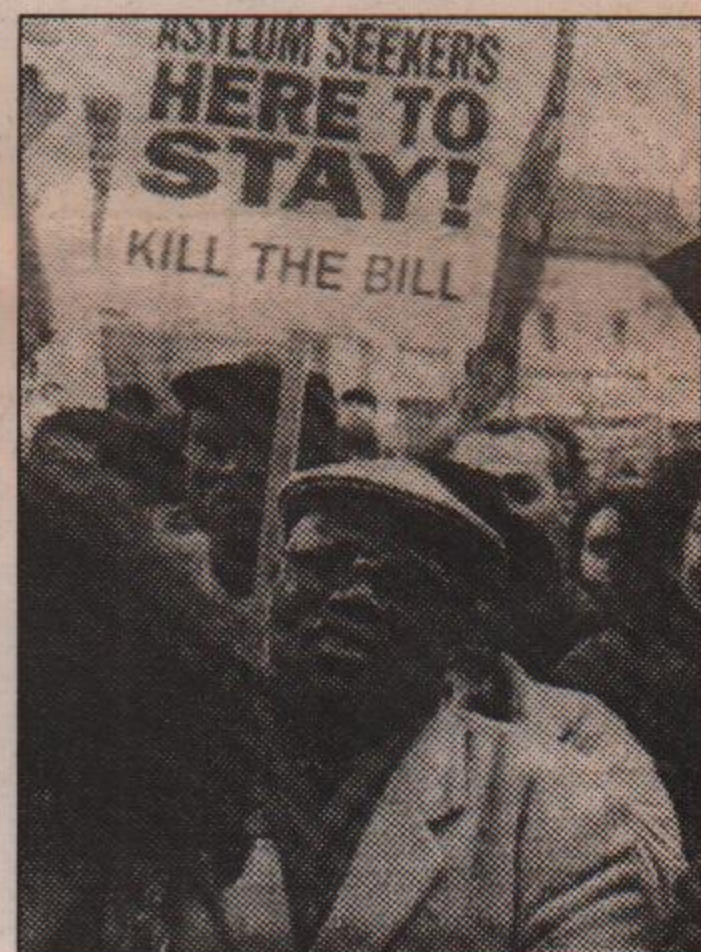
# ASYLUM BILL - racist onslaught

MAXINE WILLIAMS

The Asylum Bill has now had its final reading in the House of Commons. Despite a High Court ruling that the withdrawal of benefits was unlawful the government pressed ahead. Opponents in Parliament had sought to force the government to give asylum seekers three days to make their asylum application. As it is, if they do not apply at the port of entry but then subsequently do so, they will not be entitled to benefits.

Since most asylum seekers are too scared and disorientated to make their applications when they arrive, the result will be that the majority of such people will be left to starve. Many, as the High Court said, will be forced to leave Britain.

Labour opposition to the new law was token inside Parliament and non-existent outside. The most active fight against the Asylum Bill came from those most affected - the asylum seekers and their communities. Charities and the Church were more indignant and more active than the Labour Party.



This racist Bill, targeting asylum seekers as 'cheats and frauds', has predictably led to an upsurge in racist attacks. In Newham, a Ghanaian asylum seeker was trapped with her child in a phone box when a burning rubbish bin was pushed against it. Another refugee lost his right eye after being beaten with a metal bar. There has been an increase in attacks on Somali families in Islington. One further result is that benefit agencies now view all black people and immigrants as having to prove that they are not in a category covered by this law. Investigations inevitably lead to delays in paying people. Advice agencies are already reporting cases involving lengthy delays in payment and families left without money to buy food.

Although the government has won this round, the struggle must continue. There are likely to be further legal challenges to the Act including a challenge based on a European agreement which sets down minimum guarantees for subsistence to asylum seekers. There will also be local struggles to force local authorities to fulfil their obligations under the Children's Act and homelessness laws as well as the beginning of squats and self-help centres. All those who oppose racism must be involved in these struggles. ■

## COMMUNIST FORUMS

A new series of Communist Forums introduced by members of the Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! editorial board begins in September.

Write to FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX or tel: 0171 837 1688 for details



# Ireland ignites

'What the British ruling class is determined to prevent is the resurgence of the only force which has threatened its rule in Ireland - that of a mass popular anti-imperialist movement based on the Irish working class and prepared to use whatever means necessary to achieve its aims. The continued partition of Ireland and the maintenance of the Union; the military occupation of the North of Ireland; the vicious repression directed at the nationalist working class communities; the various schemes for 'power-sharing'; the creation of the 'unofficial security forces' of loyalist paramilitaries; the concessions made to the Twenty Six Counties government; and finally the overtures to the Republican Movement offering a place at the negotiating table in return for a cessation of the armed struggle, are all part of this ruling class strategy.' FRFI 121 October/November 1994

So FRFI commented on John Major's 'peace process' after the IRA ceasefire in August 1994. Since then, the British government, with the Labour Party in tow, has pursued this strategy unswervingly. For nearly two years it has used the promise of talks to undermine, isolate and try to defeat the Republican Movement. But this July, faced with a renewed resistance to British rule from the IRA, with devastating bombings at Canary Wharf, in Manchester city centre and at an army base in Ger-



Plastic bullets were the response to the nationalist protests

many, the British state turned once again to the sectarian forces upon which it has relied to suppress the nationalist working class in the North since partition.

Every year, the Loyalists ritually demonstrate their racist and supremacist position by holding intimidatory marches through nationalist areas. On 8 July in Drumcree, Portadown, the annual Orange march sought to march through a nationalist estate on the Garvaghy Road. This estate is itself a testament to the sectarian history of the partitioned Six Counties, built to house Catholic refugees burnt out of their homes by Loyalists during the Ulster Workers Council strike in 1974, which defeated the Sunningdale power-sharing agreement. When the RUC imposed a ban on the march, the Loyalists refused to budge.

As Loyalists converged on the area over the next few days, loyalist gangs erected barricades, attacked RUC barracks, set buses alight and cut down telegraph poles. The British state faced a choice: it could either enforce the ban and inflict a political defeat on the Loyalists, or use the opportunity to attack the Nationalist working class. They chose the latter. With no prospect of an IRA ceasefire in sight, to weaken the Loyalists would have been too dangerous. The RUC fired plastic bullets at the Orange marchers while it was

under attack, but simply stood by when the Loyalists turned on Nationalists. Violence quickly escalated. On the second day of the loyalist protests, Catholic taxi driver Michael McGoldrick was murdered in his car, with two gun-shot wounds to the head. The killing bore all the hallmarks of a UVF operation. Graffiti rapidly appeared across Belfast, demanding 'Kill all Taigs'. By 11 July, 30 Catholic families had been forced out of their homes by loyalist gangs and there had been arson attacks on two Catholic schools.

Five days later, the RUC relented and the Orangemen were given permission to march down the Garvaghy Road. Now RUC repression began in earnest - against nationalist counter-demonstrations. Nationalists staging a peaceful sit-down in the Garvaghy Road were fired at with plastic bullets. As protests spread they were met with a similar response. A 19-year-old Nationalist was shot in the head with a plastic bullet and was rushed to hospital in a critical condition. 6,000 plastic bullets were fired. 200 protesters were injured and over 150 arrested. Behind the RUC stood the British Army, reinforced with 1,000 extra troops, taking numbers to levels not seen since the period after the 1981 Hunger Strikes. The British Army claimed the only fatality: Dermot McShane was crushed by a British army tank during a nationalist protest and later died in hospital.

The scale and violence of the repression caused concern amongst the British media. Wasn't it playing into the hands of the Republican Movement? It certainly brought Nationalists onto the streets in scenes reminiscent of 1969. An estimated 900 petrol bombs were thrown at police in Derry. Three RUC men received gun-shot wounds. But the British ruling class will not be unduly worried by such developments. It knows that a section of the nationalist population in the poorest areas cannot be subjugated. The terror is aimed not at them, but at those 'softer', war-weary or opportunist sections who can be pushed towards the more compliant camp of middle class nationalism, led by the SDLP. If the terror also has the effect of shaking up the SDLP and even the Southern ruling class, leading them to exert greater pressure on the Republican movement to resume the ceasefire, all well and good. Meanwhile, those men of violence John Major and Secretary of State Patrick Mayhew are forging ahead with what they now call the 'political' process (having abandoned the sham of the word 'peace'), consolidating an alliance of for-



Loyalist reaction protected by the British at Drumcree

## Bomb in Manchester city centre

At about 11.15am on Saturday 15 June the largest bomb detonated by the IRA in England went off in the shopping centre of Manchester. The damage caused to the commercial centre was massive and will take years to put right.

The damage is estimated at over £300 million, with around 1,200 buildings damaged. As the Manchester City Council architect put it, 'The more you peel away at the damage, the greater the scale of devastation. Every time you penetrate further, it is clear things are much worse than we imagined'. Sections of the shopping centre are still cordoned off over one month after the bomb went off.

The IRA gave coded warnings one hour and 45 minutes before the bomb exploded. The area around Marks and Spencers, where the bomb was planted, was

evacuated. But some office workers in the area were told to stay at their desks and suffered injuries from flying glass. The force of the blast was that strong it caused damage over half a mile away. A police superintendent said, 'For the first time in my experience the force of this blast appears to have gone round corners'.

Condemnation of the bomb was total, from John Major and Tony Blair to the middle class left. One of Manchester's leading Labour councillors, Dublin-born Pat Karney, more concerned with Manchester's image and its bid for the Commonwealth Games than with Irish unity, uttered the profound statement, 'I hope these cowardly barbarians rot in hell'. He was joined in this high level of political analysis by *Militant*, reporting from the heart of Manchester: 'If the bomb had exploded

## Britain's apartheid state

According to the last census, Catholic men are 2.2 times more likely than Protestant men to be unemployed. A 1993 confidential government report states:

'More Catholics than Protestants leave school lacking any qualifications. There is greater provision of grammar school places for Protestant than Catholic children. Significantly more Catholics than Protestants live in public sector housing and experience overcrowding. Catholic households have a lower income than Protestant households. Almost double the proportion of Catholic households are dependent on social security. Catholics suffer from higher levels of ill-health.' It concludes that 'on all the major social and economic indicators Catholics are worse off than Protestants.'

prematurely, not hundreds but thousands of ordinary working class people could have died'. Not to be outdone, *Socialist Worker*, whose paper-sellers had to be evacuated from Market Street, called the bomb 'indefensible'.

As communists we condemn these defenders of imperialism. The responsibility for the bomb lies squarely with British imperialism's continued occupation of the north of Ireland and its arrogance in ignoring the thousands of Republicans who voted for Sinn Fein in the recent election. The absence of any solidarity movement, any movement which could oppose the British government's attempt to isolate Sinn Fein and the Republican Movement, leaves the IRA little room for manoeuvre in its tactics.

Bob Shepherd

## The real men of violence

'[We will] squeeze the Catholic population until they vomit the gunmen out of their system.'

British Army General and counter-insurgency expert, Frank Kitson in 1971

'There is only one way to control an area or ghetto that harbours terrorists and insurgents, and that is to reduce its population to fear by inflicting upon them all the horrors of terrorist warfare.'

UVF journal *Combat* 1976

'Until we crush nationalism'.

Loyalist marcher at Drumcree, July 1996, when asked how long the stand-off would last.

Sarah Bond

exposed utterly the sham of John Major's talks and the reality of the sectarian state in the North of Ireland. Progressive forces in Britain must call for its destruction, an end to the British occupation of Ireland, and raise again the slogan 'Freedom for the Irish, Justice for us all'.

## Plastic bullets

Over 6,000 plastic bullets were fired, 600 at Loyalists, during protests surrounding the 'Siege of Drumcree'. Four people were seriously injured. 18-year-old Michael McEleney had his cheek torn off by a plastic bullet fired in his face. It broke his palate and cheekbone. Friends only recognised him by his clothes.

Plastic bullets leave the gun at over 160 mph. They are as heavy as cricket balls but harder. Since their introduction in the North of Ireland in 1973, they have killed seventeen people, eight of them children. Many police forces in Britain now have plastic bullets in their armoury.

## What we stand for

The Revolutionary Communist Group fights for a society which produces for people's needs, not profit - that is, a socialist society.

Capitalist society is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling capitalist class, for profit. Internationally, imperialism divides the world into oppressed and oppressor nations: the majority lives in poverty, while a tiny minority squanders unprecedented wealth. By restricting production worldwide to the narrow limits of profit-making, the basic needs of the majority of humanity cannot be fulfilled.

► In Britain today more than four million are unemployed with many people - women in particular - trapped in low wage, part-time jobs. 25% of the population - the majority women and children - lives in poverty, with lower wages, lower benefit and fewer social services. Meanwhile, money-grabbers in the newly-privatised industries (like the water authorities) and banks amass more profits and pay their directors inflated salaries. *The RCG supports the struggle of the working class to defend and improve its living standards.*

► Racist attacks are on the increase. The police do nothing to defend black people against attack, and instead blame black people for crime. At the same time, Britain's racist immigration laws are used to harass, detain and deport black people. *The RCG fights against racism and fascism in all its forms. We support the right of black people to organise and defend themselves against racist attack. We oppose all immigration laws.*

► While the working class bears the brunt of the crisis, new laws like the Criminal Justice Act have been introduced to criminalise the right to protest. *The RCG opposes the Criminal Justice Act and fights to defend democratic rights - the right to organise and protest.*

► The richest 20% of the world's population consumes 83% of its wealth and resources. It is the capitalist system which consigns billions to poverty. Internationally, oppressed nations are driven into poverty and debt by imperialism as multinationals extort superprofits from the labour of the poor. Throughout Asia, Africa and eastern Europe the effects of the free market are obvious - low wages, appalling work conditions, poverty and starvation for the mass of the people; environmental degradation, corruption and repression in government. *The RCG supports the struggle of all oppressed people against imperialism.*

► The RCG supports socialist Cuba and condemns the illegal US blockade. *We fight actively in defence of the Cuban revolution.*

► In the drive for profits, the needs of human beings and the environment are secondary to the profits of multinational companies. *The RCG supports the struggle to defend the environment.*

► Who will defend the interests of the working class? In Britain, it is clear the Tories defend only the rich and corrupt - but the Labour Party won't defend the working class either. It wants middle class votes in the next election - and has approved many anti-working class laws, including the Criminal Justice Act. The Labour Party is a ruling class party which defends capitalism. *The RCG fights for the independent interests of the whole working class. We do not support any of the pro-capitalist parties in elections.*

► The RCG fights against prejudice and bigotry, which are used by the ruling class to divide and weaken the working class. *We oppose all discrimination against black people, women, lesbians, gay men and people with disabilities.*

The defence of the working class and oppressed can only come from the working class organising democratically and independently in its own interests, in Britain and internationally.

*The Revolutionary Communist Group stands for the rebirth of a socialist movement internationally to destroy capitalism and imperialism and replace them with a socialist society, organised to defend the interests of the working class and oppressed. Join us.*

*Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism  
BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX  
Telephone: 0171 837 1688*



# Post workers deliver blow to sell-off plan

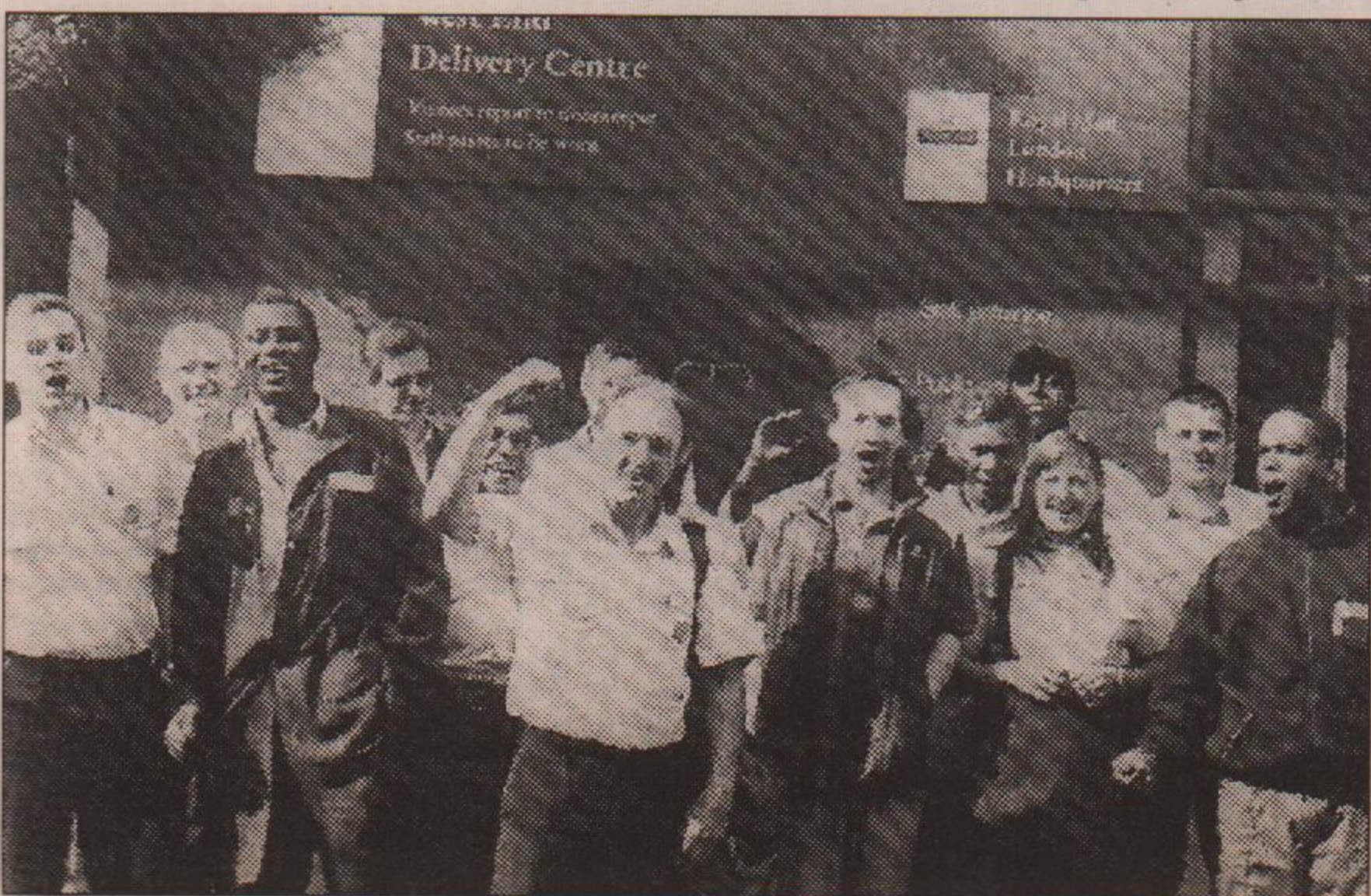
BOB SHEPHERD

The Royal Mail over the past few years has been engaged in an attempt to 'streamline' the business and increase productivity and profitability. This 'streamlining' has brought about the splitting up of the business into different 'profit centres' such as counters, parcels and mail as a means of dividing workers and gearing up for possible privatisation. The most immediate effects of this have been the selling off of Girobank and the closing of high street post offices, replacing them with counters in supermarkets.

As part of this drive to increase profits, Royal Mail is attempting to bring a new method of work practice called 'Employee Agenda'. This is Royal Mail's version of so-called 'teamworking'

conditions. In a 74% turnout, postal workers voted by over 2:1 for industrial action. The postal workers' union, the CWU, has sanctioned a series of one-day strikes. This has been done halfheartedly, with Alan Johnson, the joint General Secretary, opposing the call for these one-day strikes. The CWU is one of Tony Blair's main backers in the trade union movement and its leadership is determined not to allow escalating strike action to harm Labour's media profile.

Over the past 12 months, there has been more 'unofficial' action by CWU members than in any other union, due to Royal Mail's attack on working conditions. This fighting spirit will be needed not just to fight the attacks from Royal Mail but also to fight the attempts by the CWU to come to a settlement that leaves a form of 'Employee Agenda' in place. ■



which is being introduced throughout industry. Its aim is to divide workers and low-level management into competing groups of 'teams' which then vie with each other to see which team can raise productivity levels the highest. These new management techniques aim not just to immediately boost productivity but to tie workers ideology to the fortunes of 'their' companies.

This is the theory, but it is a sick joke in Royal Mail, where the majority of workers are on a six-day week, work shifts and have a take home pay of less than £200 a week. The 'Employee Agenda' will require postal workers to work 15 minutes at the end of each shift for nothing if mail still has to be sorted. It will do away with some night allowances and is a general attack on working

On 19 July, the day after postal workers held another successful one-day strike, the Tories issued a statement from Conservative Central Office lifting the Royal Mail monopoly for one month, with the threat of a permanent change. At the same time Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, blamed the postal workers' 'bone-headed union' for this move. In fact the union and Royal Mail bosses were already at ACAS negotiating. Lang's move was simply another attempt to wring political capital out of the strike in the lead-up to the general election and to embarrass the Labour Party, which has, so far, stayed silent about the strikes (they have happily lambasted the tube strike). Behind the scenes, Blair is considering compulsory arbitration for all public sector strikes. ■

## Pensioners' notes

RENE WALLER

**Pensioners perhaps more than most appreciate the spell of fine weather. Particularly for those living alone, it means that money usually spent on heating can be used to replace worn-out clothing and other belongings. It also means we can get out, meet others and attend pensioners' and other meetings. It's also easier for friends to visit and we get both news and gossip first-hand!**

Politically, we're certainly finding it difficult to ensure that there are firm pledges that the basic pension is not only maintained but increased to keep pace with the cost of living. Pie-in-the-sky is no use to us and we want justice now. Time for us is an enemy. Certainly we want the best for our children and grandchildren, but we need adequate pensions right now and I believe it's a demand people of all ages will back.

Meanwhile we are trying ourselves to ensure it is a demand which is constantly brought to the fore at local fetes. It's good to go along and meet others more informally than at meetings and

I'm sure that with the good weather much-needed additions to our funds will have been raised. I think, too, it's worth remembering that to start the winter feeling grand means we've done all we can to survive intact to fight another day, for there are others ready to divert attention from the need for proper funding for community care. Yes, it's good that people are not just left to lie on a hospital bed, but it's imperative that the alternative is not just to lie untended on a bed at home. This prospect is a worry for many who either have no family or find that they cannot give the constant attention they now need. In many cases, if regular help is given, total dependence can be avoided, or at least postponed.

I'm very glad to see that pensioners are again on the streets with petitions and literature to sell, and I'm sure many like me are glad to be able to voice our demands and take the chance to raise money. It all helps to ensure we pensioners stay vocal and wide awake. Our victory will help all those fighting for a decent life and weaken our common enemy. ■

# Racist killings

CAROL BRICKLEY

At the end of May, the private prosecution for murder, launched by the family of Stephen Lawrence who was the victim of racist murder in 1993, failed when the judge ruled crucial evidence inadmissible. This evidence included a covert police video of the accused men, Dobson, Acourt and Knight, gleefully contemplating violent racist attacks, brandishing knives consistent with those used to kill Stephen.

The CPS had failed to pursue any prosecution of Stephen's killers. Dobson, Acourt and Knight walked free.

Inquest, the organisation which supports families of those who die in custody, expressed disgust at the complacency of this year's Police Complaints Authority (PCA) report. This was a year in which two 'unlawful killing' verdicts were returned by inquest juries on deaths in the custody of the Metropolitan Police. Three further inquests on deaths in police custody of black men - Brian Douglas, Wayne Douglas and Ibrahim Sey - are imminent. The PCA, as usual, does nothing.

The inquest into the death of Brian Douglas opened on 17 July. Brian died after a long-baton attack by police in

Clapham in May 1995. He was arrested following the beating which fractured his skull. Brian was taken to Kennington police station where he was examined four times by police surgeons, and 15 hours later he was admitted to hospital. Four days later he died.

At the inquest, Stafford Soloman described what happened. The two men were ordered to face a wall. PC Harrison hit Douglas twice in the rib cage. The other officer, PC Tuffey, raised his truncheon over his head and smashed it down on Brian's skull: 'I heard a crack. Almost immediately PC Tuffey repeated the same manoeuvre and hit him on the head again. As he was going down he hit him again. His body collapsed and slumped on the ground.' As punishment for turning round to look, Soloman was repeatedly hit on the arm, suffering a broken wrist.

Following Brian Douglas's death, the PCA and the Metropolitan Police conducted an inquiry, but none of this information has been made available to his family. While the police are represented at the inquest, paid for by taxpayers, Brian's family, like all families at inquests, cannot get legal aid. Mike Mansfield QC is representing them free. As we go to press, the inquest continues. ■

# History rewritten for Mandela's visit

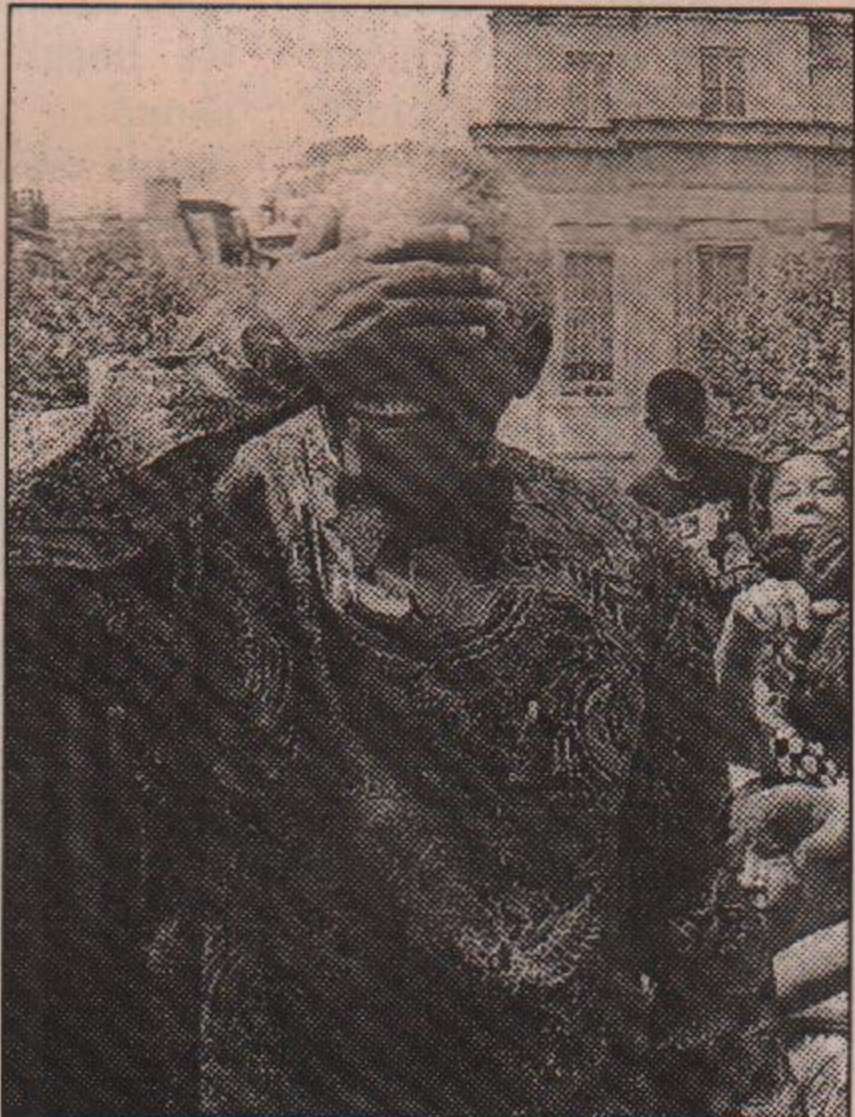
CAROL BRICKLEY

It is a fact that the men elevated in the press and media to 20th-century sainthood only achieve this public recognition after they have capitulated to the ruling class. Gandhi, Kenyatta, and Mandela were all reviled when they challenged imperialism and racism, when they led millions of black and oppressed people in struggle. Once tamed by their rulers, they became most-favoured icons. Nelson Mandela revelled in his new status as guest of HM Queen during his first state visit to Britain in July. He would like to take us all home in his pockets, he said.

Unfortunately his pockets had been designed for more pressing purposes. The ANC came to power in South Africa with a reformist agenda; the reforms were to be fuelled, they said, by resurgent foreign investment following the death of apartheid. This investment has not been forthcoming on the scale necessary to kickstart economic growth or to fund urgent and massive social reforms, even disregarding (as the ANC does) the fact that foreign investment is designed to generate superprofits for investors rather than redress the results of racial discrimination.

Mandela's state visit was anchored around appeals to the British government and big business for aid and investment to sustain the ANC government's programme of stabilising South Africa, attacking widespread industrial and public sector strikes, feathering their own nests and generally fending off socialism and revolution.

Much was made of Mandela's wish to thank those who had picketed the South African Embassy, and as a result the media was full of claims by Labour politicians, including Betty Boothroyd, to have 'been there'. No mention was made of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group which organised the four-year-long non-stop picket outside the Embassy, of the RCG, and the many young people who kept the picket going. Not a mention was made of the long campaign orchestrated by spies in the ANC, abetted by the AAM, Labour Party and union leaders who wanted to spike the non-stop picket. David Kitson and his



Nelson Mandela in London

wife Norma, who were suspended from the ANC as part of this campaign and who were subsequently robbed of the pension they were promised by the MSF union and its General Secretary Ken Gill, were never mentioned. Short memories and downright inventions were the order of the day.

History, apparently was also to be rewritten on a grander scale. Mike Terry, formerly Executive Secretary of the AAM, writing in the *Independent* claimed that the Callaghan government had, in 1978, been 'moving, albeit hesitantly, towards a tougher policy' on apartheid. He calls on readers to speculate how much pain and suffering might have been avoided if Thatcher had not come to power!

Pain and suffering might have been avoided, but none of it in South Africa. The Labour Party in government has no history of practical support for the black majority; Callaghan had entertained Vorster, the architect of apartheid, when he was Foreign Secretary, and Labour governments never hesitated to use their veto against attempts to introduce sanctions in the UN Security Council after Sharpeville and Soweto. Labour governments had no hesitation about robbing the Namibian people of their nationhood in favour of apartheid rule.

It is election year, of course, so Lab-

## In brief

### Winning the jackpot

Whilst tube train drivers and postal workers are pilloried for fighting for decent pay and conditions, our rulers and their hangers-on continue to get huge amounts of money courtesy of the tax payer. MPs have just voted themselves a 26% pay increase, taking backbench salaries to £43,000 plus inflated office and mileage expenses. Ministerial pay will go from £69,651 to £103,000. The government, fearing public outrage, asked MPs to vote for only 3%. 317 voted against. 279 voted for the massive pay rise (including lots of Labour MPs) and 154 against. Apparently these pay rises are necessary in order to ensure high quality MPs in Parliament!

Funny, we thought it was so they could keep more mistresses, make more pompous speeches and spend even more time lobbying for outside interests. And these are the people who want to cut social security and have just voted to starve asylum seekers out of the country.

Funnily enough, the trade unions don't make much fuss about such pay rises. Could this be connected to the earnings that trade union leaders get? For example: John Monks (TUC), £66,120; John Edmonds (GMB), £73,000; Bill Morris (TGWU), £71,000; Garfield David (USDAW), £65,914.

And then, there is Princess Diana. If marriage is legalised prostitution, then this girl must be the highest-paid hooker in human history. £15m is her pay-off. And the papers are asking how she will manage on it. Well, she could try digesting her food instead of throwing up; a practice that must weigh heavily on the grocery bills.

### Labour's friends

And there's no danger of a Labour government taxing these high earners. Tony Blair was quick to say at his draft Manifesto launch: '...you should be able to keep as much of the money you have earned to spend as you like'. Jack Straw chose to spend his on a lavish 50th birthday party at which guest of honour was John Redwood, Tory right-winger. No squeegee merchants were allowed in.

Blair and co are really attracting the right calibre of support now. Martin Mears, controversial former head of the Law Society, spent the past year in office squeaking about 'political correctness and the menace of feminism'. Recently he told the *Telegraph*: 'Don't you perceive Blair as to the right of Major by temperament, by instinct? I would see him as more of a social conservative than Portillo'.

### Soviet Big Brother bad - British Big Brother good

Social Democracy does not have many intellectuals to claim (in desperate moments they fall back on Anthony Crosland) and so has always been happy to include George Orwell as one of theirs. Now, it has been revealed that Orwell named communists and fellow-travellers to the British secret services in the 1940s. Apparently Big Brother was OK as long as he was British. Orwell maintained that there was an intellectually and politically credible stance that was independent of both the Soviet Union and imperialism. Evidently, in practice, he found this was not the case.

It must be said, however, that Orwell was far more radical, in a different league altogether, than today's Labourites. Which indicates how they will treat their opponents. ■

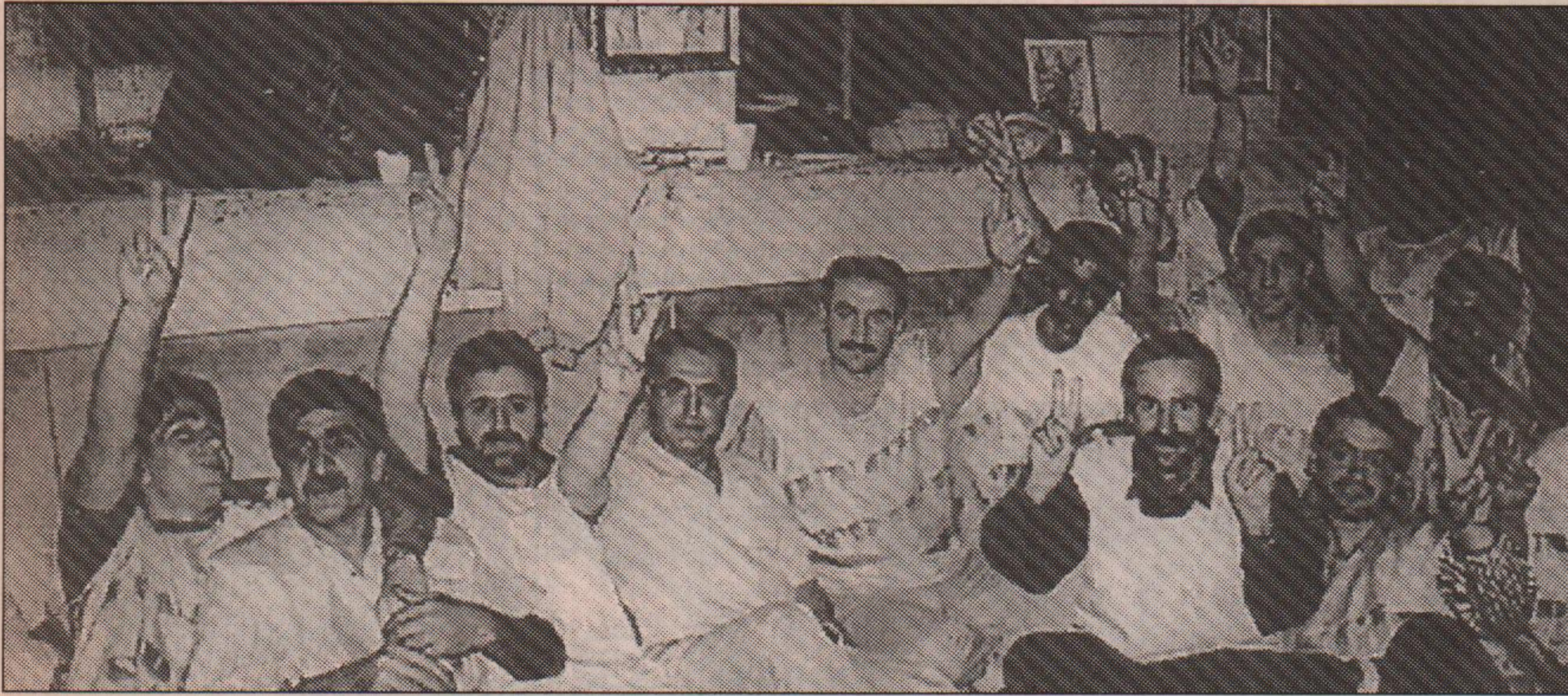
our's humanitarian, anti-racist credentials must be invented. Meanwhile, in the background to Mandela's visit, on with the Asylum Bill, backing for Ulster Loyalists and condemnation of strikers. Perfidious Albion is every bit as perfidious under Labour as under the Conservatives - a fact that even 20th-century saints would do well to remember. ■

Andre Schott, former secretary of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, was arrested outside the South African Embassy when Mandela and Prince Charles appeared before the crowd thronging Trafalgar Square. He was asked to move aside for the red carpet for Prince Charles. Staying put, he explained that he had not moved for four years despite the police campaign against the picket and it would be inappropriate to move now! 'You're nicked' they said. *Plus ça change.*



# Turkey

## A coalition of corruption



In London supporters of the Kurdish struggle on hunger strike in solidarity with prisoners in Turkish prisons

THANKS TO KIC FOR PHOTOGRAPHS

ELIF MUTLUAY

As the pro-Islamic Welfare Party and the conservative-liberal True Path Party formed a coalition government, eyebrows were raised – is Turkey following the same path as Iran and Algeria? However, Turkey is not Algeria, nor is Welfare Algeria's FIS, and no fundamental change should be expected regarding Turkey's bankrupt policy of total subjection to US/IMF imperialism.

### Turkish secularism

Secularism is one of the foundations of the Republic of Turkey, accepted by the general population – so goes the often repeated claim. However, secularism in Turkey has never meant the separation of Church (in the general sense, as obviously Turkey is a Muslim country) and State. It has, from day one, meant the subjugation of religion to the state, to be manipulated and used according to the requirements of Turkish capitalism. Independent religious organisations are heavily discouraged, and prohibited outright if they represent a non-Sunni sect, eg the Alawites. Non-Islamic religious organisations are allowed as per the Lausanne



Treaty – but they represent an ever-shrinking portion of the population. Again the line is very clear – no opposition politics.

This peculiar interpretation of secularism has meant that religion was always an issue in Turkish politics. The first wave of repression began with the establishment of the republic in 1923. Religion then represented the Ottoman identity, which the ruling bourgeois class in Turkey saw as the major obstacle to capital accumulation and modernisation in the bourgeois sense. After the Second Imperialist War, after a generation had flourished under Kemalist rule, and after Turkish capitalism took firmer root, religious identity again became an important focus of politics. Following the 1980 military coup, the junta leadership adhered to

the US 'green-belt' policy of allowing mild Islam to prosper as an insurance against the left/communist threat. Of course, as religion is a double-edged sword, some people did find Islam to be their expression of opposition in the era of repression and censorship.

### Welfare deserves no respect even as a bourgeois opposition

What is the Welfare Party, then? Not to mince words, it is a pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist party with impressive demagogic powers. The leadership has an intense vested interest in Turkish capitalism, owning banks (no interest, just 'profit sharing', of course), holdings, companies of every sort. All their pre-government talk of abandoning NATO, the Customs Union, rejecting the deployment of US forces under the guise 'Operation Provide Comfort', of abolishing interest etc have been dropped like a hot potato. The US Deputy Secretary of State was the first foreign dignitary to visit the new government, promptly announcing that relations with Turkey would continue on the basis of 'mutual cooperation and benefit'.

As for Welfare's followers – 20-25% of the electorate – they form a heterogeneous coalition. Some are poor slum-dwellers whose recent introduction to the urban world is causing an identity turmoil, as they find themselves unable to find proper jobs and are looked down on by the 'Western' urban population. Some are bourgeois small business owners, similar to the bazaar following of the Iranian Mullahs, terrified of their descent into the proletariat as they are squeezed by the bigger capitalists, most of whom are pro-EU, pro-Western. The leadership, as stated above, are rich capitalists whose wealth compares with other 'Western' capitalists of Turkey. Erbakan, the president of Welfare, is a self-confessed dollar millionaire. And there is a very small minority of Islamic militants, who often view Welfare as a revisionist front to be undermined while working with it, very similar to the view some left groups hold towards the social democrats. One of the bigish radical groups, the IBDA-C, the followers of which read Lenin to learn how to organise and who claim to denounce capitalism, suffered a major police operation just before the coalition was formed. The Welfare Party denounces such groups as adventurist.

The fact of sharing power is bound to cause tension among the various trends that make up Welfare.

### Partners in corruption

Both Ciller, leader of the True Path, and Erbakan were facing major cor-

ruption charges before the coalition was formed. The charges were all but proven, and parliamentary investigations had begun as each party's supporters launched these charges against one another. An unannounced coalition protocol called for a mutual cessation, and the first thing

the coalition government cooperated on was dismantling the investigation committees. The corruption charges would probably have ended the political careers of both leaders, as they were rather outrageous even by Turkish standards.

There will obviously be a more Islamic tone in Turkish politics, but it is bound to be rather superficial. The military coup had introduced mandatory religious classes for all high-school students in 1980. Ciller had often announced that she was 'the defender of the Mosque and the Ezan' (the Muslim call to prayer). Welfare already has power in Ankara and Istanbul, albeit by a 25-27% vote as the Turkish electorate is atomised between the IMF parties. Turkey launched one of its biggest ever interventions into northern Iraq just days after the government was formed, in an another attempt to crush the Kurdish guerrillas. Hungerstrikes by political prisoners to resist separation into single-person cells – dubbed tombs – and to gain the right to books, paper, pencils and a more humane treatment entered day 57 as we go to press – a point of no return even in cases of survival. The new government denounced them as terrorists as the previous one had. Even a major bourgeois TV network was suspended because it attempted to broadcast some pictures of the hunger strikers, more for the sensation value than out of any concern. Mass arrests of political activists, trade unionists, relatives of prisoners and 'missing' persons continue.



Murder in custody and the shoot-to-kill policy of the police have not relented.

Welfare expresses its commitment to NATO and the Customs Union with the EU. It will probably ratify the deployment of US forces, and a stand-by agreement with the IMF is in sight. The question now is whether the agreement will come before or after the economy crashes again, as it did in 1994. Other than that, not much new under the sun as far as the working people and the persecuted Kurdish or Alawite population of this nation is concerned. ■

## Hungerstrike update

As the hungerstrikes – death fasts – of some political prisoners reach day 57, police repression increases. There are 161 prisoners whose death fasts have exceeded 50 days, which is generally accepted as the date that irreversible damage to the body begins. After day 60, chances of survival are very small even if the hungerstrike ends. Two of the political prisoners can't even take liquids any more, which is again a sign of reaching the point of no return. Hundreds more are on hungerstrike, ranging from a few days to 57 days. Some relatives of prisoners and activists are also on a hungerstrike outside. A death fast is distinguished from a hungerstrike by the fact that a hungerstrike may be a short-term protest, whereas a death fast is until the end, or until demands are met.

### Background

Turkish and Kurdish prisoners have a history of hungerstrikes. The first wave was after the military coup of 1980. In fact, 14 July was the anniversary of the death on hungerstrike of four PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) prisoners of war, one of whom was a Turkish communist, Kemal Pir, a founder of the PKK. Their deaths in struggle once again showed that internationalism and unity in dignity belongs to the communists, and separatism to the bourgeoisie.

The first wave, incredible as it sounds, was successful in many ways. The prisoners won many rights, as the state backed down in the face of the resolution of the prisoners. The choice was either killing all of them, or allowing them some of the demands.

There were further waves, and most

were directed against the Eskisehir prison, a prison built of single-person cells. The CIA and psychologists advised the state that as long as the collective will of the prisoners could not be broken, the prisoners would not bend – even if killed. The dormitory system currently in place allows political prisoners to put up a collective resistance. Many come out of prisons having learned a new language from a comrade who held lessons, having had many debates with comrades from their own organisation or other organisations regarding problems of the struggle in Turkey and Kurdistan. Any attempt at separation is met with fierce resistance.

There are two approaches to the question of political prisoners. One holds the prisoners to be prisoners of class war. The other is the humane argument. For the political prisoners, the fact that they are imprisoned is not the issue. The political prisoners' collective coordination issues statements pointing out that, yes they are, unfortunately, captured, but the moment they are out, they will continue from where they've left off. The 'rehabilitation' attempt of the state is obviously not going anywhere. There are also rehabilitators of a lesser kind, as some humane NGOs asked the prisoners to drop the hungerstrike for humane reasons, as the deaths neared. The prisoners' collective coordination issued a statement which literally said, in a slightly, but not much, more polite manner, 'fuck off'.

### The prison outside

These figures were released by the Human Rights Association:

### 1996 January, February, March

- 'Shoot-to-kill' (called execution without trial) and deaths in custody: 39
- Wounded in police raids: 30
- Killed in shoot-outs: 205
- In 'actions' aimed at civilians: 21 dead, 22 wounded
- Tortured and claims of torture: 168
- Detained: 5,963
- Arrested: 544
- Villages and pastures 'evacuated': 40
- Places bombed: 32
- Trade unions and associations closed down: 23
- Trade unions, associations and newspapers raided: 37
- Journalists detained: 102
- Publications banned: 38
- Gaol and fines for publication indictments: 779 years of gaol, fines TL3,800 million
- Gaol and fines for publications adjudicated: 98 years, TL2,718m
- Prisoners of 'thought' (imprisoned for publishing): 369

### 1996 May, June

- Shoot-to-kill executions: 9
- Killed by police bullets: 3
- Killed because of not stopping when asked: 4
- Killed by torture: 1
- Killed in shoot-out: 1
- Children detained: 100
- Detentions: 4,471, of which detentions for political reasons 4,181
- Missing: 8
- Prisoners wounded in attacks in prisons: 19
- Prison sentences for publishing: 18 years, 7 months
- Magazines, papers and books banned: 29
- TV stations shut down: 4

## MED-TV

TREVOR RAYNE

MED-TV used satellites to broadcast from Europe in Kurdish, Turkish, Assyrian and Arabic across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Initiated by Kurds it was launched in May 1995 and maintained an open forum policy, inviting contributions from a range of sources. Edward

Mortimer, John Pilger, Harold Pinter, Bruce Kent and Lord Avebury are among those from Britain who appeared, but much programme time was of song and dance. Allied to no specific political party, MED-TV upheld the Kurdish identity. This was too much for the Turkish government which has used troops to tear satellite dishes off homes in Turkey and diplomatic pressure to shut the broadcasts down at source in Europe.

Now the Polish government has

joined those of Portugal, Spain, France and Germany to block transmission. Since 2 July MED-TV has been silenced. The British Foreign Office told British Telecom not to give MED-TV access to satellites and expressed its anger at the Independent Television Commission in London for issuing MED-TV with a licence. Kurds were once killed in obscurity; the Foreign Office connives that this custom be restored. Support the Kurds, stop the lies. ■



# CUBA VIVE!

## Smash the Helms-Burton Act

The fight against the latest attempt by the United States to strangle the Cuban revolution into submission has unlikely and powerful allies in the governments of Canada, the European Union and Mexico. The Helms-Burton law is a direct threat to their trading interests in Cuba – and is yet another attempt by the US to bully the world into accepting its hegemony. The threat of retaliatory action forced President Clinton on 16 July to announce a temporary delay in the practical application of Title III of the law – which prohibits foreign companies 'trafficking' in Cuban assets formerly owned by North Americans. CAT WIENER reports.

### The Helms-Burton law

The Helms-Burton Bill was rushed through Congress in February following the shooting down of two aeroplanes over Cuban airspace – an incident provoked by Cuban counter-revolutionaries, Brothers to the Rescue. The law has the openly stated aim of bringing about the downfall of the government of Cuba, installing a capitalist economy and, in the words of White House spokesman Mike McCurry, 'consigning Cuban communism to the trashbin of history.' It seeks to extend the US blockade of Cuba to other countries and, by exacerbating Cuba's economic problems, foment political instability. With the downfall of communism, the US would then set up a transitional government which would dismantle all existing state security apparatus and institutions, including the armed forces, trade unions and Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. This would be followed by 'free and fair elections' in which the Communist Party would be banned and which would be declared void if Fidel Castro won. The US would have the right to review the new government and would reimpose the blockade immediately if it did not meet with its approval.

To achieve these ends, the law:

- instructs the US President to press for a total blockade of Cuba at the UN
- makes it illegal for any US citizen to trade with Cuba
- reduces the US donation to any international institution (eg WHO, World Bank) by the same amount as that institution grants aid to Cuba
- instructs the US not to trade with any country which utilises Cuban sugar in its products
- allows any US citizen (including Cuban exiles) who claims to have had property confiscated by the Cuban revolution to sue for compensation against foreign companies which use that property. In breach of international law, they can also sue the Cuban state itself. Directors of such companies and their families may be excluded from the US.

### The threat to international trade

In June, an EU summit branded the law

'extra-territorial and in breach of the US's international obligations'. Britain's trade minister, Ian Lang, opposed the law in passionate terms – not surprising, perhaps, given British exports to Cuba topped £15m this year and Britain has provided major loans to Cuba's sugar industry. On 15 July, the EU was described as being on the brink of open trade conflict with the US as it announced a four-point package of retaliatory measures. These included the seizure of assets, legal action against the US through the World Trade Organisation and a threat to refuse visas or work permits to US executives. The temporary delay in practical implementation brought a cool reaction. Ian Lang warned that visa restrictions on US citizens could still be imposed.

Canadian companies are among the most active investors in Cuba. The most prominent is Sherritt International, whose interests include a 50 per cent stake in Cuba's major nickel mining operation. Seven Sherritt directors and executives, two of whom are British, have already been denied visas to the US. Church and aid groups are urging holiday makers to boycott Florida in response. Canada and Mexico plan a formal challenge via the North American Free Trade Agreement. Opposition to the law has also come from South Africa, Vietnam, Russia and many Latin American governments.

### End the US blockade

Any opposition that makes the Helms-Burton law unworkable is welcome. On top of the continuing 35-year blockade, Helms-Burton is already affecting the Cuban people, with foreign investment threatened. But these countries are interested only in protecting their profits. Many of them oppose Helms-Burton precisely because they believe more, not less, capitalist penetration of Cuba is the way to bring down socialism. And they certainly do not oppose the blockade itself, which has allowed them to operate profitably in Cuba without US competition. The struggle against the Helms-Burton law cannot be left to big business. The tasks for those who defend the Cuban

## Container aid for Cuba

The Container for Cuba appeal has been, over the last two years, the main campaign of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. It has been eagerly embraced by local groups and activists as a way of combining practical aid to Cuba with drawing in new supporters to oppose the US blockade. This year's campaign collected 50 tons of aid, filling three 40-ft containers to Cuba and including 170 computers, 105 hospital beds, medical supplies and hundreds of boxes of educational materials. Send-off rallies were held by local CSC groups around the country, and by the NUM in Doncaster. Rock around the Blockade supported the campaign wholeheartedly (see end of article).

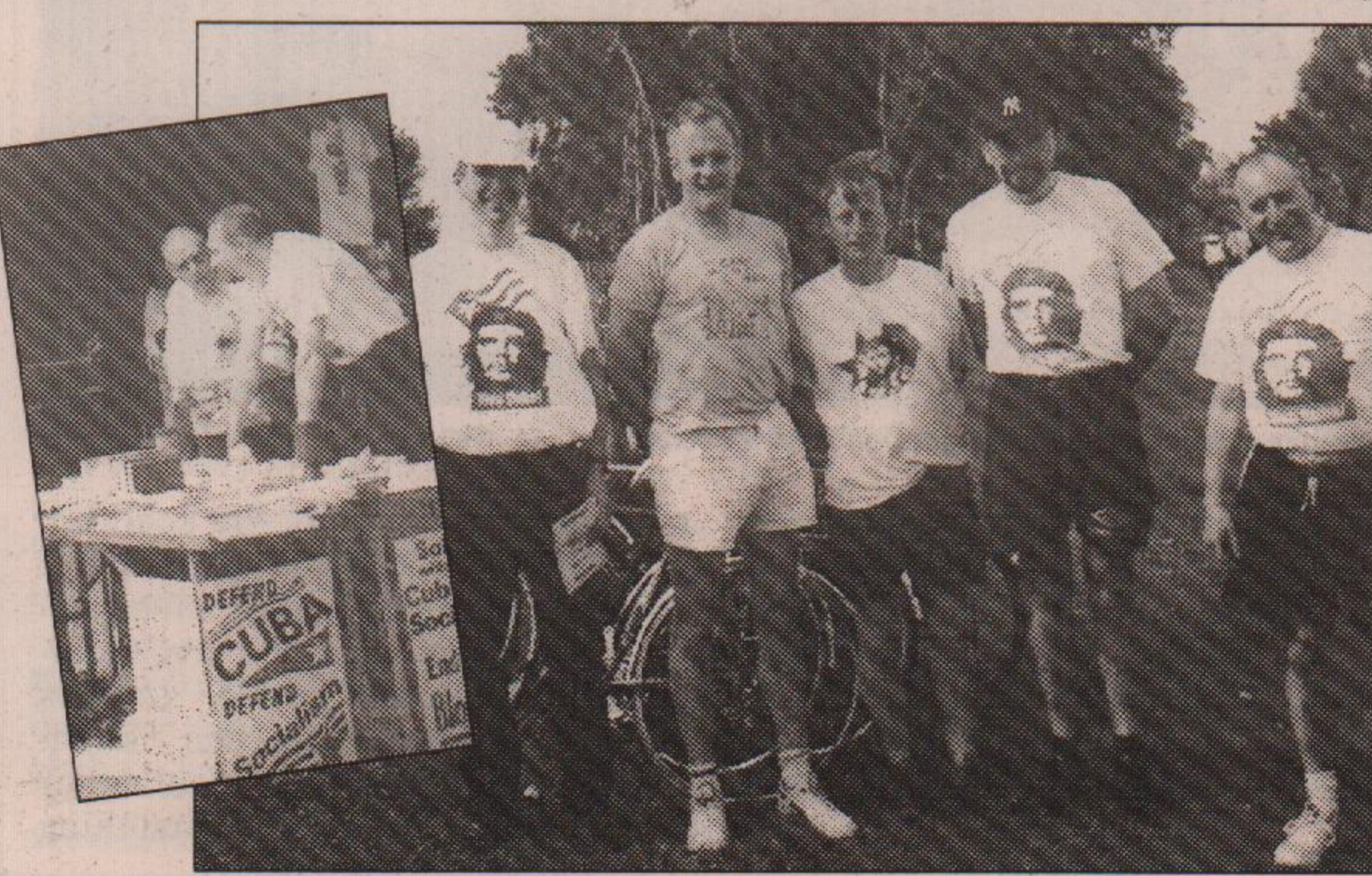
It was disappointing, then, that what should have been the main celebration of a year-long campaign and focus of opposition to the US blockade – the 'Cuba Lives! Fiesta in Highbury Fields, London on 14 July – should have been downgraded to little more than a free festival. Particularly given that the fiesta was the CSC executive's proposal to replace a

national demonstration against the blockade this year. Unlike last year, there was no mass participation in loading up the containers at the event; no wonder hardly anyone at the fiesta was even aware of what the containers were.

The politics were deliberately kept low-key: the main speakers could barely be heard beyond a few metres from the platform and between the food stalls, Latin American arts and crafts, candyfloss and music, you'd have had to search high and low for information about Cuba.

And yet there was a real thirst for politics, for information about Cuba and for ways of getting involved amongst many of the participants. For example, over 150 copies of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* were sold. Rock around the Blockade gave out 3,000 leaflets, sold 70 of our new *Cuba Vive* pamphlets and raised just under £400 for the campaign.

We had hoped to advertise our socialist brigade to Cuba this winter in the special Fiesta edition of *Cuba Si*, the CSC magazine, but our advertisement was rejected



Manchester Rock around the Blockade supporters: a stall at a local festival, and sponsored cyclists on the way to Blackpool

revolution is to build a movement in solidarity with Cuba that defends the gains socialism has brought to its people and that smashes the US blockade in its entirety.

### Going for gold

Caught between the hardships imposed on everyday Cuban life by the blockade, and the fat chequebooks of US sports promoters, two Cuban boxers and one of their finest baseball players were bribed to defect to the US. The Cubans' response? That if money was the sportsmen's priority they were not suited to being part of the Cuban team. Cuban boxer Teofilo Stevenson, three times Olympic gold medalist, was offered millions to defect. In a Radio 4 interview he said: 'No money can be worth the life we have here in Cuba... one thing we Cubans have is that we are happy.' *The Guardian* said of current Cuban boxing champion Felix Savon 'His revolutionary ideals have even made him resistant to Don King's chequebook.' Meanwhile, in Atlanta, they swept the homeless off the streets and knocked down the homes of the poor to put on a commercial show for international visitors.

by CSC Chair Ken Gill on the grounds that it conflicted with the CSC's own brigade. On the basis that the more brigades to Cuba, the better for international solidarity, we went ahead and distributed copies of our advertisement to thousands of people. The relevance of a brigade with a socialist perspective to many people was shown in practice with 50 people signing up on the spot for more information about our brigade.

The leadership of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign believes it can only build support for Cuba by depoliticising the issue. This may be true of the liberals and trade unions amongst whom it wishes to build its base. But Rock around the Blockade has shown that to draw in support from ordinary working class people, and particularly from young people, we need to build the links between Cuba's achievements and our own struggles here today. That means talking about socialism, engaging in practical activities and taking the issues out on the streets. The Fiesta should have been an opportunity for building on the success of the Container Appeal by getting new people involved in solidarity work with Cuba.

## Rock around the Blockade

A busy two months campaigning for socialist Cuba and raising funds has brought us closer to our goal of £6,000 for a mobile disco for Cuban youth and our December brigade to Cuba. We played an active role in the Cuba Solidarity Campaign's material aid campaign and held meetings and street stalls around the country, in London, Manchester, Blackburn, Birmingham and Slough. In Manchester, Rock around the Blockade raised £400 on the Manchester-Blackpool sponsored cycle ride. In London a well-attended public meeting watched the film *Gay Cuba* and discussed changing attitudes to homosexuality in Cuba.

Our list of sponsors has grown to include actors Julie Christie and Harriet Walter, MPs Harry

Cohen, Tony Banks, Peter Hain, Jeremy Corbyn, with good wishes from Dawn French, Lenny Henry, Jennyclair and Harry Enfield.

Rock around the Blockade aims to win people to support Cuban socialism and build a socialist movement in this country. To find out more or to come on our December brigade contact the campaign at the address below.

### LONDON

Fortnightly campaign meetings 7.30pm on Mondays at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1 (Holborn) Next meetings: 5, 19 Aug, 2, 16 Sept.

Sat 27 July: Hands off Cuba! Smash the Helms-Burton law! Picket US Embassy 3-5pm, Grosvenor Square, W1. Bring banners and friends.

Sun 28 July: Public meeting, 3pm Conway Hall (as above). Speakers include the Cuban embassy and eyewitness reports from Cuba. Entrance £1/50p

Sat 3 August: A Night for Cuba 8pm-midnight. Bands Kilo and Delfini. Praxis, Pott St, E2

Sun 22 September: Sponsored bike ride 32 miles from Putney to Hampton Court and back. Picnic provided. Entry forms from the campaign.

### MANCHESTER

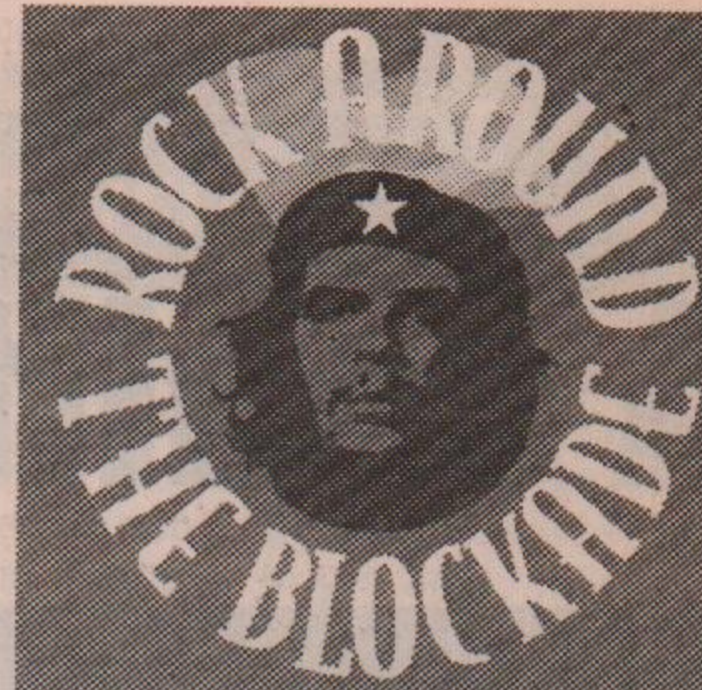
Campaign meeting: Wed 16 August, 7.30pm. The Beer House, Angel St, Rochdale Rd.

Sat 27 July: Street stall, Chesterfield town centre, 12 noon.

Fri 30 August: stall at Womad, Morecambe.

For more information: Rock around the Blockade, c/o FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX or tel: 0171 837 1688, e-mail: rcbgfrfi@easynet.co.uk

Hannah Caller



### NEW PAMPHLET

#### Cuba Vive! Defend socialism!

Eyewitness accounts from the Nuestro Tiempo brigade to Cuba in December 1995/January 1996. Published July 1996, £1.95

'We in the wealthy West are daily made acutely aware of the problems of youth. More informed and less tolerant of standard authoritarian structures, they frequently pose a threat to the establishment. But the problem is not with our youth, but with our establishment. That becomes ringingly evident to anyone reading this splendid little booklet dealing with the Nuestro Tiempo brigade. This item is a *must*, not only for people interested in the past brigade to Cuba or the possibility of going on a future one, but to those who wish to gain a quick and accurate insight into how Cuba came to occupy its present peculiar position on the world stage, and how it is coping with the fact that it has been targeted as Enemy No 1 to the full might of the economic hostility of the US.' Professor Theodore MacDonald, author *Hippocrates in Havana*

I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ copy/copies of *Cuba Vive! Defend Socialism!* at £1.95 (please add 30p p+p per copy) Cheques/POs payable to Rock around the Blockade.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Return to Rock around the Blockade, c/o FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

### Wearing badges is not enough... so buy the t-shirt too!



The classic campaign t-shirt – high-quality Fruit of the Loom white cotton, red and black design of Che Guevara and 'Viva Cuba' on the front and 'A true revolutionary is motivated by great feelings of love' on the back – is still available for only £7 inc p+p. XL only.

'Rage against the US blockade' Che Guevara badges are 50p.

I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ t-shirt(s) and \_\_\_\_\_ badge(s) and enclose £ \_\_\_\_\_ (cheques/POs to Rock around the Blockade) Donation to campaign £ \_\_\_\_\_ Total £ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Return to Rock around the Blockade, c/o FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.



# STATE OF THE UNIONS

In *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* No 120, we analysed the major developments within the trade union movement drawing on data collected by the Labour Force Survey in 1991. The article, *Whose Unions?* by Gavin Scott, showed that the trade unions were becoming increasingly dominated by 'educated, managerial, professional and associated workers' – ie the middle class. The Labour Force Survey has recently reported on 1995. ROBERT CLOUGH assesses whether the trends apparent in 1991 continue to assert themselves, and what implications they have for building a union movement that can organise the mass of the working class.

The first point is that the decline in union membership continues without interruption. From the high in 1979 when trade union membership reached 13.3 million (12.2 million for unions affiliated to the TUC), the number of trade unionists had fallen to 8.6 million by 1991, and 7.3 million in 1995, of whom just over 6 million were in TUC affiliates. This is a staggering fall, and there is no sign that it is going to halt.

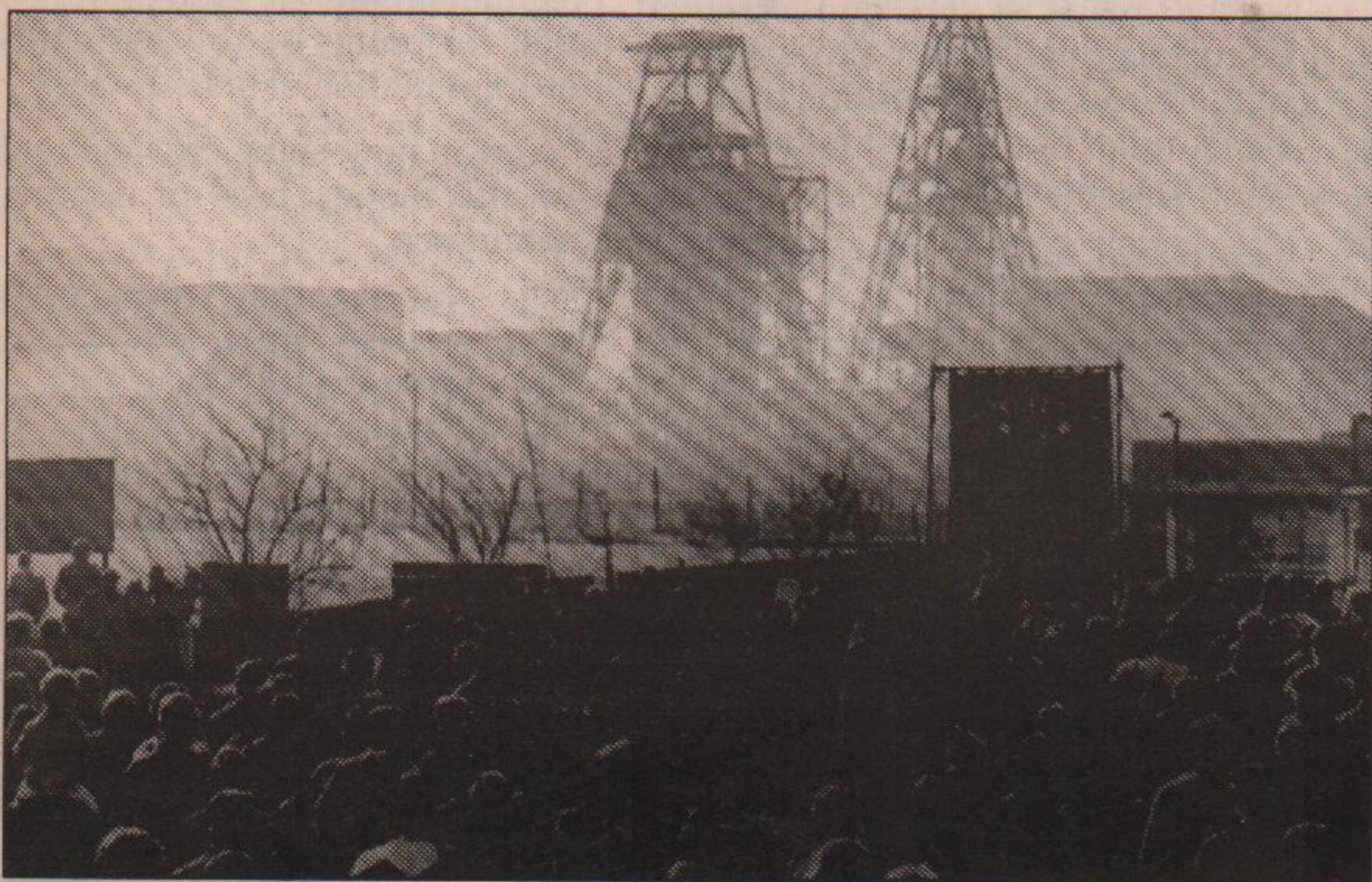
## Falling union density

The most revealing figures are those which look at union density (the proportion of workers belonging to a union) according to employment sector or category of worker:

	Union density in 1991 (%)	Union density in 1995 (%)
Employment sector		
Industrial sector	45	33
Service Sector	37.5	32.5
Category of worker		
Manual workers	44	33
Non-manual workers	35	32

Since 1991 alone, union density amongst manual workers has fallen by nearly a quarter, but only by about one in ten for non-manual workers.

The tendency we noted in our



Miners on strike, 1984-85, to save their jobs and the mining industry

analysis of the 1991 data, for trade unions to become increasingly irrelevant to manual workers, has continued unabated as we can see in the following table which looks at union density according to educational qualification:

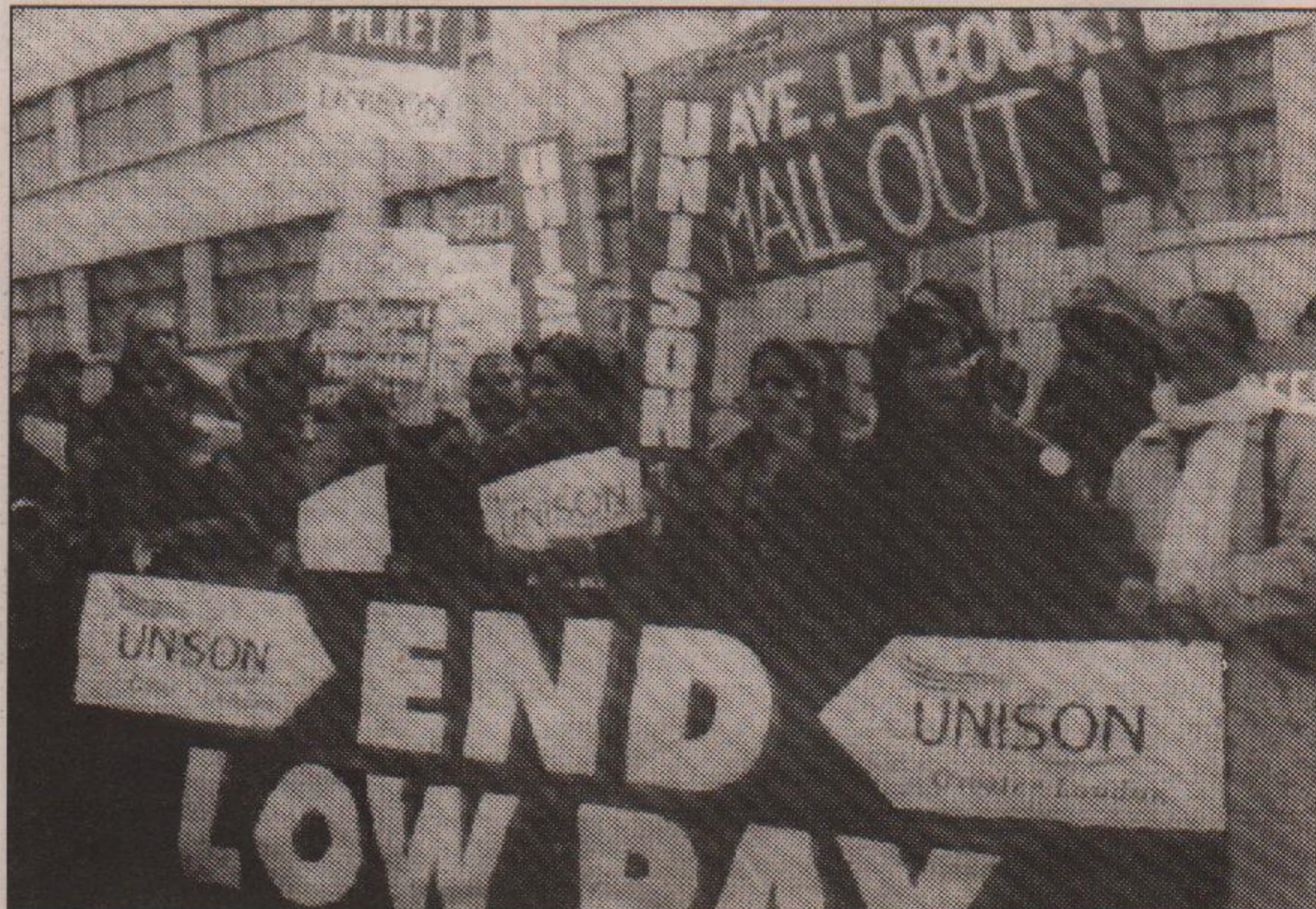
Highest Qualification	Union density in 1991 (%)	Union density in 1995 (%)
Degree or equivalent	43	40
Other higher education	55	49
A level or equivalent	40	32
GCSE or equivalent	30	24
Other	37	29
No qualifications	36	28

Whilst union density has fallen at all levels, the rate of fall for those with the lowest qualifications has been twice as fast as those with the highest qualifications.

## Unions and the middle class

There are now as many male trade unionists who are managers, professionals and associate professionals as there are who are craft workers or operatives. There are five times as many women trade unionists who are managers, professionals and associate professionals as there are women trade unionists who are craft workers or operatives. These figures mean that 35 per cent of male trade unionists and 45 per cent of female trade unionists are managers, professionals or associate professionals. In 1991, 34 per cent of all trade unionists fell into these three privileged categories. By 1995, this had risen to 41 per cent.

So what is happening? Unionism in the private sector, industry and services is dwindling into insignificance. On average, union density is just 21 per cent. In the public sector it rises to 62 per cent. Union membership is high amongst civil servants, local government officials, health service and social workers and teachers. But where public sector workers have been forced into the private sector, union density has shrunk to private sector levels, evidence that one of the main purposes of privatisation – to break unionisation – has been relatively successful.



Hillingdon hospital workers fight low pay

There is no evidence that the decline in union membership will not continue. As it falls, the middle class preponderance will only increase: in part because density will fall more slowly than for the less qualified or privileged, and in part because middle class jobs are likely to be a growth area in the absence of any major crisis. Current forecasts are that in the seven year period 1994-2001, 1.3 million new management, professional and associate professional jobs will be created, whilst the number of craft and plant operative jobs will have fallen by about 200,000. By the turn of the century it is quite possible that the managerial, professional and technical middle class will be a majority of the five or six million trade unionists that remain.

There are other tendencies at play. Six per cent of those at work under the age of 20 belong to trade unions. Even in the 21 to 30 age range, it is only 24 per cent. Between the age of 40 and 50 it reaches its highest point – 40 per cent, levelling down to 36 per cent for those over 50. Trade unionists tend not only to be middle class, but they are also inclined to be middle aged. There are about 1.5 million trade unionists under 30 (and

only 120,000 under the age of 20); there are 1.7 million over 50 and another 2.5 million over 40. That the proportion of women amongst trade unionists has increased reflects the fact that the great job shake-out of the past 15 years has affected men far more.

What does all this tell us? First, that any political strategy that places trade unionism at its centre must in practice be a strategy geared towards the middle class. It is not just that the official trade union movement is useless, bureaucratic and cowardly in the extreme: it actually organises only those who have any remaining

stability in their job position – highly-qualified workers or middle class people in the public sector. Secondly, such a strategy does not begin to address the needs of young working class people. Union density amongst the under-20s has fallen by half since 1991 – even then it was only 12 per cent. If you are young with low qualifications and you are lucky enough to have a job (more than half of those without qualifications don't), then you are very unlikely to be in a union.

However, this is not the only point. Union members in the public sector are often involved in policing the working class. It is as well to remember that the Prison Officers' Association is a TUC affiliate, and there are many on the left who regard its members as a legitimate part of the working class. And it is union members who stand on the other side of the counter to the unemployed, demanding that they take up jobs at poverty rates of pay, and harass them to ensure they are actively seeking work. This antagonistic relationship will become more intense as the provisions of the Job Seeker's Allowance come into full force. Within the health service and local government, middle class members of Unison have been and are still involved in organising compulsory competitive tendering which has driven working class members into the hands of wage-cutting private employers. This was the experience of the Hillingdon women – who then had to occupy Unison offices to get official support for their strike action.

## A return to 19th century friendly societies

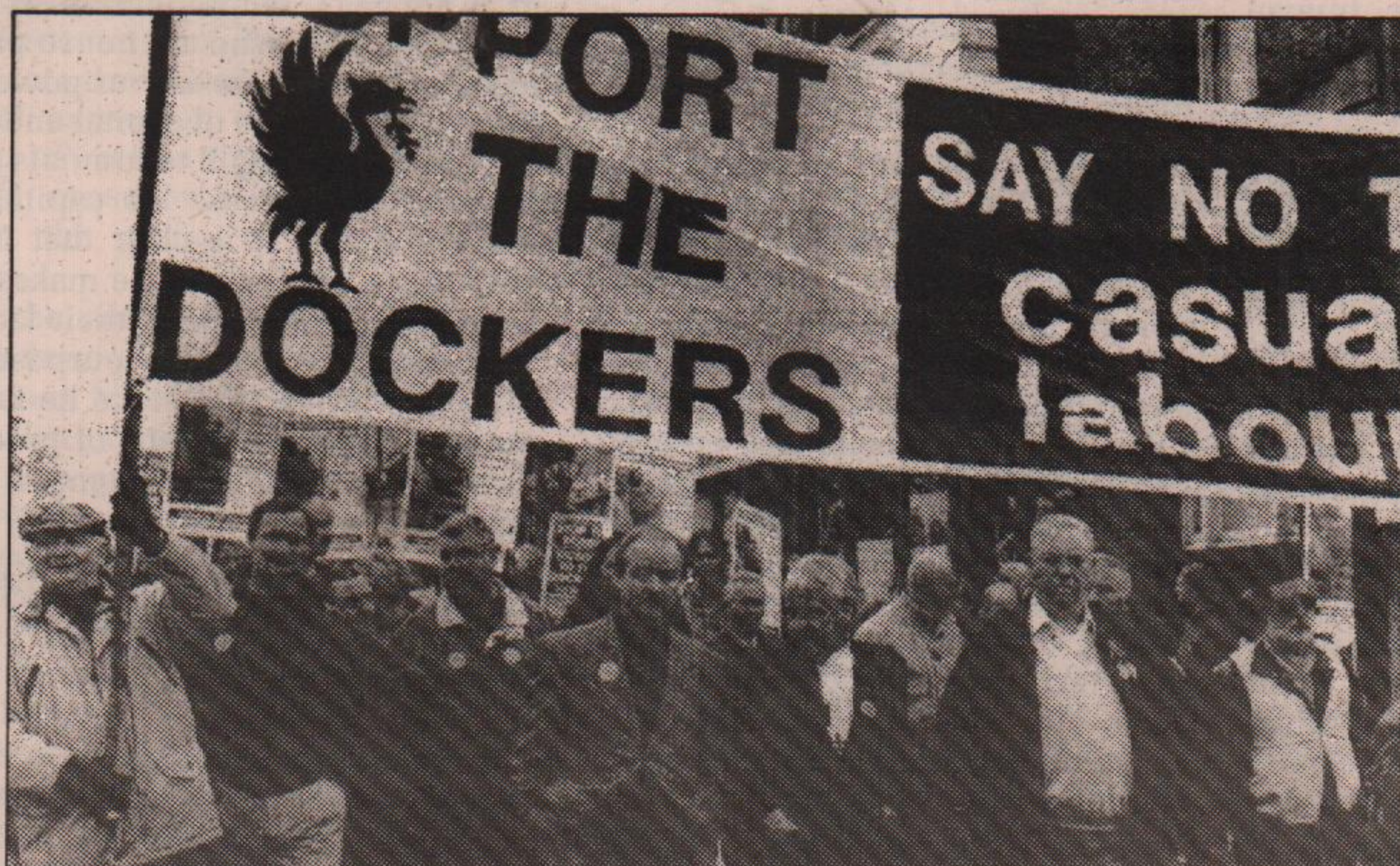
As conditions for the working class start to resemble those of 100 years ago – part-time, casual or temporary employment, with no rights to speak of – then so does the trade union movement. 100 years ago, it org-

anised about 15 per cent of employees, and some 75 per cent of its membership was drawn from the skilled and affluent layers of the working class. The skilled unionists themselves deliberately excluded the unskilled in order to preserve their privileged position; their greater degree of job security was a significant factor in achieving this. In his history *From Chartism to Labourism* Theodore Rothstein poured scorn on these unions when he showed that between 1899 and 1909 they sometimes spent as little as 5.7 per cent of their income on strike and lock-out benefit and never more than 19.2 per cent. During the same period, however, they were prepared to spend up to 40 per cent on friendly society benefits, and 25 to 30 per cent on unemployment benefit. He quotes John Burns, when the latter was revolutionary organiser of unskilled workers, who described these craft unions as so fearful of being 'unable to discharge their friendly society liabilities' that it 'often makes them submit to encroachments by the master without protest. The result of all this is that all of them have ceased to be unions for maintaining the rights of labour, and have degenerated into middle and upper class rate-reducing institutions.' One wonders what Burns or Rothstein would make of union like Unison, which over an 18 month period in 1994-95 spent about £1 million on strike pay whilst its income amounted to over £100m.

The trade union movement today is little more than a federation of friendly societies. Yet there is a need for trade unions, the same need that drove unskilled workers in 1889-90 to form unions to represent their interests independently of those of the craft workers. Part-time and temporary work are the modern form of casual labour that was the lot of the unskilled worker in Victorian times. Employment rights in 1975 covered 56 per cent of those in work: this has fallen to 36 per cent as the period of qualification for statutory rights has risen from 6 to 24 months. As a result, the majority of the working class is now without basic employment rights, and the situation is set to deteriorate further, with redundancies running at about 800,000 per annum and starting to rise. These changes are also reflected in the extent of unionisation amongst those who have been employed for a short period. In 1989, density amongst those employed for 6 to 12 months was 21 per cent, and between one and two years 26 per cent. Five years later the figures were 12 and 17 per cent respectively.

## A movement of the future

A new union movement will have to break the shackles of the current trade union laws. It will therefore have to confront the official trade union movement which hasn't the slightest intention of doing anything which might threaten its assets or its income. It will also have to confront New Labour with its refusal either to change the two-year qualification period for employment rights or repeal the Tory trade union laws. It will be a movement of those who are now without employment and trade union rights. Central to the great movement of unskilled workers led by the dockers' strike in 1889 was an alliance between working class revolutionaries and Marxists in opposition to the official trade union movement of the day – the craft unions. The same will be true again. It may or may not use existing union structures – it is too early to say. It will however have to draw its strength from community-based organisations, a lesson learned by the black South African trade union movement in its revolutionary days. Such links with the community pose the possibility of organising alongside the unemployed to ensure real working class unity. Without this, trade unionism will have no practical relevance for the working class. ■



Liverpool dockworkers fighting the return of casual labour



# William Morris — centenary

## thoughts for the 21st Century

the Post Office marks the centenary with stamps of sufficient stature'.

stamps were issued in honour of Morris

The media has used the centenary celebrations to bury William Morris's revolutionary and Marxist side. They want to keep 'alive' only a distorted and ossified artist for the pleasure of the middle classes. The V&A Museum exhibition on William Morris excludes the poor by charging an exorbitant entrance fee. Meanwhile the *Financial Times* arranges, only for its readers, exclusive evening viewings.

The ruling class, despite its claim that communism and Marxism have crumbled, clearly senses an uncomfortable truth — that so long as an oppressed and exploited class exists, then the spectre of communism will return to haunt them. Thus they seize on every opportunity to attack, distort and discredit socialism and communism lest it be taken up by the poor and impoverished. The William Morris Centenary is no exception. The *New Statesman*, for example, has joined the campaign with passion. In a sneering and ignorant article it writes that Morris:

'...had nothing at all in common with Marx's brand of scientific materialism or Lenin's version of revolutionary socialism... Morris was a rare combination of wealthy rural dreamer... a sentimentalist whose socialism owed more to the English mediaeval guild system than to any theory of historical determinism.'

Let us see!

### William Morris's vision

When Morris's political and social views are not ignored, they are sometimes dismissed as romantic dreaming. Thus is dismissed that vision he had of what life could be for human beings if today's enormously powerful economic forces were put to producing for use rather than profit.

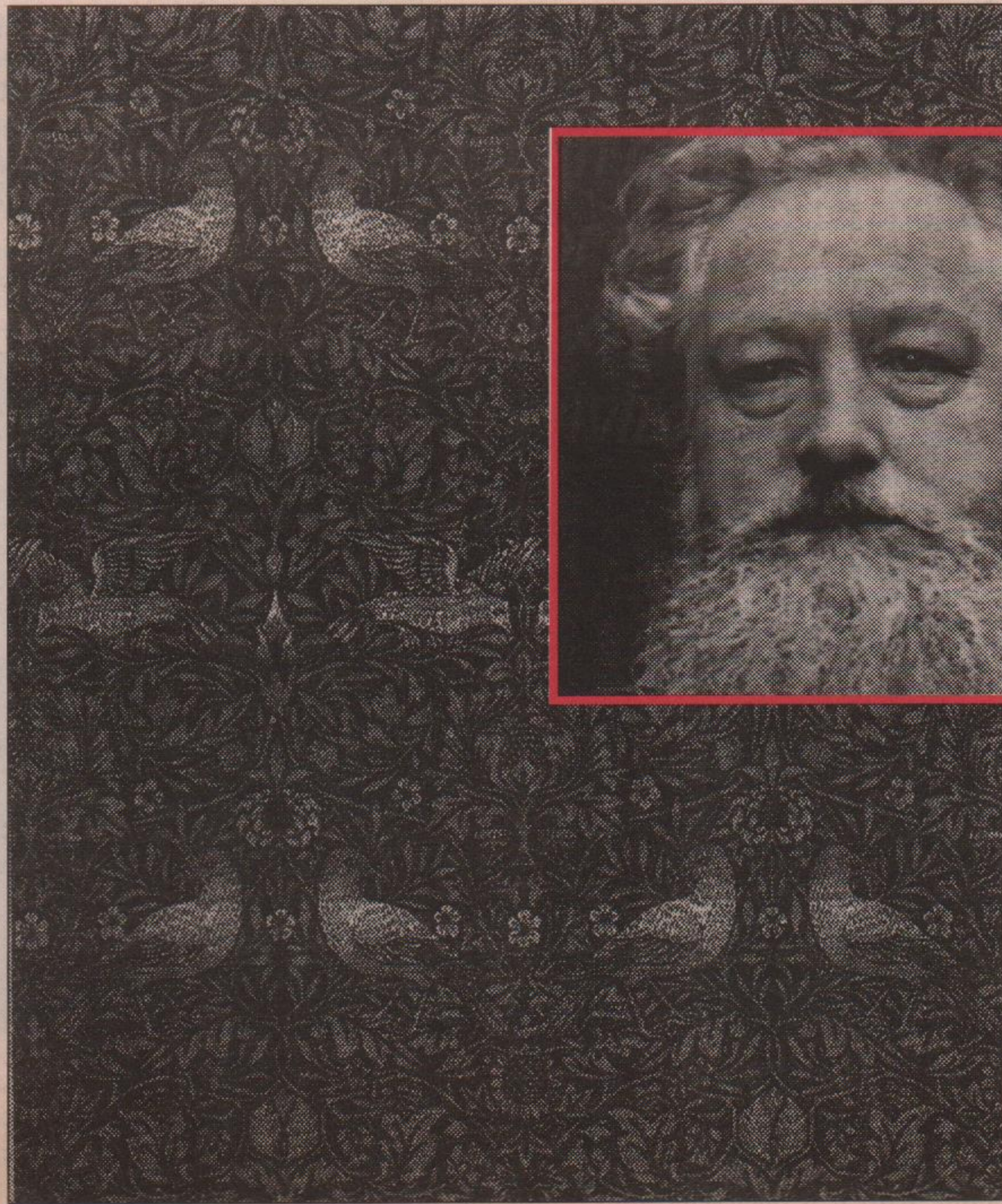
Morris's vision went beyond the abolition of the economic exploitation of 'man by man'. He believed for example that in a communist society art will be used:

'to make our streets as beautiful as the woods, as elevating as the mountain-sides: (to make) it... a pleasure and a rest, and not a weight upon the spirits to come from the open country into a town; (to make) every man's house... fair and decent, soothing to his mind and helpful to his work: all the works of man that we live amongst and handle will be in harmony with nature, will be reasonable and beautiful.'

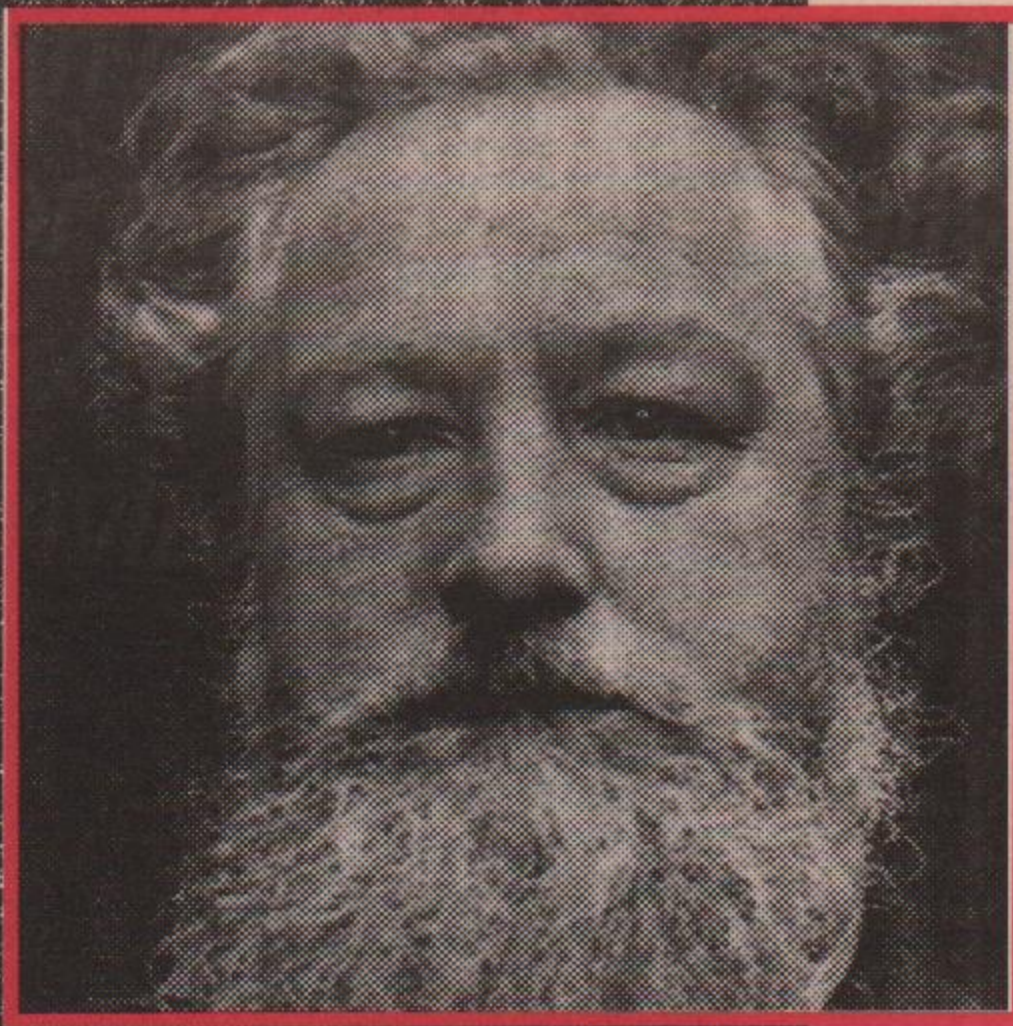
Under capitalism, only the middle classes can live in pleasant surroundings. For the majority capitalism's profit motive leads to degradation:

'It is profit which draws men into enormous unmanageable aggregations called towns...; profit which crowds them up when they are there into quarters without gardens or open spaces; profit which won't take the most ordinary precautions against wrapping a whole district in a cloud of sulphurous smoke; which turns beautiful rivers into filthy sewers, which condemns all but the rich to live in houses idiotically cramped and confined at best, and at the worst in houses for whose wretchedness there is no name.'

Besides destroying the environment, capitalism even more devastatingly transforms labour for the majority into a 'wearisome burden', a 'painful



'Bird', jacquard by William Morris, 1878



toil'. Labour is the means by which human beings create and recreate life. Labour should be pleasant and beautiful, it should be useful and invigorating and creative. Morris exclaims:

'But such a holiday our whole lives might be, if we were resolute to make all our labour reasonable and pleasant. But we must be resolute indeed; for no half measures will help us here. It has been said already that our present joyless labour, and our lives scared and anxious as the life of a hunted beast, are forced upon us by the present system of producing for the profit of the privileged classes.'

Under capitalism we do not have wealth, we have:

'but riches, with its necessary companion poverty; for riches cannot exist without poverty, or in other words slavery. All rich men must have some one to do their dirty work, from the collecting of their unjust rents to the sifting of their ash heaps.'

In socialist society we shall see the full development of the human being, for we shall have real wealth which:

'To my mind... is of two kinds; the first kind food, raiment, shelter, and the like; the second, matters of art and knowledge; that is things good and necessary for the body, and things good and necessary for the mind.'

Merely asserted, such an outlook would have been idle romantic dreaming. But Morris had a grasp of the economic, social and political mechanisms that produced and sustained the evils of the capitalist system. And he also participated in the socialist movement to change things — to destroy capitalism by socialist revolution. This is what is really galling to today's commentators. They want to enjoy Morris's art for

themselves, with an easy conscience and without having to concern themselves about the conditions capitalism forces the majority into.

### Capitalism is the source of all evil

In a desperate attempt to deflect Morris's attack on capitalism the *New Statesman* author claims that Morris saw the roots of all evil in technology and industrialisation. He writes that Morris was:

'Appalled by the idea of industrial progress... The idea of transporting building materials from one part of the country to another by evil railway was anathema.'

Anticipating such nonsense, Morris actually wrote:

'to some cultivated people, people of the artistic turn of mind, machinery is particularly distasteful, and they will be apt to say you will never get your surroundings pleasant as long as you are surrounded by machinery. I don't quite admit that; it is the allowing machines to be our masters and not our servants that so injures the beauty of life nowadays.'

This very important emphasis must underpin the work of those engaged in campaigning in defence of the environment. There is a surfeit of technology; the striving after greater and greater productivity is destroying huge swathes of the planet and millions of lives. But these social and environmental problems are not produced by the technology and machinery — inanimate instruments controllable by human beings — but by the social relations of capitalism within which that technology is developed and used.

Under different social relations technology would be developed only in so far as it was needed to 'minimise repulsive labour and to give

William Morris (1834 - 1896) was skilled craftsman, painter, poet, and activist. He wasn't a thinker of the grown British Marxist who made and human alienation under capitalism themes of socialist politics, he remains particularly relevant

as we approach the 21st century.

pleasure, or in other words added life, to the human race. But under capitalism it is 'destroying pleasure', 'instead of lightening labour... [it] intensified it, and thereby added more weariness yet to the burden which the poor have to carry.' In other words it is the system one must attack and not the instrument. And the system is capitalism.

Morris's conception of capitalism owed much to Karl Marx and need not be detailed here. The following passages are quoted only as refutations of the *New Statesman* which writes that:

'...the image of this quintessential bourgeois Englishman sitting in one of his gardens... attempting to digest *Das Kapital* [he claimed to have read all of it] is almost funny.'

Morris did read *Capital* and read it thoroughly. He even bound his personal volume in leather covers! This volume can actually be seen at the V&A exhibition. Like Marx, Morris argues that the capitalist system is founded upon exploitation. It is a system in which the privilege and wealth of a minority is based on the labour and poverty of the majority. The many working for the few. Despite the somewhat cumbersome and imprecise language, Morris's idea is clear:

'Under the present system... the manufacturer... having a monopoly of the means' of production 'is the master of those who are not so privileged'. He 'buys the labour-power of those who are bare of capital and can only live by selling it to him; his purpose... is to increase his capital, to make it breed. It is clear that if he paid those with whom he makes his bargain the full value of their labour... he would fail in his purpose' of making a profit. 'But since he is the monopolist of the means of productive labour, he can compel the worker...'

Not only is the capitalist system based on the exploitation of the majority by the minority, it is also inherently unstable:

'For what is visible before us in these days is that the competitive commercial system killing itself by its own force: profits lessening... The pro-

ductivity of labour increasing out of all proportion to the capacity of the capitalists to manage the market or deal with the labour supply: lack of employment therefore becoming chronic, and discontent therewith-all.'

Morris adds how amazed he is at the 'fatuity of the upper classes' who see in capitalism 'a distinct tendency to equalisation', to improvement of the conditions of the majority. This is not a bad analysis by a 'quintessential bourgeois'!

It is now plain why the modern intellectual wants to separate Morris's views on art and his environmental concerns from his politics and economics. For Morris real art, an art capable of serving the people, an art not restricted to the middle classes, has also been destroyed by capitalism, by the system of production for profit, by this system based on exploitation of man by man.

'...art is now being crushed to death by the money bags of competitive commerce.'

'The poet, the artist, the man of science, is it not true that in their fresh and glorious days, when they are in the heyday of their faith and enthusiasm, they are thwarted at every turn by Commercial War, with its sneering question "will it pay?"'

The same applies to the environment. It is being destroyed by the profit motive. Is profit to be made? Then:



'profit... which condemns all but the rich to live in houses and at the worst in houses for whose wretchedness there is no name.'



Recently a proposal to mark William Morris's death with a commemorative stamp was rejected by the Post Office on the grounds that Morris 'was not of the stature of Marx, Rousseau or Hegel. But as a home-artist he was in the Mule and Sooty.

However, a man of substantial stature. He was a designer, interior decorator, novelist and political philosopher of the stature of Marx, Rousseau or Hegel. But as a home-artist he was in the issues of environment, art and socialism central

pull down the pleasant trees among the houses, pull down ancient and venerable buildings for the money that a few square yards of London dirt will fetch; blacken rivers, hide the sun and poison the air with smoke and worse, and it's nobody's business to see or to mend it...

Moreover have no illusion that science, under capitalism, can cure these ills. Science, too, 'is so much in the pay of the counting-house and the drill sergeant, that she is too busy, and will for the present do nothing,' thus there remains only one solution: the defence of art and the environment: abolish capitalism, abolish private property, abolish production for profit.

### William Morris the political activist

All Morris's political work started from the principle that:

'The first step towards making labour attractive is to get the means of making labour fruitful, the Capital, including the land, machinery, factories, etc into the hands of the community, to be used for the good of all alike, so that we might all work at supplying the real "demands" of which and all - that is to say, work for livelihood instead of working to supply the demand of the profit market - instead of working for profit - ie the power of compelling other men to work against their will.'

In other words Morris argued for an end to private property, an end to 'privatised production'. Property, which is created by social labour, should be socially owned and used



...idiotically cramped and confined at best, ...is no name'

for the benefit of the people, not for the benefit of a minority which secured its ownership and privilege by means of robbery, violence and exploitation.

An end to private property, to privilege for the few and poverty for the many, was no easy ambition. The ruling class, the owners of private property in the means of production, will readily use violence to defend their wealth and privilege. And the property owners had in fact monopolised all the means of violence. This man 'so remote from Lenin's revolutionary socialism' wrote that:

'...property as we all know...[is]... jealously guarded by army and navy, police and prison, in short, by that huge mass of physical force...'

Capitalist firms:

'have now got into their hands nearly all the political power, and they band together in each country in order to make their respective governments fulfil just two functions: the first is at home to act as a strong police force, to keep the ring in which the strong are beating down the weak; the second is to act as a piratical body-guard abroad, a petard to explode the door which leads to the markets of the world...'

Even in his day Morris had to argue against those who claimed that the democratic British state would not be used against domestic opposition, against the working class in Britain. In answer he wrote:

'remember that the body of people who have for instance ruined India, starved and gagged Ireland, and tortured Egypt, have capacities in them, some ominous signs of which they have shown lately, for openly playing the tyrants' game nearer home.'

It is only necessary to recall the violence used against the striking miners in 1984-85, against black people, against, in fact, any opposition that has emerged in this country to see the truth of Morris's claim. It is only necessary to note the enormous centralisation and expansion of the state's repressive powers in this country to beware of those who today sing hymns to the praise of capitalist democracy.

Given the reality of the British state as a force of terror against the working class, Morris argued that the anti-capitalist opposition had no choice but to employ revolutionary force to overthrow the capitalist system. Indeed he wrote his famous novel, *News From Nowhere*, as a defence of revolutionary socialism against the gradualism of US socialist Edward Bellamy who in Morris's words wrongly 'conceives of the change to socialism as taking place without any breakdown...or disturbance'. Revolution will not come

'peaceably and fatalistically' but only through the working class's seizure of power. Indeed for Morris the task of socialists is to give 'hope to the many oppressed and fear to the few oppressors.'

Clearly this is not a message palatable to today's intellectual. One can't have Morris's wallpaper and art mixed up with this sort of thing.

### Morris's internationalism and anti-militarism

Beyond concern for the working class in Britain, we see in Morris an honourable internationalism which makes him an outstanding figure in the generally chauvinist British socialist movement. The capitalist state has two functions, one at home and the other servicing capital's ambitions abroad which amount to ruining foreign nations 'without war if possible, with it if necessary' and subjecting them to 'disgraceful exploitation', forcing on them 'at once our shoddy wares and our hypocrisy at the cannon's mouth.'

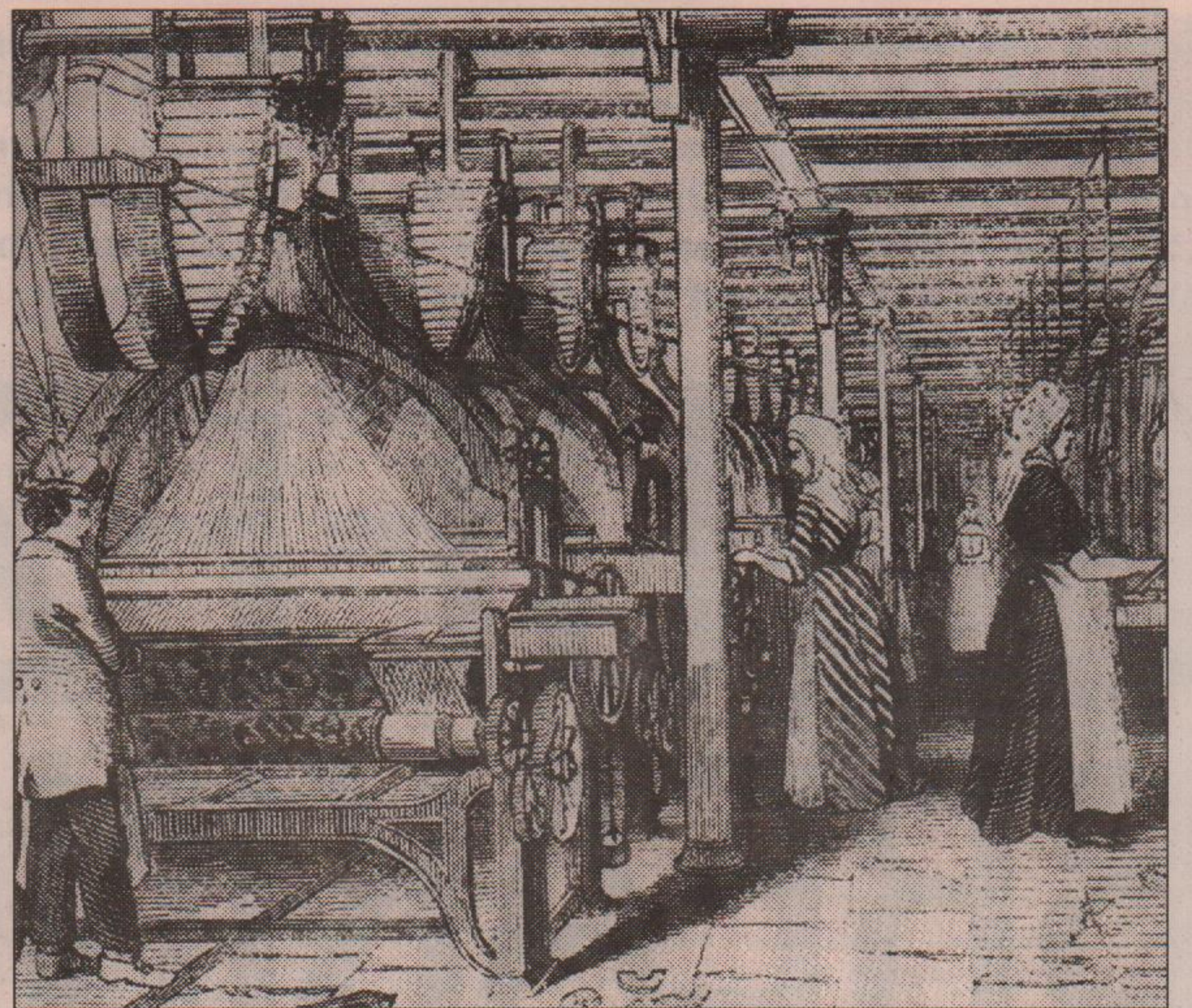
He was relentless in his denunciation of imperialist exploitation and war. Throughout Morris's assault on capitalism is a denunciation of its warmongering, its militarism, its violence: the sole means by which the capitalist class secured its interests and its wealth. Many, even in Morris's time, argued that this was all hype and exaggeration. Blinded by the peaceful island they occupied in the heart of imperialist Britain and blind to the suffering of the oppressed, they retorted that British capitalism was fundamentally peaceful. Morris's reply, written in 1887, was prescient:

'We have been shy of gunpowder war with a respectable enemy for a long while...because we have had the lion's share of the world market... But now...that we are losing or having lost that lion's share; it is now a desperate "competition" between the great nations of civilisation for the world-market, and tomorrow it may be a desperate war for that end.'

Indeed in 1914 and 1939 the world was again engulfed in war between the major powers fighting over the world market. And today we once again see the intensification of inter-imperialist rivalries and the smell of war is in the air.

### The working class movement

This is the outlook that guided Morris in his political work. He put his principles into practice. He campaigned to oppose British imperialism's war plans against Russia. He was a vigorous participant in campaigns to defend the environment and played a critical role in saving Epping Forest from destruction. In the last years of his life he joined the Social Democratic Federation in the



'it is the allowing machines to be our masters and not our servants that so injures the beauty of life nowadays'

hope of contributing to building a working class political movement independent both of the trade unions and of the middle class. These forces could not be instruments for defeating capitalism. This was a task for the working class, for the masses.

For the middle classes as a social and political force Morris had total contempt. They had appropriated all the privileges of life but were fundamentally selfish and reactionary:

'The real occupation of the well-to-do middle class...is the private war for wealth.'

They are only intent 'on gaining of a position either for themselves or their children' and in spite of 'sham dignity with which they surround' their work, 'they care nothing' for it. The middle class, 'both the leaders and led are incapable of saving so much as half-a-dozen commons from the grasp of inexorable commerce', let alone leading an anti-capitalist movement.

As for the trade unions, they had been corrupted by England's commercial supremacy. Prefiguring the later development of the Marxist theory of the labour aristocracy, Morris, commenting on the failure of the Chartist movement, says:

'the time for revolution had not then come...the great wave of commercial success went on swelling...[The] Chartist revolt warned them.... [Thus] they were forced to try and allay discontent by palliative measures...' And even 'though the main part of the unskilled, including the agricultural workmen, were no better off than before' nevertheless these measures 'damped down the flame of discontent...'

These are the conditions that led Trade Unions which were:

'founded for the advancement of the working class as a class...[to]...become conservative and obstructive bodies, wielded by the middle-class politicians for party purposes'.

Morris's model for socialism would have nothing to do with middle class liberalism or reformist trade unionism with their social democratic accommodations to capitalism. Neither did Morris's socialism have anything to do with mediaevalist or guild socialism. His model was that of the Paris Commune of 1871. It was the first:

'attempt to establish society on the basis of the freedom of labour...'

This first effort to establish a working class state, in which the entire people was armed against the minority of exploiters, struck a terrible horror into the hearts of the ruling class. So profound was this horror that when the Commune fell, the counter-revolution in a frenzy of blood lust lined up and shot 25,000 of its participants.

As Marx commented:

'The civilisation and justice of bourgeois order comes out in its lurid light whenever the slaves and drudges of that order rise against their masters. Then this civilisation and justice stand forth as undisguised savagery and lawless revenge...A glorious civilisation, indeed, the great problem of which is how to get rid of the heaps of corpses it made after the battle was over.'

Despite the Commune's defeat William Morris proclaimed that 'to all socialists that heroic attempt will give hope and ardour in the cause as long as it is to be won; we feel as though the Paris workman had striven to being the day-dawn for us, and had lifted up the sun's rim over the horizon, never to set in utter darkness again...'

The William Morris that modern day intellectuals are trying to bury is the revolutionary who defended the revolutionary force and working class democracy of the Commune, the democrat who insisted that art must be for the people, the environmentalist who wanted to save the earth for the people, and the communist who believed that all this could be achieved only by destroying capitalism. This vision that Morris bequeaths the anti-capitalists of today can be summarised and concluded through his view of art. Art to be true art must belong to the people. 'I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few' he exclaimed. Works of art are an 'expression of man's delight in beauty: all peoples and times have used them; they have been the joy of free nations, and the solace of oppressed nations.'

Unfortunately under capitalism art has been confiscated by profit and the middle classes. It has now to be reappropriated by the people. It will be so, but only through the 'Social Revolution (which) must be the foundations of the rebuilding of the Art of the People, that is to say of the Pleasure of Life.'

This is the legacy of William Morris. To those who dismiss it as an idle dream, Morris responds:

'[Socialism] is not a dream but a cause; men and women have died for it, not in the ancient days but in our own time: they lie in prison for it, work in mines, are exiled, are ruined for it: believe me when such things are suffered for dreams, the dreams come true at last.'

Such is the William Morris that they are trying to bury. Such is the William Morris communists salute!

Eddie Abrahams

\* All quotations from  
- *Political Writings of William Morris* - ed. A.L. Morton  
- *Three Works* by William Morris  
- *Art and Society - Lectures and Essays* by William Morris ed. Gary Zahel



They are called the New Titans – Microsoft, Intel, Nike – some of the most valuable companies on the US stock market. Together they employ approximately 64,641 workers compared with 337,778 employed by Ford and 304,000 by Unilever. These three Titans have a combined turnover of \$22.218 billion and made \$4.505 billion net profit in 1995. That is profits of \$69,694 per employee. Fords made profits of \$15,714 per worker and Unilever \$12,217. A future of fewer and fewer workers squeezed to breaking point for more and more profits. TREVOR RAYNE examines the latest trends in work and employment.

# SQUEEZED TO BREAKING POINT

## work, exploitation and profits

**E**conomic output on the planet has increased five-fold in 45 years; an increase equivalent to the additional output achieved in the preceding 20,000 years. Yet the proportion of the world's population living in absolute poverty has not fallen. Wealth distribution is more unequal than it was in 1950. 45 years ago the richest 20 per cent of the world's population were 30 times better off than the poorest 20 per cent; now they are 60 times better off. Today, just 358 people hold between them \$760 billion, a sum equal to the wealth of 2.5 billion people, 45 per cent of the world's population. The world's largest 500 companies employ 0.05 per cent of the world's population and control 25 per cent of its output. Why this enormous concentration of wealth into so few hands? Why this vast and widening chasm between the rich and the poor?

Are the winners more competitive, more efficient, have they shown more enterprise? Why, when companies announce job cuts, are they greeted with leaps in share prices? Corporate buzz words spew out like the proverbial 'cascade': leaner and fitter, downsizing, just-in-time stock control, outsourcing, teleworking, flexible contracts, layering – the argot of a new gang masking the familiar wares of cost cutting, redundancies and higher turnover as if they were something new.

Triumphal capitalism is in a crisis of profitability, revealing ever-more starkly its most authentic and brutal form. Its essential relationships are stamped upon the world, obliterating that which does not conform. Marx's analysis of capital is more vital than ever. Capitalism's hired apologists try to discredit and ignore Marx but reality persists in confirming him.

### Surplus value

Marx demonstrated that profits do not derive from competition, which only equalises or reduces profits to their average. Profits derive from surplus value produced for the owners of capital by the owners of labour power, workers. Surplus value is the value created by the worker over and above that which is necessary to maintain the worker and his or her family. In any working day the worker works partly for his/herself and family and partly for the owner of capital. The value produced in the part of the working day that the worker works to create value equivalent to that necessary to sustain him/herself and family is the value of labour power. Value produced beyond this is surplus value, the source of profit and wealth for the capitalists.

The rate of surplus value extraction from the worker increases as that part of the working day in which the worker works to produce value for him/herself diminishes relative to the total working day. Marx described it as 'an exact expression for the degree of exploitation of labour power by capital.' The rate of exploitation increases as wages fall, relative to the total value created, and decreases as wages rise, relative to the total value created. Surplus value is the product of unpaid labour.

To increase surplus value the capitalists can lengthen the working day or increase the intensity of work so that more value is produced in any given amount of time without an equivalent increase in the wages or allocation to the workers. This is absolute surplus value, typically obtained by overtime, flexible contracts, speed-ups, pushing managerial responsibilities further down the workforce, not replacing people when they leave, combining two jobs into one, increasing work loads etc.

Surplus value can also be increased by reducing the amount of time the worker spends on reproducing the means by which he/she maintains him/herself and family, that is by reducing the value of labour power. This is achieved by raising the productivity of labour in those industries which supply the workers' means of subsistence, or which provide machinery and raw materials for those industries. Surplus value obtained by reducing the value of labour power is called relative surplus value. Genetically modifying and standardising fruit and vegetables, forcing cattle to become cannibals, allowing sweat shops in British cities to avoid health and safety legislation – these are means of reducing the value of labour power and increasing relative surplus value.

Capitalists seek to reduce the cost of labour power below its established value by the use of female labour, child labour and racism. Where the price paid for labour is pushed below the price of necessities for the maintenance of that labour power then the amount of surplus value extracted is increased. Intensified exploitation using discrimination is one means of achieving this; inflation is another.

The value of labour power has a social-historical element to it as well as an intrinsically physical element. In Britain today soap, electric lighting and simple forms of medication are conditioned or habituated wants. They were not always so and nor are they everywhere in the world today, thus the value of labour power has a geographic element as well.

Capitalism will periodically try to reduce the value of labour power to



Post-war Britain: car workers on the assembly line at Cowley

its minimum physical limits or even below them. There is no limit to the extent capital will go to extract surplus value except that which is presented to it in the form of class struggle. But with every victory temporarily obtained by labour in defence of the value of labour power, capital will re-double its efforts to find a device to cheapen it.

Labour's chances in the market are undermined by the processes through which capital seeks to grow, its constant striving to raise productivity and hence the rate at which it extracts surplus value. New methods of production increase capital intensity (machinery etc) relative to labour so the demand for labour does not keep pace with the accumulation of capital. Capital throws labour off, generating a surplus supply or an industrial reserve army of labour, thus 'the general tendency of capitalistic production is not to raise, but to sink the average standard of wages, or to push the value of labour [power] more or less to its minimum limit,' (Marx). Wages are being driven down to the point that labour power can no longer reproduce itself; a barbarism shortening lives and destroying social relations in the pursuit of profits.

In July the South Korean company LG announced it would invest £1.7 billion in South Wales, employing 6,100 people to produce semi-conductors and televisions. This is an outlay of £278,689 for everyone employed. 'Why is Britain so attractive to foreign companies? "Low pro-

duction costs," echoes Yasunori Taga, who plans manufacturing strategy for Japan's Hitachi group in Europe. In Wales, according to local politicians, as many as 42,000 people work for wages of less than £2.50 an hour, including 12,000 who are paid less than £1.50. And social security charges are only a fraction of what's levied in countries like Germany, France and Spain,' (*The Wall Street Journal* 11 July 1996).

In the same publication another hired apologist adds to the explanation of why Britain has attracted 38 per cent of inward investment into the European Union over the past year, 'reforms to the labour market... such measures as the removal of restrictions on the number of hours that young people between the ages of 16 and 19 can work; the abolition of a minimum wage for people under 21; reductions in maternity, unfair dismissal and redundancy rights; access for women to factory jobs from which they had been excluded; and measures to promote more part-time jobs.' This is labour's chances being reduced in the market by the accumulation process and capital's tendency to push the value of labour power down to its minimum limit. In order to attract investment the British

government offers a labour force shorn of its protections, malleable and cheap.

### An electronic cage

For capitalism time is money. Early capitalists had to wrest control of the production process from the worker. Manufacturing moved to new towns free of guild and other feudal regulations over labour. Today, capital swoops down on free trade zones around the world where health and safety regulations are lax, restrictions on the length of the working day are few and trade unions weak or non-existent.

'Within export processing zones, and in particular in the electronics industry, there is evidence that workers' rights to join a national union, to engage in collective bargaining and/or to strike, have been restricted by governments to increase the attractiveness of a country as an investment location... For instance, in Turkey, the laws governing strikes, lockouts and conciliation are not to be applied for ten years following the start of operations in the zones,' (UNCTAD *World Investment Report* 1994).

Early capitalism's subcontracting or 'putting-out' systems had problems of control over the regulation of production, waste materials, theft, uneven quality of output and inability to change production processes. Now, with the combination of computers and telecommunications, surveillance over remote workplaces, regulation of the workforce and stan-

**'Workers on temporary and part time contracts often receive no sick pay, holiday pay or pensions. Managers can exert greater pressure on them to conform or get out'**





In Britain wages and salaries have fallen from 68 per cent of total incomes in 1971 to 56 per cent in 1993.

dardisation of products are more easily achieved. Hence the great increase in subcontracting and teleworking from home in recent years – all reducing costs to the employers.

'With the information technologies already available I can sit on the beach of my Florida home with a laptop computer and a cellular telephone and monitor the video images installed throughout my manufacturing company in Ohio to ensure that my people are on the job and doing their work properly,' (1994 radio interview cited in David Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World*).

The regulation of labour at the workplace is used to increase the intensity of work and hence the rate of exploitation. Wages may actually rise but if the total value created rises by a greater rate than the rate of exploitation has increased. The multinationals often pay above local levels, for example in Turkey wages paid by multinationals are 134 per cent above the average paid by local firms (UNCTAD). The mass of surplus value obtained from higher productivity more than compensating for the higher wages.

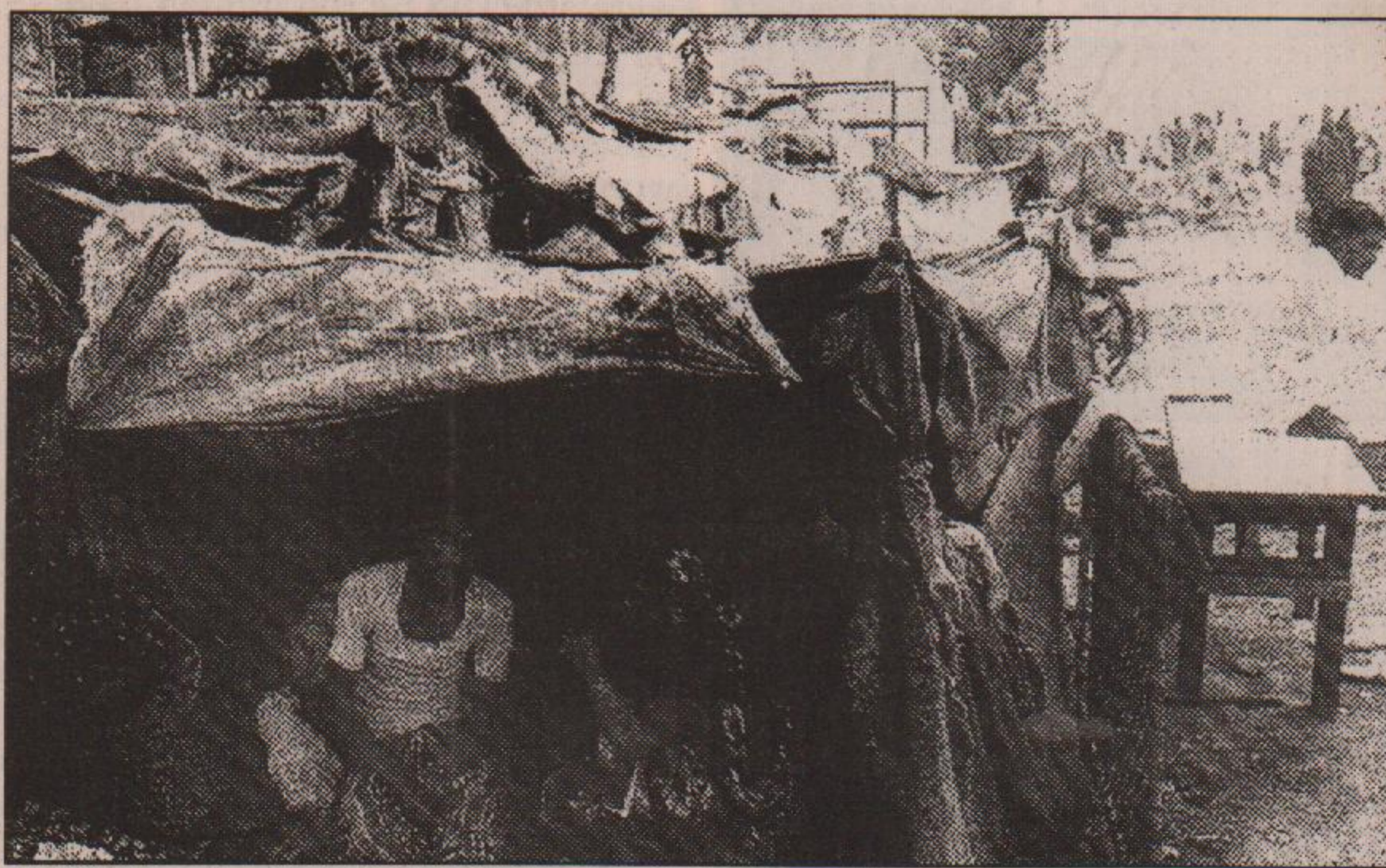
In 1914 Ford introduced the first continuous flow-line assembly process. Within three months a Model-T car took one tenth of the previous time needed for assembly and by 1925 almost as many cars were produced in a day as were originally produced in a year. Faced with the possibility of a strike in 1914 Henry Ford increased pay to \$5 a day. He was to say, 'The payment of \$5 a day for an eight hour day was one of the finest cost cutting moves ever made.' The working day had been shortened, pay increased but the increased intensity of labour meant that more work was done in half-an-hour than had previously been done in two hours.

Firms with a lead in technology giving them greater productivity than their rivals may well be able to pay higher rates, but Ford in 1914 is not Ford today when cruder methods are needed to extract more surplus value. Ford have opened a plant in the *maquiladora* belt in Mexico. Productivity here is similar to the USA although the hours are longer. Average hourly wages in the *maquiladora* factories are just \$1.64 compared to the USA's hourly rate in manufacture of \$16.17. In 1987 during a two month long bitter strike Ford tore up the contracts of its Mexican workers, fired 3,400 of them and cut wages by 45 per cent. When workers supported their sacked friends gunmen were

hired by the official government-run union to shoot at random workers from the Ford factory. Thus was labour regulated and costs kept down.

US average hourly wages for production and non-supervisory workers fell in real terms from \$11.37 in 1973 to \$10.34 in 1991, while average hours worked per year rose from 1,683 in 1973 to 1,781 in 1990: a 9 per cent drop in wages and a 6 per cent increase in hours worked raising both the amount of absolute surplus value and the rate of surplus value. In 1992 47 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds in full-time employment in the USA earned below poverty level wages.

The US election debate includes the minimum wage issue. Clinton wants a 90 cent rise to \$5.15 an hour phased in over two years. This is still below the price-adjusted minimum US wage of the 1970s. A disproportionately high number of workers on minimum wages are women and



Down-sizing, outsourcing – mean unemployment, poverty and 'de-housing' – homelessness

black and Hispanic people. Wages have been driven so low that labour can no longer reproduce itself and maintain family relationships.

The share of profits in the US gross domestic product has risen from 4.7 per cent in 1982 to 8.4 per cent in 1995. Labour's share in the form of wages and salaries has declined by almost 5 per cent over the same period.

In Britain wages and salaries have fallen from 68 per cent of total incomes in 1971 to 56 per cent in 1993. The average change in earnings fell below the change in retail prices in 1980, 1981-82 and in 1990. In October 1993 the year-on-year growth in wages was the lowest recorded since 1967 at 2.1 per cent. The price of labour is pushed below the value of labour power, increasing the amount of surplus value created. Thus the

ratio of income from employment to income from profits fell from 6.6 to 1 in 1983 to 5 to 1 in 1993. One in three wage earners are on or below the poverty level rate of pay (£5.90 per hour).

### 'Lunch is for wimps!'

The *Financial Times* carried an article on the lengthening working day entitled 'The Daily Grind of the Seven to Nine.' Michael Douglas as Gordon Geko in the film *Wall Street* expressed capitalism's obsession with time as money in the contemptuous response 'Lunch! Lunch is for wimps.' According to *The Overworked American: the Unexpected Decline of Leisure* by Juliet Schor, US people 'now work an average of 164 hours more annually than 20 years ago. This amounts to a month more at work per year.' A French manager observes, 'People are becoming slaves to technology. With faxes and computers you have much more paper and no longer wait for the next morning's post before responding.' To this can be added the accessibility and intrusiveness afforded by mobile telephones.

'Conditioned to accept the right of the group or the boss to make limitless demands, a Japanese worker is already psychologically unprepared to resist even the most extreme orders from management – the reason why the Japanese have had to coin a word, *karoshi*, to describe the phenomenon of death from overwork,' (R. Taggart Murphy, *The Real Price of Japanese Money*). One in six Japanese workers works more than a twelve hour day.

The UK's average full time working week was 43.4 hours in 1992, the longest in the European Union, compared with an EU average of 40.3 hours. October 1994 Department of Employment statistics show '104,300 operatives (manual workers in manufacture) worked 10,190,000 hours overtime on top of their working week, or an average of 9.8 extra hours a week.' That is, 36.6 per cent of full time employees in manufacture worked overtime, providing nearly an additional quarter of the average working week.

In April 1994 the *Financial Times* reported, 'the pre-tax average weekly earnings of male manual workers was £280.70 a week, of which an average

per cent said their families suffered, but fewer than a third would stand up to their boss to improve their family time.

Thirty years ago a single wage earner earned enough to maintain a family, now often a family needs two wage earners, sometimes doing more than two jobs, to sustain itself. Average household incomes may rise but as Marx observed in his own time, 'Your middle class statistician will tell you... that the average wages of factory families in Lancashire have risen. They forget that instead of the labour of the man, the head of the family, his wife and perhaps three or four children are now thrown under the juggernaut wheels of capital, and that the rise of the aggregate wages does not correspond to the aggregate surplus labour extracted from the family.'

### An actor's career

Since the mid-1980's there has been a process of reducing the number of middle-managers. They add to time and the wage bill but often not to surplus value. Their supervisory and disciplinary functions can be pushed further down the workforce through self-surveillance in the form of Quality Teams and smaller cost centres for accounting purposes. 'Many times, the middle-management and clerical groups are involved in work that does not add value to the product... In international competition jobs that don't add value to the product are not needed... The idea is to renew a focus on the core elements of the enterprise: design, manufacture, sales,' (a consultant with Arthur Andersen, 1985)

Management theorist Charles Handy envisages the firm of the future, 'For one thing, companies will be much smaller: "1/2 x 2 x 3" is becoming the essential formula for those who want to remain competitive in an inter-connected world – half as many people, paid twice as well (because they keep the best), producing three times as much added value. Then repeat the exercise; it is possible – an estimated 65 per cent of most companies activities do not add value...'

'In the best businesses today the market value of the business is three or four times the tangible assets and, in a good manufacturing company, labour costs should not be more than 10 per cent of the product price.

'If the individuals do not like the milking they can always leave – or ask for more money to stay. That way the "1/2 x 2 x 3" formula translates as half as many people paid twice as well to work three times as long. "24-7's" (24 hours a day, seven days a week) they call them in Los Angeles. More accurately, they are cramming the 100,000 hours of a normal working life into 25 years instead of 50, which makes for 75 hour weeks and burn-out at 45.'

As Marx said: 'In prolonging the working day the capitalist may pay higher wages and still lower the value of labour, if the rise of wages does not correspond to the greater amount of labour extracted, and the quicker the decay of the labouring power thus caused.' Capitalism in crisis revealing its most brutal and essential form.

Elsewhere Handy describes in prettified terms the tenuous existence that workers lucky enough to find work will lead, 'More and more people will pursue "actors' careers", seeing life as a sequence of roles in projects, sometimes within one large organisation or hopping among several, or behaving as independents with a "portfolio" of roles...'

'To the individual, the organisation will offer, not a planned career, but a series of opportunities which one's skill profile may or may not fit. All the world will then, in a sense, be a stage; a sequence of teams with a changing cast of performers, backed by a small continuing production team.' More realistically the set for this performance resembles *On the*

**'people now work an average of 164 hours more annually than 20 years ago. This amounts to a month more at work per year.'**

*Waterfront*, or the system once employed in the Port of London and what is intended for the Liverpool dockers today.

Almost 50 per cent of workers in the Netherlands are employed part time or in temporary jobs. In Britain only 57 per cent of the workforce is employed on a full time, permanent basis. 43 per cent work part time or on fixed term contracts or have a 'portfolio' career. Instead of acting agencies there are employment agencies. Manpower, the US firm, sees Europe as its fastest growing market as employers take advantage of the permanently high unemployment rates to eject full time staff and use 'flexible' short term labour. Over Autumn and Winter 1995-96 part time jobs accounted for 88,000 of the new jobs created in Britain, while full time jobs only accounted for 24,000. Women were the majority of the new part time employees.

The launch of Microsoft's Windows 95 relied heavily on temporary workers to field calls from confused buyers. The European employment agency Randstadt expects to provide 17,000 temporary workers for the Atlanta Olympics. Workers on temporary and part time contracts often receive no sick pay, holiday pay or pensions. Managers can exert greater pressure on them to conform or get out. Sales of corporate uniforms and surveillance equipment continue to grow. Bullying and fear become the norm in many workplaces.

### Nike just does it

The model of a small core of employees and a shifting tenuous periphery designed to maximise the extraction of surplus value and minimise expenditures that are unproductive of profits restructures society and the world economy. The typical big Japanese firm has a core of permanent employees surrounded by subcontractors which are its suppliers. Here are not the jobs-for-life but temporary and part time contracts and wages a third and more lower than those of the core workers.

We can see how capital fashions the world if we look at the US footwear company Nike. Nike itself currently employs 9,000 people, while 75,000 are employed by its independent sub-contractors in different countries. A pair of Nikes sell in Europe and the USA for £50 to £90 and more. They cost £3.70 to make in Indonesia, made by young women paid as little as 10 pence an hour. The \$20 million that basketball player Michael Jordan reportedly received for advertising Nike in 1992 exceeded the entire annual payroll of the Indonesian factories where Nike boots are made. What price the Euro 96 promotion?

Nike has exceeded even Charles Handy's 10 per cent dictum for costs relative to selling price. The rate of extraction of surplus value is reaching fantastic proportions but still it is insufficient. Capital is insatiable and pours into every corner of life; transforming it, changing work and society, heedless of human needs, it makes life unliveable. ■



**N**or can Scott and his tedious method of producing his report be blamed for this. Obviously he would not blame the politicians or probe the arms industry. But if there is nobody – no politicians, no journalists (with the creditable exception of *Private Eye*), no political opposition – to drive home what the Inquiry exposed, then it shows the utter bankruptcy of existing political forces in Britain.

The Scott Report itself is an extremely impenetrable document of over 2,000 pages and written in such a way that you have to read all of it to find the odd judgment from Scott. Scott concentrates on the narrow questions of how the government machine operated and modified its guidelines over the sale of arms to Iran and Iraq. Thus the actual subject – government involvement in the sale of arms – is made to seem both normal and irrelevant. It skates over the surface of the most spectacular questions that underlie the whole scandal of arms sales in the 1980s, such as the role of the then Prime Minister Mrs Thatcher and her son in the Middle East arms business.

Despite this, it is the closest examination of the way British government works in recent decades and has many little nuggets within it.

### Arming the world

The production of machines for killing people is so central to the British economy that it provides one in ten manufacturing jobs. It is enormously lucrative. Some of the biggest British companies are involved and their names recur throughout the report: British Aerospace, ICI, Marconi, Plessey, Racal, Rolls Royce, Royal Ordnance (now privatised and sold to British Aerospace), Thorn EMI, Vickers, as well as a host of smaller ones. Intertwined with these companies are banks and the British government through the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Export Sales Organisation (DESO).

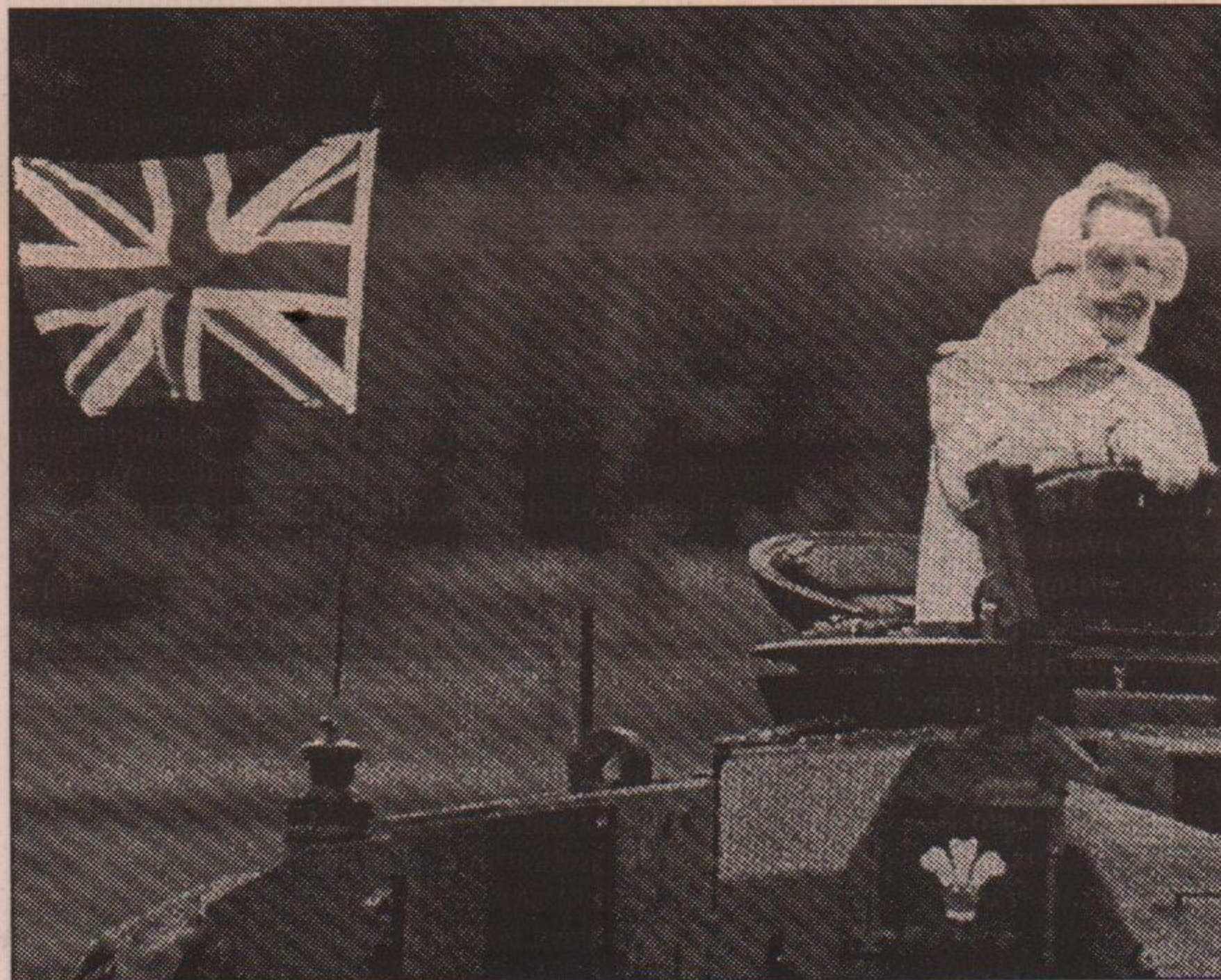
There is little separation between the arms companies and the government. The best indication of this in the Scott Report is the Hawk aircraft contract. British Aerospace had been negotiating with Iraq since 1981 to supply £5bn of Hawk aircraft and the equipment to create an Iraqi air industry. Discussions continued throughout the Iran/Iraq war. There was controversy surrounding the contract within government and eventually it was decided not to give it approval. (As John Major said: 'I did not think it was a very good deal financially. I did not believe it was a very good deal morally either.' Good to see him getting his priorities right.) However, the arms companies were allowed free rein to lobby within government. Thus one of the former bosses of British Aerospace, now Sir Colin Chandler, was appointed Head of Defence Sales in the government's Defence Export Sales Organisation in 1985. In 1988 he arranged for one of his British Aerospace right-hand men, David Hastie, to be seconded to work with him in DESO. Hastie's salary continued to be paid by British Aerospace and he spent most of his time actively lobbying for the Hawk contract, helping the Ministry of Defence draft papers in support of the Hawk contract and meeting Iraqi ministers about it. In one bizarre episode, he attended the Baghdad Arms Fair in 1989 – an event which the Ministry of Defence was officially not allowed to attend. The government overcame the problem of his attendance by temporarily de-seconding Hastie from the MoD and re-categorising him as a British Aerospace employee for the duration of the Fair. Thus Alan Clark could reply, when asked in Parliament whether any Ministry of Defence personnel had attended the Fair, 'No'.

### Arms sales to Iraq

The scale of arms sales to Iraq can be seen from the detailed list of export

# Anyone remember the Scott report?

**One of the most telling indications of the cynicism and political deadness of British society is the instant amnesia that overtook the Scott Report. Within a week of publication it was forgotten. The Matrix Churchill scandal, the issue of government complicity in selling arms to an Iraqi regime busy gassing the Kurdish people and waging a war with Iran that cost one million lives, government lies, the evidence of a intimate connection between government and the arms industry – all forgotten. The publication in July of a CD-ROM of the Inquiry's 20,000 pages of evidence (price £176.25) is unlikely to revive any interest. Now, five months after the Report's publication, even writing about the issue again has an archaeological feel to it. Yet this was a scandal that could have – should have – unseated the government.**



Mrs Thatcher reviewing the family merchandise in 1986

licences granted, which the report publishes. In 1984, for example, the total defence-related sales where values are given amounted to £80m and included electronic equipment, radar, mortar detection and communications equipment. This was when the British government claimed it was neutral in the Iran-Iraq conflict and was not supplying lethal equipment. Of course they did not mean this – government ministers had already agreed that 'every opportunity should be taken to exploit Iraq's potentialities as a promising market for the sale of defence equipment; and to this end "lethal items" should be interpreted in the narrowest possible sense, and the obligations of neutrality as flexibly as possible.' (quoted p154 Scott). Decoded, this meant that almost everything that a modern army needs continued to be supplied.

This need for flexibility was uppermost in the minds of those who redrew the policy in 1984 in the face of awkward questions. One senior Foreign Office official (Mr Haskell) set out the arguments for and against the supply of any defence equipment to Iran or Iraq. There was, he said, 'some feeling that it is "morally

wrong" to supply defence equipment of any kind to either'. But if such a policy was followed there might be an 'adverse reaction on our general trade from Iraq and Iran as a result' and 'on last year's figures a loss of up to £1,000 million in British exports'. As Sir Stephen Egerton, Head of the Foreign Office, said at the time about morality: 'it is better to steer clear of this... concept now that we are so far into the arms supply game.' Indeed.

The new guidelines proved, as they were designed to, little obstacle to sales. In September 1985, the Defence Attache at the British Embassy in Baghdad, Colonel Eccles, wrote in his annual report that there had been a 'noticeable decrease in new interest shown by the Iraqis towards British defence equipment'. This was mainly because the Iraqi government was strapped for cash and Iraq was 'already comprehensively equipped – perhaps even over-equipped.' Even so there was, he said, '£164.5m in export licences for defence-related equipment being processed.' (p233). He concluded that there was 'still a lucrative market'. Despite the fact that the new guidelines prevented the supply of defence equipment which would 'signifi-



Alan Clark – 'the interests of the West were best served by Iran and Iraq fighting each other'

cantly enhance the capability' of either side to wage war, an export licence was, for example, granted in 1985, allowing Plessey to supply Gun Sound Ranging Equipment worth £15m to Iraq. Gun sound ranging allows enemy guns to be located – this was not felt to be a 'significant enhancement.' The guidelines proved to be very flexible friends. After all, Oxbridge-educated civil servants and politicians had mulled them over for months. There was a lengthy debate, for example, on whether to use the term 'significantly' or 'appreciably' in relation to not supplying equipment that would 'enhance' the capability of either Iran or Iraq to prolong or exacerbate the war. They plumped for 'significantly'.

At every stage they attempted to cover their tracks about what they were supplying. For example, International Military Services (a company set up by the Ministry of Defence to arrange arms sales) acted as consultants in building Iraq's Integrated Weapons Complex at Basra. They then arranged for two Iraqi naval officers to come and be trained to use it in England. IMS wrote about the visit in 1986 that they were 'conscious of the need for a low profile in this exercise and the Iraqi officers will be designated as Civilian Government Servants during their stay in the UK.'

In 1986 and 1987 two British ships were attacked by the Iranian navy in the Gulf. Britain had supplied spares to the Iranian navy. The Foreign Office wrote: 'Any UN arms embargo would almost certainly preclude the provision of such spares... which so far we have been able to justify as not significantly enhancing Iranian naval capability. Such interpretation is now less tenable. Moreover... it would not be publicly understood if we were continuing to sanction the export of spares that were enabling the Iranian navy to mount attacks on our own or friendly ships.' Selling arms to people who will then use them against British forces – as they were in the Gulf War – proved no more than a mild embarrassment to these patriots.

Scott also found that there was continuous diversion of arms to Iraq via Jordan, a route which was an open secret within government circles. Scott gives no figures about the scale of this but quotes a DTI report on a visit to check how much ammunition Royal Ordnance had sold to Iraq: 'With hindsight the records indicated that MoD had agreed to exports of ammunition to Jordan far in excess of that country's needs prior to the outbreak of the Gulf War.' *Private Eye* indicates that in the export category covering arms sales to Jordan there was an increase from £18.5m in the 1970s to £581.5m in the 1980s. Much of this would have gone to Iraq.

And to further rub salt into the wound, the British taxpayer was effectively paying for the arms being sold to Iraq. They were sold on credit under the Export Credit Guarantee Scheme which paid the arms suppli-

ers whether or not Iraq did. In 1985 they were allowed £50m worth of such credits for arms purchases. If this proved inadequate then what were obviously military goods were helpfully reclassified as, for example, meteorological, so they could obtain even greater credit. By 1986, Iraq had benefited under this scheme to the tune of £1,260m.

It is the 'concealing of that policy from Parliament and the public' that Scott finds 'reprehensible'. This is absurd. A government that engages in such a cynical and filthy trade is hardly likely to be above lying about it. At least Alan Clark (Minister at the Department of Trade and then Defence Procurement Minister) was honest when he said that 'the interests of the West were best served by Iran and Iraq fighting each other, and the longer the better'.

### More cover-ups

The British also sold large amounts of machines for Iraq's use in making its own weapons. This underlay the Matrix Churchill scandal that led to the Scott Inquiry being set up. Despite ministers denying their knowledge that British engineering firms were selling machine tools to produce munitions and weaponry, the Scott Report shows that such knowledge was common throughout government from 1988. For example, in a civil service briefing for a meeting by Alan Clark with the Machine Tool Trades Association in 1988, the question arose of how to deal with possible publicity about the export of machine tools known to be intended for making munitions. The companies were advised to 'maintain a low profile. Press or public attention would make it more difficult to permit fulfilment of contracts.' The Foreign Office also added 'if it becomes public knowledge that the tools are to be used to make munitions, deliveries will have to stop at once' (p 227). Both Intelligence and the Ministry of Defence knew that Iraq owned Matrix Churchill and was more active in Britain than elsewhere in buying the engineering equipment for its own arms industry. Such goods were routinely licensed. Small wonder when the catastrophic Matrix Churchill prosecutions went ahead, ministers issued Public Interest Immunity Certificates to try to prevent the truth emerging.

In one small but revealing incident, Jonathan Aitken, the Minister of Defence Procurement, was asked to sign the MoD's Public Interest Immunity Certificate. He did so but a note was attached saying: 'Not used. Minister (ie Jonathan Aitken) was associated with BMARC (who were associated with Matrix Churchill)' (p1137). BMARC was an arms company dealing with the Middle East and Aitken was one of its directors. How pleasant then that he should be appointed Minister for Defence Procurement in 1992.

The guidelines were liberalised still further in 1988/9. This too was kept secret, with Lord Howe, for example, stating his reluctance to 'initiate a process whereby it will become known that our line on arms sales to Iraq has relaxed, while the Kurds/chemical warfare question is still hanging over us' (p420). This unannounced change of policy was concealed behind a smokescreen of distortions and outright lies by various ministers including the Prime Minister. Some of them justified this at the Inquiry on commercial or foreign policy grounds. Their position is far more logical than that of Scott, who criticises them for this breach of ministerial behaviour. It is that inexorable logic – sell arms, cover it up – that has won in this episode. Otherwise, the Scott Report and its recommendations (oh yes, there were 50 pages of recommendations) would still be reverberating. The veil has once again been drawn over the Government Lie Machine.

Maxine Williams



# Parkhurst escape verdict

On 8 July the long-awaited Parkhurst escape trial ended with a predictable guilty verdict and some utterly unpredicted and positive recommendations from the jury. Andrew Rodger and Keith Rose were charged with 'breaking prison' in January 1995. Having heard their explanation of why they were forced into such action, the jury recommended they be treated with 'extreme clemency'. They further recommended that the murder charge for which Keith Rose is serving life be reinvestigated. Presumably the only thing preventing the verdict from being one of 'not guilty' on grounds of duress was the judge's firm instruction to the jury that they must convict the men.

**K**eith, Andrew and Matthew Williams were at large for five days, during which time the press painted them as violent monsters and police protection was given to 15 people in Devon who supposedly figured on a 'hit-list' found in Keith Rose's cell. Keith is serving 15 years for a kidnapping to which he pleaded guilty, and life for a murder, which took place ten years before his arrest and with which he vehemently denies any connection whatsoever. His prime motive in escaping was to highlight his fight to overturn that conviction.

Keith has sent FRFI a detailed account of the trial, in which he describes the prosecution as 'low-key'. The Crown obviously felt that the only onus on it was to prove that the men left the prison; a matter not in dispute.

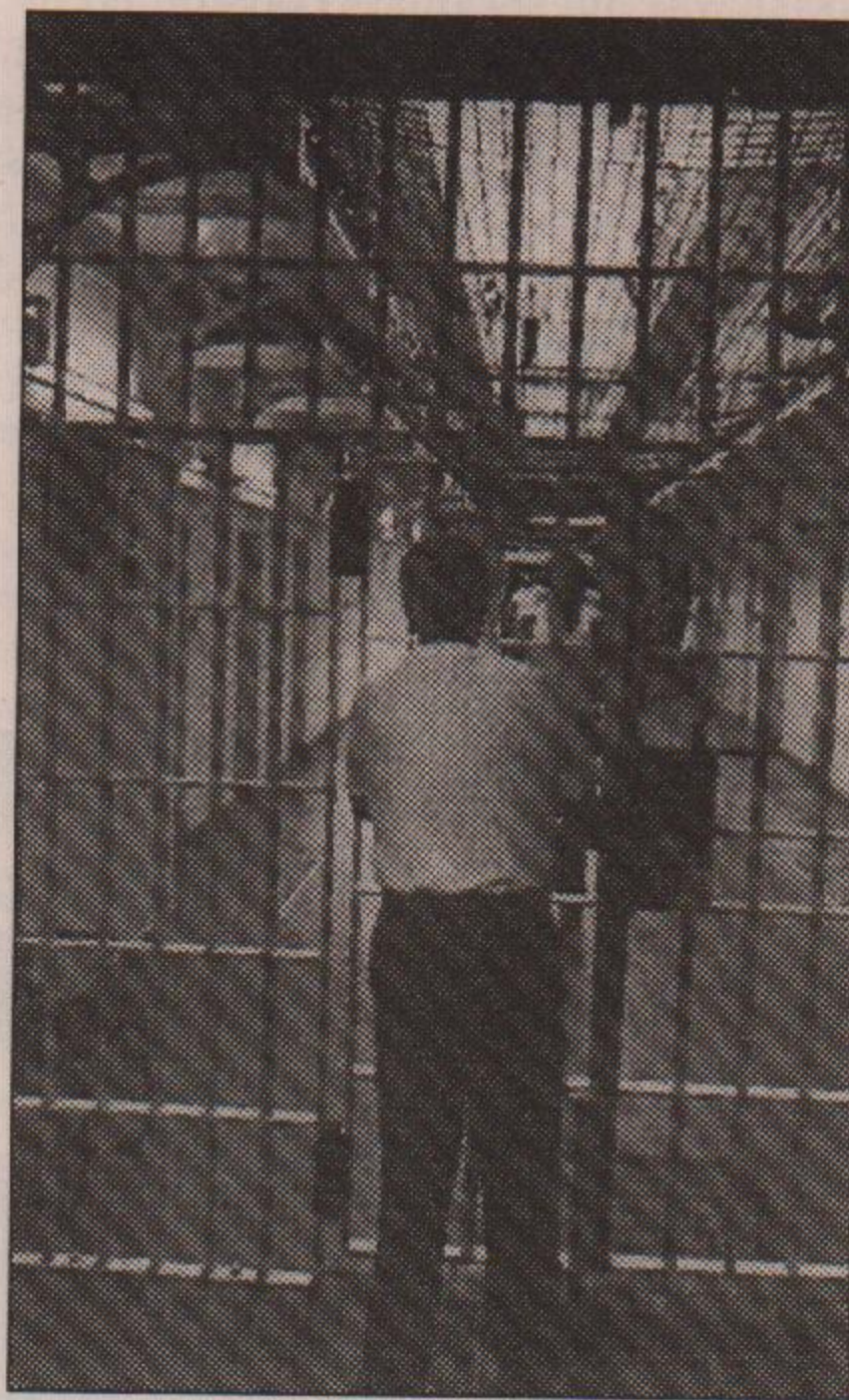
Dr Bob Johnson, Consultant Psychiatrist at Charing Cross Hospital and former head of the Parkhurst Special Unit, testified that Andrew Rodger was suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome, caused by

being informed that his 'tariff' (the minimum number of years a life-sentence prisoner must actually serve) had been increased from 12 to 17 years. And prisoner Ben Dore, a friend and 'father figure' to Andrew, confirmed the traumatic effect of this Home Office decision.

Keith gave evidence in his own defence, speaking principally about how he was stitched up for the murder by the Devon and Cornwall police and a Home Office forensic scientist.

'I told how the Home Office C3 department had started my case in 1992 and was still "investigating"; my letters were being "lost" and legal mail opened. I said this was down to someone in the Home Office trying to shut me up, probably to protect the scientist or to hush up the torture at Guildford police station where I was "questioned".'

'I told how out of the blue I was stopped from fighting my case in May 1994 and could not find out why I could not even get a piece of paper photocopied, let alone a computer,



and how the Prison Service kept lying about the ban...'

Following Keith's evidence, a bizarre coincidence came to light. The prison officer in charge of escorting the defendants to court told Keith he had been at Parkhurst in 1994 when the Home Office rang the prison security office about Keith. Following this call, all Keith's legal papers were confiscated.

This prison officer agreed to go into the witness box and repeat his story. The jury were therefore clearly able to see that Keith Rose was not paranoid but had been genuinely frustrated from pursuing his case. Unfortunately such revelations were too much for the judge:

'He stopped the trial and started two and a half days of legal argument. Our defence was that we had to escape as we would have gone crazy or suicidal or both. This is called duress: duress of circumstances or necessity. The judge ruled our defence out of order and kept saying, "This is a political case, I'm not having politics; no-one is to mention the Home Office or the Home Secretary as it's political". Then there was another long argument about whether Andy and I could address the jury, as withdrawing our defence meant our briefs were not allowed to. We were not allowed to and the jury was sent out.'

The jury returned after an hour and a half with their 'qualified verdict', such a rare occurrence in English law that the full implications are not yet absolutely clear. The judge exercised his 'clemency' by sentencing Keith to three years and Andrew to 30 months imprisonment for the escape, concurrent to the life terms they are already serving. Both men plan to appeal against conviction and sentence. Regarding the second recommendation, Keith and his solicitors are waiting to see exactly how the courts deal with it but are hoping an appeal date will be set in the near future.

During his evidence Keith prophetically told the jury, 'I did not break out of Parkhurst. I broke into court.' This is an incredible victory for all prisoners struggling against wrongful convictions or the iniquitous nature and operation of the life sentence system.

Nicki Jameson

## Perth prison strike

On 10 June 100 long-term prisoners went on strike at Perth over deteriorating visiting conditions. They issued the following strike notice:

'We, the prisoners in A Hall, wish to protest over the deterioration in access to visits since the introduction of a new visits system.

'Despite longstanding complaints regarding insufficient visit places provided to A Hall and the progressive increase in Hall numbers, the situation has been allowed to get worse, creating considerable anger and frustration...

'We are asking the administration to provide at least two additional visit spaces for A Hall, especially at weekends. Considering the under-utilisation of the visit room on an average day here such a concession would hardly result in a serious problem of overcrowding.

'To emphasise our unhappiness about current problems with the visit situation here and to support our request for additional visit places, we have decided to withdraw our labour for one day on Monday 10 June. This strike will be disciplined and peaceful and staged purely as a means of emphasising our discontent with the current visits system.'

The prison's response was the immediate removal of those it saw as ringleaders, to the block or to other gaols. The remaining prisoners responded by staging a second strike on the Wednesday.

William Barbour was moved from Perth to Glenochil. John Bowden, who had been in Perth since his recapture in 1994 after 18 months on the run, was moved first to Shotts and then across the border to Durham prison, the Scottish Prison Service having finally found an excuse to return John to the English system. John is now in the block at Whitemoor and would appreciate letters of support. Write to John Bowden B41173, HMP Whitemoor, March, Cambs, PE15 0PR.

## Eric goes to Strangeways

John Bowden is not the only regular contributor to FRFI's prison pages to find himself unexpectedly a guest of Her Majesty's English prisons. Eric Allison, co-author of *Strangeways 1990: a serious disturbance*, is now unfortunately in HMP Strangeways, following his conviction (despite an absence of evidence) on conspiracy charges. Eric too would welcome readers' letters. Write to: Eric Allison XG3448, HMP Manchester, Southall Street, Manchester, M60 9AH.

## Frankland dirty protest

FRFI also sends solidarity to Strangeways protester Tony Bush, who is on dirty protest in Frankland. He has been in the block for nearly six months, following a stabbing on his wing, despite the prisoner who was attacked telling the governor that Tony was not involved.

The protest was begun in May by Barry Morton, Ray Gilbert, John Noonan and Tony Bush, over a variety of ways in which they were being individually and collectively mistreated.

Barry, John and Ray were successful in their protest and have now been moved to Garth and Long Lartin. Tony, however, remains in the block and on the protest. Barry Morton wrote to FRFI from Garth, telling us that Tony 'has been on the dirty now for six weeks and at the moment is in the strip cell. He has never been allowed out of his cell at any stage...' He describes the demeanour of the staff in the Frankland block: 'They are still beating the lads up bad-style. They are on steroids...and they take the effects out on us.' Ray Gilbert has also written from Long Lartin, saying Tony is 'still on his protest and losing weight terribly'.

Send letters of solidarity to Tony Bush CD0405, HMP Frankland, Brasside, Durham, DH1 5YD and letters of protest about Tony's treatment to the governor, Mr Leonard.

## Deaths in prison January to July 1996

Mark Price, 36, HMP Strangeways, hanged	Kevin Brady, 44, Dartmoor, 'diabetic related' [it is suggested insulin was administered at wrong times or in wrong doses]
Christopher Gear, 27, Belmarsh, brain haemorrhage	Christopher Kingsley, 40, Highdown, hanged
David Driscoll, 56, Whitemoor, heart attack	Danald Nyereyegona, 25, Pentonville, hanged
Shaun Dawes, 33, The Wolds, hanged	Alan Dix, 25, Birmingham, hanged
Alan Scanlon, 24, Wormwood Scrubs, hanged	James Morley, 33, Winchester, hanged
Paul Woolven, 23, Ford, heart attack	Seamus Daly, 32, Wellingborough, pneumonia
Alan Croft, 57, Kirkham, hanged	Mark O'Sullivan, 22, The Mount, hanged
Nicholas Grubb, 27, Hull, hanged	Peter Wood, 19, Feltham, hanged
James Duncan, 62, Acklington, heart attack	Nicholas Mitchell, 20, Dorchester, hanged
Ernest Manger, 69, Winchester, gastrointestinal bleeding	Christopher Mack, 23, Winchester, hanged
Jeremy Coates, 34, The Wolds, possible heart attack	Mark Byrne, 28, Strangeways, hanged
Donald Tuson, 68, Blakenhurst, possible heart attack	John Callaghan, 27, Strangeways, hanged
Darren Jowers, 25, Lindholme, hanged	Carl Smith, 18, Doncaster, hanged
Martin Fenton, 56, Erlestoke, heart attack	Razinder Pall, 46, Parkhurst, stroke
Francis Williams, 59, Risley, heart disease	Raymond Chapman, 19, Glen Parva, hanged
Carl Boothroyd, 23, Liverpool, hanged	Richard Gross, 31, Lincoln, hanged
Ian Williams, 30, Dartmoor, hanged	Dominic Otoo, 19, Hindley, 'collapsed in cell'
Neil Page, 34, Dorchester, hanged	Paul Raczinkiatitis, 43, Wandsworth, 'chest pains'
Neil Fraser, 34, Shrewsbury, hanged	Frank Sharman, 47, Littlehey, 'collapsed in cell'
Walter Cross, 62, Bristol, hanged	Lincoln Snape, 28, Strangeways, hanged
Gavin Wenham, 19, Hatfield, overdose	Colin Needham, 54, Wymott, brain haemorrhage
Kenneth Healey, 69, Garth, possible heart attack	Darren Lake, 19, Portland, hanged
Bernard Copperthwaite, 44, Brixton, hanged	Shaun Keenan, 47, Lancaster, heart attack
Phillip Towns, 51, Bullingdon, hanged	Margaret Gilboy, 33, Drake Hall, overdose
Alan Bailey, 51, Shrewsbury, cardiomyopathy	Dennis Drew, 46, Group 4 escort, hanged
Peter Collins, 41, Wormwood Scrubs, possible heart condition	George Jarrett, 65, Wymott, cancer
David Cherry, 56, Chelmsford, unspecified medical condition	Christopher Lancaster, 27, Holme House, hanged
Dennis O'Brien, 58, Wandsworth, brain tumour	Stephen Whitfield, 36, Durham, hanged
Raymond Haarhoff, 34, Stocken, hanged	Chandwal Naker, 54, Albany, cancer
Robert Lambird, 57, Rochester, cancer	Linus Dale, 48, Wayland, brain tumour
Nigel Perry, 27, Long Lartin, suffocation	Raymond Bishop, 43, Norwich, cancer
John Dorr, 38, Liverpool, hanged	Brett Hay, 31, Lincoln, heart attack
James Collingwood, 48, Full Sutton, hanged	Geoffrey Rentema, 27, Dartmoor, hanged
Frederick Groves, 64, Standford Hill, heart attack	James Fleetwood-Taylor, 22, Liverpool, hanged

Information from:  
INQUEST, Alexandra National House,  
330 Seven Sisters Road, London, N4  
PRISON WATCH,  
24 Rochester Close, Derby.

## The degrading practice of strip-searching

Strip-searching is a reality that prisoners face on a daily basis. Although this degrading practice leaves lasting psychological effects, prison authorities have the power to strip-search prisoners under Rule 39 of the Prison Rules.

Following recent events (ie the Whitemoor escape) the Prison Service has gone further and given officers powers regarding intimate searches. Prisoners are now required to submit to anal searches. This humiliating practice requires the prisoner to strip naked, bend over and part his cheeks for visual examination. Clearly this violates Article Three of the European Convention on Human Rights: 'No-one shall be subjected to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment'.

My own recent experience at Long Lartin demonstrates the level of abuse that prisoners face on a constant basis. On 9 March, after a social visit from two members of my defence campaign, I was taken to the segregation unit and placed in the strong-box, where I was told to strip. Having complied, I was told



to bend forward and spread my cheeks for a visual examination. I refused as I felt it was degrading and an affront to my dignity. I was then physically attacked by several prison officers, thrown to the floor and pinned to the ground while one of the officers forcefully spread my cheeks. All my clothing was removed from the cell and I was left in the strong-box, having to sleep on the floor all night.

I am pressing charges against the officers responsible and challenging the legality of these searches. I would ask any prisoner who has experienced similar treatment to contact my solicitor, who is collating information for a Judicial Review.

My solicitor is: James Wilson, 299-301 Birchfield Road, Birmingham, B20 3BY; 0121 356 4556.

Satpal Ram, HMP Norwich



# We must have socialism!

In 1989, when one by one the East European communist states began to collapse in disorder and to be replaced by 'free enterprise' societies, we were told that communism/socialism had finally failed, and that capitalism was the way forward. This message, eagerly taken up by the popular press, seemed perfectly reasonable to many ordinary people at the time. After all, the old Soviet Union had been associated with totalitarianism, secret police, informers, labour camps etc - all of which seemed a rather telling argument against communism. PROFESSOR THEODORE MACDONALD, a noted educationalist, argues that socialism is now more relevant than ever.

## The collapse of communism

Some readers may have been so young in 1989 that they don't remember how much wild talk the 'collapse of communism' caused. For instance, one fairy tale that quickly grabbed the popular imagination was, now communism was gone, there was no more threat to world peace - the 'baddies' had vanished and only the 'goodies' (especially the mighty US) were left. Therefore, we could cut way down on defence expenditure and pour all the money saved into the education and health services! In fact, freedom from the tyranny of inefficiently-run communism did not turn out to be an unmixed blessing for the people of Eastern Europe. Since it happened, they have had to get used to such capitalist glories as restricted social services, mass unemployment etc.

What has to be realised is that people who tried to establish their societies according to the theories of Karl Marx were not being frivolous. They attempted it in order to solve certain large-scale social problems which had arisen under capitalism. And, moreover, many of these problems were largely overcome in the communist states - problems like unemployment, under-education, lack of access to cultural facilities etc - and have returned to those countries in which communism has 'collapsed'.

Thus, while some of the more fortunate people in Britain still think that the demise of the USSR and its satellites was a good thing, many from the societies concerned no longer think so! One of the most ardent anti-communists I've ever met escaped to West Germany in 1989 and now lives in Koblenz. At first Dieter, a music teacher, revelled in the apparent 'freedom' - the availability of consumer goods on every side, the better quality of cars etc. But by the time he had lived there unemployed for two years or so, his tune began to change. Sure, the cars were better in the West and more people had them, but public transport barely existed. Good facilities for music existed, but they had to be paid for. In the DDR, the rich musical life had been regarded as a legitimate state expense. The East had been characterised by a dullness that almost defeats description and by massively

unimaginative propaganda, but there had been security and a guarantee of healthcare, education and other social services.

Dieter's story can be multiplied millions of times over. A sober assessment of what life is really like for an increasing number of people in the 'free' and 'democratic' West

**'What does socialism mean to me? Equality. Why should there be such a thing as rich and poor? Why should there? Why should the rich get the best education and in many parts of the world the poor not get an education at all, or health care? Why should there be a monarchy - one family ruling people? And what we call democracy isn't really democracy at all. My family has lived in this country for eight years and we can't vote - is that democratic? People call Turkey, for example, a democratic state. I do work experience with Med-TV. Because it supports the Kurdish struggle, the Turkish government is putting pressure on other countries to close it down. Is that democracy? The Turkish state has made the Kurdish language illegal. That's not very democratic. But for a lot of my friends, the idea of socialism isn't very relevant. But I think when bad things start affecting them - like having to pay for health and education - then they'll start looking for alternatives, too.'**

Inan, aged 14

shows that - while communism was far from perfect - it did solve many of the problems created by free enterprise. Surely that means that we need to re-establish it, hopefully without so much of the bureaucratic stuffiness of the previous model. At the same time, it is not hard to see that capitalism requires these self-same problems to maintain itself. The free enterprise system above all depends on the wit and intelligence of more favourably placed people, institutions and societies, taking advantage of the weakness of the less favourably placed. This is the ethic of individual acquisitiveness, of corporate greed and of economic imperialism. Such a social philosophy must, by the sheer logic of it, create and then sustain increasing levels of inequality and conflict.

## Britain in 1976 and in 1996

To see that this is true you just have to look at how Britain has changed in

the last 20 years. In 1976, at least a bit of lip-service was paid to the idea of everyone's right to human dignity and a reasonable network of social services. The idea of trying to run education as a cost-effective enterprise was not seriously considered by government. Likewise, the NHS had its faults, but the concept of a state-run 'socialistic' health service was rarely questioned. There was some unemployment, but you did not see masses of people sleeping rough.

What has happened between then and now? Have we suffered a serious economic collapse? A war, perhaps, or a plague? No, of course not. Indeed, all of the indicators show that

characterised by people watching their backs at work (if they are lucky enough to be employed) and being more ready to do the dirty on someone else to hold onto what little security they have.

## What choices are open to us?

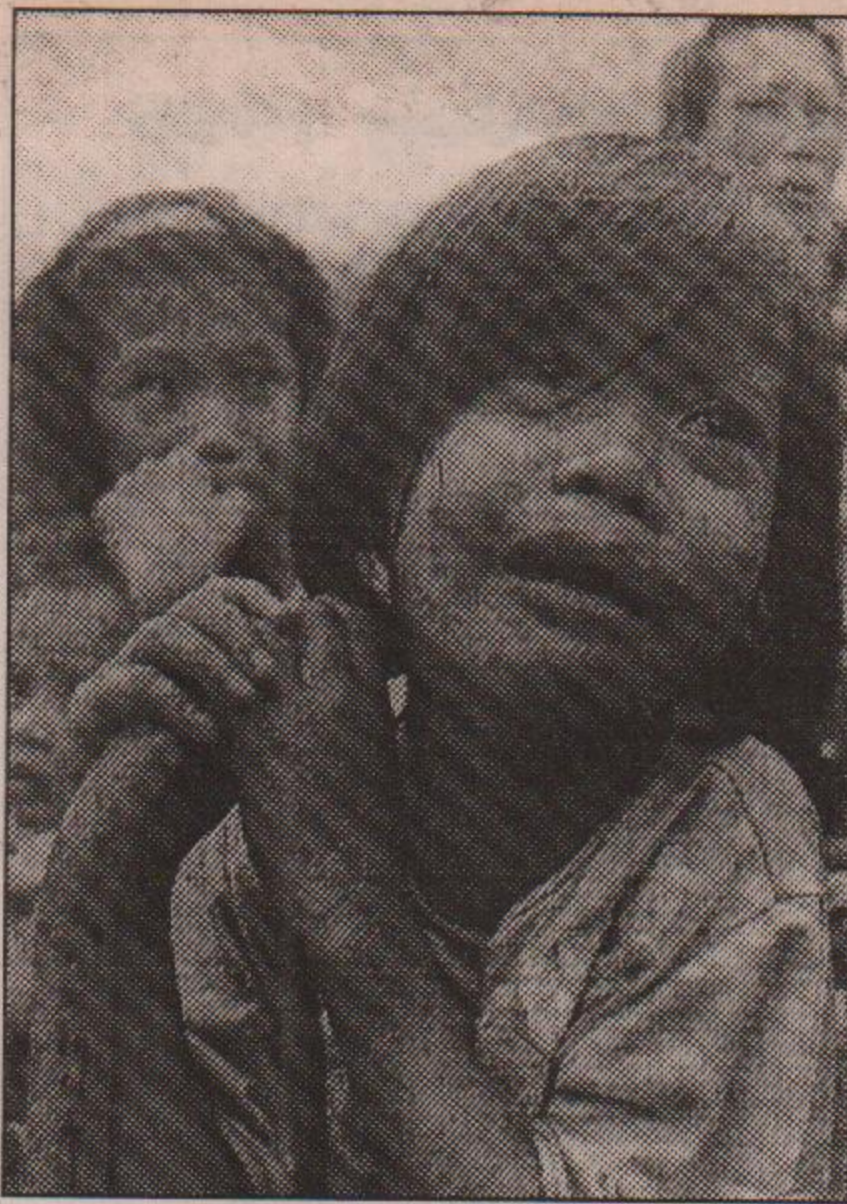
When one considers all of this, it seems quite irrational to simply let the machinery of society run on the basis of the free-market model. But what choices are open to us? The various socialist regimes of Eastern Europe had much wrong with them. But were these defects a necessary part of socialism? Cuba, for instance, was quite different as a communist



Germany: the realities of the free market are biting

Britain, on the whole, is more fortunate economically than it was 20 years ago. Our productivity and efficiency have improved. We can do lots of things now better, faster and more cheaply than we could in 1976 - from setting up hospitals, to building schools and houses. How come, then, more of us are under the

state in the 1970s than were the Soviet Union or East Germany. Is it not stupidly short-sighted to say: 'I know that capitalism must ultimately end in disaster, but socialism has to involve a police state, corruption and serious restrictions on individual liberty'? If socialism in theory, is a better way of enhancing the dignity of



Manila, Philippines: shanty dwellers driven out of their homes to make way for an international summit

man and of saving the world from environmental disaster, then it is surely not beyond our wit to find some way of putting it into practice. Indeed, some societies (like Cuba) have been conspicuously more successful at this than others, and it is perfectly reasonable to propose that the same can - and should - be done in Europe, America and everywhere else.

The sheer idiocy of *not* attempting to construct a socialist society is shown by a simple calculation: in 1989 it was worked out that the cost of providing sufficient food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world would come to about £15 billion a year over what was already being spent. This is a staggering sum of money. Yet defence spending was, in 1989, using up that amount every fortnight, according to journalist Brian Hicks (*Observer* 12 June 1989).

Capitalism throws away enormous

current productive potential. The unused productive capacity of US industry, which to maintain profits often runs at only slightly more than 60 per cent, is equivalent to more than the entire productive capacity of Africa, Latin America and Asia combined. Think of the waste represented by unemployment. And yet it continues because it boosts profits.

What would happen, though, if a large number of people living in a relatively well-off society were convinced, possibly as a result of reading commentary like this, that socialism were the long-term rational choice? Can we demonstrate its capacity to achieve things that capitalism cannot?

## Socialism vs capitalism

Socialism implies a need to mediate the 'greatest good for the greatest number'. Capitalism cannot do so, not only because competition itself makes losers necessary, but because such a social philosophy guarantees inefficiencies.

Capitalists are always denouncing 'government waste', 'dole bludgers' and 'lack of efficiency', yet their system exudes waste from every pore. Capitalism squanders resources, material and human. For example, in 1991, New Zealand bought 200 million kilos of butter at a cost of \$450 million from the United States. Yet New Zealand is one of the world's largest exporters of...butter. Nevertheless, this sum had to be spent for the sole purpose of maintaining high world prices for New Zealand's exports.

Advertising is another example. Perhaps 10 per cent of advertising is informational. The rest serves no useful purpose. Perhaps the worst thing about advertising is that in a society where people are already frightened and frustrated by their inability to control their own lives, a billion-dollar industry is devoted to playing on people's insecurities. Women are bombarded with ads telling them their bodies are dirty, their mouths smell foul, their skin is ugly and their natural shape is repulsive. Human emotions lose all meaning when we're told to buy insurance because the insurance salesman 'cares', or borrow money because the loan company 'is our friend'.

What could be more wasteful than the giant military budgets? Billions of dollars are employed for the production of the means of killing people. Through competition with other states, new technological breakthroughs in mass murder - expensive to produce and not all that labour-intensive either! - become obsolete and have to be either scrapped or sold to some less developed country. All of this to preserve a system which not only wastes resources but wastes people as well.

But who benefits from all of this? Certainly not the people who receive it at the ends of rockets or bombs. Neither do the people in the country in which such weapons are produced benefit directly from it. Stockpiles are a constant source of potentially destructive accidents, make one's country a target for enemy attention and create untold environmental headaches when disposal of unused supplies becomes necessary. Our taxes pay for all of this and, as indicated earlier, the costs are astronomical.

Let us, therefore, not waste time deciding the obvious. We must have socialism. The question we must now answer is 'How?'

Theodore MacDonald worked for many years as a doctor in Cuba. He is the author of *Hippocrates in Havana*, a highly-acclaimed analysis of the Cuban health system, published in 1995. Copies can be obtained from him for £9.95 + £1 p&p at 300 St Margaret's Road, Twickenham TW1 1PT or tel: 0181 891 8224



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## TERRY O'HALLORAN MEMORIAL FUND

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The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund will be holding an exhibition of prisoners' art in October 1996 to raise money for the Fund, which sends books and other publications to prisoners in Britain and Ireland. One work will be selected to go on our 1996 Christmas card. The winning artist will receive books to the value of £100.

- Designs should be in black and white and suitable for reproduction on a medium sized greeting card. Maximum size for artwork A3 (297mm x 420 mm)
- The design need not have a Christmas theme
- Closing date 31 August 1996

To enter, fill in the form below.

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- I shall submit my entry by 31 August 1996
- I would like to be sent an artwork tube for the safe postage of my entry
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# LETTERS

write to FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX

e-mail: rcgfrfi@easynet.co.uk

## Support Sundiata Accoli

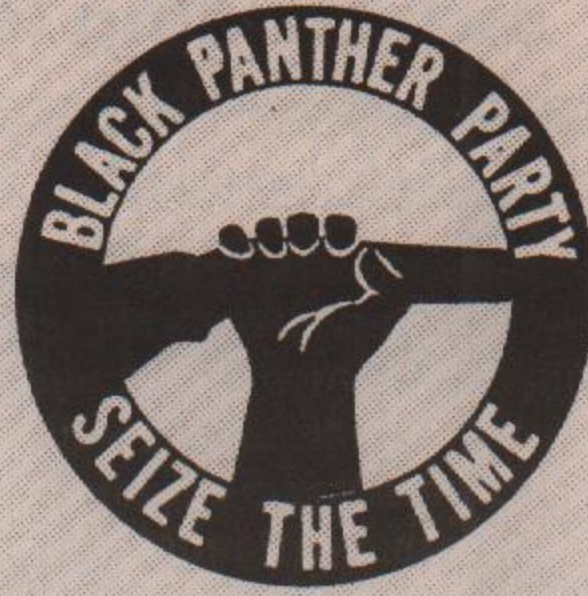
**G**reetings and thank you for the very interesting and inspiring interview with Assata Shakur in the latest issue of FRFI. Great to read more about her life and struggles.

Just thought that I would let you know of the situation of one of the other comrades captured with Assata Shakur in 1973. In that incident in New Jersey, Zayd Shakur (a companion of Assata's) was killed, as was a state trooper. Despite the fact that the trooper was killed by bullets from another state trooper's gun, Assata and Sundiata Accoli were convicted of the murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. As you know, Assata made it to Cuba.

Sundiata Accoli, now aged 59, has spent 22 years in gaol, 13 of these incarcerated in solitary confinement, firstly at the Management Control Unit at Trenton State Prison, and then in 1979 he was moved to the Marion control unit prison. While held at Trenton he contracted TB.

In 1992 he became eligible for parole. At a pre-hearing requested by the New Jersey parole board Sundiata passed with flying colours. Yet the parole board denied parole and gave Sundiata another 20 years to serve. This means that he would have more than ten years before coming up for parole again. Their stated reasons for this were their concern for Sundiata's past membership of the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army and that

'rehabilitation' had not been sufficiently achieved. He had not changed appreciably during his incarceration. In other words he



had not changed his political ideas and attitude to the existing governmental structure of the USA. Sundiata is appealing this outrageous racist decision by the parole board. Readers can help his case by writing and expressing

support for his appeal to the NJ Parole Board, Adult Panel, CN-862, Trenton, NJ 08625, USA and also to Janet Reno, US Attorney General, Main Justice Building, Constitution Avenue, Washington DC 20530, USA.

Letters can and do make a difference as the US authorities fear the exposure of what really happened in New Jersey that day and the treatment of political prisoners such as Sundiata in the USA. Publicity about his case and letters have a positive impact. Let's not forget and let them slowly kill this principled and committed comrade, whose mind and spirit remain unbroken and who continues to struggle for a better world.

Steven Katsineris  
Mittagong, New South Wales, Australia

## Reclaim the streets!



**O**n 13 July I was one of the thousands of people who helped reclaim the M41 in west London. It was a fantastic feeling: after hours of travel to an unknown location,

being part of around 7,000 people who changed an urban motorway from a polluted high-speed danger zone to a vehicle-free, safe place for adults and children to

dance and play in. The police were relegated to redirecting the traffic. What a triumph to have used pneumatic drills, unnoticed by the police, to dig up part of the road and plant trees.

The hot weather and increased car use during the tube strikes makes London's pollution and clogged roads all the more obvious. We cannot go on like this. Progressive people and socialists must support campaigns against the roads industry and fight for better public transport for all. We must support people who take direct action to try and improve the conditions under which we live. The input of socialists is vital. To achieve lasting success, the movement must take a class standpoint on the issues of capitalism and use these opportunities to help build a mass political movement.

MEGAN  
North London

## Unite to fight repressive laws

**T**he Civil Service is a massive institution employing thousands of people. It is both bureaucratic and eccentric. It remained unchanged for many years, guaranteeing for its many employees a job for life with a pension at the end.

But all that is coming to an end as in the last five years the Civil Service has been dragged kicking and screaming to the market place by the Tory government with the splitting up of departments, creation of executive agencies, market testing, private consultants priming areas to be sold off, performance-related pay and devolved pay. The trade unions - FDA, IPMS, PTC and CPSA - have for the most part stood by and allowed this to happen, allowing their membership to plummet rather than campaigning with or for them.

The situation in the DSS is one of despair with 25 per cent cuts forecast for the next three years. Meanwhile, ever more repressive legislation is introduced that we are supposed to implement. Yet the CPSA conference has refused to oppose the Child Support Act on the grounds that it would cost members' jobs and its main concern over the Job Seeker's Allowance appears to be the personal safety of staff rather than a campaign that makes links with those the law most affects - the unemployed. If we are to fight to defend our own rights and oppose, for example, the 25% cuts announced over the next three years, we must make common cause with those bearing the brunt of these attacks - the unemployed, single parents etc. After all, the poll tax was beaten not by those who sent the bills out, but by those who refused to pay it.

PAM ROBINSON  
South London

## POWs' birthdays

Vincent Wood EN1049  
HMP Full Sutton  
York YO4 1PS  
7 August

## No justice in this country

**M**y name is Marianne Keita and I am serving a 16-year sentence for drug offences. I have been in prison two years, and 13 months ago was made a Cat A, being transferred to Durham after my conviction. I am French Senegalese and have no family resident in the UK.

On 8 June 1996 I was informed I could not use the telephone as I cannot speak English, which prevents them from listening to my conversations. All my family speak French and do not understand English. All the other

Cat As here have access to phone except me. They have cut off my communication with everybody. I am forbidden to have contact with certain women's organisations who help prisoners as well as with my solicitor. They have put me under a lot of pressure. I was stopped with 5kg of cocaine, but it is the police who put this pressure on me, treating me as if I am a dangerous lady. However, I am not guilty of the offence. I would be very grateful if you could help me in this matter to overcome this current difficulty.

I know there is no justice in this country as the police can do what they want with your life, which is inhumane. I am in contact with a solicitor regarding this situation but she has been unable to achieve much. I have an appeal lodged against my conviction but legal aid has been refused.

The prison are not willing to pay for an interpreter so that I can have regular telephone contact. I feel so isolated here, cut off from friends and family at such a difficult time in my life.

I would be very grateful for any assistance you can offer me.

MARIANNE KEITA  
H Wing, HMP Durham, Old Elvet,  
Durham DH1 3HU

not even those who oppose Cuba - they had a good time, too! What sort of political event is that?

TOM LOWE  
North London

## Come on the socialist brigade to Cuba!

For information about the Rock around the Blockade December brigade and our work in solidarity with Cuba, see page 6 or contact: Rock around the Blockade, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

## Only here for the beer

**C**ubans love to fiesta, but then they have something to celebrate and have earned it. But what passed for a fiesta in Highbury Fields, Islington on 14 July was the kind of complacent, self-indulgent day out in the park that passes for people's politics in England, particularly London.

I expect people to be angry about the attempt to crush socialism in Cuba, angry about the wrecking of our NHS and

education and ready to argue that Cuban socialism shows there is a better way. But anger and socialism don't go down too well with some people and certainly aren't what the comfortable Blairites of Islington - some of whom came along - want to hear. So the Cuba Solidarity Campaign played safe and did what the English do so well and so often, a vicarage fete, with added beer and dope if you wanted. Nobody could complain,

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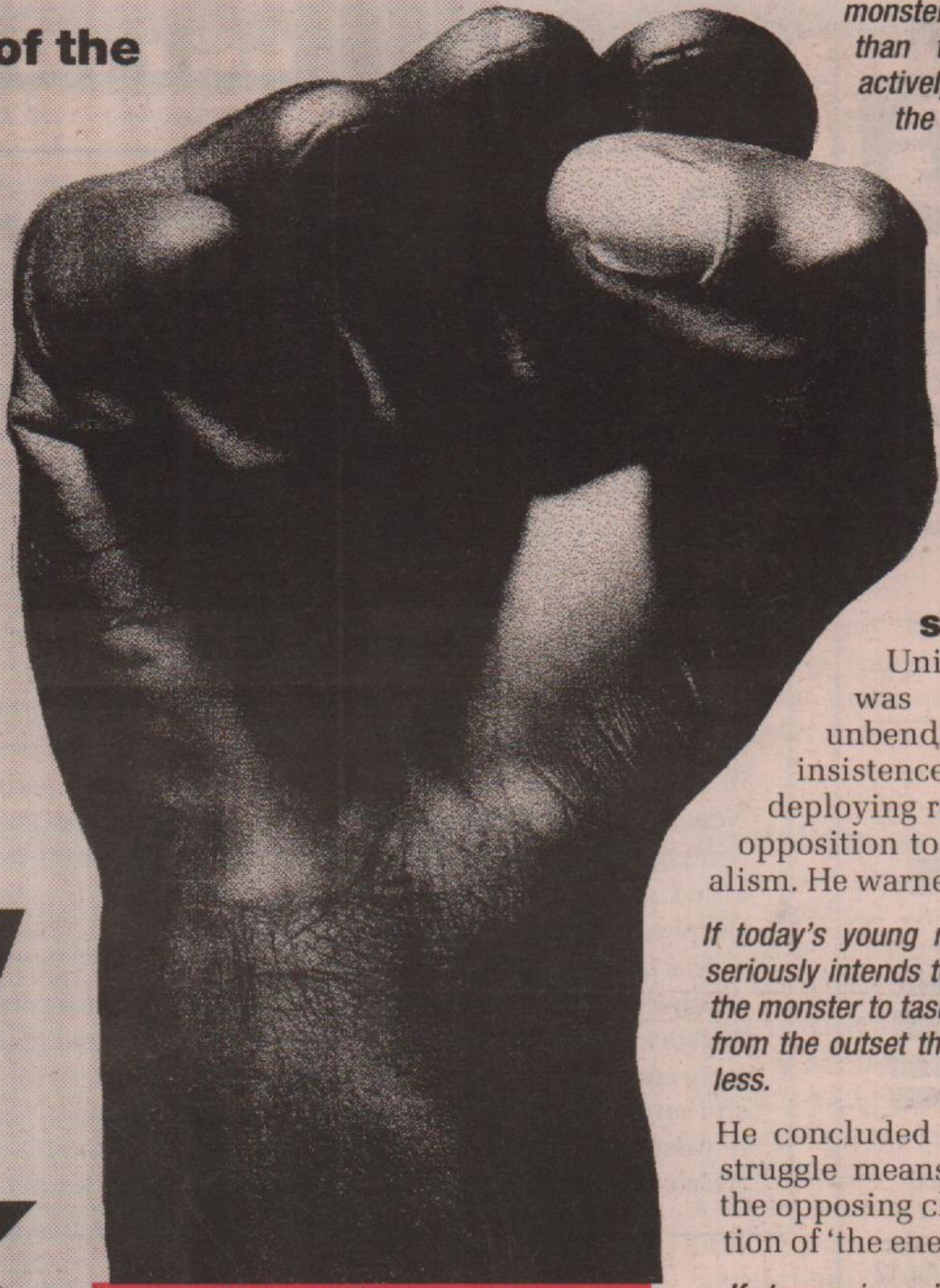
Organised by ABC and Class War. Invited speakers include former Strangeways prison protesters and relatives of serving prisoners.





**This year marks the 25th anniversary of the murder of outstanding black communist George Jackson. To honour his memory we are reprinting an article we published in 1992 by EDDIE ABRAHAMS and CAT WIENER, which highlights George Jackson's outstanding legacy.**

# George Jackson: the legacy of a black communist



**FIGHT RACISM**  
**FIGHT IMPERIALISM**

monster are much more difficult than they would be if we actively aided them. We are on the inside. We are the only ones (besides the very small white minority left) who can get at the monster's heart without subjecting the world to a nuclear fire. (SB p235)

**On force, violence and the armed struggle**

Unifying all his thought was George Jackson's unbending and categorical insistence on the necessity of deploying revolutionary force in opposition to the terror of imperialism. He warned that:

*If today's young revolutionary vanguard... seriously intends to step out front and take the monster to task they should understand from the outset that the monster is merciless.*

He concluded therefore that 'class struggle means the suppression of the opposing class' and the destruction of 'the enemy capitalist state':

*If terror is going to be a choice of weapons, there must be funerals on both sides. (BIME p28)*

Many criticised George Jackson's insistence on the necessity of revolutionary force. Such people have grotesque illusions in capitalism's democratic credentials. Jackson rightly had none.

The history of imperialism has been one of the most bloody and brutal slaughter in defence of capital and profits.

Criticising the pacifism of Martin Luther King (while respecting his sincerity - he was 'too innocent, too cultured, too civil for these times') Jackson noted that:

*Any claims that non-violent, purely non-violent political agitation has served to force back the legions of capitalist expansion are false. (SB p195)*

Applying these principles to the movement of his day, Jackson advocated the systematic organisation of armed struggle in tandem with the political struggle in the USA. He was however no militarist, no glorifier of the armed struggle for its own sake. The armed struggle was a defensive tactic forced on the oppressed. Furthermore the necessary form of revolutionary force is changeable and dependent on circumstances:

*circumstances change in time and space... there can be nothing dogmatic about revolutionary theory. It is to be born out of each popular struggle. Each popular struggle must be analysed to discover new ideas. (BIME p27)*

A new communist movement will itself decide what form revolutionary force must take. But in doing so it will utilise the essence of his message: if the working class fails to meet force with force, bourgeois dictatorship with the 'dictatorship of the people', it has no future. ■



**G**eorge Jackson was an Afro-American working class communist. Born in 1941 he was murdered by warders in San Quentin Prison in 1971. At 18 he was sentenced from one year to life for the theft of \$70. He spent the rest of his life in prison. There 'I met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels, and Mao... and they redeemed me'. In prison he also joined the Black Panther Party.

From prison Jackson witnessed the black risings of the 1960s, the police massacre of the Black Panthers, the US bombing of Vietnam, the silence of the US labour movement and the resistance of the oppressed across the world. Out of this experience and his study of Marxism he produced *Soledad Brother* (SB) and *Blood in my eye* (BIME). Fired by a passionate and poetic imagination, these treasuries of revolutionary thought chart his development on major issues of revolution. For example, from seeing women as inferior and as obstacles to the struggle he learned to recognise their role as 'the very same as the man's... The differences we see in bourgeois society are all conditioned and artificial.'

George Jackson lived and died for the liberation of humanity from imperialism, capitalism and racism:

*Black, brown and white are victims together. At the end of this massive collective struggle, we will uncover our new man... He will be better equipped to wage the real struggle, the permanent struggle after the revolution - the one for new relationships between men. (BIME p105)*

George Jackson understood with greater clarity than most the relentless savagery of imperialism and the absolute necessity of revolutionary force to destroy it. His approach to the question of racism and his recognition of the key role of the black working class places him head and shoulders above those leaders of the black movement who espouse nationalist or separatist programmes.

## Capitalism, black oppression and the black working class

The starting point for George Jackson is that the capitalist system is at the

root of racism, poverty, unemployment and oppression. The impoverishment and oppression of the black working class derives directly from capitalist production:

*It was the profit motive that built the tenement and the city project. Profit and loss prevents repairs and maintenance. Free enterprise brought the monopolistic chain store to the neighbourhood. The concept of private ownership of facilities that people need to exist brought the legions of hip-shooting, brainless pigs down upon our heads, our homes, our streets. They're there to protect the entrepreneurs!!, his chain store and his property that you are renting, his bank! (SB p207)*

Racism and oppression are fundamental characteristics of capitalism. Capitalism cannot meet the people's needs.

*Monopoly capital is the enemy. It crushes the life force of all the people. It must be completely destroyed, as quickly as possible, utterly, totally ruthlessly, relentlessly destroyed. (BIME p102)*

## Imperialism and the US working class

To destroy this 'monster', the US working class cannot rely on the traditional US labour movement. The US ruling class has been able to 'co-opt' and 'neutralise' large sections of the white working class. Imperialism has made 'concessions':

*to the degenerate sections of the working class, with the aim of creating a buffer zone between the ruling class and the still potentially revolutionary segments of the lower classes. (BIME p111)*

The basis for such concessions is the US's racist plunder of oppressed people at home and abroad. US imperialism rests 'on the misery and discomfort of the world' and its wealth, prosperity and 'progressive reforms' are made 'at the expense of the rest of us and the world's peoples'. As a result the 'huge mass of blue collar workers... support a system owned and controlled by a tiny minority'. They are exploited, but they identify with:

*the white hierarchy (because of) their economic advantage over the oppressed races.*

*They may be oppressed themselves, but in return they are allowed to oppress millions of others. (BIME p163)*

Thus imperialism has been able to 'merge the economic, political and labour elites' into 'the greatest (reactionary) community of self-interest that has ever existed'. Many a 'Marxist' has dismissed Jackson's views because he describes this system of alliances as fascist. Whilst the term may not be orthodox, the essence of his analysis cannot be disputed. It has repeatedly been confirmed by the US labour movement's pro-imperialist and racist stand. Further, while bourgeois democracy, not fascism, did exist for the mass of the white working class, for the oppressed internationally the bourgeois order is maintained by direct tyranny and dictatorship, with guns, prisons, murder and war, not democracy.

## The role of the black working class

George Jackson's grasp of the counter-revolutionary role of the official US labour movement marked him off from the 'old left'. US communists, he argued, needed to develop a new strategy which acknowledged the fact that the 'segments of the lower classes' - primarily the black working class - constituted the revolutionary vanguard of the whole working class, not the official labour movement:

*The principal reservoir of revolutionary potential in Amerika lies in wait inside the Black Colony. Its sheer numerical strength, its desperate historical relation to the violence of the productive system, and the fact of its present status in the creation of wealth force the black stratum at the base of the whole class structure into the forefront of any revolutionary scheme. (BIME p25)*

Despite his detractors, he did not dismiss the whole working class or argue that the black working class could make the revolution alone. He merely insisted on its leading role:

*The impact of black revolutionary rage could carry at least the opening stages of a socialist revolution - under certain circumstances - not discounting some of the complexities created by the spectre of racism. (BIME p25)*

Indeed, he argued for the unity of black and white workers on a principled anti-racist, anti-imperialist basis. In his fight for socialism and working class unity he opposed black separatism and nationalism. Commenting on Malcolm X's move away from nationalism he notes:

*You remember what was on his lips when he died. Vietnam and economics, political economy. The professional killers could have murdered him long before they did. They let Malcolm rage on Muslim nationalism for a number of years because they knew it was an empty ideal, but the second he got his feet on the ground, they murdered him. (SB p271)*

He had contempt for black separatists who 'attack the white left...who want to help us destroy fascism'. They used 'the tactic of (attacking) "white left-wing causes" to protect the bosses' "white right-wing causes".' They are 'as much part of the repression, even more than the real-life rat-informer-pig'.

## Imperialism and internationalism

For George Jackson, the struggle for socialism was an international struggle. Among the oppressed worldwide:

*The common bond will be the desire to humble the oppressor, the need to destroy capitalist man and his terrible, ugly machine. (SB p232)*

This internationalism has a material basis. Reminiscent of Marx, Jackson notes:

*It isn't just a matter of trusting the goodwill of other slaves and other colonies and other peoples. It is simply a matter of common need. We need allies. We have a powerful enemy who cannot be defeated without an allied effort. (SB p233)*

Within the international revolutionary movement, the communist vanguard in the US had very special duties:

*The entire colonial world is watching the blacks in the USA... Their problems and struggles with the Amerikan*