

# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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(unwaged 30p) 50p

## EXCLUDED!



Old? Sick?  
Homeless?  
Unemployed?  
Low-paid?  
Single parent?  
Child? Student?  
Black?  
Asylum seeker?  
If you are  
working class,  
you are under attack

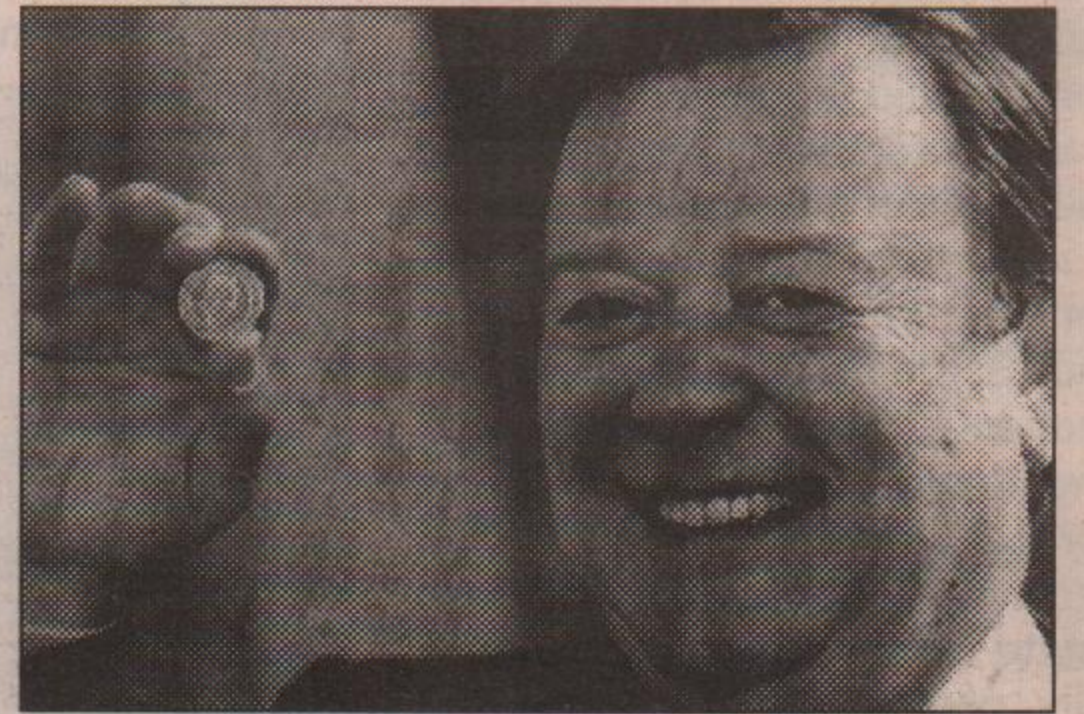
The Budget: in order to reduce taxes for the middle class and ruling class, the Tories have launched a wholesale attack on the working class. New Labour toes the line on middle class greed and self-interest. Ditch them!

## FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS

### Inside:

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**EDITORIAL** - The Budget: hammering the poor for middle class votes p2



**ENVIRONMENT** - Justice? Direct Action Conference p3

**CUBA VIVE** p4-5  
Interview with UJC student  
Do Cuban women need feminism?  
Rock around the Blockade



**ZAIRE** - Imperialism's bloodstained arena p6

**SLEAZE** - Parliamentary business as usual p7

**EDUCATION** - Schools, morality and communities: interview with Chris Searle p8/9

**RACISM** - The roots of racism p10

**ZIONISM** - Israel: its role in the Middle East p11



**DRUGS** - Land of flowing poison II p12

**NEW LABOUR** - New moral tyranny p16



# The Budget Hammering the poor for middle class votes

In the days following the budget we were treated to the spectacle of Labour and Tory politicians arguing whether the government had or had not managed to increase the incomes of 'middle class' voters since 1992. With a General Election at most six months away, politics has got down to real business – a cynical public auction for the favours of the better-paid workers and middle class voters who determine the outcome of elections.

All talk of a 'prudent' budget, of playing neither Santa Claus nor Scrooge, was simply a dishonest attempt to conceal what was really happening. Given the precarious state of the British economy and the need to slash state borrowing to less than 3 per cent of GDP to meet the Maastricht criteria, any further tax cuts for the middle classes would only be achieved by hammering the working class. And that is what this budget did.

To finance tax cuts the Chancellor had to cut his previous plans for state spending by £1.7bn. Widespread concern about the deteriorating state of the health service and education provision made it difficult to cut these budgets openly, but he cut them nevertheless. The 3 per cent increase in current health spending disguises the fact that, once capital spending is taken into account, the budget will be frozen in real terms (after inflation) for the next two years and then will suffer a slight fall. The government is cutting capital spending by 16 per cent. After allowing for income from land sales, and the ever delayed investment through the so-called Private Finance Initiative, there will still be a 9.6 per cent cut in cash for hospital building and equipment. Prescription charges will rise 15p to £5.65 – 22 times the amount (25p) they were in 1979 – imposing ever greater hardship on the low-paid and sick.

£633m of the £830m increase in the schools' education budget will have to be channelled through local authorities. This allocation is a cut of £121m on last year and well below the £785m the local authorities need just to stand still. There is no pledge to fund in full any teachers' pay settlement. The government has cut plans to train 17,000 extra teachers, on the grounds that its measures to discourage the early retirement of teachers will cover the loss. Local authorities are already being squeezed with a totally inadequate increase of £1.1bn in their overall funding, to £45.66bn. More than double this increase is needed to avoid further cuts in services. So education provision for working class children will continue to deteriorate.

Vicious cuts in the housing budget of nearly £500m are planned. The Housing Corporation will have its funding cut by an extra £247m and local authorities' repair and maintenance budgets will be cut by £250m – the fifth successive

cut. The number of homes built each year will be cut in half removing any real possibility of homes for homeless people, and millions of council tenants will continue to endure deteriorating and unhealthy living conditions.

Nothing, however, shows more clearly the government's contempt for working class people driven into poverty as a

you earned the more you gained. The average gain was £1.64 a week but it wasn't evenly distributed. The richest 40 per cent gained more than average, from £2.16 a week to £5.64. The middle 30 per cent gained a little, but below the average amount. And the poorest 30 per cent actually lost money, the poorest 10 per cent losing the most (48p a week).



The 'virtuous' Chancellor – widening the gap between rich and poor

result of their economic policies than the cuts in the social security budget. In an undisguised attack on working class people, the benefits of single people, one parent families and other tenants in rented accommodation will be cut. All single people who live alone will now only be allowed housing benefit equivalent to the average rent of a room in a shared house – this was introduced for under-25s last year. This will affect 250,000 people at present and save £100m. It will force thousands of single people to make a choice between being driven out of their present homes or facing even deeper poverty. All working class people are under threat as economic conditions deteriorate. Tenants in private accommodation will also be hit with housing benefit being limited to the average local rent for a 'suitable' size home. This will save £25m and hit 125,000 people. Restrictions in council tax benefit to the level of a band E home will save £15m and affect 65,000 claimants. Lilley tells us that he has taken these measures to encourage people to take 'cost into account' in deciding where to live. In a country where millions are low-paid, but executives can make £27m overnight as a result of takeovers and mergers in the electricity industry, this is an obscenity.

After April 1998, the one parent family benefit of £6.30 and the £5.20 paid to single parents on income support, frozen last year, will now be withdrawn – an attack on working class women with children under the guise of treating all parents equally.

As was the case in the previous year, all the changes in taxation were designed with the interests of middle class voters in mind. In every case the more

This reinforced the trends present since 1979, widening the gap between rich and poor even further. Recent figures show that between 1979 and 1994/5 average real income rose 40 per cent, but the more you earned the more you gained. The poorest tenth lost 13 per cent while the richest tenth gained 65 per cent, with only the top 30 per cent gaining the average increase or above. 13.7 million people now live in poverty – below half the average income – including 4.2 million children. 31 per cent of children now live in households where nobody is in full-time employment. In 1979 it was 18 per cent. These are the appalling conditions which the budget can only make worse.

Government statistics, as we pointed out after the budget last year, are unrealistic. A pre-election mini-boom driven by consumer expenditure is likely before the brakes are put on. Interest rates will then rise and with them the level of the pound, already up by 10 per cent since August. Exports will falter and growth will slow down. Capital investment as a percentage of national income, already at low levels of GDP not experienced since the 1950s and still some 5.5 per cent below that achieved at the peak of the previous business cycle, will fall. As unemployment increases and thousands more become reliant on benefits, the real import of this savage budget will be driven home. To hold back the growth of state borrowing, in order to meet the Maastricht criteria, either taxes must rise and middle class living standards fall, or else whole areas of state expenditure will have to be cut. The choice is clear. Whatever government is elected in six months' time, the attacks on the working class will intensify.

## Crisis for health care in east London

HANNAH CALLER

East London and City Health Authority (ELCHA) faces a deficit of £18.5 million by 1997. It must find savings equal to about five per cent of its budget. ELCHA's planned cuts include £215,000 from its grant to an AIDS hospice. It also plans to save:

- £1 million by reducing 'inappropriate' hospital admissions and time spent in hospital;
- £280,000 on complementary therapy and plastic surgery;
- £2.7 million by ending one-off grants to various bodies;
- £1.5 million by allowing waiting lists to get longer.

A feasibility study is underway to decide which of Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children (QEHC), Mile End Hospital and the London Chest Hospital should close. These, along with Royal London and St Bartholomew's (Barts), form the Royal Hospital Trust. ELCHA has suggested that the Trust receive £5-6 million less next year, and wants to speed up closures.

The initial decision to close QEHC was made two years ago. Children's services were to move to a new hospital on the site of the Royal London, a £300 million private-finance initiative, estimated to be finished in



six years if it goes ahead.

Meanwhile the closure of QEHC is expected in the next 18 months. The children's services will have nowhere to go. They will be split between the Royal London and Barts, neither of which has enough beds, whilst Barts has no A&E department.

Gerry Green, Chief executive of the Royal Hospital Trust, said that if the measures taken so far will not balance the books, 'we need to treat fewer patients'.

While it is illegal for a Trust not to balance its books, it appears that the government and its well-paid managerial lackeys can legally close hospitals and cut services.

The Association of Community Health Councils recently brought out a report 'How reformed is the NHS?'. It found

that fundholding GPs' patients are prioritised over those of non-fundholders in one out of five Health Authority districts. Nor will a Labour government alter this situation. Labour has stated that it will not abolish fundholding. So money will continue to be directed to the more affluent.

Hackney and Tower Hamlets are two of Britain's poorest boroughs and most in need of decent healthcare. However the process underway is not unique and similar scenarios are being enacted all over Britain.

The government has just published a White Paper on the future of the NHS. It states a commitment to: universal population coverage, high quality care, and availability on the basis of clinical need. In view of what is happening this is a sick joke. ■

## It's good to talk



On 19 July 1992 I and a number of other members of the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group ran on the pitch at Lords cricket ground, protesting against the presence of an all-white visiting cricket team from South Africa.

We were arrested and taken to Paddington Green Police Station where, after an hour in a cell, I was allowed to telephone my solicitor. I insisted that I do so in private, but was told there were no facilities to make a call in private, despite a statutory right to do so. Paddington Green is the high security London police station used to detain people discovered in possession of an Irish accent or with a Middle Eastern appearance. I made a complaint

at the time and in July 1993 the Police Complaints Authority wrote a letter in which they admitted:

'...Paddington Green Police Station does not have adequate facilities to allow persons detained this basic legal right... this is a case in a number of the capital's police stations and it is a problem that should be addressed centrally by the Metropolitan Police Service.'

Round One to the people! In September DS Andrews, acting under the direction of the Met Commissioner, wrote to my solicitor stating: 'Suitable steps have been taken by the Chief Superintendent at Paddington Green Police Station to allow persons detained privacy when participating in telephone conversations.'

Round Two to the people. I then launched proceedings against the Metropolitan Police for breach of statutory duty. The cops agreed to settle out of court. I was offered £200 and an apology. Round Three to the people of this country and of Cuba as I have given £100 to Rock around the Blockade and £100 to the RCG. In November the Metropolitan Police wrote to say that Paddington Green's refurbishment will include a room where prisoners can consult in private with their solicitors. The Home Office has issued a design guide which includes a reference to facilities for making private telephone calls.

Richard Roques

## Pensioners' notes

RENE WALLER

Despite the onset of winter and the difficulties that brings, I am sure most groups, like my own, are coping and indeed the numbers attending our meetings are continually increasing. Our November lobby of Parliament was certainly well-attended.

It's most important that would-

be MPs realise that our support is not automatic. OK, maybe most would not forget the need to defeat the Tories, but some positive feeling is also needed to turn vocal support into positive action in the form of votes. For my part, I see little point in electing people who have given no assurances they will support our declared policy. We need to stimulate enthusiastic support

from all pensioners and, indeed, all working people. We need, too, to look at the future. We may destroy our own movement if we elect those who will betray our interests. That is what leads desperate folk to turn to fascist deceivers, so let's beware.

However, let's not despair, either – just make it very clear we expect firm promises from anyone seeking our support and we can win. It is still true that we are many and they are few. We need, above all, confidence.





'The world isn't dying. It's being killed, and the people who are killing it have names and addresses.'

**A**is for Aid: A recent survey by the European Network on Debt and Development showed that Britain has been a net recipient of cash from the Third World since 1981. Of the OECD nations, only the US has a longer record of taking more money than it gives out. In 1994 alone, the net transfer of debt from Third World countries was over US\$450 million. Meanwhile, 800 million people in the world are seriously malnourished or starving. **Say thanks to British American Tobacco (BAT).** Last year BAT's chairman, Lord 'smoking gives pleasure and is not addictive' Cairns, became chairman of the Commonwealth Development Corporation, a quango in charge of the distribution of £1.5 billion of investment to poor countries. He is also chairman of the Overseas Development Institute and Voluntary Service Overseas - the latter receiving a £9,000 BAT donation every year. Another recipient of BAT's cancer money is Sir James Lester MP, chair of the House of Commons All-Party Group on Overseas Development. Lester gets a £10,000 pa consultancy for his part in keeping the world pleasant and not addicted (and increasing BAT's super-profits by 18% last year.) BAT's 1995 turnover was \$8,503.7m. Its market value is \$25,460.7m.

**B**is for Bougainville. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) are fighting the Papua New Guinea state (PNG) in defence of their beautiful but poisoned land. The resulting PNG blockade has denied medical supplies to the entire island, adding misery to the longest and most destructive war in the South Pacific since World War II. There are now over 40,000 islanders in 'care centres' (concentration camps) in PNG-occupied areas. 10,000 were killed in July alone.

**Say thanks to Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ),** whose Australian subsidiary CRA opened one of the largest open-cast copper mines in the world at Panguna, central Bougainville, in 1966. Islanders were forced from their land, their homes destroyed and their water polluted. After 20 years, the mine has grown to a crater nearly 1/2km deep and nearly 7km in circumference, creating over a billion tonnes of waste. Between 1972 and 1989 CRA dug US\$6bn total revenue from this pit, before being forced to stop by the direct action of the local resistance movement. An alleged \$32m in 'Aussie military backhanders' has been spent against the BRA guerrillas, who are still fighting. [Source: *Do or die*, published by EarthFirst!] RTZ's market value is \$15,435.3m.

**C**is for Colombia. Arguably the most dangerous country to live in today, over 52% of cases of political violence are attributed to the army and police, and 20% to their paramilitaries. Local environmental campaigners have been abducted and murdered and trade union members have been assassinated or forced into exile, while the land and water are polluted and half the population goes hungry.

**Say thanks to British Petroleum (BP).** The world's largest offshore field was discovered in Colombia five years ago. BP have been working overtime ever since to grab what they can. This year they signed an agreement to provide an additional £39m to the Colombian military, handing over photographs and video recordings of environmentalists, trade unionists and peasant activists. Makes you feel proud, doesn't it? BP's market value is \$41,109.2m.

Steve Byrne

## Irish working class organises against drug dealers

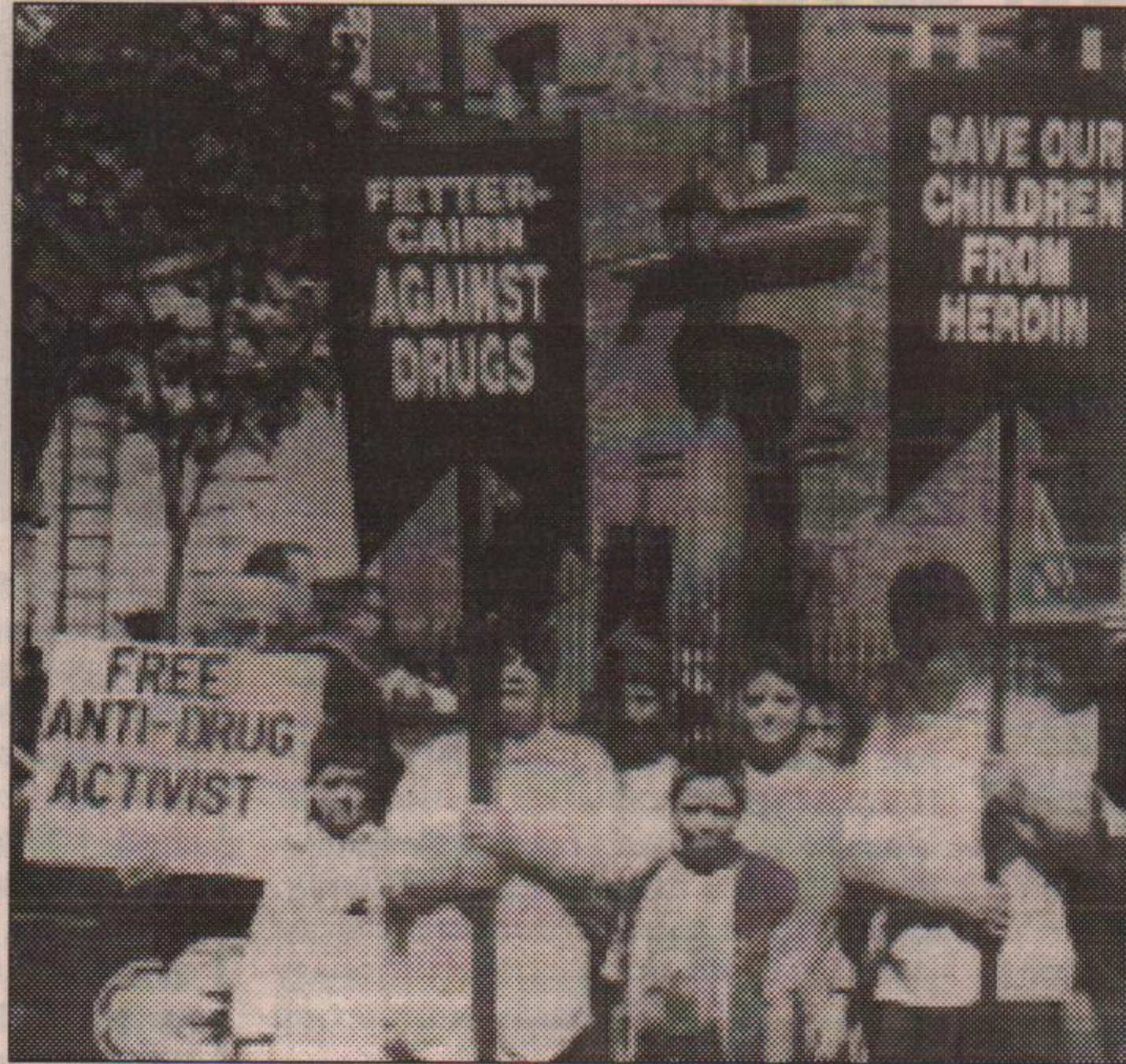
SARAH BOND

The nationalist working class in the northern Six Counties of Ireland faces discrimination, poverty, harassment from the RUC and British army. It is also facing a new threat: the spread of hard drugs, particularly heroin. The Six Counties has until recently remained relatively drug-free. But according to the *Observer*, 'In the wake of the paramilitary ceasefire, drug dealers, drug dens and drug wars are cropping up all over Northern Ireland.' One estate in Downpatrick is known as 'the Bronx'. Local people complain that the RUC does nothing about pushers.

The development of a drug culture in nationalist areas would suit the British ruling class: a pacified youth, unable to see beyond its next fix; plenty of opportunity for recruiting informers and the growth of a criminal elite that would undermine the Republican movement in working class areas.

For this reason, and in the absence of any action by the RUC, the IRA has always acted against drug dealers. In 1992, on one night, it killed one drug dealer and kneecapped another ten. In 1994, it had to act again, killing one dealer and injuring another 16. That the problem is now increasing is illustrated by the increase in punishments meted out to dealers: in the 14 months after the ceasefire there were 159 beatings attributed to the IRA. Since the ceasefire, an organisation called 'Direct Action against Drugs' has claimed responsibility for beatings. It is widely believed to be connected to the IRA.

Republican activists are also



Working class communities organise against drugs in the South

trying to encourage the kind of response that has been seen on Dublin estates. Heroin arrived there in the early 1980s and now has a firm grip. But working class communities, especially the women, have fought back against the pushers who profit from it. Known dealers' homes are picketed, forcing the dealers to give up their activities or get out, and night patrols keep estates safe for residents. Hundreds attend events to rally opposition to drugs. At the same time, the groups are organising projects to help addicts. In one area, 40 addicts have signed up for treatment.

Increasingly the campaigners are having to organise to defend themselves against attacks by the Gardaí. The state cannot tolerate working class organisation, especially among the poorest sections whom drugs are

meant to pacify. So while the Gardaí has announced a new operation against drug dealers, in practice it has focused on anti-drugs activists. Arrests of campaigners have become commonplace, but local people have promptly responded by marching on the Garda station demanding their release. At the end of August, the petrol-bombing of a drug dealer's car was used by the Gardaí as a pretext for an attack on local residents, leaving a pregnant woman in hospital. More recently, three campaigners, including a Sinn Féin member, were gaoled pending trial for GBH charges. All three deny the charges. Two of the three have since been granted bail, but on the condition that they do not participate in any local night patrols.

Meanwhile, smears and lies have been spread in the media,

accusing the groups of being 'vigilantes'. The combination of press lies and Garda harassment was used against 'Concerned Parents against Drugs', a campaign set up by Republicans in the early 1980s. Eventually, these tactics destroyed it and the pushers remained.

Drug dealers in the South are now a major force. They were responsible for the widely publicised assassination of journalist Veronica Guerin after she exposed their activities. Their wealth buys respectability. The man widely believed to be responsible for Guerin's murder runs an equestrian centre patronised by Ireland's elite; his wife rides with the local hunt. When the IRA killed dealer Michael 'Moneybags' Mooney, 118 death notices appeared in the *Irish News*.

The drugs profiteers would love to gain access to new markets on estates in the North. At present the IRA stands in their way. Socialists in Britain must defend the right of the working class to deal with the menace of drug-dealers in whatever way it sees fit. And they should also take the lessons of Dublin's anti-drugs campaigns to working class areas in Britain plagued by drugs too. ■

## No to extradition of McAliskey's daughter

The German state is seeking the extradition of Roisin McAliskey, daughter of veteran Republican Bernadette McAliskey. They claim she was involved in the bombing of a British army base at Osnabrück, Germany, in February. The IRA claimed responsibility for the attack.

Bernadette McAliskey earned the undying hatred of the British political establishment when, having been elected as MP for Mid-Ulster at the age of 22, she punched Labour's Home Secretary Reginald Maudling in the House of Commons. She has remained a staunch opponent of British rule in Ireland. Roisin, who is pregnant, declares her innocence.

confronting the direct action movement. Debate and discussion between the varying trends within the movement is vital. So for one small group to insist that this diverse movement unite around their publication is, at present, to weaken rather than strengthen the movement. That, however, seemed to be the demand of the distributors of the new *Reclaim the Future* (RTF) newspaper. In effect, they are calling for other publications such as the highly-successful weekly *SchNEWS* to simply liquidate themselves. RTF may turn out to be a useful organising tool, but activists should be aware that, despite its 'independent' appearance, it was in part initiated by the Trotskyist organisation which produced *Workers' Press*: a paper which, in stark contrast to the principled stand of Justice? and others in the movement, has always called on its readers to vote Labour.

A new movement is in the making. The more we grow and the more effective we become, the harder the state will try to crush and divide us. They have barely started, but neither have we. Only together can we resist and win. United we stand and united we were at the Justice? Direct Action Conference. ■

## Justice? Direct Action Conference

HELEN

Inside the newly squatted building, colourful silhouettes huddled round candles on the cold floorboards. The queue for the veggie café moved slowly and loud applause came from the crowd-warmed meeting room. The Justice? Direct Action Conference II was drawing to a close with the grey winter afternoon. Outside, a token police presence paced around in frostbitten frustration.

A four-day battle for the originally squatted venue meant a late start. It was after midday and an excellent introduction by Colin from Justice? when the police arrived at the new location, but 350 uncompromising conference participants were already installed inside; the conference was going ahead.

Wide-ranging workshops encouraged lively discussion. Experience of police sabotage was shared, advice offered and lessons drawn. Two RCG members were among those introducing workshops: Nicki

Jameson on the repressive British prison system and Trevor Rayne on 'Imperialism and the Third World debt'. The discussion on imperialism turned into a heated debate on how a privileged section of the working class in imperialist nations is able to live in relative comfort off the backs of the people of oppressed nations. The debate continued long after the workshop was due to finish.

The diversity of the workshops illustrates how connected many 'single issue campaigns' really are: police brutality, state racism, destruction of the ecosystem, multinational exploitation of the Third World, weapon sales to oppressive regimes, the farce of party politics and the inertia of fluffy campaigning tactics are all intrinsically linked. Eco-warrior, animal rights protester, communist or anarchist, we have the same enemy: the capitalist system.

'You cannot seriously campaign to defend the existence of our planet's ecology without challenging multinational capitalism and its never-ending hunger for profits - a hunger

that has brought us to the brink of ecological collapse.' (*SchNEWS* 100)

It was clear that everyone at the conference had already reached the conclusion that direct action, not negotiation or compromise, is the only way forward against a rich that keeps getting richer and increasing its interest in preserving a status quo in which one per cent of the world's population controls 60 per cent of its resources, while 80 per cent scabble over just 15 per cent.

There is also an essential link between protecting the Earth and defending human rights. The capitalists rape, destroy and exploit for profit, regardless of its source. Our resistance must be as widespread and well organised as their repression. There was much talk of the Liverpool dockers at the conference; the kind of coming together of working class struggles such as theirs with an environmental movement like Reclaim the Streets, which took place at the end of September, can only strengthen both. There are important political issues

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



# CUBA VIVE!

## Unequal Britain

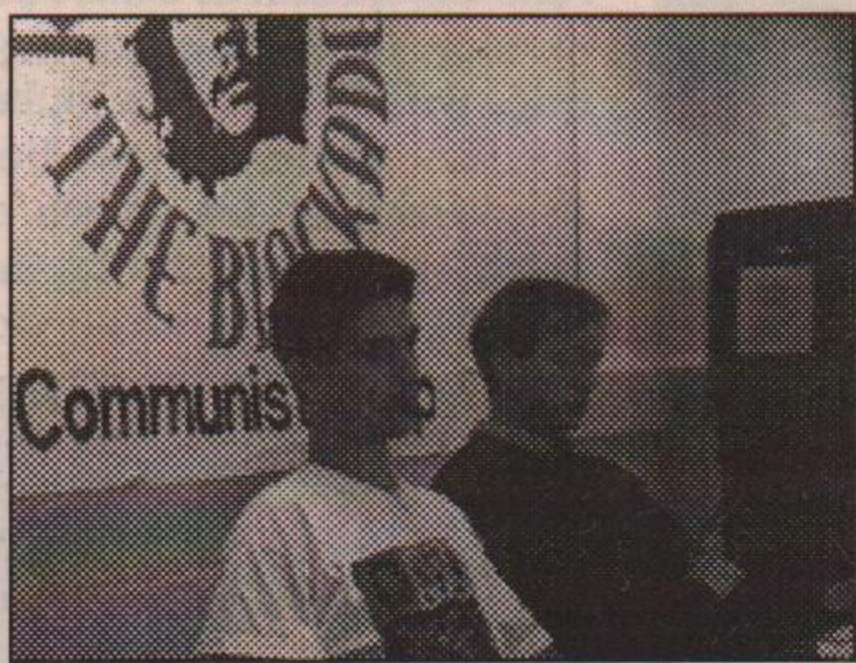
a Cuban student leader speaks

**Alejandro Cuza, a representative of the Cuban student movement and member of the Union of Young Communists (UJC), was invited to Britain by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign in October 1996 and addressed meetings all over the country. Here he speaks to FRFI.**

**FRFI:** This is your first visit to a capitalist country. What are your impressions?

**AC:** In Cuba, they tell you about capitalist society and its great gap between rich and poor, but it's not the same as seeing it with my own eyes. There are very rich people who have everything and very poor people who have nothing. If you don't have money here, the shops may be full of things, but you cannot get anything. On the London underground, I saw a woman sitting on the ground with her baby asking for money to feed her baby. I was shocked, because in my country you don't have homeless, hungry people on the streets. I hear university students here will soon have to pay hundreds of pounds [top-up fees] just to get to university. Already, many people in Britain cannot afford to go to university or have to take part-time jobs. One of the first things I am going to do back in Cuba is tell my classmates what capitalism is like. That even in a developed country, if you are an old person you may die because you can't pay the heating. If you live in a block and you are sick, no one goes to see how you are. Instead of keeping schools open, your government is building roads! You have plenty of roads already!

People say there is no democracy in my country because we have only one party. But that party cannot put forward parliamentary candidates. You don't have to be a member of the Communist Party to be a member of parliament. If you are elected, you are paid only about 60 pesos. If you are a



Alejandro Cuza speaking at a Rock Around the Blockade meeting in Preston

doctor and are elected to represent a hospital, then you keep on working in that hospital. That's how you know what the interests of the people there are. But here, if you are elected as an MP then you just become a politician and get well-paid. You are not linked to the people any more. Where's the democracy in that?

**FRFI:** How do you think solidarity with Cuba should be built in this country?

**AC:** The Cuba Solidarity Campaign is doing a great job, as are other groups like the Revolutionary Communist Group. Your pamphlet on Cuba is very, very good.\* Many groups in this country help Cuba a lot materially and morally. When we hear that people in Britain, in a cold, far-off country, are helping Cuba, it makes us feel even more convinced about our ideas and principles. It gives us great encouragement, as do brigades which go to Cuba to mix with the real people. The moral support they give is absolutely brilliant.

**FRFI:** What are the UJC's political priorities at the moment?

**AC:** We mobilise hundreds of thousands of students and young people into the sugar and coffee harvests and other agricultural work. Our ideological battle right now is to preserve the gains of the Revolution, and the UJC does a great job on that – always talking to the people, discussing with them what we should be doing. In Santiago, where I'm based, we have campaigns, involving everybody, against the Helms-Burton law or demonstrations in Revolutionary Square with billboards supporting the Revolution.

**FRFI:** Rock around the Blockade took a disco to Cuba last Christmas. This year a brigade is taking over a mobile disco for Cuban youth. Can you give a message to these brigadistas?

**AC:** They are doing a great job because the young people of Cuba love discos. We don't go to pubs like you do here. Young people like to dance and to listen to music even though sometimes they don't have any drink! And the UJC recognises that young people in our country work very hard, and recreational facilities are very limited. So this is a wonderful opportunity you are giving the young people in Cuba for recreation. So my message is to keep up the good work.

\*Cuba Vive! Defend Socialism!, an eyewitness account by last year's Nuestro Tiempo brigade to Cuba is available from Rock around the Blockade for £1.95+30p&p.

### End the blockade!

On 12 November, the UN General Assembly with the support, for the first time, of the entire European Union supported a resolution calling for an end to the US trade embargo of Cuba by 137 to three, with 25 abstentions. Only Israel and Uzbekistan – both entirely dependent on US aid – voted with the United States. Britain for the first time supported the resolution, a sign of the strength of its opposition to the Helms-Burton Act. But Sir Leon Brittan, the EU's trade commissioner, at the same time endorsed US proposals for international cooperation to speed 'political reforms' in Cuba, saying 'Our determination to bring freedom and democracy to Cuba is every bit as strong as the US's.'

At the end of November, the EU rejected calls from the new right-wing Spanish government to tie humanitarian aid to Cuba to 'democratic reform' but agreed to step up pressure on Cuba to 'improve human rights'. Cuba's response to the hostile stance taken by the new Spanish government has been to refuse to accept the new Spanish ambassador, Jose Coderch.

In a recent newspaper interview, Coderch openly stated he intended to assist Cuban dissidents. Cuba accuses Spain of transforming itself 'into a spearhead for US interests within the EU.'

Cat Wiener

### Cuba's economic growth cannot be blocked

'The hurricane has occurred...at a moment when the US blockade has been stepped up with the Helms-Burton Act. The damage done by the hurricane makes Helms-Burton even more criminal and the law makes it even more difficult for us to meet the needs arising from the damage. But despite all that, our goal of ending the year with 5 per cent growth will be surpassed and that growth will continue in 1997. Cuba's economic growth cannot be blocked by anything, not by Lili, Helms or Burton.' Carlos Lage, secretary of the Cuban Council of Ministers

### The Pope: ally of the Cuban people?

Following his recent visit to the Vatican, President Castro has invited Pope John Paul II to visit Cuba in 1997. The Vatican is opposed to the United States' blockade of Cuba, and during a recent meeting angered Miami counter-revolutionaries by refusing to be drawn into criticism of Cuba's so-called human rights abuses. However, it is clear Cuba has had to make some concessions, such as allowing a number of Catholic missionaries into Cuba, and the Pope himself – an outspoken reactionary

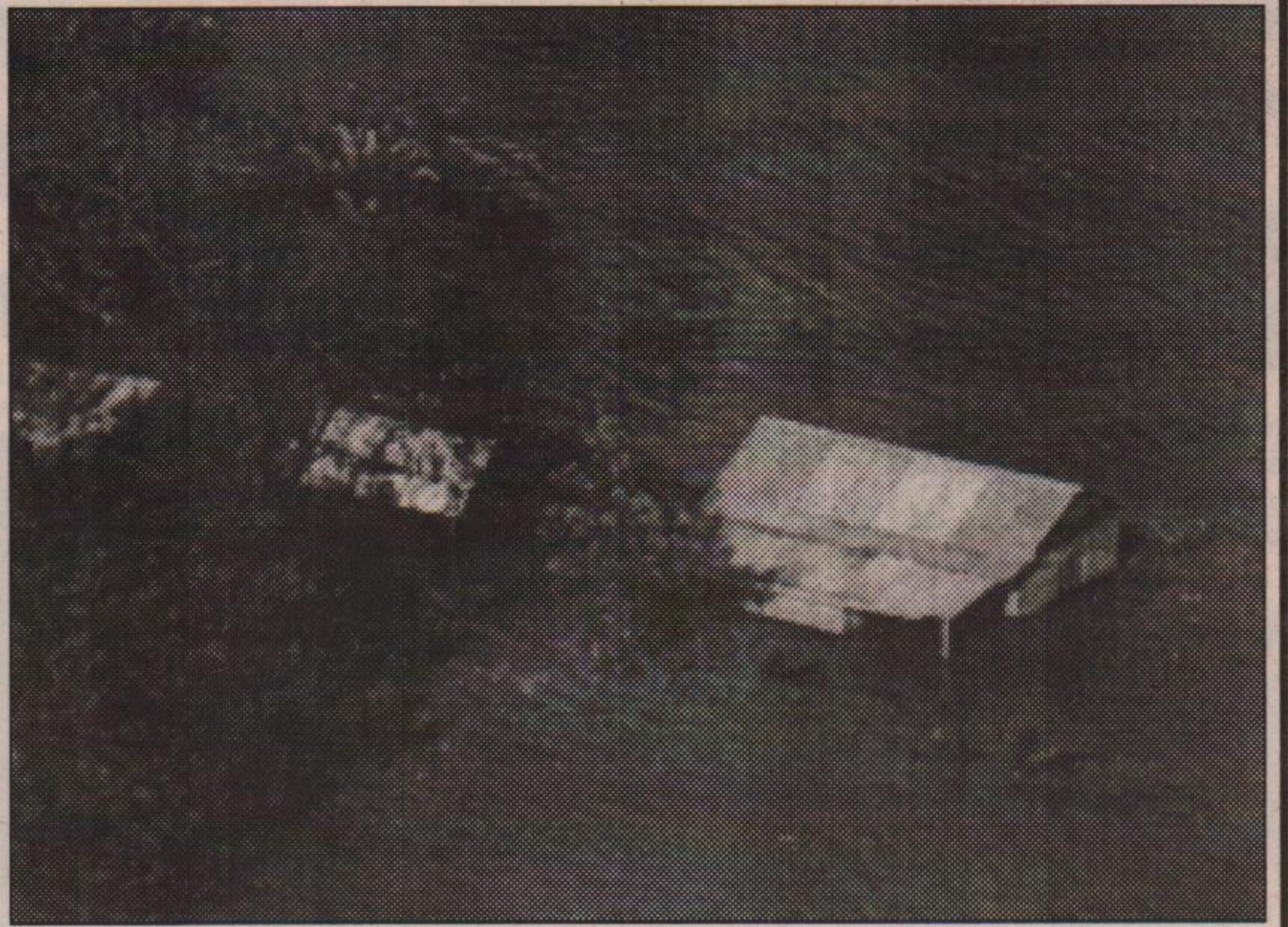
even by the standards of the Catholic Church – is no supporter of the Cuban revolution.

In contrast to Cuba's progressive legislation on women's rights, the Church – and this Pope in particular – is a staunch opponent of abortion, contraception and divorce. Elsewhere, the Catholic Church has a long and bloody anti-communist tradition. In keeping with this reactionary tradition, in the 1980s Pope John Paul II used a visit to Poland to call on the Poles to struggle for 'freedom and democracy', giving support to the antisemitic and misogynist Lech Walesa and his anti-communist Solidarnosc.

The Pope and other religious forces are pushing for a greater role for the Church in Cuba, although only about 200,000 Cubans are practising Catholics. In the Soviet Union and former socialist countries, missionaries frequently played a counter-revolutionary role, supporting dissidents and attempting to undermine socialism. However, the Cuban government presumably balanced these risks against the fact that the Pope would be a powerful voice in condemnation of the US blockade. But it is now vital that solidarity forces around the world step up their efforts in support of Cuba and against the blockade to ensure that reactionary religious forces are not able to gain a foothold in Cuba.

David Howarth

## Island in the storm



On 17 October, Hurricane Lili, with winds of up to 80mph, heavy storms and sea floods, swept across Cuba. It caused extensive damage particularly around Havana and in Matanzas, Cienfuegos and Villa Clara. Areas in the province of Ciego de Avila were also affected. 78,855 homes were severely damaged and over 200,000 people made homeless. There were serious losses in agriculture: 80% of food destined for Havana; 40,000 tonnes of bananas and 154,000 tonnes of citrus fruits were blown down and sugar, rice and other crops were destroyed. In addition, more than 200 factories, including sugar mills, and many schools were affected. This will mean serious cutbacks in food production for some time and a need to increase imports at a time when Cuba can ill afford it.

However, prompt action by the Cuban

government prevented any loss of life. 300,000 civilians were evacuated and 75,000 emergency workers were mobilised. Scarce petrol resources were used transporting emergency supplies, including the state's entire reserve of roofing materials, to affected areas. Fidel Castro and other ministers visited areas hit by the storm and commented on the intensive non-stop relief operation taking place. Castro said: 'Never before has such a degree of coordination in the face of danger been achieved, and I've seen everybody in place and making maximum efforts everywhere.'

War on Want is running an Emergency Hurricane Appeal for Cuba, channelling aid through the Cuban organisation ICAP. Donations can be sent to War on Want, Fenner Brockway House, 37-39 Great Guildford Street, London SE1 0ES.



Super Furry Animals in New York...

Super demonstrators against the blockade in Trafalgar Square, London...



## The shirt on the street

From Time Square, New York to Trafalgar Square, London, there's only one t-shirt to be seen in.

Still available from Rock around the Blockade, our classic campaign t-shirt is high-quality Fruit of the Loom cotton with a red and black design of Che Guevara and the Cuban flag on the front and a quote from Che – 'A true revolutionary is motivated by great feelings of love' – on the back. £7, including p+p.

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ t-shirt(s) in M/L/XL.

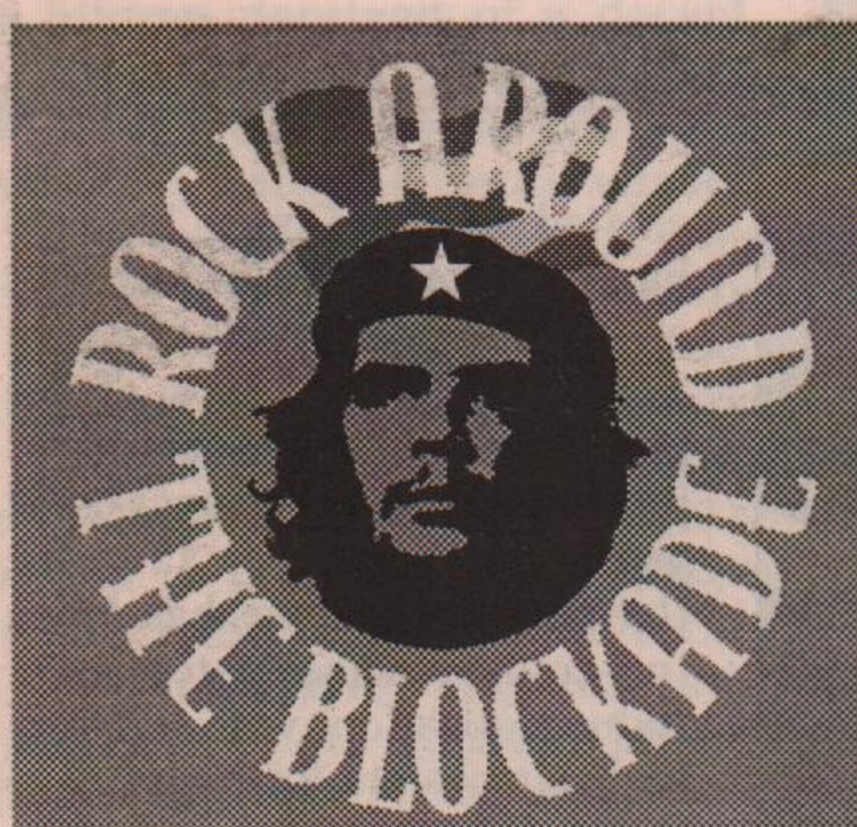
I enclose a cheque/PO for £\_\_\_\_\_ (payable to Rock around the Blockade)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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





# Rocking all over the country

**On 28 December, 20 Rock around the Blockade activists will leave for Cuba, meet up with a further group of brigadistas in Havana and travel to a UJC agricultural camp in Ciego de Avila. We have raised over £4,000 for sound equipment for a mobile disco requested by the local Union of Young Communists (UJC), to be used all over the province to further their work amongst Cuban youth in defending the principles of the Cuban Revolution.**

• In **Bristol**, the new student society - Cuba Vive! - attended a meeting to hear Cuban student leader Alejandro Cuza speak. Its first meeting of 35 people heard Theodore MacDonald, author of *Hippocrates in Havana*, explain how Cuba's outstanding

health care and education system were the result of the struggle for socialism. A week later, a lively salsa evening raised £100.

• In **Brighton**, Rock around the Blockade students held a meeting of 20 addressed by Trevor Rayne of the FRFI Editorial Board on the importance of principled solidarity with Cuba in defending socialism and building a new socialist movement here in Britain.

• In **Manchester**, Rock around the Blockade has set up societies with 30 members each at Manchester University and Manchester Metropolitan which hold regular meetings and are organising a sponsored bike ride to send a student on the brigade, as well as a fundraising spectacular in the new year.

• The society at the University of Central Lancashire in **Preston** held its first meeting in October, addressed by Alejandro Cuza and a public meeting on health care to coincide with the hospital freshers' fayre. Working with Preston CSC, they organised a meeting addressed by Father Geoffrey Bottoms and hold regular stalls. All three societies are mobilising to oppose a Gloria Estefan concert on 3 December. Rock around the Blockade was a main initiator of the **Fuera Gloria Estefan** campaign in Manchester.

• In **Scotland**, Rock around the Blockade activists met with Alejandro Cuza, taking him to see one of five secondary schools

being closed down in Dundee. They also attended the Scottish Cuba Defence Campaign and for the second year running prevented a sectarian motion to withhold SCDC support from all brigades except those organised by the CSC from being passed.

• 40 Rock around the Blockade activists supported the CSC picket of the US embassy in **London** on 19 October, bringing a minibus from Manchester and a car from Lincoln. That evening, a successful salsa evening raised £500 for the campaign, despite the CSC's Club Clandestino withdrawing their support at the last moment.

• The campaign in **London** has continued its regular educational meetings, with videos of the Cuban Revolution and discussions. Our dayschool **Cuba: in the eye of the storm** attracted 50 people and raised £100 for the hurricane appeal. It was addressed by Comrade Mancebo, First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy. They've also held street stalls and a Night for Cuba at the Rhythmic in north London, supported by bands The Other Brothers and Locomotive.

• Rock around the Blockade is participating in setting up a National Preparatory Committee for the **World Youth Festival** in 1997 and will be concentrating on building links between young people's experience of life in capitalist Britain, and support for Cuban socialism.

## Rock around the Blockade events

**Making a splash across the country: sponsored swim**, at a pool near you between 1-14 December. Contact the campaign for sponsorship details.

**Salsa night: Friday 6 December**, 8pm-2am. Salsa class (for beginners) and club. Latin America House, Priory House, Kingsgate Place, Kilburn, London NW2 (Kilburn or Kilburn Park tube). £6/£5 class and club; £4/£3 club only (after 9.30pm)

**London campaign meeting: Monday 16 December**, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube)

**Farewell party for Comrade Mancebo**, First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy, and his wife Elena, who return to Cuba at the end of the year. 17 December. Contact the campaign for details of venue.

**RCG forum: Eyewitness accounts from the brigade. Sunday 19 January 1997**, 2.30pm, Conway Hall, London WC1. (Holborn tube). £1/50p.

## What we think

*This year's brigadistas...*

'I want to experience first-hand the realities of socialism and its benefits. I'm going to Cuba to see how it works. I'm a student at the University of Central Lancashire.'

'It's vital to support Cuba in building and establishing its future. Brigades like this provide solidarity against the US blockade and it will be valuable helping me fight for what I believe is right.'

'I am going on the brigade to see at first-hand how a socialist society is organised and to learn from the experience.'

'Through Rock around the Blockade and the brigade I want to show my support for Cuba and the Revolution.'

'I always defend socialism, whether in school or campaigning on the streets. Cuba shows that socialism works - infant mortality in Cuba has dropped 50% since the Revolution, people vote at 16, education and health care are free, there are no death squads.'

'I want to meet the people of Cuba and get inspiration, because it's socialism, it's out there and they're doing it.'

'The Cuban example showed a different path from that experienced by Chile or El Salvador, whose heroic people have suffered from imperialism. The example of Cuba's Revolution is an example to all fighting for justice.'

Dominic, student, Manchester

# Do Cuban women need feminism?

The women's movement in Britain is characterised by a brand of middle-class feminism which views the struggle for women's rights from its own narrow and privileged perspective and has consistently ignored the issues facing the majority of women - the working class - both in Britain and internationally. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in a recent article by 'leading academic' Verity Smith, published in *Cuba Si* (Autumn 1996), the newsletter of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. Though purporting to be a review of recent publications on Cuba, it is an insidious attack on the Cuban Revolution and the gains for women under socialism.

While Smith concedes some gains here and there for women since 1959 - for example, the increase in women graduates - the main thrust of her argument is the Revolution denies women true liberation because it is macho, militarised and patronising, creating in women a false consciousness where they see themselves as 'sergeants, not leaders'. What they need, she argues, is a good dose of feminism.

'Cuban society,' Smith argues, 'like all Latin American ones, has traditionally been machista and racist. It still is, although these feelings run contrary to official government policy.' No evidence is offered as to manifestations of either racism or machismo in Cuba today. Nor are we offered examples of Cuba's level of militarisation in comparison with, say, the tanks that patrol the streets of Colombia, the death squads of Guatemala and El Salvador and the gunning down of street children in Brazil. None of this exists in Cuba. What Smith is condemning is the fact that in Cuba, alongside the armed forces of the FAR (in which women are fully integrated), exists a people's militia: all men and women in Cuba undergo armed training in defence of their Revolution. Smith ignores the fact that in a world dominated by imperialism, revolutions are made and defended with violence. And it

has been precisely the role of women in the liberation struggle, internationalist missions (eg fighting in Angola) and popular defence, as well as in the mass literacy campaign of 1960 (50% of literacy brigadistas were women), that has changed and is still changing the way women are viewed in Cuban society. Smith wants to have it both ways, it seems, for where images of women do occur in a military context (she cites a picture of a woman carrying a Kalashnikov rifle and a baby), she condemns it as 'Superwoman, Cuban-style: bringer of both life and death.' The opposite is true: Cuban women are armed to defend the possibility of life and dignity the Revolution has brought them.

For to sustain her position, Smith has to argue that the foundations for women's emancipation were laid well before the Revolution. Cuban women, she states, 'in particular because of Cuba's proximity to the US, benefited from a more liberal Anglo-Saxon attitude towards women's education.' These benefits were, in reality, confined to a tiny sector of middle and upper class women prior to 1959. Illiteracy in Cuba was then 43%, a figure in which women were disproportionately represented. Women were 9.8% of the workforce; of this figure, 70% worked as domestic servants. Pro-

stitution was widespread. Far from bringing benefits to the majority of Cuban women, 'proximity to the US' meant US domination of the Cuban economy and the impoverishment of the Cuban working class. It meant 300 brothels in Havana alone, servicing rich US tourists and troops. It meant the largely rural population had an average annual income per person of \$91.25 - an eighth of that of Mississippi, the poorest state in the USA. She states that middle and upper class Cuban women benefited from a comparatively lax Catholic church, but neglects to mention that abortion was illegal and contraception barely available. Maternal and infant mortality rates amongst the working class were high.

That today, for example, abortion is available on demand, women make up half the working population, supported by a widespread network of daycare facilities, 47.8% of Cuban professionals are women and the adult literacy rate is 94% are direct results of the Cuban Revolution and the socialist policies implemented by the Cuban Communist Party, working with mass organisations like the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC). Yet Smith castigates Castro for misplaced 'gallantry' in telling Celia Sanchez, a guerrilla in charge of communications, that her 'feminine touch' would be missed, warning that while this might be expected in the 1950s, 'the danger arises if people of that mentality are still in power 40 years later!'

None of this is to deny that problems remain in achieving full equality for women in Cuba. That only 22.8% of the seats in the National Assembly are held by women reflects this, although it is encouraging that the Secretary of the Union of Young Communists is a woman and women make up nearly 40% of the UJC's



Last year's Nuestro Tiempo Brigade with FMC members

national committee. The Special Period has increased women's workload while limiting social provision of child care, laundries, canteens etc, exacerbating women's double burden of domestic and productive labour. However, what the socialist Revolution has done is laid the basis on which women's emancipation can be achieved. Former Black Panther Assata Shakur, now in political exile in Cuba, understood this. In May of this year, she told FRFI:

'When I came to Cuba I didn't know what to expect... It was clear that a revolution was not a magic wand that you wave and all of a sudden everything is transformed. The first lesson I learned was that revolution is a process, so I was not that shocked to find sexism had not totally disappeared in Cuba, nor had racism, but that... the revolution was totally committed to struggling against racism and sexism in all its forms... It would be pure fantasy to think that all the ills, such as racism, classism or sexism could be dealt with in 30 years. But what is realistic is that it is much easier and much more possible to struggle against those ills in a country which is dedicated to social justice and eliminating injustice.'

The real question is, when Cuba is

under increasing attack and rights of women are being threatened, not by a lack of feminism but by a tightening US blockade, what Verity Smith writing this article is doing is posing as friends of Cuba, in fact publishing articles and fomenting debate to undermine the Cuban Revolution. British feminists were amongst the middle-class intellectuals who pushed for feminist links with the counterparts in the Soviet Union and East Germany in the 1980s, and celebrated the overthrow of communism. What they achieved for working-class women in Eastern Europe was a return to the dark ages - women have been forced back into the home and thrown out of politics. Female unemployment is high, child care facilities lost, abortion restricted, prostitution rampant. Is this what Verity Smith is aiming for in Cuba?

Hannah Caller and Cat Wier



# Zaire: imperialism's bloodstained arena

TREVOR RAYNE

The crisis in Central Africa shows the obscenity of imperialism in its most lurid light. France and the USA manoeuvre over the remains of Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire; Britain hovers between them. Control over Zaire, bordering nine countries, provides the holder with strategic power over much of Africa. A Zaire deliberately underdeveloped by imperialism enfeebles the continent.

On 30 October the Alliance of Democratic Forces of Congo-Zaire captured the eastern Zairean town of Bukavu, then proceeded to take the provincial capital Goma. Supported by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) they drove out the Interahamwe and its Zairean army backers. The Interahamwe are responsible for the slaughter of up to a million Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994. They used Hutu refugee camps in Zaire as bases from which to mount raids on Rwanda, with weapons supplied through Zaire from British and other firms. Alliance supporters celebrated by destroying Zairean President Mobutu's lakeside villa near Goma.

During the massacres in Rwanda in 1994, French soldiers stood by until the RPF routed the Interahamwe. Only then did France send its paratroops to the defence of the

Hutu militias. France now proposes armed intervention, under the pretence of protecting refugees and preventing chaos. The Alliance and Rwandan government responded saying they would treat French soldiers as hostile enemies. This forced the imperialists to think twice before leaping in to assert their control over the area.

## US Africa debut

In 1958 the mineral potential of the Congo was estimated at 50% of the world's uranium supplies, 10% of world copper, 9% tin, 75% cobalt, 70% industrial diamonds. The first atomic bombs used Congolese uranium. The USA moved in: the Rockefellers of Chase Manhattan and Standard Oil bought a controlling share of Société Générale, the holding company of Union Minière, the main mining company in Zaire, and, together with the Morgan banking group, they took over the Congo Central Bank.

The National Congolese Movement was formed with Patrice Lumumba as its president in 1958. It had a national democratic programme including unity of the country, land to the tiller and a review of the monopolies. Lumumba prioritised the need for the liberation of African women. For this Lumumba was branded a communist. Union Minière promoted tribally-based leaders, Tshombe and Kasavubu, to oppose his movement.

Following police repression and attempts at blocking him, Lumumba was elected Prime Minister, with Kasavubu as President. Within days of independence in 1960, Tshombe initiated a secessionist revolt in Katanga. Belgium despatched paratroops and the USA manipulated the UN to send a 'peace-keeping force'. Recruited by the US CIA, Mobutu helped Kasavubu mount a coup, grab Lumumba and deliver him for murder by Belgian mercenaries in January 1961. Civil war ensued. This was the first major US intervention in Africa; it showed imperialism would not allow Africa to choose its destiny: formal independence would be a sham.

In 1964 Tshombe seized power. British and South African mercenaries, joined by Belgian soldiers and ex-Cuban Bay of Pigs mercenaries, fought against those who upheld Lumumba's programme. Belgian paratroops flown in US aircraft from the British south Atlantic base of Ascension, with the permission of Harold Wilson's Labour government, propped Tshombe up. The following year Che Guevara and Cuban volunteers went to the Congo to support the patriotic forces. Cubans militarily engaged the racist South African mercenaries they were to defeat 23 years later at Cuito Cuanavale in Angola.

On 25 November 1965 Mobutu seized power. Resistance



Refugees return freed from the threat of militias

to Mobutu continued and it must worry imperialism that the spokesperson for the Alliance, Laurent Kabila, is a former ally of Che Guevara. Kabila said, 'We want to overthrow the irresponsible clique which right now has power. We want to establish a new regime and democratic elections... This is a national liberation movement. Our aim is Kinshasa [Zaire's capital].'

## Spectacular kleptocracy

Mobutu served imperialism and himself well. Zairean troops actively cooperated with the South African army in Angola. Zaire sheltered and supported Holden Roberto's so-called National Front for the Liberation of Angola. The USA and

Britain used Zaire as a conduit for funds and mercenaries fighting the Angolan government.

However, it is for kleptomania and brutality that Mobutu's rule is known. Mobutu's Presidential allowance consumes 15-20% of the government's revenue budget and 30-50% of the capital budget. Over the past 12 years the World Bank estimates that Mobutu has taken between \$150-400 million a year from Zaire's copper and cobalt revenues. The country's foreign debt is approximately \$11 billion; Mobutu's personal fortune exceeds \$6 billion.

In the 31 years of Mobutu's rule not a single school, clinic or road has been built. 85% of the 85,000 miles of roads that

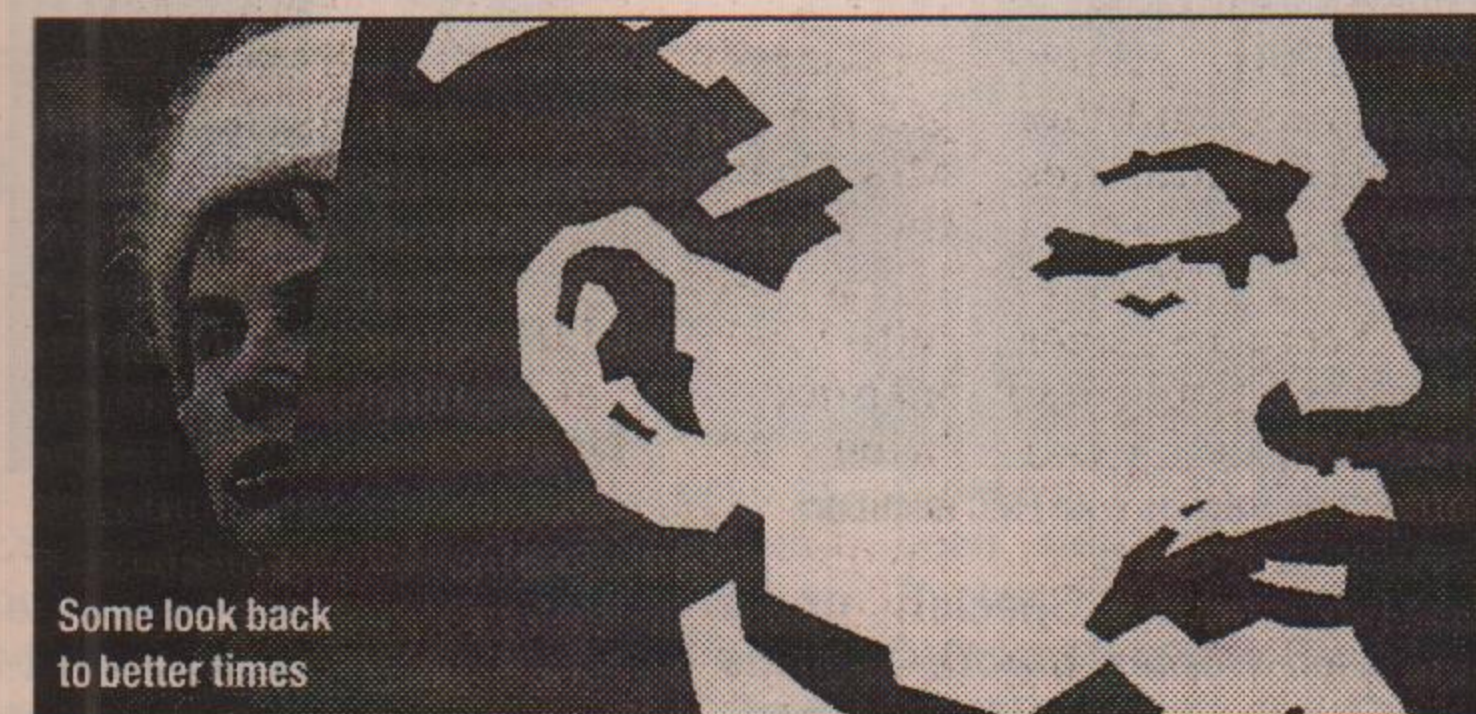
existed in the Congo in 1960 have reverted to bush. Zaire has an infant mortality rate of 93 per 1,000 live births, 39% of the people have access to safe drinking water, life expectancy is 52 years. Every year for 12 years, the national income has fallen in a country whose potential for industrialisation, with the Congo basin waters for hydro-electricity, is tremendous.

How is this state sustained? With terror. There are two elite forces immune from scrutiny and prosecution. The Hiboux ('night owls') operate by night. They were trained in apartheid South Africa. The DSP (Presidential guard), which includes foreign mercenaries, is trained by Israel.

In July 1996, the *British Medical Journal* published a survey of asylum seekers from Zaire coming to Britain. Out of 92 examined over 1993-94, 72 had scarring consistent with torture. There were reports of multiple rapes, electric shock torture and being slashed with bayonets and knives. At the time of publication 20 of those examined are still in detention in Britain. A disproportionately high number of Zaireans are held in detention. In 1994 95% of decisions made on Zairean asylum claims were refusals. Of 135 decisions on Zairean asylum seekers made in October 1996 none were granted asylum and 10 were given exceptional leave to remain on a temporary basis. In May 1995 a Home Office official returned from Zaire to announce that while crime was widespread there were no widespread human rights abuses.

Imperialism will fight for Zaire. ■

# Barbarism in Russia



Some look back to better times

TREVOR RAYNE

They were told that they would wake up from socialism to find themselves strolling along the Champs Elysées or shopping in Knightsbridge. Five years later the people of Russia are drowning in the sewer of primitive capitalism.

Since 1991 over 60% of the former Soviet economy has been taken into private ownership. The result: Russia's economy has halved since 1991. This collapse outstrips that of the USA during the 1930s Great Depression when the US economy contracted 30%. At that time the Soviet economy grew, immune from the storms wrecking international capitalism.

Russia now has a gross domestic product equivalent to that of the Netherlands. The total value of Russia's annual production is what the USA spends on weapons alone each year.

Male life expectancy in Russia which reached 69 in the

late 1950s, exceeding that of the USA, has plummeted to 58 years. This is comparable with India, Egypt and Yemen. It is the first country in history to experience such a sharp fall in life expectancy.

Public health authorities receive 60% of their allocated budget. The Soviet health care system has collapsed and measles, diphtheria, tuberculosis, hepatitis, whooping cough, dysentery and cholera reach epidemic proportions. On the government's own figures, poverty afflicts a fifth of the population, other figures suggest a third. Venereal disease is rife: the incidence of syphilis in Russia's population is now 60 times that of the rest of Europe and increases 60% a year. HIV infection is sky-rocketing; prostitution flourishes; medicines are unavailable.

Last year the death toll from organised crime in Russia was greater than the total Russian losses in Afghanistan.

This is the triumph of capitalism! ■

# Car crash exposes Turkish state/Mafia tie

ELIF MUTLUAY

A recent traffic accident exposed the connections between the state and the fascist paramilitary organisations. A truck and a Mercedes car crashed into each other. There were four passengers in the car.

Sedat Bucak is a deputy from Urfa for the True Path Party, the minor partner in the ruling coalition. He also heads a 10,000-strong paramilitary village guard army, composed of members of his tribe. Village guards are the civilian militia forces against PKK guerrillas. Bucak's Kurdish tribe cooperated with the state in return for control in their own region, where they run a drug- and arms-smuggling operation.

Hüseyin Kocadag was an Alawi police chief in Istanbul. He was known for his social-democratic views (as most Alawis are anti-Sharia, and social democratic) and had in the past been a mediator during Alawi uprisings and discontent. He had helped found the 'special teams' which are small paramilitary units, designed to fight the PKK and other leftist groups and are known for brutality.

Abdullah Catli was a fascist. He was accused of taking part in murders of leftist activists and students before 1980, especially the infamous 'Bahcelievler' massacre of seven leftist students in Ankara, 1978. A fugi-

tive for the past 16 years, Catli had been detained accidentally a few times, only to be released very quickly. He had proper identification under a fake name, plus a diplomatic passport. The diplomatic passport wasn't fake, only the name was. When detained, he was bold enough to give the address of a police station. Catli had a licence to carry and own arms; this licence wasn't fake.

The fourth passenger in the car was a young beauty queen, Gonca Us. There were also seven guns, silencers, fake IDs, fake licence plates and cocaine.

Only Bucak survived the accident. The question everybody asked was, what were a fascist murderer and fugitive, a police chief, and a tribal leader, village guard militia boss and parliamentary deputy doing in the same car?

Bucak's doctors immediately issued statements saying that their patient had 'partial amnesia', very conveniently. After being discharged, Bucak repudiated all need for defences such as amnesia and boldly declared he knew Catli very well, he knew he was a fugitive, but Catli was someone who was in cooperation with the state and had served his country well. There was nothing shameful about meeting with Catli; on the contrary, Catli was a 'martyr'.

Apparently Catli, a convicted drug smuggler, was one of the leading cadres of the Tur-

kish illegal paramilitary organisation. In the past there were many claims and partial evidence of an illegal and paramilitary state organisation operating in Turkey. Responsible for extra-judicial murders of leftists, trade unionists, human rights and Kurdish activists and revolutionaries, the 'Gang', as it was immediately dubbed, was involved in the civil war against the Kurdish guerrillas and the drug and gambling Mafia. In fact, the trio had probably been returning from a meeting with Hüseyin Topal, a gambling mafia kingpin, who was found dead in his home. Catli also participated in the killing of the Armenian group ASALA's leaders in the early eighties.

Soon it became apparent that the special teams, the village guards, the police, some sections of the gendarmes and the army plus illegal fascist organisations were all involved. Ciller issued a statement saying that although she was speaking generally (ie not specifically about Catli) 'whoever had fired guns and had guns fired on him for his state is honourable'. Completely ignoring that Catli was a convicted drug smuggler and that other serious charges against him remained, Ciller said, 'Catli isn't yet known to be guilty'.

In short, the state admitted that Catli was one of their own.

Mehmet Agar, minister of interior affairs, resigned imme-

diately after the accident, before anything was exposed. His first statement was that there was nothing 'extraordinary' about the accident. This statement and his resignation before the dirty connections became evident showed Agar knew what was coming. He was formerly the police chief of Turkey. His name was also often mentioned in connection with the paramilitary operations that involved the cooperation of the police, Mafia, fascist gangs, village guards and special teams.

The traffic accident proved what had been obvious for a long time. The Turkish state is illegal and illegitimate. It murders its own citizens, burns their villages, smuggles drugs and arms. The state has merged with the Mafia and illegal fascist gangs.

Immediately after all this was exposed, the government started preparations for a new press law that would further tighten Turkey's repressive press laws. Most of the Turkish press is allied with one side or the other in the gang-mafia wars and it thrives on state incentives and subsidies. A newspaper or a TV station is seen as a tool for blackmailing and threatening rivals. Yet even such controllable opposition is intolerable.

The only real opposition newspaper, *Demokrasi*, had to change its name four times in the past four years because it was repeatedly closed down, saw 17 of its correspondents and distributors killed by the paramilitary, and had its headquarters bombed to pieces.

Apparently, the Turkish state sees the truth as the biggest enemy. ■



Children deprived of a decent education at the Ridings School treat the school with contempt. A national furore ensues and 12 are expelled. But when a government is found to have illegally sold arms to Iraq, a tame inquiry is set up and... nothing happens. The poor also get it in the neck. A *Big Issue* seller is invented who makes £1,000 a week and a national debate takes place about this while in the background other homeless magazine sellers are beaten and robbed. Meanwhile top earnings in the privatised utilities soar:

- Sir Ian Vallance, Chair of BT - £476,000 (£663,000 in 1995)
- Ed Wallis, Chief Executive of Powergen - £300,000 plus £12,000 benefits
- Cedric Brown, former boss of British Gas - £475,000 plus £16,226 benefits (The current boss is Richard Giordani - £450,000 plus £21,842 benefits. One former director, Howard Dalton, has departed with a pay-off of £303,420 plus relocation costs and £32,291 pension payment)
- Sir Desmond Pitcher, Chairman of North West Water - £225,000 plus £75,000 performance bonus

Nobody beats up these people - they get knighted.

But it is not merely an issue of personal greed or wealth. Nothing comes out of nothing. The only way to make a lot of money is to steal it: either by direct theft or, much less dangerously, by indirect theft of the profits of other peoples' labour. The first method risks imprisonment. The second gets you into the House of Lords and/or a City Boardroom and makes you very moral indeed.

#### Where there's brass there's muck

The past 20 years have seen a growing number of sleaze and financial scandal stories. These are almost always presented either as the result of individual weaknesses or lack of regulation. Either way they are given the appearance of being outside the system. The recent Neil Hamilton scandal is typical.

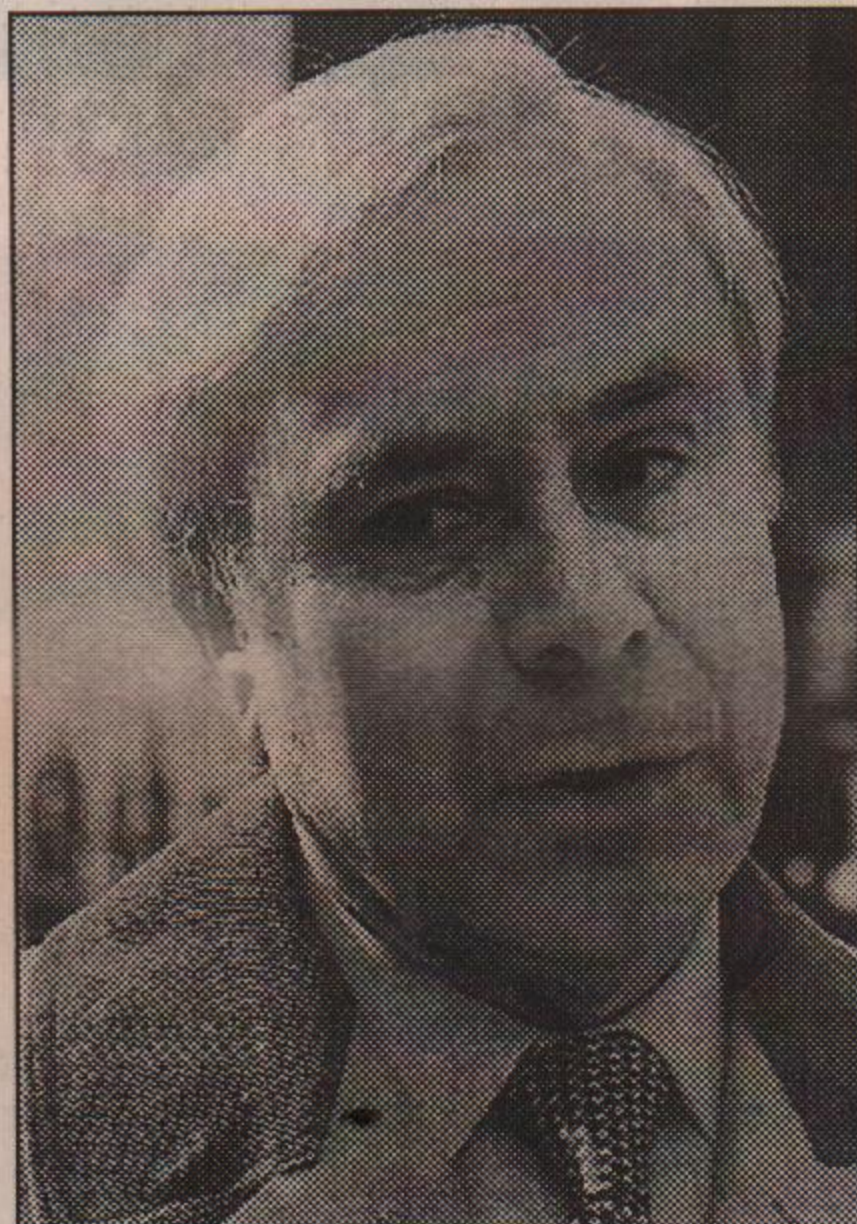
Neil Hamilton, Tory MP, was employed as a consultant by parliamentary lobbyist Ian Greer, to raise questions in Parliament on behalf of Mohamed Fayed, the boss of Harrods. Hamilton was paid £2,000 per question - money which he apparently used to pick up in brown envelopes stuffed with notes. When the story surfaced he denied it and he and Greer sued *The Guardian*. Just before the court case was due to begin, Greer and Hamilton dropped it and agreed to pay part of *The Guardian's* costs. The trial would have been a sensation, as top Tory politicians including Major and Heseltine were due to be called as witnesses. The current parliamentary inquiry, concentrating at present on the Tory Whip's attempts to subvert an earlier inquiry into the affair, is extremely unrevealing by comparison with a public trial. It is a charade designed to bore most of the population and ensure that the scandal is forgotten.

The issue of MPs' extra-curricular earnings has rumbled on for years. The Hamilton affair is only the seedy tip of a huge iceberg of sleaze. Several other Tory MPs are said to have taken payments for services to Mr Fayed. These include: Sir Michael Grylls - three payments (Grylls also acted for Greer on behalf of British Airways: in 1985 he and his wife and others went on a free luxury holiday to Rio de Janeiro paid for by BA); Sir Peter Hordern MP - amount unspecified; Tim Smith MP - amount unspecified; Andrew Bowden MP - payment reported as £5,000. Twenty-five MPs, including two Labour MPs, received contributions towards election expenses from Greer for doing who knows what.

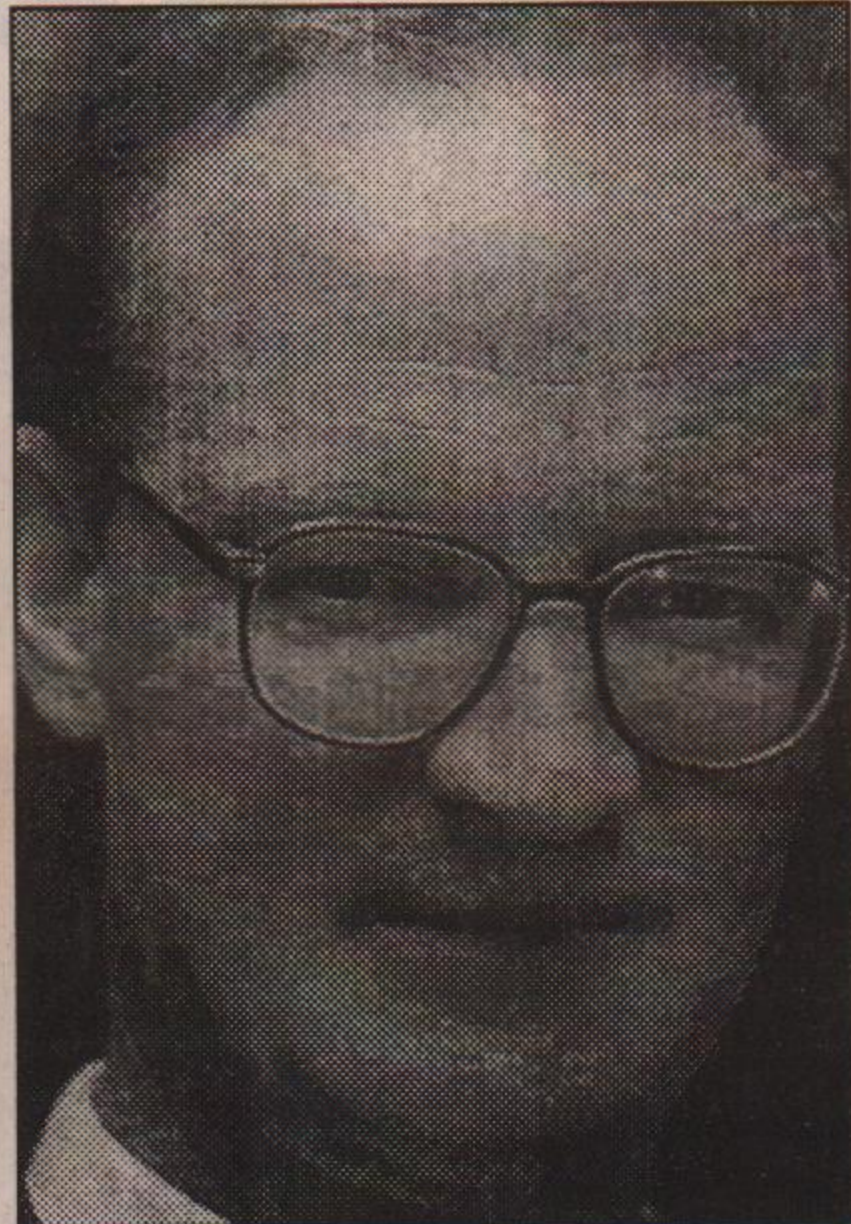
Greer by no means restricted his

# Business as usual - Morals and Money

**Our rulers are currently much agitated about morality. Not their morality of course - they are, after all, the standard of human perfection to which the rest of us can only aspire. Arms dealers, City pimps, careless destroyers of the earth and its people - these are the ones with morals. The ones without morals - it goes almost without saying - are those who have no money or power. The most immoral, for whom our rulers are building vast new goals and rooting around in their cupboards to find canes with which to beat them, are children. MAXINE WILLIAMS reports.**



Ian Greer - paid MPs to further the interests of his business clients



David Willetts - accused of nobbling the Select Committee



Steve ('Shagger') Norris - privatised London buses as Transport Minister, now a 'job' with the Road Haulage Association at £150,000.

activities to working for Fayed. He represented the brewer Whitbread and helped to set up a 'beer club' within Parliament. *Private Eye* reports a stream of beer-connected speeches in this period by Sir Anthony Durant, Tory MP for Reading West. Durant's constituency party received a donation from Ian Greer. In 1989 the Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommended that the monopoly by the Big Six brewers should be broken. A vast lobbying campaign by MPs hired by the brewers was undertaken (Hamilton again being to the fore) and the proposal was rejected by the government. As well as payments and promises, the threat of withdrawing the brewers' substantial donations to Tory funds was used to good effect.

Ian Greer has been at this trade for years. Formerly at Conservative Central Office and with close government connections, he runs the country's largest political lobbying firm. His clients have included: British Airways, Plessey, the Argyll Group, Babcock International and the National Nuclear Corporation Ltd. Lobbyists use MPs to further the interests of their clients - opposing laws, fixing lucrative contracts, pushing privatisations - and pay them either directly or through indirect means. It is thoroughly normal. In his book *MPs for hire*, Mark Hollingsworth reported that by 1991 there were 50 political lobbying firms with a turnover of £10 million. Thirty-five MPs were advisers or directors of such firms.

The Greer/Hamilton story is so typical that the real difficulty facing our esteemed parliamentarians is how to make Hamilton look abnormal. A *Labour Research* survey of

members' interests in late 1994 found that 82 per cent of Conservative backbench MPs had paid directorships of companies (276 paid directorships and 356 paid consultancies between them). They are paid to promote the interests of the industries for which they work. Indeed *Private Eye* quotes the MP Sir Anthony Durant telling the House of Commons, unintentionally comically: 'In this House I represent the National Federation of Demolition Contractors', apparently a surprise to his constituents.

Durant the Demolition man is small beer compared to others. Tim Smith MP was hired as a consultant by accountancy firm Price Waterhouse in 1986. In 1987 he asked 18 government departments for detailed information on management consultancy contracts. In 1988 he asked 58 similar questions and in 1989 and 1990 asked 27 government departments for detailed information about internal auditors and their costs. Ex-ministers are much in demand. David Mellor, for example, has amassed vast numbers of outside interests since his forced resignation as National Heritage minister. By 1994 his total was 12 paid directorships or consultancies with a heavy emphasis on arms/defence companies - British Aerospace, Racal Tacticom, Short Brothers, Vosper Thornycroft. Mellor is currently often in the press lobbying for a ban on handgun sales. Presumably he would prefer everyone to buy a guided missile system.

#### The Biggest Prizes and The Fattest Cats

Some of the biggest prizes have arisen from the privatisation of public utilities. There are massive profits

at stake and the rewards for politicians are high. Large numbers of Conservative ministers have personally overseen privatisations and then... joined the privatised industries. The guilty men include:

- Lord Keith Joseph, who in 1981, as Trade and Industry Secretary, oversaw the privatisation of Cable and Wireless. In 1986 he became a consultant to Cable and Wireless.
- Lord Young - Joseph's advisor on privatisation and later Secretary of State for the Department of Trade and Industry. In 1989 he granted Mercury (a Cable and Wireless subsidiary) a licence to act as a mobile phone network. In 1990 he became Executive Chairman of Cable and Wireless at £400,000 per annum.
- Nigel Lawson - Chancellor of the Exchequer until 1989. On leaving the post he was hired for £100,000 a year as a non-executive director of Barclays Bank, for working two days a week.
- Norman Tebbit - Trade and Industry Secretary in 1984 when British Telecom was privatised. In 1987 he became a Director of British Telecom.
- Sir Norman Fowler - previously chair of the Tory Party and on the Board of Group 4's holding company when it got a £21m contract for running private prisons.
- Lord Peter Walker steered through gas privatisation as energy minister in the 1980s (and oversaw the smashing of the miners' strike). In 1990 he joined British Gas as a director and joined the board of Rothschilds who were the bankers advising on gas privatisation.
- Norman Lamont - Chancellor of the Exchequer, and John Wakeham - Secretary of State for Energy, were in

charge of the Department's negotiating Rothschild Bank's fee for financial advice on coal privatisation. The fee was £9.2million. Lamont and Wakeham left the government in the 1980s and joined the board of Rothschilds.

• John MacGregor - former Transport minister. His department awarded the contract for advising BR on the Chunnel and on the sale of BR assets to bankers Hill Samuel. MacGregor is now Director and joint Chairman of Hill Samuel.

In any other field this would be seen as corrupt. In politics it is normal.

#### Arms sales - Big Money, Huge Morals

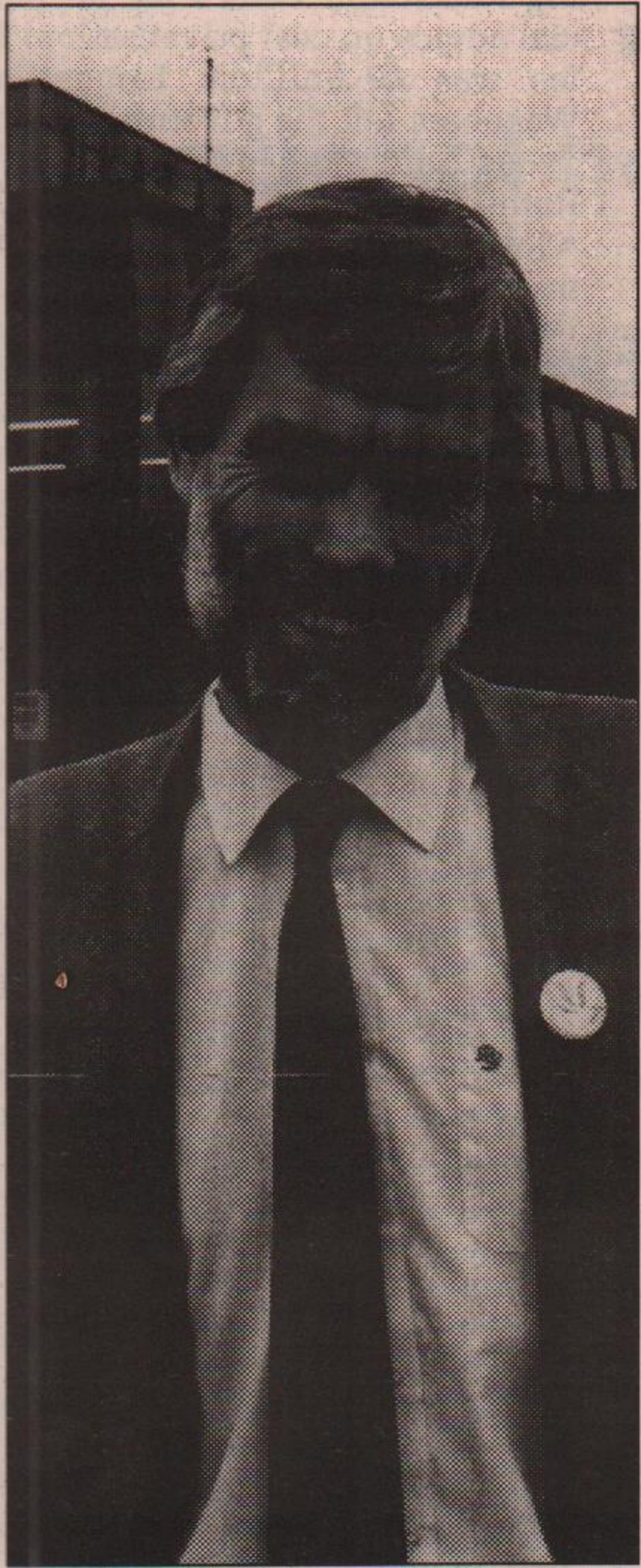
Aside from prison building, the other main growth industry in the 1980s was armaments. It was central to the Conservative government's economic strategy and Margaret Thatcher took a close personal interest in arms sales and contracts. There are big bucks in mass murder. Thatcher's son Mark, whose only previous gainful employment had been as a racing car driver, is now in virtual exile in South Africa, to prevent awkward questions being asked about the source of his vast personal fortune, estimated at £50-100 million. The source was arms deals, and the influence he wielded through his mother and his Middle Eastern contacts in securing such deals. That is a major part of the scandal that lies at the heart of government in Britain and was carefully obscured by the Scott Inquiry.

Such huge profits are made in arms sales that virtually all democratic, official or governmental norms are subverted and corrupted by it. That is why major government departments were involved in arranging arms sales to Iraq up to the outbreak of the Gulf War (indeed some British weapons were used against British troops) and covering them up. That is why the aid budget, supposed to be used to relieve distress overseas, was used instead as a bribe to secure arms contracts. The best known example being the Pergau Dam deal, in which the Malaysian government got £234 million British aid to build a dam (built by British firms Trafalgar House and Cementation, who got the profits) in return for their agreement to buy £1.3 billion of arms produced by British firms (who got the profits). Sir Charles Powell, Mrs Thatcher's private secretary in the 1980s, is now a director of Trafalgar House. Mark Thatcher, along with Wafiq Said (the Saudi businessman/arms dealer currently trying to bribe Oxford University to set up a business school in his honour), was involved in the biggest deal of the 1980s, the al-Yamamah arms deal with Saudi Arabia, which was worth £60 billion.

Jonathan Aitken MP, also a close associate of Wafiq Said, has a long history of association with the Saudi Royal Family and of work in the arms trade. He was a former director of Astra arms company's subsidiary BMARC. His activities were illustrated when in 1985 he wrote a letter to the Astra arms company chairman saying: 'In the course of my last visit to Saudi Arabia, I did discuss Astra with one or two Saudi businessmen who I thought might be effective within the defence field. To date however I have not clearly identified an agent who would be likely to deliver an order for military pyrotechnics. However I do have a good and trusted contact who seems able to produce excellent results in both Iraq and Saudi Arabia'. Aitken became Minister for defence procurement in 1992, ie chief arms salesman for Britain. The fox was not only in the chicken coop - he was running it.

The current investigation of Neil Hamilton and co takes place against a background of all this much, much larger corruption. Indeed it cannot be accurately called corruption - it is just business as usual. ■





**'If you exclude children on such a scale you're simply creating conflict and violence in the neighbourhood of the school. What will happen to those children? Many of them won't find another school. They'll be on the streets. They'll look for the only support and solidarity around them - which will be the very distorted and dangerous solidarity of gangs - which is what happened to a number of those young people. It seems to me that a moral crusade built on the memory of such a policy and practice is very hypocritical.'**



**'Bring back the cane! Beat the jobs! Cram "morality" down their throats until they give in or kick them out of school!'**

It seems that every sort of crude barbarity is once more on the agenda to stop so-called disruption in schools. State education, like every other sector of the welfare state, is under attack. The ruling class demands that schools produce just what, and only what, the ruling class needs and do it with ever diminishing resources. Every other purpose for education is trampled underfoot in

the single-minded drive to serve a decadent capitalism.

While the rich protect their power and wealth in private ivory towers, others need to pass examinations to get to the top. So sections of the middle class (the Tony Blairs and Harriet Harmans of this world) are desperately scrambling to hack out their own privileged niches in the grammar schools, grant-maintained schools and 'best' comprehensives. Woe betide any working class youngster who refuses to be trodden on in the rush. If the aspiring classes can't select him out

and they're not yet allowed to beat him out they're damn well going to throw him out.

Unfortunately, without an alternative vision of a decent future some working-class parents also reconciled to joining the examination and end up supporting the call to kick out those who don't toe the line. More and more teachers, either because of the demoralising circumstances in which they have to work or because of their own middle-class perspectives are resorting to these simplistic solutions. Progressive teachers and governors must

# Schools, morality and community

## An interview with Chris Searle

**FRFI:** Chris, as a headmaster why did you refuse to expel students?

**Chris Searle:** We had a policy worked out between the headteacher and the governors, who were very much representative of local communities. It was a school which was in an 83% black community and of course it was the black communities that were the prime subjects of exclusion through the years. The governors from the black communities obviously felt very strongly about their own students being disproportionately excluded.

So we developed a collective response. We excluded children temporarily - overnight exclusions, or for a couple of days to calm them down if they'd been in a fight, or if they'd done something serious, or they'd been racist, or unreasonable, or violent. This gave us time to see the parents and then get the student back in as quickly as possible. We did not want to expel students because we knew that they would be criminalised; they would not find places in other schools; they would be sucked into a very dangerous local drugs culture. They would lose all faith in education. We were determined that that wouldn't happen.

So we developed other methods, the most significant one being working with the governors and the community associations, like the Somali Community Association, the local Pakistani mosques, the Sheffield and District African-Caribbean Association, the Yemeni Community Association. If any student from these communities - the main ones represented in the school - got into serious trouble, we would send them to the community centres for a day or two to get counselling from community elders and to work in those community centres. On their return we frequently found that the counselling and support from their own community had been very effective. This was our alternative to exclusion, an alternative which relied on the communities and integrated them more directly into the life of the school.

**FRFI:** Why are a greater proportion of working-class and black students excluded? Why don't other schools go to the community for support?

**CS:** Some 'disruptive' behaviour has a very positive side - as an act of resistance; it's fairly inarticulate, but is an expression of students refusing to accept the kind of curriculum that is being offered to them. They find it insulting; they find it tedious. The National Curriculum has become institutionalised across schools, it's a very tramline, narrow, chauvinist, exclusive curriculum which leaves out the lives, experiences and aspirations of British black communities, and British working-class communities. The resulting tedium and sense of insult provokes this form of anarchic resistance which results in disruption.

This form of rebellion was another message to us that the school had to develop a curriculum which actually related to the lives, aspirations and histories of other languages and other cultures of the students in the school. In being so, the curriculum had to be worthy of the lives and the contribution that black communities and their families have made to the culture and economy of British inner cities. The National Curriculum just ignores and spurns this.

**FRFI:** Why have other schools not attempted to build a curriculum based on the needs and experiences of their working-class communities?

**CS:** I think the difference with our school was we refused to be market orientated. Schools now are sucked into the market philosophy, into market practice, and so they expel students because they want to move up the league tables, and they want to appear to be a smooth, efficient, cleanly-run school. We refused to play that game.

We saw ourselves as a genuinely comprehensive school which welcomes all students, all young people from any community. That includes the well-motivated and the less well-motivated, the well-behaved and the disruptive. Our job as teachers was to take these so-called disruptive students and motivate them, and make them see the importance and the relevance of learning, and to fire their aspirations and expectations of themselves. But that required a curriculum genuinely wedded to community.

**FRFI:** What do you think is behind the current drive about 'morality' and 'discipline' in schools?

**CS:** It's a particular interpretation of morality. I believe in morality, and I believe that our school was giving an exemplar of morality, in that we indicated in practice internationalism, which is a most important aspect of morality. We've tried to ensure that there was genuine solidarity amongst our students, so that they stood up for and supported each other. We tried to develop a campaigning ethos in the school, so that we could campaign against injustice, which is another aspect of morality. When the school was threatened with closure, we thought it was an immoral act to close the school, the only school in the community. So every student in the school was involved in the process of saving it, and we did save it.

Over the five years that I was head teacher we developed a strong approach to fundraising, not simply for the school, but for international projects. For example, we raised £1,000 to rebuild shattered schools in Somalia. We raised money for the victims of floods in Pakistan and Bangladesh; we raised money for the Kurds; we raised money to help buy medicines for the cholera epidemic in Guyana. We raised money during the Gulf War to help support Iraqi students' families in Sheffield who had been left high and dry and had no money coming through. We raised money for local old people.

We had a moral attitude towards the drug culture. We didn't simply expel children who were involved in drugs. We conducted a public campaign, involving the parents, against local drug pushing. We openly declared 'Of course we have a drug problem in our school. We have to fight it and overcome it.' And we willingly took students from other schools who'd been expelled for drug use and changed their habits and their attitudes towards drugs.

This is a very different morality to that of the current moral crusade, which really is a set of hypocritical positions, not so much about active moral campaigning practice, but about telling children that they've got to be good and quiet, be passive, keep in their seats, not involve themselves

in these serious things, in the big world outside the school.

**FRFI:** Who benefits from this hypocritical 'morality'? Why is this crusade happening now?

**CS:** The moral crusade suddenly sprang from the article written by the widow of the head teacher, Philip Lawrence, who was killed by a youth outside his school. He was obviously a very brave man. He went to do what any good teacher would do, which was to try to intervene to make sure nobody was hurt. But this so-called moral crusade which has been set up in his name stems from the practice of high exclusion in which he was involved. He permanently excluded 60 children from his school in two years. What happened to those 60 children? Wasn't that just a way of feeding the gangs that were besetting the school?

If you exclude children on such a scale you're simply creating conflict and violence in the neighbourhood of the school. What will happen to those children? Many of them won't find another school. They'll be on the streets. They'll look for the only support and solidarity around them - which will be the very distorted and dangerous solidarity of gangs - which is what happened to a number of those young people. It seems to me that a moral crusade built on the memory of such a policy and practice is very hypocritical.

**FRFI:** Do you think the Labour Party are capable of changing education again?

**CS:** They appear to have no interest in changing very much at all. Really their intention is to continue with the schooling system which has been set up by the 1988 Act, to repeal none of it. They are not proposing alternative educational legislation which would undo the market system and create a system based on social justice. Their leaders are saying that they're going to apply this Tory Act and other legislation on education more zealously. This seems to me to be a very pessimistic future.

**FRFI:** What do you think of the teachers' unions in the context of recent



then solidarity with working-class parents and fight for the sort of schools and educational resources they need in their communities.

FRFI is pleased to publish the following interview with Chris Searle, currently a lecturer in postgraduate English at Goldsmiths' College, London, about his alternative view for working-class students. As a young teacher, Chris was sacked for daring to publish his students' poetry which gave a critical working-class view of schools. Always a fighter against racism and imperialism, Chris spent many years helping to

build education in Grenada, Mozambique and Ethiopia. Earlier this year he was sacked as head of Earl Marshall, a comprehensive in a working-class district of Sheffield, for refusing to expel students. Chris had the full support of the parents, governors and students for this policy of community-based but internationalist education. It took a typically underhand piece of racist double-dealing between David Blunkett, the local Labour Party and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to get him out (see FRFI 129).

Interview by Jim Craven

# Morality inities

events and the campaign for increased obedience in schools?

CS: I think if you look broadly at the history of education you'll see that teacher trade unionism has played a progressive role over the years. But, at the moment, certainly the NAS/UWT appears to be doing its best to demean teacher trade unionism. Instead of fighting for education for ordinary people and campaigning against government injustice over education, they are attacking the vulnerable individual young people in schools which have predominantly working-class populations. It seems to me teacher trade unionism has never done that before.

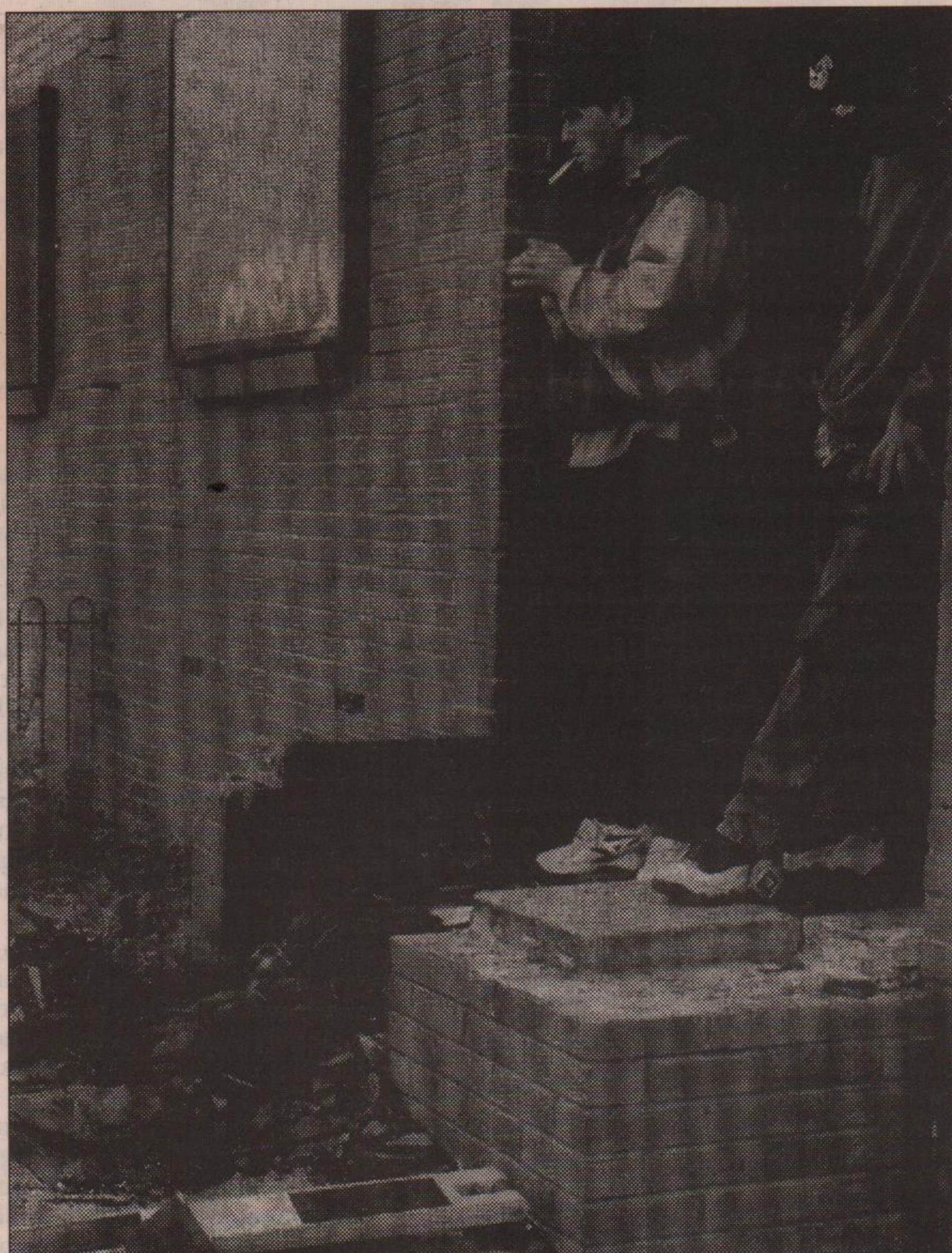
It's not just an unprofessional approach; it's a very mean and anti-child approach. The lives of the young people who have been singled out as victims, and the lives of their families have been shattered by the experience of the last 20 years. Instead of supporting them, the NAS is actually torturing them.

Look at the young boy placed out of school in Nottingham. He was one of their first targets. He had to go through the public humiliation of being called the worst student in Britain and his family were accused of being antisocial and completely negative about education.

Two weeks later the boy's father died. He was long-term unemployed because he was long-term sick, and the press tore him to pieces. If you remember the headline in the *Daily Mail* the day he died, it summed up the results of the NAS' action and the way it had been used by the Conservative press. The headline simply said: 'Yob's father dies'. Remember, they're talking about a 13-year-old working-class boy who needed help and support, not the barbs and nastiness that was thrust upon him by the NAS/UWT.

FRFI: Given that the Labour Party will continue with Tory policy and the trade unions are increasingly defending their own interests at the expense of the working class, where should we turn in order to build an education system for the working class?

CS: I'm not condemning teacher trade



'We did not want to expel students because we knew that they would be criminalised; they would not find places in other schools'

unionism. Far from it. I'm criticising one particular union's strategy, which I think is largely founded on a wish to increase its membership and act very opportunistically to do that. I think most teacher trade unionists, for example in the NUT, would be horrified and disgusted by the way the NAS are acting. I still think teacher trade unionism has an enormous role to play in the betterment of English education. Obviously, the role of the NUT is still of paramount importance and will continue to be so.

But I also think that working-class communities in the inner cities themselves, the power they can exert through their governing bodies and the alliances that can be made between progressive governing bodies and progressive teachers in schools, is a very, very important source of consolidation and change. I

think we're at a time when there is a developing hegemony across the education system and where the opportunities and spaces for protest and development of alternatives are getting much smaller. But at the same time, I think there are opportunities, and teachers, progressive governors and communities have to seize them and have to push their own local education authorities into taking more progressive positions. Education authorities are very often sandwiched between the progressive demands of local communities in inner cities and the reactionary constraints of government. At the moment, the government seems to be exerting far more power over them, preventing them from listening more closely to their own communities. So the communities have to exert their pressure with a greater determination and force. ■

## Education notes

# Racism and neglect for working class pupils

The storm of media-hyped moral panic about working class children is a substitute for real care about their educational provision, argues SUSAN DAVIDSON.

When The Ridings school in Calderdale, Yorkshire burst onto the front pages it had already been badly served for at least two years. As a local councillor put it, 'There are 17 secondary schools in Calderdale and The Ridings has the misfortune to be number 17'. Seven local comprehensive schools opted out of local authority control gaining extra money as an incentive from Whitehall. One result is that Calderdale Local Education Authority has lost nearly £20 million a year from its education budget. Another is the formation of an academic pecking order of schools which left The Ridings school with problems that needed proper resourcing. The school was promised £4 million plus to repair its crumbling buildings. This promise was broken. Only 8% of students gained more than five A-C GCSEs against a national average of 44.5%, and only 59% gained at least one A-G GCSE, leaving 41% completing secondary education with no public exam passes compared to a national average of 7.9%.

The official figures show 96 'special educational needs' students out of a total of 663, which is a far lower figure than that which appeared in the newspaper stories. Only 27 of these were 'statemented' which suggests that little effort had been made by the school to gain the extra help and finance which a statement of special need can bring. Combined with a truancy rate of 9.1% half-days missed compared to the Local Education average of 0.9%, a picture of neglect and poor administration emerges.

The demand by the NAS/UWT for permanent exclusion of the 60 most disruptive students was a totally irresponsible stance made to appeal to the reactionary 'moral' lobby. They were blaming the children. Militant action by teachers, together with parents and students, was certainly needed. They should have demanded proper resources for the children in school, however difficult those children may have been. Instead a rapid rescue was instituted, resources were given, children were expelled and a new 'tough' head appointed. The problem, however, will not go away.

### Shephard's lost sheep

The real scandal behind The Ridings is that this is what is happening to working class children in schools across the country. A total of 13,419 children were permanently excluded from schools in England in 1995/6; an 8% increase on the previous year. The new Education Bill promised by the Tories will make exclusions easier and reduce the right to appeal.

What happens to these children is of less concern to the government and the NAS/UWT than what they cost. Research has shown that exclusions cost local education authorities £14 million a year, together with £7 million police costs and £3 million for social services. Home tuition or special referral units cost an average £5,000 per child per year compared to £2,200 for a child in school. A recent Audit Commission report has estimated that the youth justice system, which mostly deals with excluded and truanting pupils, costs £1 billion a year and is overwhelmed by an increasing number of excluded pupils who say they have nowhere to go and nothing to do. Of all 15-year-

olds cautioned by the police last year, 69% were not attending or suspended from school. Even leaving them to rot costs money! Clearly a concern in a society where money and morality are intimately connected.

The exclusion policy also reflects the racism deep at the heart of the whole system. David Gilborn of London University's Institute of Education studied the comparative rates of exclusion for black and white students and shows that in some areas 'the exclusion of black young people has reached crisis point'. The national picture is that black exclusion rates are six times those for whites, but in some areas much higher.

A report by HMI David Moore on primary school exclusions shows that two thirds of those excluded are below average ability. There is a suggested strong link between bad behaviour and poor literacy. About two thirds of all exclusions are of children in care.

When the Commission for Racial Equality proposed that maximum efforts must be made to keep young people in school, Nigel de Gruchy, General Secretary of the NAS/UWT said they were 'out of their minds': 'I shudder to think of the costs in educational terms if these people were not excluded'. As for racism, it doesn't worry de Gruchy at all: 'I like to think we react in the same way to anyone presenting impossible problems of behaviour'.

What is in-built in the education system is intolerance, racism and a total lack of any care for working class children.

■ 'It costs the same to teach a bad lesson as a good lesson' said the Minister of Education, Gillian Shephard on BBC Radio 4. Not true. Knowingly not true and deliberately not true. A good lesson requires a specialist teacher, sufficient books and resources, adequate preparation time and in-class support where appropriate. In other words everything that the middle class expect and pay for, but that is denied to the children of the poor.

This fact is obvious to everyone except the Secretary of State, Chris Woodhead and Ofsted. All of them claim that smaller classes, for instance, would be a 'waste of resources'. Such austerity is of course confined to state schools which cater for working class children - Blair Jnr, Harman Jnr, etc deserve better. Now a study by Leicester University involving a swap between state primary teachers and prep school teachers has proved them wrong: the 'swap' brought immediate improvements in teaching standards in the smaller (11-13 pupils) prep school classes. Forced to teach classes of 30+, the prep school teachers were horrified: 'All of them said afterwards they wouldn't go back to that if you paid them double.'

While moralists talk about home-school contracts, single parents and caning, while Jack Straw weighs in with proposals for state-controlled bed-times and compulsory homework, what is needed is proper resourcing for schools and an end to the neglect and contempt for working class children. That is the only social responsibility that is meaningful. The rest is just hypocrisy. ■



The day to day reality of racism is vividly documented in this year's Newham Monitoring Project Report\*. It is a catalogue of racist attacks, police harassment and inactivity by Newham Council. In one typical case an Asian man was seriously assaulted outside his house. The police first failed to respond to his 999 call and then refused to come out. When he visited the police station he was told he should lobby Parliament for more money for the police and that he should ask his attacker for his name and address. There are dozens of such examples where the police give 'carte blanche to all racists to do as they please knowing they will get away with it'. (p18)

The police also get away with their racist attacks and even murders. In late 1994 Shiji Lapite died having been kicked, punched and bitten by police, finally dying from suffocation caused by a police choke-hold. Despite an inquest verdict of unlawful killing no officer has been prosecuted.

The situation in the areas of east London covered by the Newham Report is particularly dire as a result of the deadly combination of an increasingly violent core of white working class racists being mobilised by fascist organisations and protected by the police. But the situation is exacerbated by the way in which local authorities, usually Labour, have utterly abandoned the working class, black and white, but promise sections of white people marginal privileges, to keep them loyal. This has proved divisive and has encouraged the growth of racism.

Recently, local Social Services heads said that the cost of paying for asylum seekers would mean that they would be unable to finance community care for old people. The local authorities, most of them Labour, have again given the fascists the cards to play with.

The political context of racism is the stage imperialism has reached in the late 20th century. In the major capitalist countries there is a crisis with millions unemployed and savage cuts being made in welfare provision. The Thatcherite agenda, leaving the British working class with the worst welfare provision and the highest differentials in income between rich and poor, is currently being unleashed in Europe. Underlying the debate on European monetary union is the knowledge that state spending must be cut if such a union is to take place, but also the fear that without union there will be rivalries in Europe that could, as they have done twice this century, lead to war.

What is the capitalist system but a system of looting and banditry on so massive a scale that it appears normal? If you live amongst sharks no doubt shark-like behaviour appears normal. So it is accepted that at a time when the world has never been richer, the majority of people in the world - including a sizeable section of the people of the rich nations - are struggling to survive. And, in the poor nations, are not surviving. At a time when world arms spending is \$1.4m per minute, the spending per capita on the health of people in the poor countries is \$22 dollars per year. 130 million children in poor nations have no education. Two million children have died in recent years due to the absence of immunisation but since 1945 \$8,000 billion has been spent on nuclear weapons.

Are our rulers trying to tell us something? Yes - that mass slaughter to keep their system intact is necessary, health care is not. The wars that have made this century the most violent in human history (250 wars and 109,746,000 deaths) are the product of imperialism, the fight to maintain their superiority over each other through their domination over different regions of the world. Few question whether the US has the right to regularly bomb Baghdad or to fund the Taliban in Afghanistan. That's



# The roots of racism

This article is a shortened version of a speech on 'The Poisonous Roots of Racism' given at a London RCG Forum in October 1996 by MAXINE WILLIAMS.

their bit. Nobody questions the right of Germany to stealthily enlarge itself by the economic annexation of parts of Eastern Europe. That's their bit.

We are seeing the reality of imperialism: militarism, nationalism, poverty in the rich countries and starvation in the poor. Vicious trade terms are imposed on poor nations, terms that have virtually wiped Africa off the economic map of the world and led recently to the charming debate about whether some African nations should be privatised and sold to multinationals.

But in the eyes of those who rule the world this doesn't matter. After all, the victims are poor and black. Alongside the revision of the world between rich nations goes not just an increasing contempt and stony-heartedness about the poor of the world, but a rise in nationalism and racism. As the capitalist countries rival each other, they whip up patriotism and its twin, racism. Throughout Europe there have been moves to restrict immigration, to deny benefits to and deport asylum seekers. Britain's recent Asylum Act is in place and race checks by councils, hospitals, colleges and social security are now routine. Asylum seekers are forced onto the streets or onto local authority provision of the most basic kind. Often, as in Germany and in Britain, during the debate on the asylum bill, governments argue that the only way to stop the growth of fascism is to implement its racist programme for it.

And so we have a situation where the capitalists of the rich nations impoverish the poor nations and

then erect barriers to keep out refugees fleeing the resulting civil wars and poverty. The level of desperation created is illustrated by the finding of a dead body recently,



thought to be of someone who had stowed under an aircraft and fallen out as it landed.

These are the imperialist roots of racism. The systematic impoverishment of large areas of the world and the stigmatisation of those living there as inferior. Of course, now in a period when millions are unemployed across Europe, the new immigration controls aim to keep people out. It was a different story in the 1950s when these countries suffered from a labour shortage in low-paid jobs and encouraged immigration. But from the 1970s onwards no more immigrant labour was needed and controls multiplied until we had John Major saying in 1991: 'We must not be wide open to all comers sim-

ply because Paris, Rome or London seem more attractive than Bombay or Algiers.' A 'strong perimeter fence' must keep people out.

Immigration controls expose the roots of racism. A minority of the world lives well at the expense of billions in poverty. The post-war period, despite huge economic growth, did not alter that position. The gains in income made per person between 1964 and 1994 were 22 times higher in the rich nations. Racism is the form taken in imperialist countries by national oppression, reflecting and mirroring the oppressive relations of imperialism. And it is constantly being recreated, as the poor nations are held in their position both by economics and by force.

Of course the way in which these things are articulated has become more sophisticated in recent years. They would not today say, as for example the Labour Party programme said in 1917, 'nobody contends that the black races are fit to govern themselves', referring to them as the 'non-adult races'. Now when the big boys intervene in Africa or elsewhere they are more likely to call it Operation Help Everybody. But it is still done with guns.

And this relation has had profound consequences in the rich nations for the working class. A split was created there between a richer section of the working class, bribed with the profits of imperialism and other poorer sections of the working class. The labour parties and trade unions reacted with fierce racism to immigrant labour. By the late 1960s the TUC was calling for a quota of

immigrant labour in sections of industry and rejecting anti-discriminatory laws on the grounds that 'people being protected might be put in a privileged position'.

Only the language changes. The recent Asylum Act was not opposed by the Labour Party. As Jack Straw said: 'There is no need for this measure to be controversial. There is agreement across the floor... on the need to cut abuse and delays while meeting our international obligations. The issue is how this should be achieved, how that balance between firmness and fairness should be struck.' Labour's argument was that you could save £160m by shovelling out asylum seekers within three months.

That is in line with the whole of Labour history which has always placed the interests of British imperialism above all others. We do not need to wonder what a Labour government will be like - we remember they enthusiastically introduced the 1968 Immigration Act, that they used the police to suppress the Grunwick strikers, they used the police to assault anti-fascist demonstrators in Southall in 1979, when 1,000 people were injured and Blair Peach killed.

They will be like that today but worse. Look at Labour councils. They are festering cesspits of corruption, chaos and utter contempt for their working class residents. And as the poorer sections of whites feel abandoned and attacked, they will be encouraged to turn against the black people in their areas.

It is therefore vital that the socialist movement goes into those areas and takes up the issues of concern to black and white local people, actively fighting racism in the process. Anti-racism must mean not only assisting and aiding the struggle of black people against racism, it must mean fighting against the conditions which produce racism, fighting to build a socialist core in the working class - black and white.

Black people have a long tradition in Britain of organising to fight for their right to defend themselves. That struggle has its ups and downs, it has periods when it is more likely to be controlled by opportunists, Labour MPs and so on, and other periods when it is more in the hands of working class black people. It has a tradition strong enough to ensure that when black people die in police custody the community responds, often militantly. Today it is the Hillingdon strikers, mainly Asian women, taking on one of the longest struggles against the effects of privatisation in the health service.

The question for the left is not only to fight racism but also to raise the questions that have driven poor sections of the white working class into racist organisations. On housing for example, the history of local councils is shocking and they tried, in the East End, to overcome an absolute shortage of housing by a discriminatory policy of preferential housing for whites. We have to fight such divisive politics, to say that Labour has abandoned and betrayed the whole working class, that socialists are for housing for all and will fight for this. That socialists, unlike the recent Social Services statement I spoke of at the beginning, believe that both old people and asylum seekers must be protected and not forced to compete. We must fight the Labour councils who are saying this, force them to provide decent services or get out.

The roots of racism lie in the imperialist system and only by building a movement against this system, which has at its core opposition to racism and support for the interests of the working class, can we kill off those roots.

\*The Newham Monitoring Project Annual Report 1996, available from NMP, 382 Katherine Road, London E7 8NW.



## Imperialism and the Middle East

The Middle East is most crucial to the USA and Europe for its oil, a source of huge profits for multinational companies. In 1945 a US State Department Memorandum noted that the Middle East was:

'... a place where oil resources constitute a stupendous source of strategic power and one of the greatest prizes in world history.'

Presently the region accounts for 66 per cent of the world's known oil reserves. In comparison the US has only 4%. Saudi Arabia has estimated oil reserves of 252,000m barrels. The US has 35,000m. Is it at all surprising that the predatory powers are determined to dominate the region?

For centuries the Middle East was controlled by the Ottoman Empire. The latter's disintegration in 19th and 20th centuries coincided with the capitalist exploitation of Arab oil. So the European powers moved again to assert their power. After the First World War, a war for the division of the world among the colonial powers, a British General, General Sykes brazenly declared that:

'The French and the British satisfied each other's appetites after the First World War by serving up strips of Arab lands to each other.'

France took Syria and Lebanon. Britain took Iraq and Jordan and in 1922 Britain obtained the League of Nations Mandate over Palestine. The French and British re-entered the Middle East at a turbulent time. Oil, with its promise of stupendous wealth, was beginning to flow. But so was the tide of Arab nationalism. The Arab peoples had fought against Ottoman domination. They were not about to peacefully swap masters and therefore continued their struggle for national independence. In response the European powers began grooming the Zionist movement as a counterweight. They began to sponsor and support Zionist designs for the colonisation of Palestine.

## Zionism/Israel at the service of imperialist colonialism

Long before the creation of the Israeli state on 15 May 1948, a founder of Zionism, Theodore Herzl, said:

'For Europe we shall create there in Palestine an outpost against Asia, we shall be the vanguard of the civilised world against barbarism.'

Herzl went on to explain that:

'England with her possessions in Asia should be most interested in Zionism... The shortest route to India is by way of Palestine. And so I believe in England that the idea of Zionism, which is a colonial idea, should easily be understood.'

This then was the explicit function of those who set about building the state of Israel. The British were very quick to pick up the significance of Zionism. Sir Ronald Storrs, British governor of Palestine in the 1930s argued that:

'A Jewish state... could be for England a "little Jewish Ulster" in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism.'

The division of Ireland and the creation of 'Ulster' was, as is well known, a means of securing British domination over Ireland as a whole. Lord Melchet, a leading capitalist and founder of ICI, said in 1937 that:

'The advantages to the British Empire (of a Zionist state) are obvious. The security of... imperial interests can be better assured by a large European (Zionist) population than by the few battalions that can be spared.'

# ISRAEL

## ITS ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Despite Israel's repeated breaches of international law, the Zionist settlements in the West Bank for example, and despite its systematic flouting of United Nations resolutions, such as its continued occupation of South Lebanon, Israel receives unstinting support from the United States, Britain and the European Union as a whole. In this, the first of two articles, EDDIE ABRAHAMS explains why by examining the historical origins and the function of Israel in the Middle East. Israel is no ordinary state. It was artificially created and is externally sustained - to the tune of some \$3-4bn annually from the USA. It is a racist, colonial-settler state founded by Britain and the USA to safeguard their oil and other economic and military interests in the region.



1928: British troops attack Palestinians

## The colonisation of Palestine

In 1882 there were 24,000 Jews in Palestine. The Arab population numbered 450,000. In 1917 there were 60,000 Jews compared to 700,000 Arabs. Arabs owned 91% of the land of Palestine. Jews owned 4%. Others owned the rest. In the following decades this picture is dramatically reversed. Jews constituted 11% of the population of Palestine in 1922. By 1931 they were 17%. In 1936 the figure rises to 28% and in 1943 it reaches 31% of the population. In 1948 750,000 of the 1.3m Palestinians, ie over half the population, was forced to flee - to Jordan, Lebanon and the rest of the Arab world. In that same year the state of Israel was founded on 72% of the historic land of Palestine.

The process which led to this result was a typical colonial process of settlement requiring the conquest of foreign land and the expulsion of the indigenous settlers. It was a process carried out by means of trickery and deception and, where this failed, by force of arms. The first Zionist settlements in Palestine were funded by the Jewish bourgeoisie through organisations such as the Lovers of Zion formed in 1882, the Palestine Jewish Colonisation Company, formed by Lord Rothschild in 1883 and the World Zionist Organisation founded in 1897.

Zionist settlement began by purchasing land from Arab feudal lords and the expulsion of Palestinian peasants who came with the land. In their stead Jewish immigrants, from anywhere, some fleeing pogroms in Russia, others no more than adventurers from Europe, were put to work on the land. A rigid apartheid regime was at once instituted. Arabs were banned from working on land purchased by the Zionists. There was to

be no place in the Israeli state for any Palestinian. A Zionist leader Joseph Weitz was to state:

'Among ourselves it must be clear that there is no place in the country for both peoples together. With the Arabs we shall not achieve our aim of being an independent people in this country. Transfer the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries, transfer all of them, not one village or tribe should remain.'

This 'transfer', a veritable genocide, was accomplished with remorseless brutality, especially during the period of the Great Palestinian Uprising and General Strike of 1936 to 1939 and the period from 1943 to 1953.

## British imperialism and Zionism

During the 1936-39 Uprising and General Strike, British Labour and British imperialism played the decisive role in defending Zionism against the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations. A Palestinian peasant put it this way:

'The British were the cause of our catastrophe and the catastrophe was Zionism. So we asked the people: who is your first enemy? Britain. The second enemy? Zionism. Why? Because Britain is responsible. Britain protects them and persecutes us.'

In 1917 Britain had issued the Balfour Declaration endorsing the idea of a homeland for Jews with only 'protection for non-Jewish minorities'. But the defeat of the 1936-39 Uprising was the decisive period in the consolidation of Zionism and the development of the nucleus of the Zionist state as a military and economic unit. Such a unit

simply would not have emerged without British support. *Ha Eretz*, a prestigious Zionist paper said of the British role during the Uprising:

'Arab military strength was destroyed... and during the same period, the Jews, protected by the British, succeeded in building up their own strength.'

When the uprising began in April 1936 British forces responded immediately by massive repression, dynamiting Palestinian homes, criminalising Palestinian freedom fighters and killing 1,000 people by the end of the year. A British Settlement Police was formed which was in effect a Zionist militia, armed and trained by the British. By 1939 this force numbered 21,500 Zionists and formed the core of the Israeli army. The British also created the death squads, known as Special Night Squads. British authorities introduced repressive legislation, used to this day by the Israelis, including detention without trial and collective punishment. To counter the effects of the Palestinian General Strike the British systematically nurtured Zionist economic enterprises. When the uprising was finally defeated in 1939, 5,000 Palestinians had been murdered and 15,000 maimed and wounded. The British labour movement's reaction to the Uprising was typical of its response to all anti-imperialist movements. The TUC met and urged the British government:

'... to take all the necessary measures to bring the present disorders to an end.'

It was not for nothing that Golda Meir, herself a future Prime Minister, was to state:

'One of the greatest factors in helping us overcome our initial difficulties was the fact that from the very first, since 1917, we constantly received encouragement from the British labour movement.'

## Zionist terror 1945-1953

Where trickery or collaboration with the Arab ruling classes didn't succeed in driving the Palestinian peasants from their homes, fascist violence did. The Irgun and Stern Gangs specialised in terrorising Palestinians into fleeing the land. Indeed a systematic strategy of terror was devised in 1948 to drive out 750,000 Palestinians. It was known as Plan Dalet (D). It amounted to organised 'ethnic cleansing'. On 9 April 1948, for example, terrorist killers from Irgun led by Menachem Begin (a future Prime Minister) attacked the village of Deir Yassin and massacred 250 defenceless men, women and children. A witness, Red Cross Doctor de Reynier, said: 'All I could think of was the SS troops I had seen in Athens.' Begin sent his troops a message: 'Accept congratulations on this splendid act of conquest.'

Deir Yassin was no isolated act. In the village of Safsaf, 70 men were blindfolded and shot dead. In Elabun, Zionist commanders lined the inhabitants up in the village square, shouting 'You want to make war, here you have it!' and gunned down 13 people. In Safed, while there were no massacres, captured prisoners were tortured to death. A Zionist witness recalls how she saw an intelligence officer 'beat these (10) wounded men with a hoe until they bled to death.'

It was methods such as these that led to the Palestinians' exodus. A 'population transfer expert', one Schechtman, wrote:

'It is difficult to overestimate the tremendous role this list of abandoned property has played in the settlement of hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants who have reached Israel since 1948.'

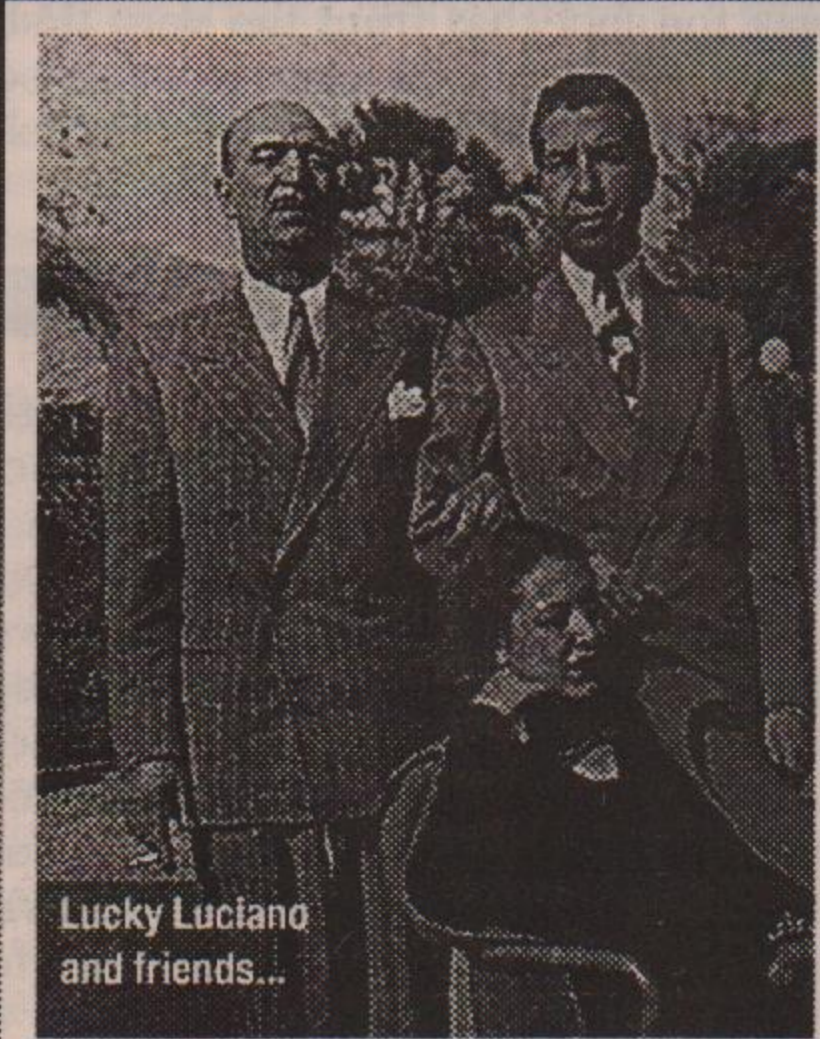
Indeed of the 370 Zionist Settlements built between 1948 and 1953, 350 were built on land confiscated from the Palestinians to accommodate the 684,000 settlers who arrived in the same period. Meanwhile, since 1948 385 Palestinian villages have been destroyed. Such are the foundations of the Israeli state; a state built on land confiscated from the Palestinians. In 1917, Jews owned but 4% of the land, Arabs 91%. In 1945, three years before the foundation of Israel, Zionists still owned only 14% of the land compared to the 80% owned by the Palestinians. By 1953 the figure was 73% compared to 25%. And after the Six Day war, with the conquest of the West Bank, Zionists controlled 84% to the Palestinians' 14%.

The Zionist's strategy during the 1948-53 period was accurately described by Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, and anticipates much of Zionist strategy today:

'The strategic objective was to destroy the urban community, which were the most organised and politically conscious sections of the Palestinian people. This was not done by house to house fighting inside the towns and cities, but by the conquest and destruction of the rural areas surrounding most of the towns... Deprived of transportation, food and raw materials, the urban communities underwent a process of disintegration, chaos and hunger which forced them to surrender.'

Such were the circumstances of the creation of the Israeli state, a state more or less imported into the Middle East by imperialist money and British arms. In the next issue we will examine its post-1948 role and its current significance to imperialism.





# LAND OF *flowing poison II*

'We gave the companies that worked with us the money to help them buyin' goods and all the stuff they needed to operate with. Then, if one of our manufacturers got onto us for dough that he could not pay back, and the guy had what looked like a good business, then we would become his partner... we actually kept a whole bunch of garment manufacturers alive, and we helped all them unions, the Ladies Garment Workers and the Amalgamated, organise the place.'

Thus Charles 'Lucky' Luciano recollected the 1930s Great Depression and the Mafia's efforts to support US capitalism in its time of need. Organised crime, drug trading, fraud and speculation flourish when capitalism is desperate to increase its profitability; they supplement normal activities and are essential to it. In the previous issue **TREVOR RAYNE** examined the heroin trade's role in imperialism's struggle against socialism. He continues by exploring the politics of narcotics.

Capitalism abhors a vacuum as it abhors low returns. Capitalist states use organised crime and the drugs trade to police communities and nations where their rule would be otherwise ineffective. Their strategy appears ambiguous: on the one hand the state retreats from or is excluded from a population, on the other it uses gangs and organised crime as auxiliaries to contain and subordinate the population and the drugs trade to legitimate violent intrusion into it.

From international politics to control of poor working class communities to enforcing prison discipline the capitalist state uses drugs. The illegality of drugs legitimises the state's invasion of countries, council estates and prison cells. By regulating the flow, the state secures allies in the midst of potential opponents, gathers intelligence on targets, criminalises entire populations while raising its favourites up to be imitated and forces the victims to compete among themselves, leaving the rule of the real criminal intact.

## The Caribbean

Approximately 40% of the cocaine smuggled into the USA now passes through the Caribbean. The US government has recently signed 'ship rider' or hot pursuit agreements with nine Caribbean states, enabling US ships and planes to operate in the territorial waters and airspace of other countries if a local official ('ship rider') is present. US aircraft can enter another country's airspace and force down 'suspicious' aircraft. Jamaica and Barbados have so far rejected US government pressure, refusing to sign such agreements. Consequently, they have been denied US aid tied to the agreements and warned by US government representatives that they face becoming safe-havens for drug smugglers.

In September President Clinton announced that aircraft, boats, training and equipment would be made available to the eastern Caribbean Regional Security Service as part of a \$112 million anti-drug programme, including supplies and training for Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela. The army and police of each one of these four countries profit from the drugs trade, but it provides a convenient cover for increased US military interference and presence where significant anti-imperialist movements exist. The Panamanian government was overthrown in 1989 and General Noriega kidnapped in the name of the 'war on drugs'.

## Los Angeles

Organised drug trafficking moved from the shadowy underbelly of US foreign policy in south east Asia to its centre with the Contras.

In 1984 US President Reagan won a Congressional vote resuming military supplies to the Nicaraguan Contras using fabricated evidence that the Sandinistas were drug smugglers,

evidence which even his own Drug Enforcement Agency later refuted. This August the Californian *San Jose Mercury News* ran an article showing that during the 1980s the CIA ran a drug ring with supporters of the former Nicaraguan dictator Somoza supplying a 'tidal wave' of crack cocaine to Los Angeles street gangs. Turnover reached \$2-3 million a day. Profits made one black middleman the 'first crack-dealing millionaire to rise from the streets of South Central Los Angeles', on the backs of some of the poorest most oppressed people in the USA. Other profits were recycled to fund the CIA-Contra war.

The Los Angeles black community is furious at this abuse of its youth, forcing the Director of the CIA to attempt a public relations retrieval by addressing them in Watts and promising a CIA investigation of the allegations. He fools no-one.

## British prisons

Drugs are being used to impose a regime of vicious retribution in British prisons. This is intended to terrorise the working class at a time of looming crisis for the ruling class.

A Penal Affairs Consortium report published this November states that 43% of prisoners used illegal drugs in the six months before imprisonment. Almost one in ten prisoners are described as 'drug dependent' and a survey of 452 released prisoners showed 55% of them to have used drugs in prison; of these one in five had taken heroin. Reporting on Styal Prison in 1995 HM Chief Inspector of Prisons said, 'Inmates asserted, and staff agreed, that drugs were freely available... it was also firmly asserted that a number of inmates were introduced to drugs for the first time and became addicted at Styal: "enter

and closed circuit TV to monitor visits. A pilot for the mandatory tests programme run between February 1995 and February 1996 produced 30% positive results. On average 11.5 days were added to sentences. The error range for the tests is put at 5-10%. Cannabis remains in the system ten times longer than heroin and cocaine. Unlike in the courts, where cannabis possession is treated more leniently than heroin and cocaine possession, in prison punishment does not vary with the drug detected!

## Violence made to order

In many US cities the state in its more recognisable forms has retreated: dilapidated housing, streets in disrepair, no welfare or service provision, lawlessness. Into such vacuums step the gangs and organised crime. This is the prospect before Britain.

During the last century the Italian state allowed local interests to control peasant unrest and protect private property in Sicily when there was a vacuum of power on the island. The state deferred its monopoly of violence to local estate owners who hired 'custodians' among whom were the Mafia. The Mafia came to control not only the peasants but their produce and supplies as well. During the Second World War the US government deferred its monopoly of violence to 'Lucky' Luciano who ran the New York docks for it: quelling labour unrest, imposing discipline, preventing sabotage etc. Organised crime has grown in the former USSR as central state power has weakened, particularly in the former republics.

In the abandoned areas of US cities there is competition over resources. Gangs are an attempt to improve the competitive position of their members in the scramble for resources. Such resources dwindle to drugs and prostitution. Given that these are illegal, the state disqualifies itself from enforcing order in disputes in these illegal markets. Order, as in the final analysis it does with the state itself, comes down to the ability to execute violence and the consequent effectiveness of the threat of violence. Wherever drugs penetrate into the abandoned and excluded working class there is violence and a proliferation of crime: violence to establish power in the market, crime to meet payments.

Sao Paolo's murder rate exceeds one an hour. Crack cocaine has swept through the *favelas*. Addicts who do not pay their suppliers can be killed for \$50, enough for a day's crack. Not all the drugs arriving in the Caribbean are in transit, some stay. On one estimate eight out of ten crimes committed in Trinidad and Tobago are narcotics related. Veronica Guerin,



In Ireland the working class has been fighting back against the disintegration of their communities

Crack cocaine is cheap and used by the poor working class. Powder cocaine is expensive and used by the middle class. In the USA possession of crack cocaine carries heavier sentences than the equivalent weight in powder. Since 1986 no white person has been convicted of crack cocaine possession. In 1983 57,975 drug offenders were in US gaols. By 1993 the figure was 353,564 of whom 90 per cent were black or Hispanic. In California one in four black males aged 18-24 and one in five Hispanic males of the same age are arrested for a felony or serious crime each year: systematic criminalisation of entire communities.

Nine Cuban exiles were revealed as having been recruited by the Republicans for the 1972 Watergate break-in. What the *Washington Post* (which did so much to expose Watergate and Nixon then but which defends the CIA against the *San Jose Mercury News* now) did not mention is that the Watergate team recruited by the White House were drug traffickers.

a shoplifter and leave an addict."

Prison staff see doped inmates as easier to control; drugs can easily be left in some awkward prisoner's cell, awaiting 'discovery'. They are lucrative to the supplier and those who control access to the captive market.

Mandatory drug testing has been enforced in all English and Welsh prisons since March 1996. There is a target of 60,000 drug tests a year. Testing involves testing on reception or transfer, targeted testing on a basis of 'reasonable suspicion', random tests, frequent testing of those deemed persistent misusers and risk-related testing for those who may be temporarily released etc. Prisoners, other than those tested on arrival, who prove positive or who refuse to give a urine sample face a range of disciplinary measures: loss of privileges, fines, extended sentences, removal of home leave and closed visits.

Closed visits involve a screen partition between the prisoner and the visitor. Alongside the closed visits are increased searching of prisoners and visitors, the use of sniffer dogs

'Capital eschews no profit, or very small profit, just as Nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum. With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10% will produce eagerness; 50% positive audacity; 100% will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300% and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged. If turbulence and strife will bring a profit, it will freely encourage both. Smuggling and the slave trade have amply proved all that is here stated.'

Cited in Karl Marx, *Capital Vol. 1.*

the Irish journalist murdered in June this year while investigating Ireland's drug trade, was the twelfth contract killing in Ireland tied to this trade in less than two years. No one has been convicted for any of them. In Liverpool in 1995 there were eleven drug related shootings in one month, drug trafficking offences were up 60% for the year, robberies up 35%. On 6 October *The Observer* reported from the former south Yorkshire mining village of Grimethorpe. Male unemployment is around 40%. Heroin consumption in south Yorkshire grew by 300% between 1992-95. Recorded crime in Grimethorpe also increased by 300% in the same period.

The depiction of Grimethorpe will be familiar to many in Britain sooner or later if not now. Stealing, places littered with discarded needles, dealers in flash cars, schoolchildren throwing temper tantrums and refusing any discussion of bad behaviour, teenagers with £40 a day habits and the simple rationale, 'It's cheaper and quicker to get out of your mind on heroin than it is on beer.'

The final part of Land of Flowing Poison will examine the culture and banking arrangements of the drug trade.

'The criminal is the man downtown who brings this drug into the country. Negroes can't bring drugs into this country. You don't have any boats. You don't have any airplanes. You don't have any diplomatic immunity. It is not you who is responsible for bringing in drugs. You're just a little tool that is used by the man downtown. The man that controls the drug traffic sits in city hall or he sits in the state house. Big shots who are respected, who function in high circles - those are the ones who control these things. And you and I will never strike at the root of it until we strike at the man downtown.'

Malcolm X



# Overcrowding and isolation

A quick glance at one newspaper's recent reporting of prison issues revealed the following: 'Prison chief backs weekend custody', 'Prison crisis spills into court cells', 'Crowded jails face return of slopping out' and 'Prisoners to be held at nuclear base'. In short, the system is again at bursting point. Leicester prison is 183% overcrowded, Shrewsbury 171%, Chelmsford 165%, Durham 154%, Canterbury, Swansea and Preston 153%, Birmingham and Lincoln 150%. Many of these are the same run-down local gaols which were crammed full in 1987, the year when police station cells and a disused army camp were used to house the overflow and the government resorted to keeping asylum-seekers on a prison ship moored at Harwich.

**P**rison Service Director General Richard Tilt recently stated that, with imprisonment increasing at its current rate, he will need a new prison every three weeks to keep pace. In 1987 a similar situation prevailed; however the response of the then Home Secretary Douglas Hurd looks positively liberal compared to that of Michael Howard. Hurd announced an early release scheme, which would cut the prison population (then around 51,000 - in accommodation built for 41,500) by 3,500. Howard, on the other hand, is introducing a US-style Crime Bill which will increase prison numbers by up to 15,000. The prison population of England and Wales is now 58,000 and rising at around 1,000 a month.

At the same time, the government is demanding the Prison Service cut expenditure by 13.5% over three years. 70% of the prison budget is spent on staffing but the POA still holds enough power to ensure every-



thing else gets axed first. Education and probation have already been slashed and Tilt admits that 'purposeful activity' and out-of-cell time

will be further cut and refurbishment plans frozen. The losers every time will be the prisoners.

The only aspect of imprisonment to receive increased financial support is 'security', which supposedly aims to prevent escapes and stop 'unauthorised items', in particular drugs, from being brought into prison.

The new Mandatory Drug Testing programme costs £4.2 million per annum and appears to have virtually no effect on the level of drug abuse in prison. The tests are humiliating and prisoners found 'guilty' or who refuse to comply are punished by the imposition of closed visits, even when there is no suggestion that drugs were received on a visit.

Intrusive searching of visitors has routinely been extended to small children and babies although the Prison Service refuses to say whether any of the 2,000 drug seizures during visits last year actually involved children. Such measures are clearly designed to isolate prisoners and intimidate visitors to the extent that contact will diminish or cease altogether. Such a programme is not really about 'security'; it is about the progressive destruction of prisoners' ties to the outside world and is utterly inhumane.

Nicki Jameson

On taking over as Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham asked the Inner London Probation Service to provide him with a 'snapshot of the prison population'. He was told that in 1994, at the moment of sentence:

- 75% of prisoners were unemployed
- 46% had drink problems
- 40% had served previous sentences
- 35% had drug problems
- 33% had been in care
- 28% had chronic housing problems
- 15% were mentally disordered
- 10% had attempted to commit suicide.

[Annual Report of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales, 1995-6]

## Durham women's wing deteriorating rapidly

The renewed focus on prison security has led to public expenditure in this area at the expense of all others. **CLARE BARSTOW** reports from H Wing, Durham, on the situation of women prisoners, which has deteriorated rapidly over the past year.

**T**his wing is very confined, enveloped within a men's local prison. Consequently, everything is in the one place: work, gym, cells, dinings area etc, and often leads to feelings of extreme claustrophobia. The only break is an hour's exercise a day but even this is just outside the wing.

In October 1995 family days were stopped. These were an opportunity for women to spend much-needed time with families and children, and helped relieve the boredom and loss of contact of a high-security unit.

Then volumetric control was introduced. As over half the women are lifers, all are doing five years or more, and they are unlikely to move around the system much, it seems inhumane to expect them to live out of two boxes, but they were forced to cut down on clothes, books, keepsakes, cassettes, correspondence and writing material. For many it meant the loss of treasured possessions and other items vital to long term prison survival.

There had always been a lot of provision for association but this has been drastically reduced and women are now locked in for two hours after lunch and one after tea. At weekends they are locked in from 5pm until the following morning.

The number of vulnerable women has increased rapidly and morale is extremely low, due to the recent changes. With more time spent in isolation, it is feared that suicide at-

tempts may not be detected in time.

Communication has also been further reduced. Women were entitled to two incoming calls a week, as many are a long way from their families and do not receive regular visits. This has been stopped.

Category A prisoners have particularly suffered: a new visiting room has been built for them where they have to communicate with visitors via a glass partition. As well as having to undergo a rigorous strip-search before and after each visit, they now have to submit the clothing they intend to wear, including underwear, an hour before the visit. This is degrading and will put many off having visits, as they do not want their families to be humiliated. That a mother cannot have physical contact with her child is traumatic.

Access to the canteen to choose items to purchase has ceased. Women are now forced to fill out a form which is sent to the main prison; the items are then bagged up and returned. Often items are unavailable or the wrong items are sent. We can no longer choose cards so are often given unsatisfactory ones or the same ones two weeks running. All this only increases the women's institutionalisation by denying them the responsibility of choice.

Cell searches are now more common and the search teams often negligent, regularly damaging items, for which women have been unable to

claim compensation. And personal items, such as letters or legal papers, often go missing in the search.

While there is a pilot group which helps the most vulnerable women on the wing with education and life skills, there is little counselling or medical help for others. Too often the response to depression is to prescribe a psychotropic drug which merely converts the recipient into a zombie. After a suicide attempt, the woman is often given no help and left to her own devices. Many seriously ill women do not receive the urgent treatment they need due to incompetence and lack of available staff to take them to hospital. This is likely to worsen as more staff are made redundant.

Education has been reduced to a maximum of five sessions per week. This is sexual discrimination as those on the male side have access to full-time education. Facilities are substandard and women are forced to carry out repetitive work in the workshop, serve food or clean in order to get paid a weekly wage.

If the situation on H Wing continues to deteriorate, it is unlikely that a fatality can be averted. With an extreme emphasis on security, it appears that care and rehabilitation are no longer on the agenda. Four deaths among women in custody in the past few months merely illustrate that the problem is prevalent throughout the system. Unless something is done rapidly, Durham may soon mirror the breakdown of Holloway in 1995. ■

### A view over the magpie's nest

This paper, subtitled 'Prisons within Prisons - long-term administrative segregation', is a well researched account of the ultimate methods of brutalisation used by the prison system. By Andrzy Jakubczyk and Paul D Ross, available from Larkin Publications, price £1, including p&p.

# Protest at Cornton Vale

On 23 November over 200 people, predominantly women, protested outside Cornton Vale women's prison near Stirling, as part of a co-ordinated action outside prisons to mark International Day against Violence against Women.



International Day against Violence against Women protest outside Cornton Vale women's prison

**T**he event was organised by the Campaign Against Domestic Violence to draw attention to over 70 women currently imprisoned for defending themselves against violent partners. The campaign is demanding a review of all these cases and a change in the law on provocation and self-defence, taking into account violence suffered at the hands of abusive men. Women like Sara Thornton have been given life sentences for killing violent partners, while Joseph McGrail received a suspended sentence for kicking his wife to death and offered 'nagging' as an excuse.

Scottish campaigners felt strongly that the suicides of five young women on remand at the Vale also constituted violence against women. Between June 1995 and September 1996 Kelly Holland, Arlene Elliot (both aged 17), Joanne O'Reilly, Angela Bolan and Denise Devine took their own lives.

The Scottish Prison Inspectorate report into Cornton Vale described the remand wing as 'a mixture between a casualty clearing station and a psychiatric ward', where 93 per cent of women were on suicide or medical observation. Prisoners are two or three to a cell, with controlled access to toilet facilities, locked up for most of the day, with little recreational activities: not even a TV at weekends, when most of the deaths happened. There have also been six attempted suicides in the last 15 months, including one the weekend before the protest.

Into this hell, Scottish judges, who were recently shown to be locking up young women for minor offences at an incredible rate, throw the most vulnerable in our society. The In-

spectorate report noted that 'many on remand were frail and undernourished'. Some women have psychiatric or drug problems and are in for fine defaulting or petty theft. They come mainly from Greater Glasgow, which has some of the worst living conditions in Europe. Poverty, hopelessness, heroin and Her Majesty's Prison combine to destroy these young lives.

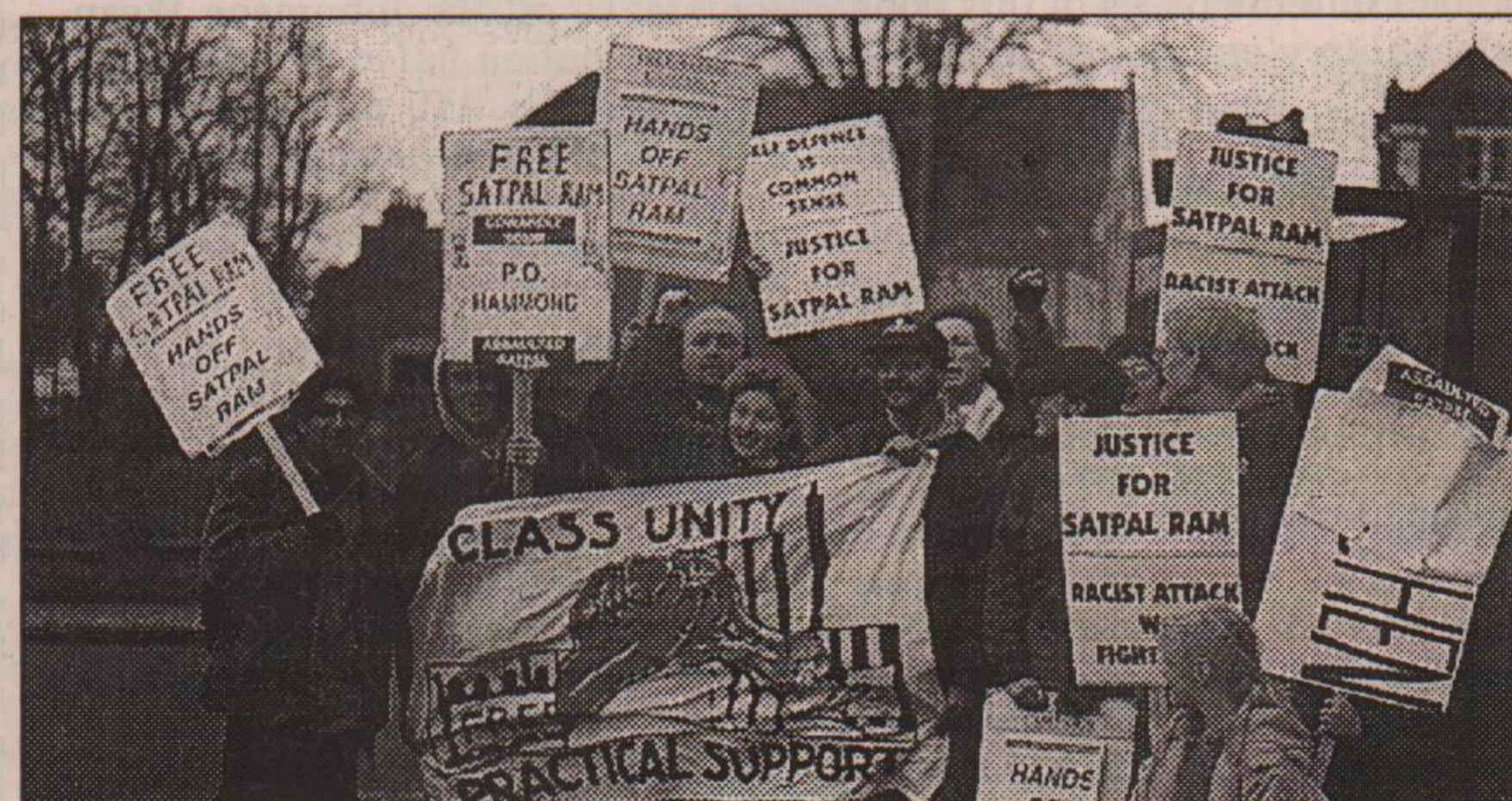
Demonstrators from Dundee, Dumbarton, Glasgow and Edinburgh assembled for the protest and, despite the new governor's claim that she supported the aims, we were not allowed to stand in the front car park. This was turned to our advantage as protesters marched to the perimeter fence to decorate it with flowers, poems, candles and banners of remembrance. Warders told us to get back and were ignored. Cops whined about 'prison property' and were ignored. The Scottish Militant Labour member on the megaphone suggested we come back and she too was ignored, as a spontaneous march took off round the fence. Drums and whistles carried by children broke the grim silence and chants of 'British Justice, No Justice' were heard, as prisoners came to the windows to wave and shout support and welcome.

Out of such spirited protest must come organisation. Prisoners, relatives and friends, supporters, socialists, feminists and others must unite to fight the criminalisation of young women and of all youth, and to oppose violence against women and the system which breeds it.

The Campaign Against Domestic Violence can be contacted at PO Box 2371, London, E1 5NQ

Mike Taylor

## Emergency picket for Satpal Ram



On 25 November hastily mobilised supporters protested noisily outside Brixton prison against the beating, three days earlier, of Satpal Ram, as he left the visiting room. Satpal has now been moved to HMP Gartree, a move he welcomes as it gets him off the 'circuit' of punishment blocks and nearer to his family. He sends greetings to FRFI readers, in and outside prison.



# Irish prisoners in Belmarsh

Following the abandonment of their trial, the six men charged with the 1994 escape from Whitemoor have now been moved to the Full Sutton Special Security Unit (SSU). Seven remand prisoners remain in the Belmarsh SSU, men who are innocent until proven guilty, but who must endure the most draconian conditions the British prison system has to offer, including mandatory closed visits. They recently issued a statement about their situation, extracts from which are reproduced below:

**O**n remand, unconvicted and hundreds of miles from our families, confined by financial restraints regarding visits, unable to communicate our love and affection to our loved ones, we find ourselves to a high degree severed from the outside world... We do not seek special treatment. All we ask is to be treated in the same way as thousands of other prisoners...

**Legal visits:** We have not been able to avail of full and open legal assistance. We have been committed for trial in an unprecedented scenario, where no legal advice has been available, nor instruction to lawyers possible, due to the ludicrous regime of 'closed visits'... If this situation continues we will be unable to conduct a legal defence and it will be impossible to obtain a fair trial.



**Domestic visits:** We, our partners and our children are being made to suffer unnecessarily because of the closed visits regime. Our relationships are being put under great strain and will invariably be damaged. Again, we are not asking for anything other than normal visitation rights. In normal circumstances, Irish families

can only afford to visit loved ones in English prisons a couple of times a year. So a few visits cannot be a major security issue, given that any visitor must go through a vetting process with the Irish/English Special Branch, Prison Services Security and the Home Office [and that we] are subjected to very elaborate security search procedures, including full body rub-down searches, full body metal-detecting portal, metal-detecting wand, full strip-searches, search of mouth, noses, ears and complete change of clothing.

There are no set criteria for the application of closed visits and as such we cannot appeal any decisions.

**Medical:** Since being imprisoned in Belmarsh, we have all experienced serious reluctance on the part of the administration to secure speedy medical attention even when prescribed by the prison doctor. The core problem seems to be reluctance to move prisoners outside the SSU. Several men who requested to see the dentist have been waiting two months or more, even when it has

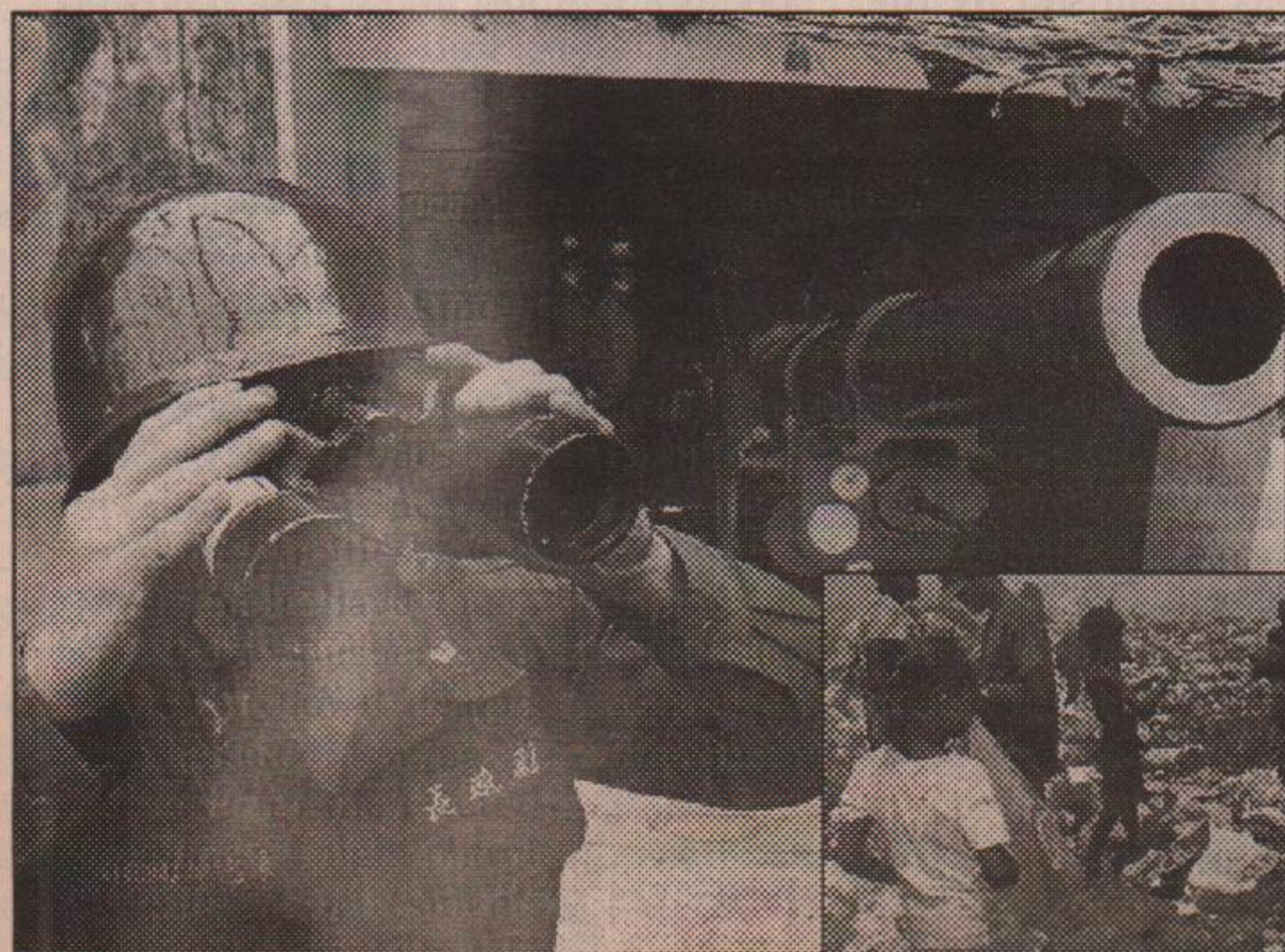
been obvious fillings have come out, resulting in severe pain. On at least three occasions the doctor has ordered X-rays of injuries and six weeks pass before they are taken. Requests for the optician are more than three months outstanding.

**General health:** The regime is very claustrophobic in that we are forbidden any social interaction outside our wing; no formal education classes are permitted; no cell hobbies or musical instruments; our exercise periods are held in cages.

No matter where we are (bar in individual cells) we are monitored on CCTV. All our movements, no matter how small, are monitored and logged. All our mannerisms and moods are monitored and logged.

A doctor who recently visited Irish prisoners in Belmarsh had this to say: 'The conditions... are those of a caged animal kept permanently indoors under artificial light and with insufficient room to exercise its muscles. A civilised society condemns conditions like these for animals in a zoo. It should condemn them for the containment of a human being'.

## REVIEWS



A fraction of the world's military expenditure would give these children a future

# Dealing in death

World Military and Social Expenditures 1996, 16th Edition, by Ruth Leger Sivard, World Priorities, Washington DC, \$7.50 (available from Campaign Against the Arms Trade for £7.50 + 55p p&p)

Have you ever wondered about how world military expenditure compares with expenditure on education and health? How much the US and Britain make on arms exports? How much underdeveloped nations are spending on arms imports? How countries rank on provision of education and health? How the desperate plight of people in underdeveloped nations could be alleviated with just a fraction of the money spent on arms in the imperialist nations? These are just some of the facts and figures crammed into the pages of this book. *World Military and Social Expenditures* (WMSE) has the precise up-to-date figures clearly laid out, making it a great source of reference. As you would expect from a publication with a foreword by a US Member of Congress, it fails to make the obvious conclusion that poverty will exist for as long as capitalism exists, but the facts speak for themselves.

In what is claimed to be an era of relative peace, world military expenditures in 1995 were more than \$1.4 million per minute, \$2 billion per day. Half the world's governments spend more on their military than on health; 25 spend more on the military than on education and 15, including Israel, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, spend more on the military than on health and education combined. The US military budget ex-

ceeds the total military budget of the 13 biggest spenders ranking below it and in 1994 US arms exports were well above the total arms exports of all 52 other exporting countries combined. And what is the product of this inconceivable amount of military expenditure? In the 20th century, there have been over 250 wars, with 109,746,000 war-related deaths: an average of more than 3,000 people every day of the century. Civilians are increasingly the major victims of war: between 1900 and 1950, they accounted for 50% of war-related deaths; this increased to 63% in the 1960s, 74% in the 1980s and even more today. In the 1990s, 90% of casualties of war are non-combatants.

In May this year, UN delegates at a conference on the Inhumane Weapons Convention failed to agree a ban on landmines. 110 million of these vicious devices are strewn across the world, about one for every 50 people, causing more than 70 deaths or injuries a day. The victims are overwhelmingly civilian, many of them killed or maimed long after war in the area has ended. Anti-personnel mines have been produced in 50 countries, with 350 models currently available, including 'bounding fragmentation' mines that maximise injuries, mines designed to explode if an attempt is made to disable them, and, most disgustingly, mines that look like toys to appeal to children, such 'innovations' demonstrating, as WMSE says, 'a truly perverse application of technology'. Mine clearance is now big business, with many former mine-making and mine-laying

companies now selling themselves as mine-clearing experts. With a sale price of as little as \$3 but removal charges of \$200-\$1,000 per mine, it's clear where the profits are to be made. In 1993, it is estimated that 80,000 mines were cleared; this is against 2.5 million new mines being laid and no ban on their use forthcoming.

As WMSE points out, ordinary people don't want spending to be made on 'defence': 'the threats that touch people in their daily lives [are] hunger, illness, joblessness, crime'. We live in a world where 'one person in five is permitted to remain hungry and to die early for want of food, safe drinking water and basic health care'. Nearly half of all deaths in the underdeveloped nations are due to communicable diseases. Diarrhoeal illnesses killed 3 million people in 1995; 80% were children. Malaria causes 2 million deaths a year, 90% of them in Africa. 585,000 women die in childbirth every year, 99% in underdeveloped nations: maternal mortality there is 64 times higher than in imperialist nations. Life expectancy in Africa as a whole is 53 years and falling; the average for imperialist nations is 77 years and increasing further.

The US today, 'in contrast to its commanding lead in virtually all aspects of military power... now ranks 8 in Economic/Social Standing... in health expenditures per capita it stands eighth in rank and in education... ninth'. Its rank in terms of mortality rates is even lower. By number of students per teacher, the USA ranks 39th, behind the UK in 27th place and Cuba in 11th. With 255 people per physician, Cuba ranks 11th in the world, behind only the nations of the former USSR and Spain; the US ranks 39th (again!) and the UK 55th. Between 1984 and 1993 the US devoted 72% of its research budget to military objectives. Congress keeps adding more to the \$300 billion military budget than the administration is requesting: \$7 billion extra in 1996 and a predicted \$12 billion in 1997, not surprisingly 'for programs produced in the districts of key members of Congress'. Meanwhile, new welfare legislation passed by Congress in August 1996 aims to squeeze federal spending by about \$10 billion a year by gutting the food stamp program, stopping welfare payments to adults out of work for more than two years and putting a lifetime limit of five years on payments to any family. These are the conditions in the world's unchallenged military and economic superpower. They'll be coming to you soon.

Zoe Green

# 25 Years on the Move

This 70-page pamphlet gives an insight into the Pennsylvania-based organisation, MOVE, which for 25 years has been ruthlessly persecuted by the US state. MOVE's most famous supporter is probably black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal who is still on death row, fighting to overturn his conviction for the murder of a Philadelphia police officer in 1982.

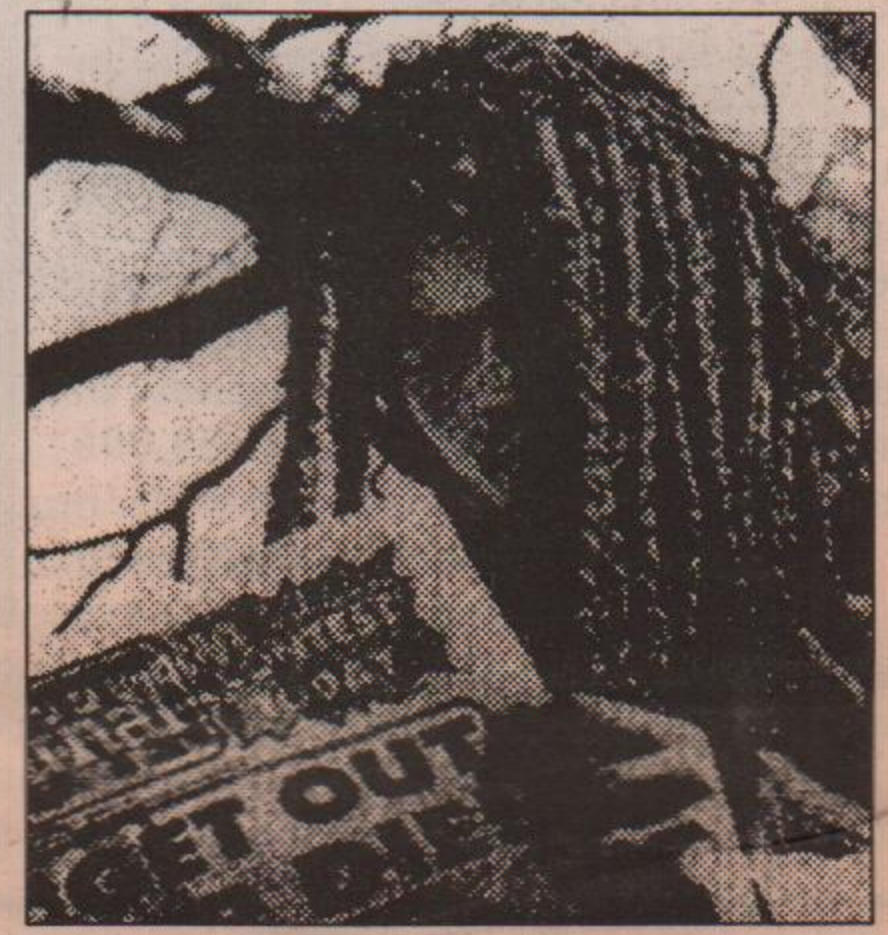
*25 Years on the MOVE* did not answer all my questions about how MOVE developed and who exactly its founder John Africa is or was. We do learn that he was also known as Vincent Africa and was acquitted in a 1981 court case in which he ignored the charges, slept through the prosecution evidence and expounded MOVE's philosophy in his defence. But the precise beginnings of MOVE are passed over in the single sentence: 'MOVE surfaced in Philadelphia during the early 1970s'.

MOVE's philosophy is based on respect for all life. MOVE people are vegetarian and do not smoke, drink or take drugs. They are anti-capitalist and environmentalist, believe in a God and a 'natural law', above man-made law, live together as a big family but form monogamous couples and value their children, oppose medical intervention in childbirth and appear also to be anti-abortion.

But whether you think such a credo is progressive or reactionary is only part of the story. MOVE was not simply an exercise in alternative living; its people considered themselves to be revolutionaries and acted as such. They organised demonstrations and protested at meetings. In his own book *Live from death row*, Mumia Abu-Jamal recounts his first encounter with MOVE - when they were picketing a Jesse Jackson meeting.

MOVE members did not fear arrest, prosecution or imprisonment. Instead they turned court cases to their advantage, filed counter-charges against the system and focused public attention onto police brutality. Enraged by this uncompromising activism, Mayor Frank Rizzo, formerly the city's police commissioner, began a vendetta which would result in 17 deaths, 15 long gaol sentences and one death sentence.

The most brutal and internationally infamous attack on MOVE took place on 13 May 1985. It was a full scale military assault, using tear-gas, water-cannon, shotguns, Uzis, M16s, silenced weapons, Browning Automatic Rifles, M60 machine-guns, a



A MOVE member reads about the impending blockade and military style assault

20mm anti-tank gun and a 50-calibre machine gun. The police flooded the area with tear-gas and fired over 10,000 rounds of ammunition at MOVE's house. They attempted to blast through the walls with military explosives and finally used a helicopter to drop a bomb on the roof. The resultant fire destroyed the entire block of 60 houses and killed six MOVE adults and five children. Only one child and one adult, Ramona Africa, survived. She was subsequently tried, convicted and sentenced to seven years for riot and conspiracy. No police officers were ever prosecuted for the massacre.

*25 Years on the MOVE* contains lots of pictures of MOVE, their resistance and the brutality they have been subjected to. Perhaps the most shocking photograph is the last one, which shows three smiling children; the caption reads: 'Tomaso, Tree and Netta Africa (All murdered by the state of Philadelphia May 13 1985)'.

MOVE's political prisoners are: Delbert Orr Africa AM-4985 and William Phillips Africa AM-4984, Drawer K, Dallas, PA 18612-0286, USA; Michael Davis Africa AM-4973 and Charles Sims Africa AM-4975, PO Box 244, Graterford, PA 19426-0244, USA; Edward Goodman Africa AM-4974, PO Box 200, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0200, USA; Debbie Sims Africa #00-6307, Merle Austin Africa #00-6306, Janet Holloway Africa #00-6308, Janine Phillips Africa #00-6309, 451 Fullerton Avenue, Cambridge Springs, PA 16403-1238, USA; Mumia Abu-Jamal Africa AM-8335, 1040 E Roy Furman Highway, Waynesburg, PA 15370-8090, USA.

*25 Years on the MOVE* is available from Friends of MOVE, PO Box 3069, London, SW9 8LU, price £3 including p&p.

Nicki Jameson



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**Disaster for the Afghan people**

The reactionary brigand government of Afghanistan has been replaced by an even more reactionary gang of brigands. The city of Kabul lies in ruins. Since the Taliban's grip on power does not cover the whole country and is unlikely ever to do so, the unfortunate people of Afghanistan will continue to suffer destructive civil war for the foreseeable future.

Apart from their savage murder of former President Najibullah and his comrades, the Taliban's first actions in Kabul have been to wipe out any vestigial rights for women and to smash anything which does not fit in with their medieval mentality.

The 'Mujaheddin' gangs who have destroyed Afghanistan have all along been supported by western imperialist powers and by neighbouring reactionaries Iran and Pakistan, while the money to fund their weapons purchases comes from sales of opium.

However, the guilt for supporting these bandits must be shared by the leftists - Trotskyists, Maoists and Eurocommunists - who condemned the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan and portrayed the Mujaheddin as 'freedom fighters'. The



Afghan women, liberated under the former Soviet-backed government, are today forced back to the veil.

disastrous result of their victory for the workers, peasants and above all the women of Afghanistan is now plain for all to see.

Most guilty of all amongst the world's left forces is the Chinese Communist Party, because China's support for the Afghan counterrevolutionaries (on the grounds of 'resisting Soviet hegemonism') was of far greater substance than that of the puny groups in the West. The Autonomous Region in northwest China has

already experienced terrorist acts carried out by Islamic separatists and such incidents may well increase following the rise of the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Among the British left, only a minority of organisations took the side of the Soviet-backed former Afghan government. These included the Revolutionary Communist Group/FRFI, the New Communist Party, non-Euro-communist factions in the Communist Party such as the Leninist and *Morning Star* (now CPB) factions and, alone amongst the Trotskyists, the Spartacist Tendency. All the other leftists, who think of themselves as defenders of women's and workers' rights, should look at the sorry state of Afghanistan today and examine their consciences.

JONATHAN COHEN  
Taiwan, China

**Delegation to People's Korea**

A delegation from the Society for Friendship with Korea in London recently visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. What we saw there exposes the lies of the western imperialist media regarding life in the DPRK - for example, the recent reports that the entire population of 22 million is starving and faces a famine situation. We were there in the harvest period and saw for ourselves Korean peasants harvesting fields of green vegetables and rice. Recent floods did cause a lot of damage, but the joint efforts of the Korean workers, peasants, students and the people's army have successfully repaired the damage and built dams to cope with future natural disasters.

The political ideology of the ruling Workers Party of Korea (WPK), which has three million members, is the Juche idea - that man is the master of everything and decides everything. On the strength of this, man throws off the fetters of nature, opposes subjugation by feudalism, capitalism and imperialism, and puts everything at the service of humanity. Therefore socialist construction can succeed and a new society based on people's needs, not profit, can be built. The DPRK has an independent



national economy and complete self-reliance in defence. After the 1950-53 war, priority was given to developing heavy industry alongside light industry and agriculture. The socialist economy was constructed using the country's own raw materials, its technicians and fuel.

We stayed in the capital, Pyongyang. During the war, it was indiscriminately bombed over 1,400 times with 428,000 bombs by the US-led alliance. The White House boasted at the time that Pyongyang would not rise again in 100 years. 40 years later, we were able to witness for ourselves how wonderful Pyongyang looks today: modern housing blocks line the clean, pollution-free streets; there are shops,

theatres, stadiums, gymnasiums, swimming pools, people's palaces, circuses and study houses available to every citizen.

Education and health care is free and available to the entire population. What is imperialism's response to such human progress and development? Clinton recently stated that if the DPRK continued to develop its nuclear industry, 'We'd have no option but to destroy North Korea.' Our visit to Panmunjom village in the 'demilitarised' zone was proof enough that Clinton isn't bluffing as we witnessed the provocative behaviour of the GIs and military police. The zone - 246km long and 4km wide - is now militarised. The US have mustered over 1,000 nuclear bombs, despatched Patriot missile batteries, thousands of extra attack troops and hi-tech fighter bombers. This war machine, aimed at socialist Korea, in effect enforces a blockade, similar to that of Cuba and of Iraq.

The Society for Friendship with Korea works to build a movement in solidarity with the DPRK and supports workers' struggles in South Korea against the puppet regime of Kim Young Sam. We urge people in Britain to join us and support our activities.

PAUL COWEN  
Society for Friendship with Korea  
PO Box 9135, London W3 6DG

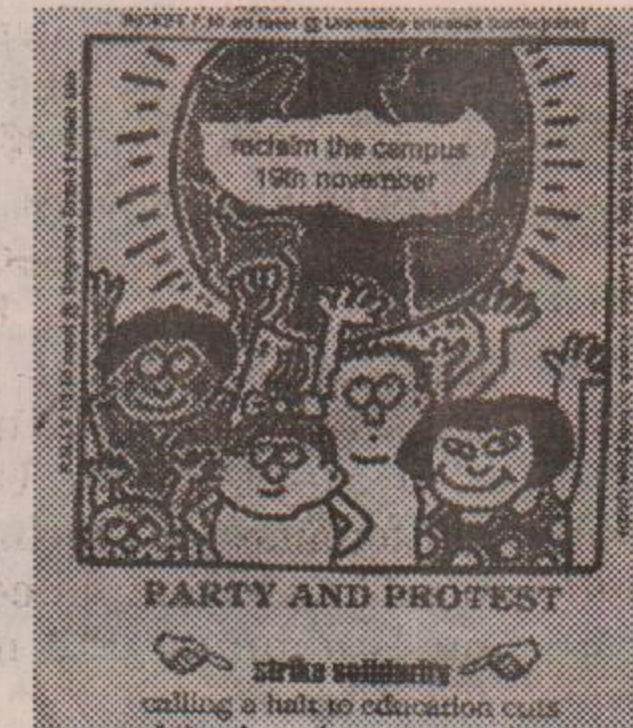
**Reclaim the future: party and protest**

In the tradition of Direct Action, the students of Sussex University reclaimed the campus on Tuesday 19 November. A protest party was held in solidarity with striking university workers.

All workers, porters, kitchen staff and lecturers had balloted to strike after a rejection of a 1.5% wage increase - half the rate of inflation. This insult was added to the injury of rising levels of job insecurity and stress in higher education.

Students at Sussex University supported the strike in unity. Students are suffering too. Grants have been cut by 30%, loans have been introduced and the threat of tuition fees looms. We face the same enemy.

We wanted to do more than stay at home in sympathy, so we organised a Direct Action response to the strike call, bringing students together to say we have had enough. Our so-called representatives, the NUS, have even abandoned a commitment to free education in their eagerness to support Blair's New Labour Party.



The day's action consisted of three events: a picket line at the campus entrance at 7.30am, a rally at 12.30 in Brighton and a party and protest at a central location on campus at 2pm. The Refectory was occupied at 2pm, decorated with banners and a sound system was set up. Food and tea were provided by the Anarchist Teapot and stalls were set up by Justice?, Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!, the Gay and Lesbian Society and the Brighton Autonomous Group. Over 400 students joined the celebration of defiance as they danced from 2pm to 2am with support from Brighton's finest DJs, two bands and more than 20 drummers.

ANGRY STUDENTS  
Sussex University

**Miscarriage of justice**

Under British law, an accused person has the right to unimpeded legal advice? Wrong! All Irish remand prisoners in Belmarsh SSU prison are subjected to 'closed' legal visits.

Under British prison rules, all prisoners have the right to reasonable facilities to conduct a legal defence? Wrong! My solicitor Gareth Peirce has told English courts repeatedly that it is impossible to conduct any legal defence under closed visits.

All remand prisoners in English jails are subjected to closed legal visits? Wrong! Out of a prison population of 56,000, there are a total of 11 remand prisoners subjected to closed visits.

Anti-Irish discrimination does not exist in the English legal and prison system? Wrong! All 11 remand prisoners subjected to closed visits are Irish.

If Irish people are impeded from making a legal defence, can they have a fair trial? No! Coincidence??

GERRY HANRATTY  
HMP Belmarsh

**Barcelona youth fight homelessness**

While in the UK some organisations have begun a campaign to find housing for the 365,000 homeless, in Barcelona the police, on the orders of the state governor and the city mayor, have launched a campaign that will increase the number of homeless here.

This story is not some sad cinema script, but it takes place in a cinema. Seven months ago, the former 'Cine Princesa', abandoned since the Seventies, was occupied by young homeless people. Working alongside other people, they began to create, in the heart of Barcelona, a centre of alternative culture within the neighbourhood and a home to live in. It was hard work as the building was ruined and needed extensive reconstruction. Their neighbours helped them and some local residents joined the young people in their venture. Within weeks, 'El Cine' became known as a new place where you could find debates about different issues, poetry, plays, concerts of different kinds of music - a place where everyone could get involved as

protagonists in their own stories.

But the establishment doesn't like people becoming protagonists if the script is written by anyone other than itself and they can't control it. So, on 28 October, 150 armed police, supported by helicopters, violently ejected the young people from the building. 15 people were injured and 48 arrested. Some newspapers compared the police actions with those that occurred under the former dictatorship.

However, this story is not unusual in Spain. Over the last few years there have been many such cases. What is new is the level of support of the population for those who occupy empty and abandoned homes. It has to be taken into account that over 50% of the Spanish population aged 30 still live with their parents, according to an official survey.

Is it our right to occupy empty spaces? What comes first - life with dignity, or 'property'? Can there be social justice if some people are homeless while others own empty houses just to speculate?

One of the slogans painted on the walls of the El Cine was: 'It is necessary to revive dead spaces'. This is another battle in the long war to live, against this system.

ROC DESTRALER, HELENA HAMSAS,  
PEDRO GARNATXA  
Barcelona, Spain

**Break with Labour**

CPSA Left Unity is a supposed left alliance within the union. It is a motley collection of SWP, Militant Tendency and other assorted non-aligned Trotskyists. It purports to be to the left of the National Moderate Group and the Democratic Left, who are right-wing, die-hard Blairite Labour Party members. But fundamentally, there is no difference. In the Left Unity 'What we stand for' statement it says: 'We support the CPSA taking its place alongside all the major unions by reaffiliation to the Labour Party'.

Until they actually make a break with the Labour Party and realise that the CPSA must remain independent from all parliamentary parties, they are going nowhere. The Labour Party will not reverse any of the Tory Party anti-trade union laws or reverse the wholesale privatisation of the welfare state or the NHS.

I have stood as an independent candidate on two occasions, clearly stating my opposition to the union's affiliation to the Labour Party and have won some 2,000 votes.

PAM ROBINSON  
South London

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# FIGHT RACISM

## FIGHT IMPERIALISM

### The Christian morals of Jack Straw

This is New Labour's new morality: one founded on a new puritanism, directed exclusively at the working class, especially its youth. Jack Straw, a devout Christian and equally devoted enemy of 'winos, junkies and squeegee merchants', now wants a public debate on children's bed-time. He is proposing schemes for child protection, curfews to keep children under 10 off the streets at night. 'Turning the tide of delinquency and crime', he says, 'means looking at the early years of people's lives, their upbringing and the way parental responsibilities are discharged'. Of course New Labour will not be looking at how poverty, unemployment, the environment in sink schools or disintegrating estates may affect 'the early years of people's lives' since this would involve raising public expenditure for the benefit of the working class, and not cutting it for the benefit of the middle class.

As it enters the morality debate so New Labour declares itself more and more openly for capital and privilege. At the foundation of its 'morality' are the 'flexible labour markets' which according to Tony Blair 'are an important and permanent feature in raising efficiency and ultimately living standards'. We are entitled to ask: what are the consequences of such 'flexible labour markets'? The existence of an estimated 250 million child workers throughout the world according to the International Labour Organisation is one. Another is seen in the nearly one in three full-time employees who work more than 46 hours per week in Britain, and the 22 per cent who work more than 48 hours as compared with the 7 per cent in Germany and the 6 per cent in France. In fact, of all hours worked beyond the 48-hour threshold within the whole European Union, British workers account for more than half, yet only one in four will benefit from the recent EU restriction. This is because the remainder will be working the extra hours 'voluntarily' - that is, in the form of overtime to increase the pittance they earn on the basic weekly wage.

## Liverpool dockers fight on

Since being sacked on 25 September last year, the Liverpool dockers and their supporters have continued to fight for their jobs and against the casualisation of dock work. They have waged a major campaign both nationally and internationally against powerful employers and their allies in government and the media.

They are picketing the docks every day, one day a week being a women's picket. They have held protests outside the homes of the directors of Mersey Docks and in September held a joint day of action with Reclaim the Streets and other activists. Indeed, they have 'gone out to the people', as did the striking miners in the 1980s, to gather support and spread the lessons of their struggle.

They are an embarrassment both to their union, the TGWU, which has refused to make the dispute official, and to New Labour, which prefers not to mention them. In John Pilger's splendid *Guardian* article on the struggle, he describes his unsuccessful attempts to get comments



# New Labour, New moral tyranny

In the editorial to the last issue, we argued that 'New Labour intends to destroy state welfare as we know it'. As if on cue, Gordon Brown announced to the CBI

that the challenge of the 1990s would be to reform fundamentally 'the British welfare state for new times, starting with a programme of moving the young and long-term unemployed from welfare to work'. He continued 'The task is nothing less than to rebuild the welfare state around the work ethic and opportunity for all'; Labour would offer the young unemployed options of work or training 'but not the option of staying at home on benefits and doing nothing.' **ROBERT CLOUGH** reports.

### Labour's got sleaze too

Labour candidates are falling thick and fast. David Hurst, until last September the Parliamentary candidate for Bath, was gaoled recently for forging cheques. He also claimed Housing and Unemployment Benefit while working. Perhaps fearless fraudbuster Frank Field should have had a word. Hurst was local Labour treasurer from 1992: £30,000 is missing from the funds. Apparently the fraud was used to finance a lavish lifestyle to 'impress party bosses'. Well, well.

Labour's candidate for the Wirral South by-election resigned when his former girlfriend alleged that he was violent both towards her and to his former wife. Dr Ian Wingfield is a Southward Labour councillor and a full-time official of the Union of Communication Workers.

Yep, New Labour, same old sleaze.

and fiercely anti-communist head of the Transport and General Workers. MacDonald took only a small number of Labour politicians with him into an open alliance with the Tories. By contrast, however, Blair will head a government which is committed to a programme far more reactionary than MacDonald's. The state of the 'official labour movement' - the trade unions or the Labour Party - is such that there is no-one who could play the Bevin role. There is no independent working class movement to which they would be forced to respond.

### Family morals

Blair's moral crusade also seeks to make the family the centre of a reconstructed society. 'I have no doubt that the breakdown in law and order is intimately linked to the break-up of a strong sense of community', he says, 'and the break-up of community in turn is, to a crucial degree, consequent on the breakdown in family life... It is largely from family discipline that social discipline and a sense of responsibility is learned.' The very language itself is oppressive, and is directed unrelentingly at the working class. 'No decent society can exist with an underclass set apart

from the mainstream. To rebuild communities we need to provide opportunities and demand responsibility,' he writes. But the only opportunities 'flexible labour markets' create for the working class are unemployment, low pay, temporary or part-time employment for some, exhaustingly long hours for others. Such markets cannot exist without regimentation, oppression and the destruction of basic employment rights. And New Labour is committed to all of these through its support for Tory trade union laws, for the equally moral two-year qualification period for employment rights, and

for the extremely moral Job Seeker's Allowance. Blair's use of the term 'underclass' is all part of this, in that it enables New Labour to put the working class outside 'normal' society, degrade it into an object of fear and loathing; a stratum which needs to be constantly punished, its children birched or caned into subjection.

### Millionaire morals

When John Pilger writes that a Blair government 'is likely to be more reactionary, nastier and a greater threat to the very notion of democracy than its Tory predecessor', he is speaking an unpalatable truth for the rest of the left. New Labour will bring with it a tyranny which the left completely underestimates. They do not appreciate the depth of the crisis that will make New Labour a dictatorship elected by the middle class to preserve its sense of privilege and security against the 'mob'. Yet this is what the Socialist Workers' Party would have us vote for! Labour has now shelved its proposals for a Bill of Rights. It has shelved proposals to reform the House of Lords. Instead we are likely to have Straw's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities - rights for the privileged, and responsibilities for the working class to accept a hopeless future. That is why millionaires such as Hollick, the owner of the Express newspapers, Hamlyn and Pearson queue up to fund it, and why we now have the grotesque spectacle of Blair's private office receiving £500,000 each year in 'anonymous' private donations. All we can assume is that their morality must be of a very different order to that of the 'underclass'.

Blair is now compared to Ramsay MacDonald, who also wrote endlessly about Christian or ethical socialism. MacDonald broke with Labour in 1931 when his Cabinet refused by a slender majority to impose draconian public spending cuts. His major opponent at the time was Ernest Bevin, the reactionary

### The morals of privilege

Blair's morality is grounded in the parasitic nature of British imperialism and serves to justify the middle class's individualism, its hedonist lifestyle. It has come to expect king prawns as part of its normal diet, whatever ecological destruction their farming entails - of mangrove swamps in Ecuador or in Bangladesh on the other side of the world. Never mind that the workers live in starvation as they produce these tasty morsels. Never mind that Zimbabwe and Kenya have to import basic foodstuffs for their population whilst exporting beans, strawberries and fresh flowers for the British middle class all year round. Never mind the poverty and oppression that exist throughout the Third World - so long as they provide cheap holidays on the one hand, and markets for British arms companies on the other. Satisfying the aspirations of the middle class has caused untold suffering and misery coupled with global ecological destruction.

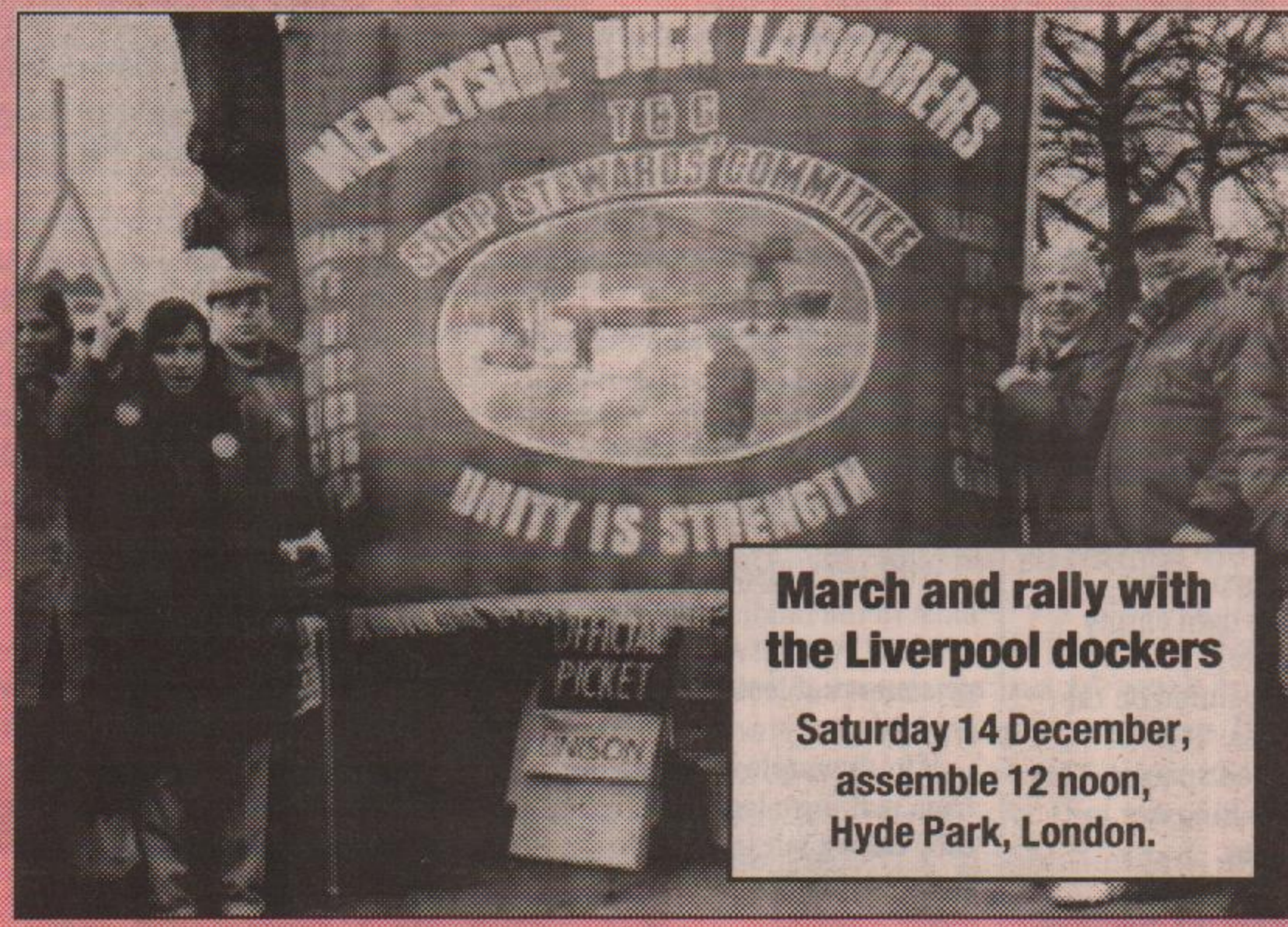
Old Labour represented an upper stratum of the working class which used its collective power to protect its privileged position vis-à-vis the rest of the working class and the oppressed throughout the world. That collectivism found its political expression in the social chauvinist ideology of Labourism. New Labour also represents a privileged stratum, but one which is characterised by complete egoism and anti-collectivism of any variety. Hence its ideology has had to change to one that espouses individual choice for those who can afford it, tyranny for those who cannot and who may offer collective resistance in response. Old Labour's heyday came when Britain was the dominant or at least the second imperialist power. New Labour was born in the period of British imperialism's accelerating decline. This is the key factor that will drive New Labour to a new tyranny - more oppressive than any of its Old Labour predecessors. ■

on the dockers' fight from the TGWU as a 'farcaical exercise'. Ditto the TUC, which apparently 'never comments on disputes'.

The dockers have felt the icy breath of the Labour Party and TUC, and have

turned to other forces which have an interest in the dockers actually winning. They have now called a march and rally in London on 14 December, calling for all 'who are fighting in different struggles for the right of millions of people to live a decent life' to speak with one voice.

Maxine Williams



### March and rally with the Liverpool dockers

Saturday 14 December, assemble 12 noon, Hyde Park, London.