

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 155 June/July 2000

(unwaged 30p) 50p

LABOUR'S BRITAIN



POLICE STATE

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London Mayor Election

'All that's solid melts...'



Ken Livingstone: on course for rejoining Labour

On 4 May, Ken Livingstone was elected London's first independent metropolitan mayor, gaining 667,877 first preference votes (38.9%). His nearest rival, Conservative Steven Norris, took 464,434 votes (27%) and the official Labour candidate Frank Dobson came a poor third with 223,884 votes (13%). Across the country, in local council elections the Labour Party suffered a consistent drubbing: Labour lost 573 seats compared to Conservative gains of 593. What was also consistent was the appallingly low turn-out for both mayoral and local elections. In London 1.7 million votes were cast out of a possible 5 million (32%); in some areas of the country the turnout was less than 25%.

The result for the 25-seat Greater London Assembly (GLA) - the Labour government's sop to devolution and decentralisation - was less conclusive. Both Labour and Tories ended up with 9 seats, Liberal Democrats 4, and Green Party 3. This is hardly the broad democratic assembly that London needs or that Livingstone claimed to want. The parties are already imposing centralised discipline for a body, as Livingstone himself described it, 'hardly bigger than an Islington dinner party'. The assembly will meet from 3 July. Until then the manoeuvrings for

Livingstone's cabinet and various committees will be no less byzantine than the mayoral election campaign itself.

Over the last six months Livingstone has made a number of promises which he will now break. He has started already: he promised to support whichever candidate emerged from Labour's selection procedure, but when he lost and discovered his huge lead in opinion polls, he could not resist breaking that promise. He had plenty of excuse given the shameless gerrymandering by the Labour leadership to ensure that Frank Dobson was selected. But there will be fewer and fewer excuses as time goes on, because despite his erstwhile socialist pretensions, Livingstone does not want a confrontation with New Labour's leaders - he wants to be one of them. Typically he attacked the anti-capitalists before and after May Day in a manner designed to please his Labour masters and the Metropolitan police.

The Livingstone post-election party was a forum for optimism: 'promising the most open, accessible and inclusive style of government ever seen in the UK, the new mayor plans to pick up where the GLC left off with equal opportunities policies, an increase of police numbers by 2000, sponsorship of ambitious arts, sports and envi-

ronment programmes, and cajoling money out of Whitehall for more low cost homes and better health and education services' (*Observer*).

Very nice, and broadly what his supporters expect of him, even though the Mayor and GLA have very few powers to do most of this. But this is a very different rainbow coalition to the one Livingstone claimed for the GLC. 'Open', 'accessible' and 'inclusive' may be the slogan, but in reality the mayoralty is a savage concentration of executive power. The vision may be rainbow, but like

Labour's 'ethical' foreign policy, it can have no substance...it melts into air. Within days of the election, Livingstone had broken his promise to appoint a Green Party member as his deputy on the grounds of political inexperience. Instead he appointed Labour millionairess and Quango Queen Nicky Gavron. Alongside Gavron, Lord Harris became Chair of the Metropolitan Police Committee. Both are loyal Blairites. He has now appointed Judith Mayhew, Corporation of London and aspiring Tory MP as City and Business advisor. The rainbow

errs towards blue.

The price to pay for New Labour co-operation in running London was Livingstone's backing-off from a confrontation over the privatisation of London underground. In March Livingstone promised: 'I'll use all my resources, everything I can mobilise, including a court challenge, if the government doesn't drop their proposal to break up the tube and go for partial privatisation.' Immediately after the election John Prescott confirmed that New Labour would go ahead with its privatisation plans, trumping Livingstone's claim to an electoral mandate with contrary promises made in the 1997 Labour manifesto. After the horse-trading over Livingstone's 'cabinet', the Mayor has now referred the whole question of the tube to an independent panel, in exactly the fashion promised by Frank Dobson in his election campaign.

More horse-trading must follow since Livingstone cannot run London or the GLA without the co-operation of the Labour Party. A two-thirds majority of the Assembly can block the Mayor's budget. Livingstone now has one overriding ambition - to get back into the Labour Party. Describing his 20-minute post-election phone-call to Prime Minister Blair, he made the agenda clear: 'I said I would be applying to join, but I didn't

want to embarrass him. I'd wait, and clearly he'd want to wait and see how I'd perform as Mayor. We'll think about it after the summer.' Very consensual!

The other aspirations which have turned to dust are the claims of the London Socialist Alliance (SWP, Socialist Party et al) that Livingstone's mayoral campaign was a dramatic split with Labour, even though Livingstone made it clear he was not standing on a socialist programme and would remain loyal to the Labour leadership. The socialist left did badly in the election: the LSA polled 1.63% of the vote, the Socialist Labour Party 0.82% and the CPB 0.45%. The fascist British National Party polled 2.87%.

Socialist Worker claimed this as a major victory if you add together all the left of Labour votes. You can hardly blame them for this since, these days, no candidate or party ever admits defeat; they all claim that even the most dismal results are victories. But no matter how you read the election entrails these results were a simple demonstration of weakness. Socialists who supported the LSA's campaign, hitched to the Livingstone wagon, soon found themselves derailed. We must wait now for the next general election when the SWP and the rest of the left will once again call for a vote for Labour. ■

News

Education notes

Something strange is happening. The 'joined-up government' that the Labour administration boasts about is failing in all areas except one. A seamless pathway is developing, starting with education ministers, taking in the Ofsted inspection consultants, picking up opportunist local education officers on the way and ending with friends in big business who want to buy. The rate of selling off education to the private sector is rapidly increasing.

Under Chris Woodhead, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) has expanded its powers with the encouragement of Labour. Not only schools but whole education authorities are inspected and ranked in order by authoritarian criteria. This, it has since turned out, is the first stage of processing the goods for sale. So called 'failing schools' and boroughs are declared to be 'not value for money' and the firm message is given that the public sector is bad, the private sector is good.

Over the last ten years there has been creeping and piecemeal 'outsourcing' (privatisation) of school dinners, pay roll administration, computer systems, supply teaching services, careers offices, special educational needs provision etc. This, it appears, is not enough. There are more eager buyers out there in the business world who want more. The deals that have been

made so far have involved small scale enterprises, local contractors who specialise in school cleaning, for example. Where private take-overs have been on a larger scale, niche companies, like Nord Anglia and Cambridge Education Associates (CEA), which is now in charge of Islington schools, have been given the business. Now, however, large multinationals are keen to move in on what is seen as a lucrative market.

Group 4, Serco and financiers WS Atkins are among the companies interested in the £1.6 billion market for education outsourcing that is due to expand under new plans announced by Estelle Morris, the schools' minister. These are companies with no interest or experience in schools or education as such, but which know when they are on to a good thing. The Labour government is handing over a big market with an even bigger future potential. As Paul Warren of the corporate finance house Capital Strategies said in May, 'We estimate that UK education and training companies have spent almost £1 billion in the past 16 months on over 30 transactions. We expect further merger and acquisition activity in the coming months'. This is where the multinationals move in.

How do they make a profit?

There are two ways of making money from education. One is



by providing a service which clients purchase, no different to any other service, hairdressing or booking into a hotel, for instance. This is the way private education operates, even though much of the infrastructure - like trained teachers - is produced by public expenditure. Fee-paying independent schools, however, are a privilege that only the wealthy can afford in general. The vast majority of children in state education do not have parents who can purchase this service directly. The public sector provides for schooling. When it markets education it is simply transferring money to the private sector. CEA, for example, was given £1 million for taking on a consultancy role for Islington schooling and stands to receive a bonus of up to £600,000 a year if test scores improve.

The other way is the arrangement known as the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), which suggests that money from business is invested into the public sector. The reverse is true. Private business is given mas-

sive loans at low rates of interest over many years for capital construction of schools. PFI money now makes up a significant proportion of the government's capital investment in education - with £350 million of credits in the current financial year and £450 million allocated for 2000-2001. In Glasgow £220 million has been given to private companies for the refurbishment of all its 29 secondary schools. With this donated capital businesses will be constructing buildings and charging rents and other expenses for a lot longer than if the local authority had paid for them. 'PFI deals are costly and bureaucratic, but ministers want more of them' reported the *Times Educational Supplement*.

The indecent haste with which education ministers David Blunkett, Estelle Morris and others are urging on the privatisation of education is, in part, an ideological attack on the public sector. But it is also buddying up to big business in a way that is corruption at the highest level.

Susan Davidson

Clause 28 in Scotland

Despite Stagecoach millionaire Brian Souter's plea for his family to be left to worship in peace, supporters of the repeal of Thatcher's infamous Clause 28 banning the 'promotion of homosexuality', took to the streets outside the Church of the Nazarene in Perth, Scotland. FRFI/RCG supported the protest which outnumbered the wealthy congregation. Souter later complained of intimidation but he remains free to let his money do the talking. He is bankrolling a Keep the Clause Campaign in Scotland to the tune of £1 million and is now using his enormous personal wealth to buy a referendum on Clause 28 in Scotland to allow, he claims, parents' voices to be heard. Yet it is the sickening roar of bigotry, prejudice and incitement, led by the *Daily Record*, which has set the tone of this phoney exercise. Gay and lesbian organisations have no mass circulation daily papers to counter the hysterical filth spewed out by Souter and the millionaire media. Nor can they look to the Labour Party to defend their rights: Glasgow Labour Council recently voted to suspend the tiny grants they advance to groups working with gay and lesbian people, and those with HIV/AIDS.

Souter's fortune came from Thatcher's deregulation of the bus industry in the 1980s. Stagecoach workers will be

angered at his recent concern for parental rights. He has already sacked one woman worker for trying to look after her kids, and another for taking a stand on health and safety to protect the lives of other parents. In 1998, a scab driver killed Frank Dean as he stood on the picket line against Stagecoach in Blackburn. Souter will not be respecting the rights of workers who have voted at meetings across the country for a one-day strike against a recent Stagecoach pay offer.

Gay and lesbian campaigners recently staged their own colourful protest against Stagecoach by respraying a bus at Glasgow's Buchanan St bus station bright pink.

The Labour Party has always taken the side of the rich and the bigots. In the Scottish Parliament their deeds have confirmed this. Having said they would repeal Clause 28 prior to the election, they have now compromised in favour of issuing new 'guidelines' to local authorities in an effort to protect its electoral base among the middle class and better off workers. This completely reactionary alliance determines all political calculation. Labour never has and never will use its power to defend the rights of gays, lesbians or low-paid workers. Resistance must begin!

Michael MacGregor

Racist Britain

HANNAH CALLER

The racism of the Labour government and the media towards asylum seekers is helping to fuel the climate of intolerance and xenophobia that is linked to the increasingly vicious and rising numbers of racist attacks against asylum seekers and black people in Britain.

Home Office statistics show more than 11,000 racist incidents in Greater London last year (a rise of 89%), with attacks more than doubling in Cheshire, Durham, Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire, Suffolk, Surrey and across Wales. The Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit has reported a 100% increase in the number of reported race-related crimes since August 1999.

Horrific attacks over the last three months include:

- In March, in Swindon, Hardip Singh, 25, was beaten by Asian men because his girlfriend is white. Zahid Mubarek was attacked the day before he was due to be released from Feltham Young Offenders Institute. He died a week later.

- In April, an attack by a white man in Camden Town, London, left Tewdros Afewerke, a 24-year-old Eritrean, in a coma. A gang in Belfast beat up two young Chinese men, the tenth attack on the Chinese community in three months. In Port Talbot, Wales, two white men are being questioned after

Santokh Singh Fandhu, a 42-year-old Sikh shopkeeper was beaten to death in the street.

- In May, a black boy aged 12 was attacked by a gang of white men who broke into his Shropshire boarding school and daubed racist graffiti on the walls of his bedroom. Roma asylum seekers, who have borne the brunt of tabloid vilification, were attacked in Stockport, Middlesbrough, Essex and north London.

In April, the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police finally apologised to the families of Harold and Jason McGowan. Harold had been found hanged in Telford in July 1999 and Jason in January this year. The police had decided their deaths were suicides, despite the fact that they knew both men had suffered racial abuse and death-threats in the months before they died. Clifton McGowan, Harold's brother, fears that the police contrition may have come too late.

In September 1993, Quddus Ali was beaten, kicked unconscious and left for dead by a white gang in east London. Four months in a coma, he now has severe speech and walking difficulties. Following demonstrations at the time by the local Asian community, five were charged with the attack but none was convicted. The Racial and Violent Crimes Task Force of the Metropolitan Police has now said that it will reinvestigate the case. Quddus Ali is



Racist attacks on the increase

sceptical: 'it would have been different if I had been white, I could have had justice the following day'.

Meanwhile, on 17 May, Alton Manning's family won a five year battle when the Lord Chief Justice set aside a decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions not to prosecute anyone for his death in December 1998. Alton, a black man from Birmingham, died aged 33 from asphyxia in Blakenhurst prison as warders carried him from his cell, one of them holding him in a neck-lock. He had been asked to strip naked and squat for an inspection of his genital and anal area. An inquest two years ago ruled that he was unlawfully killed. The High Court ruling could result in the first prosecution ever for the death of a black person in custody. ■

FIGHT POVERTY PAY

New Deal isn't working!

Labour's 'flagship' New Deal is a failure even according to the government's own dubious aims and objectives. Labour has always claimed that New Deal exists to 'get people off benefit and into long-term employment'. We know that it is also a means of forcing people to accept low pay or no pay and useless training schemes under threat of having their benefit withdrawn if they do not comply.

A recent survey in the *Observer* found that large numbers of people are dropping out of the scheme's education and training courses and that most who complete the courses are not finding jobs. They are then recycled into other New Deal options, including subsidised or voluntary work and places on environmental task forces.

The new information, based on official figures, shows that over the first year and a half of New Deal:

- only one in 10 people taking education and training courses completed them before leaving the scheme;
- the proportion of first year course-leavers ending up in long-term jobs was as low as 8.4 per cent;
- the government does not know how many or what type of qualifications have been gained by 'new dealers' because its computer systems are incapable of finding out.

Figures released recently show that only 7,024 of the 29,472 who left courses finished completely with New Deal. The remainder went on other schemes within the

programme. Of those who left, 2,488 went into jobs. New Deal is part of the problem - not the solution.

USDAW Gen Sec's 'partnership'

The annual conference of the shopworkers union USDAW in April rejected a motion calling for a £2 increase in the minimum wage to £5.60 an hour and an end to the lower rate for 18 to 21-year-olds. Bill Connor, the union's General Secretary, said that the motion was, 'against the whole partnership principle'. Warming to his argument he went on to say, 'we don't have to pay and the government doesn't have to pay. It's the employers who have to pay. If they were to pay an extra £2 an hour for 16-year-olds, by God, we would lose a lot of jobs!' Instead of fighting in the interests of low-paid shop workers, USDAW is more interested in safeguarding its 'partnership' deal with Tesco. This is a deal which guarantees over 100,000 Tesco workers subs every month to pay Bill Connors' inflated salary. No wonder an increase in the minimum wage was rejected!

Child poverty in the North West

After two years of this Labour government more children are now living in poverty in the North West than five years ago. More than 600,000 children live in households whose income is below half the national average, 50,000 more than five years ago. Nationally, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports that two million children live in homes where no adult has a job.

'That's 10p for you... and £3,183 for me'

Hours after the government announced that the minimum wage would be 'increased' by 10p an hour to £3.70, they increased MPs' salaries to £48,371. Tony Blair awarded himself a rise of £3,183, taking his annual salary to £112,951.

TGWU sells out SkyChefs - 'play it again, Bill'

Having sold out the Liverpool dockers the Transport and General Workers Union has been at it again. In November 1998 Bill Morris, T&G General Secretary promised the 275 striking workers at SkyChefs that the T&G would back them to the hilt: 'With your support and your determination we are going to stand up and fight and we are going to win our reinstatement. You all came out together and you will march back together'.

At the union headquarters in London a big picture of the striking workers still in the large windows promotes the militancy of the union acting in its members' interests. But on the ground regional official Alan Green says the strike is over, the workers must settle for a pittance from the employers Lufthansa and sell out their jobs, dropping their tribunal cases on the way. The workers are being told that no strikers will be compensated unless everyone accepts this position - and the union agrees with this. 50 of the striking workers are holding out against this sell-out.

Information: thanks to Bob, Mike and Ted

Rally supports Lindos' battle for justice

SONIA AND DELROY LINDO

The struggle of the Lindo family for justice continued as Delroy and Sonia Lindo spoke at a packed rally held at Tottenham Green Leisure Centre in north London. Delroy is Winston Silcott's friend and was instrumental in tackling the injustice and demonisation of Winston, who was framed for the killing of PC Blakelock in the Broadwater Farm uprising of 1985. Winston was later cleared of the murder.

Speakers at the rally included Winston's father and the US civil rights campaigner and former Black Panther Lorenzo Komboa Ervin who was on a speaking tour in Britain. Lorenzo was involved in anti-Klan and civil rights activities in the US. He hijacked a plane to Cuba after an FBI 'shoot-to-kill' order was issued on him. He was later arrested and spent 15 years in a US prison developing his political ideas.

The meeting directly focused on police racism, brutality and deaths in custody. Lorenzo said 'we need to raise consciousness that police racism and brutality is an international issue. Therefore we should build an international network structure. End police brutality and organise self-defence units to protect black communities and organisations'.

Sonia addressed the audience in a dignified and defiant speech about the latest tactics the police have reverted to in an attempt to secure a conviction against the Lindo family. Sonia spoke about the depths that racist cops will lower themselves to if individuals fighting racism and injustice become effective in the struggle to confront and challenge the system. There would be systematic attempts to criminalise family members, as there have been in the framing of her teenage son, which led to a conviction and could ultimately ruin his future. Fighting back has its consequences not just for those directly involved, but for their families too, who become targeted, but she emphasised that they would not give up.

There has been a sustained pattern of brutality and harassment against Delroy and Sonia, resulting in 18 charges against them over a three-year period. They have been acquitted on 15 of these charges, and a further three trumped-up charges have yet to be heard.

During the meeting Delroy made a dynamic and vibrant speech, saying that harassment can lead to death as he had been on the receiving end of police brutality many times and was lucky to survive as he gasped for breath when he was forcibly and illegally strangle-held by police

and brutally beaten with a baton.

Delroy described how his political involvement started as he saw his friend and business partner Winston Silcott being scapegoated and demonised; he said 'I could only see thirty years recommended sentence flashing in my head, and the end of my friend's life for a crime he did not commit. I had to do something; I formed the Winston Silcott Defence Campaign. The mainstream media and the police are still institutionally racist: by highlighting carefully selected events of the Broadwater Farm uprising, PC Blakelock is portrayed as the only person who died. There was another victim, Cynthia Jarret, who was killed by the police, when they chased her son to Cynthia's house and killed her as they used excessive force to enter her home without a warrant. That was the real cause of the Broadwater Farm uprising and ultimately led to the death of PC Blakelock, and Winston Silcott was framed by police for Blakelock's death'.

Delroy appealed for organisations and individuals to support his forthcoming court case and picket on 31 May 2000 (9:30am) at Haringey Magistrates' Court, Bishops Road, Highgate N6 (nearest tube Highgate).

Health service in crisis

HANNAH CALLER

The Association of Community Health Councils published a report in mid-April which shows how unaccountable the NHS really is, and how bad it is in dealing with grievances and complaints. The report presents the outcome of a poll which found that more than 19 out of 20 people believe the service the NHS provides could be improved, with two-thirds believing that it needs a great deal of improvement. However, 63% of the respondents picked the NHS as Britain's most valuable institution (only 12% thought the same of Parliament, and a mere 11% of the police) whilst 96% supported the right to free medical treatment at the time of need.

The last two years have shown how little regard Labour has for 'Britain's most valuable institution'. Its commitment to Tory spending plans has left the NHS on the verge of collapse. If the government had not come up with £2bn in the March budget, the scale of service cuts this year would have been colossal, with many London teaching hospitals facing complete bankruptcy. As it is, they still face enormous problems; Guys' and St Thomas' is having to make 7% savings - £17m. The first tranche of the £2bn has been used up paying off hospital deficits; none is available for all



the much-vaunted developments announced by Health Secretary Alan Milburn.

A recent joint report by the Royal Colleges of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Midwives, and Paediatrics and Child Health demonstrates how desperate the position has become. It reveals that some 80 maternity units throughout Britain are to be closed or merged because there are too few clinical staff. There is now a national shortage of around 2,500 midwives, with the result that one third of maternity units are unable to provide one-to-one care. The government has capped the number of new consultant posts that can be created, even though the colleges estimate that a further 215 consultant obstetrician posts are needed and double the number of paediatric doctors if units are to provide 24-hour

cover in line with the European Working Time Directive.

Another report, this time by the British Nutrition Foundation, found that hospital catering is so poor that people become clinically malnourished during their stay in hospital. Hospital food worth more than £144 million is thrown away every year because it is cold, unsuitable or inedible. What has been Labour's response? Of course, to bring in one of their big business friends - none other than Richard Branson. His role is to make hospitals consumer-friendly, to improve the standard of food and the 'homeliness' of wards. The record of Virgin Trains has obviously impressed the government enormously - and no doubt there will be opportunity for him to advertise the nutritional qualities of Virgin Cola. ■

South Africa:

COSATU leadership weakens workers' movement

DALE MCKINLEY

Over the last few years, the broad left, both in South Africa and internationally, has tended to be cautious in its analysis of COSATU, the largest and most progressive trade union federation in South Africa. However, it is time for a much more rigorous critique of a workers' movement that is rapidly losing its organisational strength and political direction.

'If you can't beat them, join them'

It should be clear to socialists that many of the leaders of COSATU are well on their way to becoming bona fide members of the 'capitalist club'. In doing so, they are laying the groundwork for a fragmented and dispirited workers' movement. This so-called 'transitional' ideological and organisational shift is based on two related assumptions. The first is that capitalism's new round of global accumulation means that the core role and character of unions has changed. It is commonplace these days to hear COSATU leaders arguing that, due to the 'hegemony of capitalism' and 'new global realities', unions must fundamentally alter their strategic vision in order to remain 'relevant'. In other words, 'if you can't beat them, join them'.

The second assumption is that the democratic elections of April 1994 signalled some kind of 'end-game' for workers' struggles which had been guided by a socialist political programme. In other words, they argue that the days of unions placing the active political struggle for socialism at the top of the strategic agenda are over, or at the very least, must take deep cover in the bowels of an ongoing National Democratic Revolution (NDR).

Hence COSATU's political tactics revolve around seeking concessions from their ANC Alliance partner while consistently watering down their demands over, for example, jobs, resource redistribution and basic services. Ostensibly, this approach is designed to ensure an acceptable degree of continuity with the governing ANC leadership, so as to maintain a 'national democratic Alliance' that is seen as the only viable way to meet the needs of the majority - the workers and poor. The reality, however, is that these tactics bring only moderate relief. Their real purpose is to preserve and advance the personal careers of leaders across the Alliance spectrum (ANC-SACP-COSATU). Despite radical-sounding statements combined with limited mass action, designed to extract concessions and remind capital of worker power, the COSATU leadership has in fact been unwilling to draw organisational/class lessons from the capitalist path pursued by the ANC and what that means in relation to the Alliance.

These kinds of tactics have been sold to the workers on the grounds of the need for 'unity' within the Alliance. This is counterposed to the dangers of an independent, socialist workers' movement and political organisation that will break such unity and thus weaken the 'liberation movement'. Again, the reality is far different. The kind of unity that the ANC, in particular, has fashioned (and which the leadership of COSATU and the SACP have bought into) revolves around using a mass of radical-sounding rhetoric ('transformation', 'a progressive NDR', a 'developmental state', 'workers' interests and the national interest') to create a space for the further entrenchment of capitalist relations of production and distrib-

ution. Any critical questioning of what lies behind the rhetoric is attacked. The result? Organised workers are left in a state of confusion as to where their class interests lie.

Leaving the workers on the sidelines

The leadership of COSATU has taken to placing all the blame for social and economic ills on other 'classes' (ie finance and industrial capitalists) when in fact the ANC government's agenda is consistent with the attacks on workers, the social welfare system and lack of basic services. Indeed, COSATU seem unwilling to see the state for what it is - an instrument of class rule. Instead they have fallen for a 'patriotic' multi-class front that will take forward some ill-defined and unexplained National Democratic Revolution.

A good example of the practical effects of this confusion is COSATU's (and the SACP's) opposition to GEAR (the ANC's programme for Growth, Employment and Redistribution) which has been fragmented and selective and has failed to tackle GEAR on the political terrain that provides its raison d'etre. Focus has been instead on the 'non-inclusive' process that resulted in GEAR and appeals to re-tool this or that policy area in the hope of a more progressive outcome. It is a hopelessly economic approach that seeks to pick and choose different aspects of a macro-economic framework without tackling the class politics that provides the foundation for GEAR itself.

More disturbing still is the fact that COSATU and SACP leaders insist that the present situation demands a 'creative management of contradictions'. Simply translated, this means that the political and economic framework formulated and dri-

ven by the ANC has to be accepted, and that the role of organised workers is to try and squeeze as much out of the resulting 'contradictory process' as possible. Practically, this leaves the mass of workers on the sidelines, to be lined up behind this or that particular 'contradiction' being fought out amongst the various layers of leadership inside and outside government. It seriously weakens the basic class weapon of workers - the withholding of their labour power - as something to be turned on or off depending on the specific battle being waged, rather than as a political weapon to force the ANC government and the capitalists to back down, and to create real space for increased workers' power, democracy and incipient socialist relations of production and distribution.

The example of COSATU illustrates the serious contradictions that have arisen as a result of COSATU's understanding of the tasks facing the working class. These companies see the private accumulation of capital as a genuine means to empower workers through capitalist ownership and influence in the economy. When, inevitably, contradictions arise, COSATU turns around and argues that the best that can be done is to 'manage' such contradictions. It is like poking holes in the boat in which you are travelling just so you can spend most of your time filling them in.

A more recent, ongoing example of this, 'two steps back, one step forward' approach is COSATU's response to the mass firing and subsequent re-hiring of miners employed at Canadian-owned mining company Placer Dome. After Placer Dome cost-cutting 3,000 workers in a fired-nearly exercise, COSATU (through its affiliate, the National Union of Mineworkers



President Thabo Mbeki

- NUM) made all sorts of big noises about the immorality of capitalism and the greed of the bosses. Soon after, a deal was struck with the company to reemploy 200 workers (with a promise of a few hundred more over the next year or so) who will have to work continuous or full calendar shifts. Incredibly, this was then hailed as a victory for the working class, with NUM General Secretary, Gwede Mantashe, quoted as saying that 'we need to work together to be successful' and that 'this agreement demonstrates what can be achieved when a company and a union engage one another in a robust, open and constructive manner (that) holds promise of expanding job opportunities'.

COSATU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi has said that 'COSATU demands that business creates quality jobs and brings an end to casualisation and outsourcing' and has urged the government to honour the National Framework Agreement (the accepted negotiations framework for state 'restructuring'). Further, COSATU has been quoted as saying that 'unless government and business meet our demands, we will go ahead with the national strike'. Yet there is little indica-

tion that rank-and-file workers (or the leadership for that matter) have a clear understanding of the connection between the rhetorical demand and the practical means proposed to implement them, or of what the COSATU leadership intends to do - beyond organising a show of worker power on the streets in a managed process that can be easily ridden out by the state and capital.

In South Africa, just as in the rest of the capitalist world, the reality of the content of class oppression and ownership has not changed in any substantive way. The tactics of the COSATU leadership are a great deal more unrealistic than alternative socialist strategies grounded in an open political unionism, linked to the realities and necessities of working class struggle. While aspects of the objective conditions facing the South African workers movement have changed, the fundamental political and economic challenge has not. As long as the exploitative relationship between wage labour and capital exists, so too does the necessity to struggle for working class economic and political power. Some of us still like to call it socialism. ■

May Day: neo-Nazis rally in Germany

ANTHONY BIDGOOD

Police attacked May Day rallies in two of Germany's largest cities, Hamburg and Berlin. A Reclaim the Streets march in Hamburg was attacked even though it had been approved by the authorities. Several witnesses report the use of agents provocateurs, and the autonomous group Rota Flora became a special object of police violence. Early on the morning of May Day, police cordoned off the Schanz district where the most expensive and 'desirable' office property in Hamburg is situated. They then proceeded indiscriminately to arrest 130 people, many of whom had arrived for a dance party. One person suffered a fractured skull; another had fingers in both hands broken.

There were two rallies in Kreuzberg, Berlin. One was led by Antifaschistische Aktion Berlin (AFA) and was billed as a 'revolutionary 1 May demonstration'. Participants included Revolutionären KommunistInnen and Turkish and Kurdish Maoists.

A second rally, a 'festival', was organised by the Party for Democratic Socialism and the Greens. Police deployed from the un-armed and 'community' units were soon replaced by riot squads which attacked the head of the 'revolutionary' demonstration as it reached its destination. Truncheon-wielding riot police, backed up by water cannon, arrested 401 people and injured 200.

Since the beginning of the year the main concern of the Berlin interior minister has been to make the centre of Berlin 'demonstration free'. The AFA

Berlin march was denounced beforehand as 'an undoubted terrorist action'.

In Hamburg, the CDU, the main opposition party, and the Springer Press attacked Rota Flora. Right wing members of the ruling Social Democrats joined the witch-hunt on the grounds of 'national security'.

Demands to restrict the right to protest from ruling class spokespersons were clearly directed against the left. Hence the neo-Nazi NPD held rallies in five German cities under close protection from the police.

In Wetzlar, a town of 40,000, 1,000 police with helicopters, water cannons and horses protected 100 neo-Nazis from 2,500 anti-fascists. This massive police presence ensured that the neo-Nazi rally was able to go ahead. Such is democracy under capitalism. ■

Tamil Tigers advance

TREVOR RAYNE

Over 22-24 April the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) captured the Sri Lankan Army base at the strategically critical Elephant Pass. The LTTE proceeded to advance on Jaffna City where 30,000 Sri Lankan troops are in danger of being trapped. After 17 years of armed struggle, costing 55,000 lives, the Tamil people seem closer than ever to achieving a homeland.

The response of the Sri Lankan government was to put the country on a 'war-footing'. Police and army powers to detain people have been extended, property including vehicles can be seized, censorship of the media was increased, all 'non-essential development work' was suspended for three months, allowing more funds to be channelled to the military.

Sri Lankan President Kumaratunga, who was in London at the

time of the LTTE victory at Elephant Pass, vowed to 'relentlessly pursue military operations' against the LTTE. Her government appealed to India to intervene against the LTTE. This appeal was rejected. Sri Lanka quickly moved to restore diplomatic relations with Israel, seeking weapons and other support. Britain is also being asked to increase arms supplies and other forms of military assistance.

This must be opposed by all socialists and democrats in Britain. Sri Lanka's government has refused all LTTE attempts to reach a negotiated settlement to the conflict and refused LTTE offers to help it arrange an orderly withdrawal of the Sri Lankan Army marooned in Jaffna. While the Norwegian government attempts to broker peace negotiations, Sri Lankan ministers talk of a 'war of extermination'. If the LTTE retake Jaffna it will be the racist Sinhalese government and the reactionary Buddhist clerics



who support it that will face political 'extermination' at the hands of the LTTE and Sri Lankan people. ■

Labour's racist asylum policy



Photo-opportunity for Jack Straw as he gloats over stowaway refugees being removed from a lorry in Dover

The 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act makes it illegal to carry any passenger into Britain who seeks asylum on arrival. Ignorance that the would-be refugee is in your lorry, coach or train is no defence and the punishment is £2,000 per 'clandestine' discovered. Refugees who do get into Britain or are already here are being forcibly 'dispersed' to any part of the country other than the south-east. This almost inevitably results in them having no access to anyone who speaks their language or can provide competent legal advice to prevent their being deported. Their only means of subsistence comes in the form of vouchers, which can only be spent at certain shops and for which it is legal and profitable for the retailers not to give any change.

The implementation of this vicious legislation in April was accompanied by a frenzy of racist propaganda, mainly targeted against east Europeans. Eastern Europe has been under sustained attack from western nations for many years, first as imperialism actively sought the destruction of communism, and then, having achieved this, as it strove to conquer the new capitalist market and extract as much profit as possible. The former Soviet Union and eastern bloc have been ravaged by the imposition of ruthless free-market economies bringing massive wealth for a tiny few and appalling poverty for millions. Unemployment, homelessness, part-time work, casualisation and insecurity have been foisted on people who had previously relied on stable employment and living conditions. The Balkans have been subjected to repeated military assaults; nationalism has been stoked up, wars waged, countries divided and destroyed.

In the six months from October 1999 to March 2000 there were 80,000 asylum applications to European countries from former socialist bloc nations (including Afghanistan): over half of the total of all applications. There are one million refugees from NATO's war in Yugoslavia alone.

Despite the Kurdish liberation movement's unilateral ceasefire, the genocidal policy of the western-backed Turkish regime against the Kurds also continues to result in thousands of refugees seeking sanctuary in Europe.

Worldwide, the number of refugees has risen from 2.5 million to 20 million in the past 20 years. Contrary to the scaremongering propaganda, the vast majority go to neighbouring countries, with less than 1% coming to Britain. In 1998, for example, Iran received 1.9 million refugees, Jordan 1.4 million and Pakistan 1.2 million.

'The worldwide carnage and exploitation by British imperialism is the basis for racism in Britain... Any struggle against racism in Britain which does not struggle against British imperialism will inevitably fail because it leaves the basis of racism untouched... The racism and racial oppression within Britain today is a particular form of imperialist oppression. It is the form taken by national oppression within the oppressor nations.' (*Revolutionary Communist* 9 'Racism, imperialism and the working class', 1979)

The Labour government is engaged in a vicious racist attack on refugees seeking asylum in Britain. While the Tories and tabloid press compete to employ the most vitriolic language against asylum-seekers, it is actually Labour which is implementing the policies of race hatred. **NICKI JAMESON** reports.

'Real' and 'bogus' refugees

Like every government which has brought in anti-immigration laws, in the run-up to the passing of the 1999 Act Labour intoned the mantra that the new law would assist 'real' refugees but would weed out 'bogus' asylum-seekers and 'economic migrants' who seek to take advantage of our 'generous' benefits system.

Once the Bill had become law, the Conservative opposition scented an issue on which it could give the government a run for its money. Riding the tide of anti-refugee filth already dominating the press, the Tories denounced Labour as a 'soft touch' and announced their proposals for all asylum-seekers to be imprisoned on arrival. Labour is in fact working towards mass detention anyway, as indicated by the opening of the Oakington Detention Centre and confirmed by recently leaked memoranda. The Conservative Manifesto for the local council elections in May played to the fears of the most xenophobic sections of the middle class and labour aristocracy and was full of scaremongering about 'bogus asylum-seekers... flooding into Britain', apparently encouraged by Labour's lack of a firm hand.

The working class was similarly wooed by the fascist British National Party, which took 2-3% of the vote in the London mayoral and assembly elections, more than any left group. The BNP's election campaign centred on a leaflet headed 'Asylum Seekers? Longer hospital waiting lists? More wage cuts? More homelessness? Enough is enough! Isn't it time we put our own people first?'

Following a complaint by the Liberal Democrats - a party which has never itself hesitated to exploit racism in local elections - the United Nations High Commission on Refugees criticised both Tories and Labour for their use of inflammatory language about asylum-seekers.

In an act of supreme hypocrisy,



East European refugees face poverty and race hatred on the streets of Britain

the government then moved to distance itself from the Tories by rejecting the use of the words 'bogus', 'flooding' and 'swamped'. This suited Labour, not only because it could appear to be rejecting overt racism - to the relief of its *Guardian*-reading supporters - but because such language implies that the government is failing to cope.

A parliamentary debate on 12 April reflected the revamped approach, with the Tories continuing to shout about 'floods' of 'bogus refugees', while Labour switched to talking about the 'problem' of 'unfounded applicants'. This entirely semantic distinction did nothing whatsoever to disguise the real competition between government and opposition as to which could be most racist in practice.

Jack Straw congratulated himself on having taken 'early action' to impose visa restrictions on Slovaks, on recruiting 700 new staff to work in the Immigration and Nation-

ality Directorate and on giving immigration officers the power of arrest. He crowed over having 'impounded a lorry and... expecting a fine of £100,000 in respect of the driver bringing in 50 clandestines' - a well-orchestrated capture he had gone to the port to witness in person - and boasted of having created 'expanded detention space' and 'much better regional enforcement capacity', while lamenting that 'removals have not been as fast as they should be'.

A week later he announced that 3,000 refugees, whom Britain had been compelled by other European countries to accept from NATO's 1999 war in Kosovo and whom it had made a sickeningly phoney show of welcoming with open arms, would be forcibly deported if they did not agree to return to their ravaged homeland voluntarily.

In virtually the same breath, he declared that up to 20,000 members of families of white farmers fleeing Zimbabwe would be exempt from the degrading asylum system being imposed on other 'real' refugees (never mind the 'bogus' ones) and would automatically be given long-term leave to remain in Britain. This instant reward for the grandchildren of colonial economic migrants who left Britain to reap the spoils of imperialist domination of black Africa delighted erstwhile anti-apartheid campaigner and government minister Peter Hain, who has been loudly pleading the white farmers' cause.

Imperialist immigration laws are always racist

The 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act is the latest in a long line of increasingly draconian laws introduced throughout the 20th century, and in particular during the last 40 years. The first British immigration law was the 1905 Aliens Act, which was designed specifically to prevent the entry of impoverished East European Jews fleeing pogroms. This was followed by further Aliens Restrictions Acts in 1914 and 1919. In 1938 Britain introduced visa requirements for nationals of Germany or Austria, greatly reducing the ease with which Jews fleeing Nazism could seek asylum in Britain.

In the 1950s Britain encouraged immigration from the countries it had earlier colonised and plundered. Caribbean and Asian workers were invited to Britain to do low-paid jobs and as 'Commonwealth citizens' were exempt from the immigration legislation then in force. However, there was an almost immediate clamour for controls, culminating in the introduction of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. Trinidadian communist Claudia Jones, then editor of the *West Indian Gazette*, was among those who spoke out against the Act, saying it reflected the government's fear of the 'unity of coloured and white workers'.

The 1962 Act was followed by a further Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1968 and the Immigration Act of 1971. Since then control after control has been introduced. By the 1980s the government had largely dealt with the immigration of black 'Commonwealth citizens' by a series of measures, including changing the status of their British passports to an inferior one which removed the right to settle here. It then turned its attention once again to refugees, introducing visa controls for those fleeing Sri Lanka in 1985 and Ghana, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India in 1986, in moves reminiscent of the earlier legislation to keep out persecuted Jews.

The 1990s saw a series of laws introduced, tightening restrictions on would-be asylum-seekers further and further. Legislation in Britain echoed provision across western Europe as 'Fortress Europe' was constructed and prepared to repel outsiders. The EU wants to maintain a pool of cheap labour outside its borders which it can use in the same way that the US exploits Mexico and Central America. It does not want people from Eastern Europe, the Middle East or elsewhere coming into Western Europe in a way it cannot control at will.

In an imperialist nation there cannot be any 'non-racist' immigration controls. Nor can anyone who comes to Britain or any other wealthy nation from a country ravaged by imperialist plunder be dismissed as an 'economic migrant', rather than a 'real refugee'. Imperialist oppression is both political and economic in character and fleeing it always has a political dimension.

Race and class

While denouncing 'economic migrants' when they are poor, the government is seeking to smooth the path for middle class skilled workers who have medical, teaching, IT, scientific or other skills and wish to work in Britain. This will save the British state the costs of education and training. For such favoured workers bureaucracy will be reduced and the power to issue visas is even being experimentally handed over to multinational companies, who will be able to 'self-certify' employees they wish to bring to Britain from their operations abroad. Immigration controls are not only racist - they are clearly class-based as well.

Divide and rule

The European ruling classes have traditionally used some of the super-profits plundered from the rest of the world to buy social peace in their own countries. This has generally taken the form of secure employment and welfare state provision, which have been used to buy the compliance of better-off sections of the working class. However, as the drive for greater profitability increases, and the working classes in European nations are increasingly casualised and impoverished, governments are anxious to ensure that any anger which develops in the future will not be directed against them or their middle class supporters. What could be easier than peddling the myth that jobs and services are under threat because of outsiders moving in, rather than the state pulling out? Refugees are visible targets, while the state's machinations are hard to see. The press is happy to whip up 'Council tax up to pay for asylum-seekers' headlines and fascist organisations provide an indispensable service by openly disseminating race-hate propaganda, allowing the state to keep its hands relatively clean and hypocritically condemn the brutal racist attacks which inevitably follow.

Such tactics are there to deter the European working class from uniting with immigrants in common struggle. Divide-and-conquer is always the motto and even the faint possibility of unity rings alarm bells. Witness, for example, the press rushing to vilify the Turkish communist organisations which participated in the London May Day demonstration alongside British anti-capitalist activists. It is in the government's immediate and long-term interests to smash such an alliance before it can be built upon, and it is the forging of such unity which is the key to fighting Labour's racist immigration laws.

The Labour Government and big business

Why is Labour so determined? Why does Prescott proclaim that the aircraft traffic control sale will not jeopardise safety at the same time as the inquiry into the Paddington disaster reveals that this is precisely what has happened with the railways? Why does he pursue a policy on the Underground which clearly most voters rejected? Why, when a recent government report shows that the NHS is now short of beds, promote PFI which will reduce them still further? It is not because the government is short of money. It has just received £22.5bn from the sale of airwaves to mobile telephone companies. The answer lies in the struggle of giant multinationals to secure and extend their monopoly positions in conditions of deepening crisis. Privatisation has allowed the development of new utility and service multinationals that have been in the forefront of a new form of colonialism: buying up state assets of oppressed nations. Privatisation of state assets in imperialist countries enables such multinationals to achieve the necessary size to allow them to play a role on the world stage. Privatisation of state assets in oppressed nations then provides such multinationals with potential sources of huge profits with minimal outlay.

Labour's dogmatic support for privatisation can only be understood within this context; it is a necessary consequence of its absolute commitment to maintaining British imperialism's completely parasitic existence. Labour is acting as the executive of British imperialism, and it has created an economic, political and ideological framework in which the interests of the multinationals are completely dominant. When *Socialist Worker* complains, along with the diminishing band of Labour lefts, that Labour is 'giving in to the fat cats', they miss the point. The government is not a passive footsoldier in this process; nor can one explain its role by suggesting it is led by cowards who are frightened to stand up to the multinationals. Quite the opposite: Blair and his cronies are active and committed partners to developments which are designed to give free rein to capitalist interests whilst shackling the working class and poor with an ever more oppressive regime.

Side by side with this privatisation process is the merging of multinationals with the state apparatus. Blair's cronies are not just the career politicians of the parliamentary Labour Party: they are representatives of the multinationals themselves. Multinationals reach into the heart of the government and are active through their representatives in all sorts of policy-making bodies. Lobbying groups facilitate the introductions: there are 35,000 appointments within the direct grant of ministers. Small wonder that there is no going back on the policy of privatisation. As if to make sure of this process, Labour is stuffing the 'reformed' House of Lords with more appointed peers than any previous government. And who selects these peers for preferment? The multinational consultancy PriceWaterhouse Cooper. The programme of privatisation is part of a whole where multinationals are playing a direct role in government.

In April, the government announced that it was postponing the sale of a 49% stake in British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) worth £1.5bn until the summer of 2002. The decision followed the collapse of BNFL contracts with Japan and Germany after revelations that the company had forged safety certificates. But in Labour's view, this is a temporary problem: the sale will go ahead once BNFL has put its house in order. In early May, John Prescott faced down Labour 'rebels' who opposed the sale of a similar stake in the national air traffic control system. This will raise £1bn. Despite Livingstone's election as London's mayor, Prescott still intends to part-privatise the Underground. 'Private Finance Initiative' (PFI) is another method of privatising state assets; PFI is now the main means of financing new hospitals, or putting advanced computer systems into government. Neither the fiasco of the railways, nor the innumerable computer disasters now besetting the Home Office and the Inland Revenue have deterred Labour from considering privatisations the Tories rejected out of hand. ROBERT CLOUGH reports.



Arms are Britain's biggest 'ethical' export: a Malaysian army officer learns to kill 'helicopters' at a Kuala Lumpur arms fair

Privatisation and the creation of utility multinationals

The creation of utility and service multinationals is an expression of the complete parasitism of imperialism today. Privatising state assets in imperialist countries was a first step in allowing new forms of domination of third world economies to develop. Privatised water and gas utilities have merged with service multinationals to create huge new conglomerates. British Gas is one example. It has two arms: BG International and Transco. BG International heads a consortium of oil and gas corporations that dominate the Caspian Sea oil fields. In early May, the consortium announced the discovery of a new oil field with an estimated capacity of 30bn barrels – the largest outside of the Middle East.

Water companies are no different. Thames Water was an early investor in Indonesia, although it nearly lost out when the Suharto regime was finally ousted. More recently, riots broke out in Bolivia as people protested against a 35% increase in water prices ordered by the newly privatised water industry of Cochabamba. This is now owned by International Waters Ltd of London.

itself owned by Bechtel, a giant US construction company. The company claimed the rise was necessary because of the costs of the nearby Misticuni Dam project. There are two points here: first, the dam has not yet been built, second, the contractor is...Bechtel. However, passing on the costs in advance to the consumer is a policy that is being endorsed by the World Bank. The first water privatisation in the region was in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where the municipal water company was taken over by Anglia Water. 6,500 jobs were axed, and the system fell apart for lack of maintenance. But for a company like Anglia this is no problem: it is in a position of complete monopoly. Its income and profits are guaranteed regardless of the state of the system. In March a meeting held under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation in The Hague agreed to accelerate the privatisation of the world's water systems in a move which will reinforce imperialist domination of oppressed nations.

What goes for water also goes for the former state-run electricity industry. National Power now has extensive power supply contracts within Pakistan. In a rare example of judicial independence, charges of

bribery against National Power officials led to the Pakistani courts cancelling these contracts. National Power appealed to the World Bank which intervened and ordered the Pakistani government to pay up. However, customers refused to pay the increased charges and National Power workers threatened strikes. In January, the military was forced to intervene, seizing power plants, gaoing union leaders and sending troops to get customers to pay.

At home, the government published its Utilities Bill in February. Labour had insisted this would bring some consumer control of utility pricing and operating policies following revulsion at the grotesque profiteering of the newly-privatised utilities under the Tories, particularly in the water and power industry. Such profiteering continues to this day: the operating profits of the water industry stand at 45p in the pound on water and sewage bills. In 1996, Labour also promised consumers the right to commercial information on utilities and a role in price-setting negotiations. Following intensive lobbying by the utilities, this provision has disappeared. Equally intensive lobbying has excluded the water industry as well as BT from the scope of the Bill. Nor is there any provision to allow access to information about the utilities' finances and operations. The Freedom of Information Bill currently bars regulatory agencies from releasing information given to them in 'confidence' or which is 'commercially sensitive'.

Multinationals in the government

The Labour government and big business are ever more closely intertwined. Within months of the 1997 election, Labour had defined how it expected the relationship of multinationals to develop. Control of financial policy was handed to the City. Sir David (later Lord) Simon from BP was an early recruit; he was joined by the Chief Executive of Barclays Bank, Martin Taylor. Lord Sainsbury was drafted in to head up science policy. There are 108 people working on various treasury task forces at the moment: 98 of them are business representatives. The City of London reaches directly into the policy-making bodies of the Labour government. The more recent news that British Nuclear Fuels Ltd paid £500,000 to have a post in the Tokyo embassy was followed by further revelations:

- Tarmac, Kvaerner, Ove Arup and Christiani and Nelson, all huge construction firms, have staff seconded into the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);
- BP and Shell also have staff in the DTI. BP has paid for employees to work in the Washington embassy

and on the Foreign Office's Middle East desk. Since the election, the government has backed down from tightening up the tax regime on North Sea oil and watered down its proposals on a climate change levy.

- BT is another company with staff in the DTI; it has successfully lobbied to be excluded from the Utilities Bill.

Eight British Aerospace staff work in the Ministry of Defence. Others are paid for by Rolls Royce and Vickers, the tank manufacturer. The Labour Party itself has shareholdings in both British Aerospace and GEC; defending this, a spokesperson said that 'we are not against the manufacture of arms. It's a big bad world out there'. It is not surprising therefore that there has been no radical shift over arms export policies which are still hidden from public view. Hence no one knows for certain how many Hawk aircraft deliveries are outstanding to Indonesia. Not one of 125 arms licences inherited from the Tories was revoked. A joint report from the cross-party Defence, Foreign Affairs, International Development and Trade and Industry committees pointed out the government had not only refused to disclose the legal advice it had received which it claimed prevented it from reviewing these licences, it would not even name the legal firm involved. Both multinationals and government need to operate under a shroud of secrecy.

Meanwhile, representatives of the supermarkets and food producers fill the Economic and Social Science Research Council, the largest patron of social science in the country, disposing of over £65m grants per annum. Keith Brandon, Tesco's Chief Executive visited the governing body. In February David Blunkett addressed the body and launched an attack on 'perverse' researchers 'driven by ideology' who failed to consider 'the reality of many people's lives'. This was apparently because they did not address issues that were 'relevant' to politicians. An exception to this would have been the 1999 report on supermarket charging policies by one Dr Mark Harvey who concluded that that they offered 'choice, quality and convenience' and that it was 'oversimplistic' to accuse them of overcharging.

In capitalism, the state is the executive of the ruling class. In today's conditions of globalisation, this is not an empty phrase. Multinationals now expect to see their representatives at the heart of government, determining policy, ensuring that their interests are defended. Labour's slogan – modernising government, public-private partnership – are an ideological expression of this new form of multinational domination of our lives.

Turkey for sale

Major changes are underway as Turkey opens its doors to international capital. The state is loosening its grip on key sectors of the economy and there are proposals from within the state to change the constitution and even to reduce the role of the army in government. Is globalisation about to transform Turkey into a modern bourgeois democracy fit for European Union membership? Is the PKK's (Kurdistan Workers' Party) programme for a Democratic Republic going to be realised through the ambitions of the Turkish industrial and financial ruling classes acting in concert with the multinationals? TREVOR RAYNE reports.

NATO, Turkish and Israeli forces captured PKK President Ocalan in February 1999. In September the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire. Setbacks to the Kurdish struggle and resulting changes in PKK strategy have encouraged imperialist confidence in Turkey: in December the European Union accepted Turkey as a formal candidate for membership. That same month the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed a \$4 billion standby loan in exchange for a structural reform programme to be implemented by the Turkish government (the 17th attempt at such a programme). This agreement was the clearest signal that multinationals should take to the field in earnest. On 12 January 2000 the Turkish government granted Ocalan a stay of execution pending a decision by the European Court of Human Rights. In May Turkey's parliament voted for the leading constitutional judge Ahmet Necdet Sezer to replace Demirel as President. Sezer is reported to have said that constitutional articles banning free speech should be dropped, that rulings made in military courts should be subject to appeal and that Kurds should be allowed to educate their children in their own language.

A report commissioned by Prime Minister Ecevit came to light at the same time as Sezer was nominated. It outlines constitutional changes to prepare Turkey for EU membership. These include equality of the sexes, changes to the electoral law, recognition of the rights of non-governmental organisations, curbs on the role of the military in the National Security Council and changes to the press and penal law to stop convictions of journalists. For the Kurds there is encouraging 'individual rights in the framework of democracy and equal citizenship', while taking 'measures to stamp out the economic sources of terrorism' in the southeast.

New enemy number one

The new IMF-backed programme targets inflation as public enemy number one. Inflation has not fallen below 50% for a decade and the Turkish lira more or less halves in value every year. Fuelled by the war on the Kurds, public debt doubled as a proportion of national income to 58% during the 1990s and real interest rates rose to 25% in 1999. The new programme aims to cut inflation from its current 64% to 5-7% by the end of 2002. Daily and monthly targets are set for the lira and therefore the inflation rate. Wages are to be pegged to the inflation targets. Consequently, in May the government imposed a 60-day postponement of a strike by tyre workers on 'national security' grounds. The tyre workers intended to strike against an imposed 26.5% pay rise – nearly 40% below the inflation rate. Retirement ages have been raised for men and women as part of the IMF's anti-inflation drive.

Of more than 100 new laws passed by the government in the past year relating to the economy, the decision to amend the constitution to provide

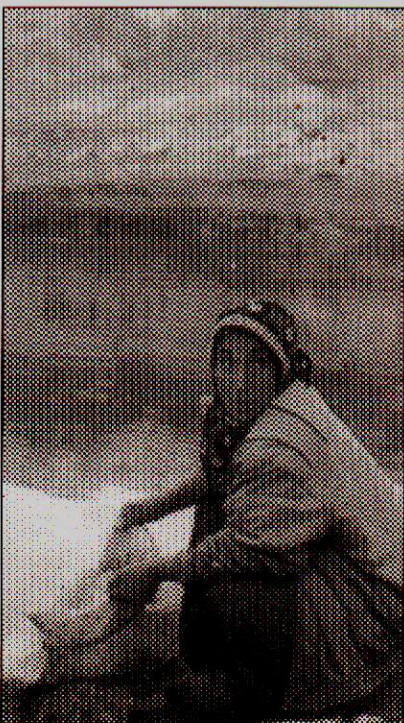
international arbitration over contracts involving the Turkish state and foreign companies has been crucial. Previously, Turkey's administrative court would rule in such disputes. In ten years Turkey has attracted only \$5 billion in foreign direct investment – about as much as Hungary now gets in a year. Seventy-four Turkish state-owned enterprises are lined up for sale. Under the IMF programme privatisation should raise \$7.6 billion this year and \$18 billion in three years. Foreign companies are not barred from the bidding.

Either already sold or in the process of being sold off are substantial stakes in the telecommunications industry, petroleum refining and retailing and the national airline. The World Bank has insisted on a new regulatory body with market rules for the energy industry in exchange for a \$750 million loan. Turkey is judged to be the world's fourth largest energy investment market and a string of multinational banks are jostling to fund it: ING Barings, Chase Manhattan, Deutsche Bank, Bank of America etc.

This time the multinationals are confident that they are on track to buy Turkey. The May Day parades in Istanbul and other Turkish cities focused on the privatisation programme, with slogans 'IMF: This nation is not for sale' and 'Damn the IMF, long live socialist Turkey'. May Day marches were banned in south-east Turkey/northwest Kurdistan.

The PKK's Peace Project

There can be no doubt that a major infusion of multinational capital will push aside constitutional, legal, political and other obstructions to its operations from the Kemalist state. Nationalistic and military bureaucratic impediments will not be tolerated if the class struggle can be contained in other ways. However, given that the dismantling of the state enterprises, restructuring of the economy and anti-inflation cam-



Thousands of Kurds will lose their homes if the Tigris is dammed



paign will be painful for many workers and will add to unemployment and poverty, the army high command will not be sidelined. They are necessary for the containment of the Kurdish struggle and suppression of Turkish workers' resistance. They retain their key strategic role for NATO in the Middle East and Caucasus.

On 20 January the PKK announced a Peace Project at the end of its Extraordinary Seventh Congress. The Peace Project seeks 'resolution to the Kurdish question within a democratic republic without changing international borders'. The PKK aims at the creation of a 'democratic Turkish republic, (with) a continuation of the struggle by democratic means towards Kurdish rights'. It seeks the creation of a democratic constitution, the lifting of the state of emergency in Kurdish areas and the abolition of emergency courts. There should be a transition from central authority to local administration, abolition of the death penalty, reconstruction of the villages and return of their inhabitants and an end to the construction of the Ilisu and Mercan dams. The life and freedom of Abdullah Ocalan must be secured. PKK armed forces are to be maintained on a defensive footing, but the armed struggle has ended.

Fifteen years of armed struggle with the loss of 30,000 lives, the most sustained resistance mounted by the Kurdish people, has failed to throw off subjugation. Massive imperialist pressure from different countries was

given for the Turkish state's war effort, with credits, weapons, intelligence and training – all of them supplied by British governments. Tory and Labour alike. A scorched earth policy produced four million refugees. Torture and death squads – the entire paraphernalia of state terror – was targeted at Kurds in Turkey without any reduction in the flow of arms to the Turkish state. Journalists and authors were systematically murdered and gaoled for criticising the war. Dissent in Europe was set upon and criminalised by conservative and social democratic governments alike. Kurds were gaoled in Europe for protesting over the fate of their people. With the collapse of the socialist bloc, possible regional allies slipped towards the imperialist camp. Kurdish organisations in Iraq were bought and turned against the PKK. No secure base area could be established. The mountains were isolated and over 3,000 Kurdish villages destroyed; the sea was drained to catch the fishes.

Faced with unrelenting determination from imperialism to back the Turkish state and destroy the PKK and with the mounting toll on their lives, the Kurdish people have supported attempts to solve their problems peacefully. There is little evidence that they oppose the PKK shift in strategy.

Whatever the changes being drafted for Turkey by international finance and the Turkish ruling class they do not include a licence for the PKK and Kurds to assert their rights.

The Kurds are the poorest section of Turkish society and the PKK's class basis makes it unreliable and dangerous for the Turkish state. Any move towards democratisation will be carefully framed to ensure that it is under the control of the ruling class and not the Kurds and the Turkish masses.

Significantly, in January, as the PKK was proposing its Peace Project, 11 leading members of HADEP, the legal mainly Kurdish party, were arrested. In February the HADEP Kurdish mayors of Diyarbakir, Siirt and Bingol were arrested and detained for ten days, accused of association with the PKK. At the same time the current and former chairs of HADEP were gaoled for over three years for cooperating with the PKK. In April the Turkish army once again crossed into Iraq to attack the PKK, without a murmur of criticism from the imperialist governments. PKK supporters are still arrested and gaoled across western Europe. There is no doubt that imperialism and the Turkish ruling class do not trust any independent Kurdish identity or organisation. They will continue to seek to contain, persecute and weaken the Kurds until their leadership is completely dependable.

For the Kurds, changes brought about by Turkey's application to join the EU can be used as openings to press their demands. But with the mass expulsion of people from the land to the western Turkish cities the Kurdish fate is tied to that of the Turkish working class. If the government continues with the IMF programme for privatisation and reducing inflation, both the Turkish and Kurdish people will come under attack. The objective need for united resistance will be felt in their stomachs.

ILISU DAM

The campaign to stop the construction of the Ilisu Dam on the River Tigris in southeast Turkey has won a victory. The British government has delayed granting an export credit guarantee of £200 million to the British construction multinational Balfour Beatty to build the dam, part of a giant project for energy generation, industry and agriculture. The dam would throw 25,000 Kurds out of their homes and submerge the town of Hasankeyf, a site of archaeological remains dating back 10,000 years and a place that is culturally symbolic for the Kurds. The dam would also have serious environmental implications for health, crops and pollution.

Prime Minister Blair is known to personally back the Ilisu scheme, seeing it as leading to many new contracts from the Turkish state for British companies. However, the Labour government has been forced to concede that granting the credit would be in breach of international law unless Turkey consults Syria and Iraq, down-stream from the dam. The export credit has been delayed until June at the earliest. The British government expressed 'particular concern' that the Turkish authorities have not produced a resettlement plan. 'Concern', this splendid example of British colonial diplomacy, barely covers the wrangling and contortions that will take place out of sight to ensure that the Turkish booty is not lost.



CHURCHILL - RACIST BIGOT

One striking political message in Parliament Square was given through the daubing and decorating of the statue of that racist bigot and ruling class warmonger Winston Churchill. The red paint dripping from his mouth and the hammer and sickle on the plinth were very poignant. He detested the Bolsheviks, reserving for them a special vitriol reminiscent of Nazi tirades against the Jews: 'swarms of typhus-bearing vermin'.

Churchill's racism was at the heart of his imperialist political standpoint. The white races, in particular the British, were for him superior: 'I do not admit...that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America, or the black people of Australia...by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade race...has come in and taken its place.' Churchill approved the use of poisonous gas on numerous occasions in Afghanistan, in Mesopotamia (Iraq) and against the Red Army, saying: 'I do not understand this squeamishness about using gas...I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gases against uncivilised tribes'.

He had a profound contempt for the working class, was opposed to unemployment benefit and, during the General Strike 1926 called for the armed forces to put down the strike by any means necessary. After its defeat he wanted relief for miners' families to be withdrawn - a position too foul even for his fellow Tories.

The ex-soldier James Matthews, arrested for daubing Churchill's statue after his picture appeared in the press, defended himself politically in court and was sentenced to 30 days imprisonment by a viciously reactionary magistrate. He justified his action in a clear, political and courageous way when he said:

'The May Day celebrations were in the spirit of free expression against capitalism. Churchill was an exponent of capitalism and of imperialism and anti-semitism. A Tory reactionary vehemently opposed to the emancipation of women and to independence for India. The media machine made this paunchy little man much larger than life - a colossal, towering figure of great stature and bearing the trademark cigar, bowler hat and V-sign. The reality was an often irrational, sometimes vainglorious leader whose impetuosity, egotism and bigotry on occasion cost many lives unnecessarily, and caused much suffering that was needless and unjustified'.
Need any more be said!

Cenotaph: RTS statement

'In relation to the graffiti on the cenotaph, we are obviously aware of the millions of people who have given their lives in the fight for freedom. We know that millions are still dying every year in numerous struggles for independence, freedom and human rights. We respect all those people who are, and have been, prepared to stand up to fascism, imperialism and dictatorship. That said we do not necessarily celebrate the generals and the ruling class that send these people to their deaths to protect the privileges and control of the few. The abhorrence of sending millions of men to their deaths in the trenches dwarfs the stupidity of any possible slogan on a piece of stone'.

* A good biography of Churchill is by Clive Ponting, Sinclair Stevenson 1994. This material on Churchill came from a review of this book in FRFI 120 August/September 1994. A short summary of Churchill 'Damaging a criminal' appears in SCHNEWS 5 May.

MAY DAY

- a parting of ways

The anti-capitalist festival throughout the May Day 2000 long weekend has a political significance far beyond both the actual events themselves and the immediate knee-jerk reactions of the media, politicians and the police to the 'violence' of the May Day protest in London. It demonstrated a determination of the corporate capitalist class through its political representatives in the Labour government, its media, police and judiciary to destroy the coalition of forces in this country that see themselves as part of a growing, global anti-capitalist movement. It also led to certain high profile figures within the 'green' movement, such as George Monbiot and John Vidal, breaking with this growing anti-capitalist coalition by siding with its reactionary critics in a manner which barely distinguished them from the 'gutter' press. DAVID YAFFE reports.

Low intensity operations

What we experienced over the May Day weekend was part of a continuing police strategy put in place soon after the 1980-81 city uprisings of black and white youth. It is based on British army colonial experience against national liberation struggles and was systematically laid out in General Frank Kitson's book *Low Intensity Operations* (1971), developed further in the North of Ireland and put into place by Kenneth Newman, an ex-Chief Constable of the RUC, when he was made head of the Metropolitan Police in 1982.* Its aim is to turn any effective political opposition to the British state into a criminal act. Only ineffectual political activity limited to establishment bodies and parliamentary debate will be regarded as legitimate. Anything else is outside the bounds of legitimate 'democratic' opposition and must be dealt with as 'a threat to public order'.

In his book Kitson argues that it is necessary to ruthlessly stamp out 'subversion' - that is, effective political (revolutionary) opposition - whilst simultaneously strengthening 'moderate' elements who support the state. Intelligence-gathering operations are an essential feature of this process to target those capable of organising serious opposition. The method of gathering intelligence relies heavily on a 'large number of low grade sources' - small pieces of information acquired by the police - fed into computers to build up a total picture of the opposition. At the same time, 'psychological operations' are used in an attempt to isolate the opposition from the people. These include propaganda against the opposition cause, use of the press and media to put over the government side, government schemes to win 'moderate' opinion and support, 'dirty tricks' such as fake leaflets and eventually provoca-

teurs and agents who masquerade as oppositionists to discredit the cause, and finally, if necessary, the assassination of leading oppositionists. The aim, in Kitson's words, is 'to discover and neutralise the genuine subversive element' and 'to associate the many prominent members of the population, especially those who may have been engaged in non-violent action, with the government.' (our emphasis)

'Intelligence gathering' and 'psychological operations', Kitson emphasised, had to take place before the emergence of subversion or an offensive phase of conflict had begun. The May Day weekend saw elements of this strategy put into practice.

Preparing the ground - psychological operations

The background to the May Day events was the drubbing the police received last summer when anti-capitalist protests in the City of London led to 28 police officers and 14 others being injured, 102 arrests and £2m worth of damage. The state was also aware of the political impact of the anti-capitalist campaigners' victories on the streets of Seattle at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in November/December last year.

So, well before the May Day events, the police, through the corporate press and media, were preparing the ground for a massive police presence on the streets of London to take on the demonstrators. They also needed to justify an intense and unprecedented surveillance and intelligence-gathering operation, filming everyone participating in any of the events over the May Day weekend. This was done by using the press to associate the activities with 'rioting and anarchy' and even 'terrorism'.

The Express (20 April) was typical.

Concentrating, like most of the press, on the main May Day event, it reported that three police forces, the Metropolitan Police, the City of London Police, and British Transport Police would unite in preparation for 'widespread rioting led by anarchists. The ringleaders are thought to be planning hit-and-run raids on targets in the City and elsewhere in the capital, using mobile phones and pagers to co-ordinate rioting'. *The Independent* (28 April) stated that police had warned that 'anti-capitalist protesters from the riots in Seattle and Washington are planning to take part in the demonstrations'. 200 to 300 'troublemakers' would attempt to cause disruption. Commenting on the way the protesters had used the internet and mobile phones to organise the rally, a senior police source said: 'They are not far away from the way terrorists work in cells'. Police told the *Big Issue* (24-30 April) that behind the 'fluffy literature' a hardcore will 'cynically manipulate' the majority of people coming to the event.

Some journalists took pride in acting as spies. Justin Rigby of *The Sunday Times* (30 April) tells us how he infiltrated the movement, went to its secret meetings and found out that the official plans for the Reclaim the Streets' (RTS) 'media-friendly publicity stunt called guerrilla gardening - planting thousands of plants and vegetable seeds across London - was a feint'. The real action would be taken elsewhere by small groups, who wanted to see the violence which occurred in the City of London in June last year happen again. *The Sunday Telegraph* (16 April) also claimed to have infiltrated an anarchist meeting and reported that protesters were to occupy a roundabout outside Buckingham Palace.



Jack Straw, Labour's Home Secretary, made it clear that there would be no repeat of last summer's City of London riots. This year the police would be prepared. Ken Livingstone, soon to be elected Mayor of London in opposition to the government, got in on the act and warned of a 'small core who will try and cause violence and people will get hurt in that'. He told his supporters to keep away. Some 15,000 officers would be on duty in Britain's 'biggest ever anti-riot operation' (*The Express*), with others in reserve. In this fashion the police, the press and prominent politicians were preparing the ground for criminalising anti-capitalist protest.

Police lay a trap

After their defeat last summer, the police were determined to demonstrate they could win this time and put into practice their tactics for containing the demonstrators in a restricted area on May Day. Throughout the day they were gathering intelligence and photographing those involved. 100 officers were scrutinising CCTV pictures and passing on information from a packed operations control room. Snatch squads were to be sent in to remove those on the front line once the riot police were deployed. In effect, they laid a trap.

The press scare stories and the warnings from politicians ensured that the numbers were smaller than expected, fewer than 8,000. In spite of being told that the police had sealed off Parliament Square the night before, a large procession of people, setting off from Hyde Park, marched straight into Parliament Square and joined the 'guerrilla gardening', planting seeds, flowers and saplings and digging up turf to lay on the surrounding roads. The police did not intervene to prevent these actions, but, as part of their strategy, photographed everyone involved. Interestingly enough the police did remove a Boycott Bacardi banner strung between two traffic lights, but did nothing when it was rehoisted between two statues in an even better place in the Square (see box), except presumably photograph those responsible. Neither did they prevent the decorating and daubing of statues like that of the imperialist and racist bigot



A reactionary chorus

The Times was typical. In a leader 'Mayday Mayhem' (2 May), it spoke of a day of action which 'has proved to be, as expected, a descent into anarchy' with 'violent gangs' and 'rampaging anarchists' hurling bricks at police officers. More sinisterly it said that 'a raggle-taggle mob, loosely grouped under an anarchist banner, cannot be trusted with the organisation of a legal, peaceful demonstration... They make a mockery of a serious environmentalist's cause'. Much was made of the daubing of Winston Churchill's statue and the Cenotaph. Typical was the *Daily Mail* (2 May) - 'mob desecrates the national memorial to those who gave their lives to the cause of freedom'. This, of course, is gross hypocrisy coming from a newspaper which supported appeasement with Hitler. *The Sun* (2 May) called upon readers to turn in people they recognised from newspaper photographs. *Evening Standard* journalist Nigel Rosser (5 May) fingered Turkish communist organisations as being at the 'heart of much of the May Day rioting and vandalism'. Appealing to the racist prejudices of many of his readers, he told us that: 'it is believed many are either illegal immigrants or seeking political asylum in this country'.

Politicians took up this theme. Blair condemned the 'mindless thuggery' and told relatives and friends of those photographed committing acts of violence to name and shame them. 'If they can't demonstrate properly, they should not be allowed to demonstrate at all.' Home Secretary Jack Straw told the Commons there were provisions within the law for processions to be banned at a chief police officer's request. After all this propaganda, it is certainly possible, as SchNEWS (5 May) reckons, that 'the public is ripe to accept that no more anti-capitalist protests will be allowed to happen again'.

Reactionary views coming from the police, the corporate press and politicians are not unexpected. But to do real damage, as Kitson argued, 'prominent' people associated with radical politics have to be called upon to take the side of the police and government. Ken Livingstone was signed up before the events took place (see above). After them, he was quick to echo Blair, when he said: 'I utterly condemn the violence and destruction of property by mindless thugs. These people injured police officers, destroyed property and disrupted peaceful union demonstrations' - repeating the lie, promoted on the night by the BBC, that the violence in Whitehall forced the police to halt the traditional May Day demonstration. More significantly, John Vidal of *The Guardian* (2 May), someone long associated with radical actions within the 'green' movement, told the police to note a man called Ben or Benny, who threw the first stone yesterday and turned a 'good-natured, if incoherent, May Day garden party in Parliament Square... into a running fight with the police'. He then went on to describe him.

The most shameful attack on the event came from George Monbiot, another *Guardian* journalist with 'radical' credentials. In a scurrilous and pompous article 'Streets of Shame' (*The Guardian Society* 10 May) Monbiot tells us that he now regards RTS as 'incoherent vigilantes' who are a 'threat to the environmental and social justice movements'. Why is this? Monbiot's reasons are quite revealing. 'Non-violent direct action', he tells us, 'is not a direct attempt to change the world through physical action, but a graphic and symbolic means of drawing attention to neglected issues, capturing hearts and minds through political theatre'. Its impact will necessarily be limited, until it becomes part of a 'wider democratic assault' on the policies which gave rise to it. He goes on to say that when 'physical force' is the sole means of preventing something from taking place, political activism is indistinguishable from the actions of Tony Martin (Norfolk farmer found guilty of murder) shooting the burglars

in his house. This is all self-serving stuff, which justifies Monbiot writing about the evils of corporate capitalism, without taking effective action to change things, and so avoid putting his own privileged position as a *Guardian* columnist on the line.

It is also nonsense, as his fellow columnist Hugo Young, hardly a left-winger, pointed out in *The Guardian* (2 May) in a more reasoned article on the May Day events. He argued that the 'guerrilla gardening' threatened no one, 'least of all the bastions of British politics or capitalism'. The event faced a dilemma. If it remained peaceful then it would be patronised or ignored. If it was violent it would get noticed. Inevitably it was violent. He continued, 'the political system does respond to force. Arguably it responds to nothing else'. But he goes on to distinguish force from 'violence' which, he says, can 'easily be seen off by the superior violence of the state'. What is needed, he says, is the 'force of a competing political reality which threatens the power of those who control the system'. At times, he argues, the movement has achieved this and had some success in direct action campaigns over road bypasses and in the case of Monsanto. Other examples are the campaigns to disrupt the meetings of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) at Seattle and Washington. Violence was not absent from these campaigns. What is significant is that they worked by amplifying real forces already at large, in the case of Seattle especially in the Third World. Direct action was the ally of political reality.

Monbiot rejects such a direct action movement precisely because it really would have to take on corporate power and confront the violence of the state. Later on in his article, he gives the game away. The protest, he complained, 'three days before the local elections, managed to jeopardise the best electoral chances radical politics has had in Britain for 15 years'. This then is his political theatre, a farce of ineffective, powerless, local bourgeois politics, of the Ken Livingstones and the official Green Party.

What next?

Building an anti-capitalist movement in opposition to the corrupt parliamentary political system and bought-off official labour and trade union move-

ment is no easy task. It will be made still harder when the new anti-terrorism bill becomes law. Many mistakes will be made and lessons have to be learned. The May Day 'guerrilla gardening' did face a dilemma. To argue as the RTS statement (2 May) did that 'Guerrilla Gardening is not a protest; by its very nature it is a creative peaceful celebration of the growing global anti-capitalist movement' and then say 'Events that occurred outside Parliament Square were not part of the Guerrilla Gardening event', only compounds this dilemma. Unlike the J18 protest in the City of London and the protests in Seattle and Washington, the direct action of May Day could not, except in a very confused way, relate to the political reality driving the growing global anti-capitalist movement.

When RTS linked up with the sacked Liverpool dockers in 1996, a crucial link between the environmental, social and political movements was made and the roots of a new anti-capitalist movement were laid. Interestingly this was a move that John Vidal (*The Guardian* 2 October 1996) regarded as a step too far. So did the police when they attacked those supporting the dockers during a demonstration on Merseyside. The protest against multinational companies' brutal exploitation of their workers, against the City of London, the WTO and IMF all built on such experiences and this has to be continued.

There is a lot to be done in Britain alone. Multinational companies are invading our educational institutions at every level. We have to stop them. Poverty pay and casualisation have become a feature in the lives of millions of workers. We need to take action. Pollution continues to destroy the health and environment of people who live in our cities. We have only just begun to combat it. Both Labour and Tories are engaged in systematic racist attacks on asylum seekers. They have to be exposed and combated. And finally we need to learn from our experiences and draw out the many lessons of May Day 2000. ■

* For a discussion of this strategy see 'Kenneth Newman the enemy in our midst' in FRFI 31 August 1983. An edited version of this article called 'State Repression' appeared in FRFI 135 February/March 1997. It is available in the Marxism section of our website <http://www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk>.

Winston Churchill (see box).

Sometime in the afternoon, a traditional May Day march of around 3,000, including large numbers of Turkish and Kurdish workers and communists, organisations representing asylum-seekers, Longbridge workers and left-wing organisations, was stopped by lines of riot police from entering the agreed destination in Trafalgar Square. Later, commentators were to claim that the rioters had prevented the march from reaching Trafalgar Square. This was not true. The main concern of the police was to stop the two sets of demonstrators meeting together.

In Whitehall McDonald's, surprisingly, had been left unboarded and unguarded. It was an open invitation and, after it was smashed up, riot police appeared from the side streets and battle commenced. The police systematically charged the demonstration, splitting it up and herding people either back to Parliament Square or into Trafalgar Square.

At Parliament Square, where large numbers of 'guerrilla gardeners' had remained enjoying the sunshine,

all exits were sealed off without warning, trapping everyone. People were photographed and their names and addresses were recorded before some were allowed to leave. At about 6.30pm a large section of the crowd, marching to the rhythm of the samba band, forced its way out of Parliament Square through Millbank. Throughout the evening, skirmishes with the police took place, concentrated mainly in Kennington Park where many of the demonstrators had regrouped.

There was no collective effort to push out of Trafalgar Square. There, demonstrators were held until after 8.00pm and only allowed to leave one by one, many after being searched, photographed and having their details recorded. The police had got what they wanted. The 'violence' was, in the main, limited and restricted to a small area. An enormous amount of intelligence had been gained, nearly 100 had been arrested and the press, the media and assorted politicians were now more than ready to attack the anti-capitalist demonstrators.



Police photographed and filmed everything: systematic intelligence gathering

MAY DAY WITH THE BAT BUSTERS!



Rock Around the Blockade's banner 'Boycott Bacardi - Corporate Vampire - Enemy of Cuba' went up over Parliament Square held by statues of two figures of the colonial establishment, gagged and bound by a statement of protest against multinationals. The Boycott Bacardi banner represented another voice in the 'people against profit' message central to the anti-capitalist movement. Our message was clear not only against multinationals and their obsessive drive for profit but also in support of a socialist alternative - Cuba. Earlier in the day, in Hyde Park, we had changed into Bacardi bat busting suits and masks and joined the procession towards Parliament Square. Out came the red 'Boycott Bacardi' flags as we set off to the sounds of the samba. During the day we distributed thousands of leaflets combating Bacardi's lies and propaganda. Around the banner in the carnival atmosphere of Parliament Square we created a vibrant information point where discussions with people from all walks of life took place to drum up support. In fact this had been a long weekend of action for the bat busting crew which had started on Friday 28 May as we took to our bikes in support of the monthly Critical Mass. Over Saturday and Sunday we continued to disseminate information on a lively stall outside the May Day 2000 conference. This is just the beginning of our activities. Join us!



Rock around the Blockade 2000 in Guantanamo

At the end of April, a Rock around the Blockade brigade inaugurated the fourth sound system we have brought to Cuba for the Union of Young Communists (UJC) in Guantanamo, the easternmost province.

The two weeks of the brigade coincided with an exciting period of activity in Cuba – mass demonstrations for the return of Elian, celebra-

tions to commemorate the Bay of Pigs in 1961, protests against the UN Convention of Human Rights vote against Cuba and the International Workers Day celebrations on 1 May.

As well as helping fix up the bus to carry the sound system around the province, we visited schools, communities and other centres. It was an important opportunity for us to collect information to defend the Cuban

revolution and to use its example to build socialism in Britain. The Cubans welcomed us with great warmth and all, from national representatives to local campesinos, were incredibly patient in answering our many questions about human rights and freedom and the future of the revolution. Ordinary people answered with as much passion and conviction as the government officials. Most importantly we discovered that the essence of Cuban democracy is that even in the most remote rural communities it is the 'ordinary' people who are the official representatives. We also did a live interview about the sound system project on local radio which went out to the whole province. And, of course, we inaugurated the sound system and spent three nights partying with the people of Baracoa.

Back in Havana we were met by Julio Martinez, the second secretary of the national UJC. Julio said he remembered that during the most difficult time of the Special Period, he had the opportunity of meeting two consecutive Rock around the Blockade brigades in Ciego de Avila where he was previously based. Julio said that Rock around the Blockade's project was the most important one that the UJC was involved with. He assured us that they are happy to develop links in any direction which would assist our own struggle for socialism in Britain.

The UJC invited the brigade to attend three nights of anti-imperialist tribunals outside the US Interests Section in Havana, to celebrate International Workers Day as special guests.

An even more special invitation awaited us, to attend the May Day celebrations in Revolution Square. After

Fidel Castro's closing speech, he set off at the head of the parade to the US Interests Section. One member of the brigade was able to speak with Fidel and hand him copies of FRFI and information about our campaigns.

We also met national representatives of FEU, the students' union, including its leader, Hassan Perez. FEU were very keen to initiate a project with Rock around the Blockade which could involve exchange speaking tours. We also spent an evening with Rogelio Polanco Fuentes, editor of the youth newspaper *Juventud Rebelde*, and discussed the possibility of co-operation between that paper and FRFI. *Juventud Rebelde* is currently exposing human rights abuses in those countries that voted against Cuba in the UN convention. We also talked about recent measures taken in response to popular demand, to combat the resurgence of crime and prostitution.

The Cuban economy has begun a turnaround and the government is already talking about the beginning of the end of the Special Period which began a decade ago. The improvements are visible on the streets. There is more and better food, more shops with more products and more economic activity. Tourism is set to expand, but a new approach has been taken which will involve educating tourists about the gains of the revolution. There is an air of positivity in Cuba, and the Elian case has created a peak of unity and activity. The catchword of the brigadistas was inspired by Fidel Castro's speech to commemorate the Bay of Pigs: 'Manana, continuamos la lucha!' – *Tomorrow, we continue the struggle!*

Helen Yaffe

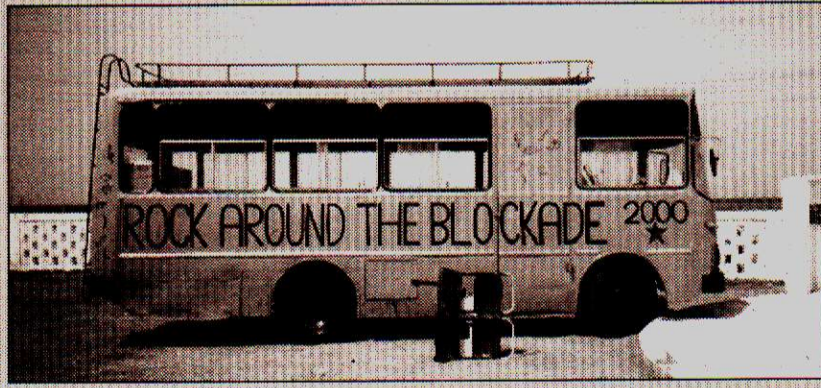
Getting the show on the road

A wheel short, with gaping holes in the floor, a smashed window and a rusting of rust, the bus that was going to take the Rock around the Blockade 2000 disco on the road was waiting for us at an old bicycle factory. In Britain, a dealer would have charged to take it away for scrap. But in Guantanamo, one of Cuba's least developed cities, workers at the factory spent a week helping us to make it roadworthy. Since bicycle production stopped a few years ago, 350 staff are employed there to assemble electric fans and pressure cookers. Around ten men took time off to work on the project, patching up holes and building a roof-rack and a steel frame for the disco lights and speakers. We brigadistas scrubbed old paint and rust from the outside ready for fresh painting. Workers sprayed the bus bright blue and Eduardo, a professional artist for the UJC, covered the body with musical notes and painted a huge Che face above the back bumper, with beret and yellow star. Paint dried quickly in the Cuban heat and after washing the bus down, we were ready to go. At first the engine wasn't, how-

ever. It took five attempts with at least ten pairs of hands to push the hulk across the huge shop floor before the driver could kick start it. Next day, when we arrived in Baracoa after a two-hour journey through the hills, I was stunned to see the Rock around the Blockademobile had made it to the town too. The disco was erected at a park on the seafront and more than 500 local young people turned up every day for three nights and

one afternoon of loud, jubilant partying to Cuban salsa and European dance music. Baracoa was just the beginning, as the UJC plans to take the disco to a different town or village in Guantanamo province at least once a month – staying for three days each time and giving thousands of young Cubans the chance to enjoy the work of our campaign.

Hannah Bayman



Local communities: bedrock of Cuban democracy

We made important visits, while in the municipality of Baracoa, to some of the rural communities that form the bedrock of Cuban democracy. Our aim was to talk with 'everyday' Cubans. We discovered that all adults in Cuba participate in the mass organisations and political representatives of these organisations live among the communities.

The first visit was to Mabujabo, a community of 1,235 people and the capital of the mountainous Mabujabo region with a total population of 3,928. The area now has three family doctor's surgeries, supplemented by health care provision in local schools and factories. The local infant mortal-

ity rate has been zero per 1,000 live births for the last 15 years; before the revolution an average of 15 babies died every month.

We visited one family doctor centre, which combines conventional medicine with alternative treatment such as acupuncture and homeopathic remedies. The medical shortages of the special period made developing alternative remedies a necessity and these have now become an integrated part of the Cuban health care system.

The second community we met with was appropriately named Alegria (Happiness), a successful co-operative farm formed in 1981 that produces vegetables, fruits and cacao

for the local and national chocolate industry. Farm workers explained to us how the co-operative functions: state banks provide credit for the community to purchase machinery and other farm inputs, and state specialists visit the co-operative to offer advice on techniques and management. The state also agrees a production quota with the co-operative with a set amount of produce it will buy from them. The community then sells its surplus at a local farmers markets' and distributes the profits around the community.

The brigadistas were given a tour of the farm and after harvesting coconuts and oranges we held an impromptu discussion under the shade

of a banana tree over issues such as Cuban democracy and human rights, racism and sexism, the organic agricultural revolution and the environment.

We had the privilege of taking part in a brief ceremony to award the outstanding members of the co-operative with useful goods such as cooking oil, salt, soap and shampoo. Recipients were those who had made the most effort.

The Happiness community made us honorary members and a few days later came to our camp with a huge pink cake to celebrate the birthday of one of the brigadistas. They spent the evening with us in Baracoa enjoying the Rock around the Blockade disco.

Elian reunited with his father

On 22 April, after five months of blatant refusal from Elian's distant Miami relatives to return the child to his father, and in the face of a vociferous and potentially violent campaign orchestrated by the vicious Miami-based Cuban exile group, CANF, US Attorney General Janet Reno ordered a dawn raid. The Miami relatives and their backers were quick to attempt to make political capital out of use of armed FBI paratroopers and pepper spray. But, after months of political wrangling, the raid took just three minutes and within a few hours a clearly delighted Elian was finally reunited with his father in Washington.

In any event, the Miami relatives' own obduracy in the face of all attempts at negotiation and compromise left Reno no other option. While both presidential candidates, Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W Bush, exploited the Elian issue as an excuse for Cuba-bashing and the US administration dragged its feet, it had become clear that the vast majority of the people of the US – including the non-Cuban population of Miami – wholeheartedly supported the return of the child to his father, his closest surviving relative. There are currently around 10,000 US children living abroad who have been abducted by a relative; the Immigration and Naturalization Services must have feared setting a precedent that would compromise international family law. Fidel Castro called 22 April 'A day of truce between the United States and Cuba, perhaps the only such day in 41 years.'

However, the battle for the return of Elian to Cuba is not yet over. A lengthy court process still looms. And behind the scenes, huge pressure is being applied to persuade Juan Gonzales and his family to defect to the US. Hillary Clinton, ever the opportunist, added her voice: 'I hope that this taste of freedom and opportunity he [Elian's father] has had with his son during this time might help him to reconsider staying definitively in the US.'

However, if the US thought they could use the Elian issue to weaken the Cuban Revolution, they made a major miscalculation. The Cubans have rallied around demands for Elian's return with huge demonstrations and a show of unity and determination said to be unparalleled since the early 1960s. The case has awakened, too, memories of those other children stolen by the US in Operation Peter Pan. In 1960, the CIA spread propaganda that the communists were planning to snatch children from their parents to be sent to the USSR for indoctrination – or, in more macabre versions, to be processed into canned meat in Siberian slaughterhouses. The Eisenhower administration, in a secret deal with the Catholic church, arranged for 14,000 Cuban children to be smuggled out of the country to the United States, unaccompanied and without passports or baggage.

It has also meant an opportunity to publicise again the hypocrisy of the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966, which deliberately

entices Cubans to migrate illegally to the US with the promise of residency rights. Ironically, in the same week Elian was returned to his father, 300 Haitians were awaiting automatic deportation back to Haiti after their boat capsized en route to the US. Thousands attempt the perilous crossing each year; many disappear without trace. In Haiti, life expectancy is 50, 25 years less than in Cuba; infant mortality stands at 100 per 1,000 live births (6.2 in Cuba), adult illiteracy is around 70%; political persecution is a regular occurrence and average annual incomes are £320. While more US media coverage has been devoted to Elian than even the death of Princess Diana, the plight of those fleeing real poverty and real oppression continues to go unreported and ignored.

Britain backs attack on Cuba

At the end of April, 22 countries, including Britain, backed a motion condemning Cuba for 'human rights abuses' at the UN Convention on Human Rights in Geneva. The motion, ostensibly put forward by the Czech Republic, was in fact drafted eight times to meet the approval of the US, with parts re-written at the behest of Madeleine Albright, US Foreign Secretary and would-be Czech president. The Czech Republic, with its financial and political dependence on the US, simply acted as imperialism's poodle. However, 18 countries, many of them amongst the poorest in the world, voted with Cuba despite US pressure.

Foreign Minister Felipe Roque was acerbic about the human rights records of those countries condemning Cuba, citing the war in Yugoslavia, racism in Europe, the continuing sanctions against Iraq. As for Britain, he pointed out, what about the brutal activities of its police against the Irish people, the plastic bullets, the acts of torture? Complaints had been lodged in 1998 with the UN Committee against Torture and yet still nothing had been done.

Labour gives Cuba short shrift at the EU

Continuing this role, Britain was the only country to veto EU Preferential Trading Status for Cuba on the grounds of, as Labour's Clare Short, darling of the left, put it 'lack of democracy and human rights'.

Democracy in Cuba

98.06% of the Cuban population voted in April's municipal and provincial elections. 13,853 delegates were elected throughout the island to the municipal assemblies of Popular Power, which in turn elect the provincial assemblies and approve candidates for the National Assembly.

Casting his vote, Vice President Raul Castro emphasised that Cuban democracy was an example, even if it was still imperfect. What they must do, he said, is struggle to improve it, while maintaining a single party – because a second party would be made up of counter-revolutionary groups, 'Washington's pawns'. What counted was the class character of democracy. He concluded 'Here there is a single party and there will continue to be a single party, because there is no need for another one to represent the people's interests.'

Cat Wiener

compulsory, but this community had 100% participation. All members carry out their responsibilities on top of a full-time job. Representatives of each CDR attend the Municipal Assembly where they elect the president of the municipal CDR organisation.

Each community forms part of the MTT (Territorial Troops Militia) which gathers together men and women who are able to undertake the most difficult military tasks and the Production and Defence Brigade which is organised to manage every day life in a war situation and trains members in basic military techniques.

Our visits to the communities provided an important insight into the lives of Cuban people and demonstrated how well small communities can function if organised for the good of everyone.

Barnaby Tasker

May Day in Havana

May Day in Havana was the climax of our 17-day brigade. Well over a million people gathered in Revolution Square to listen to their President, Fidel Castro. The crowd, headed by Fidel, then marched over three kilometres to gather at the Jose Marti Anti-Imperialist tribunal, opposite the US Interests office. Rock around the Blockade were given front-row seats amongst the international representatives.

The strength of the international workers' day parade was not only the numbers but the unity and courage displayed by the Cuban people. It was further confirmation that social justice, a reality in Cuba and attainable throughout the world, represents the principal objective of humanity. The vast crowd congregated at Revolution Square showed nothing but respect and support for its leader. It was another irrefutable demonstration to the world that Cubans are firmly convinced of what they believe in and their place in the world in the future.

Fidel spoke about recent developments in the Elian Gonzalez case and the boy's reunion with his father. It was clear, he said, that the USA had 'underestimated our people, who have not rested a single day in fighting for something absolutely just.' It had become increasingly clear for all to see that there could be no justification for such barbaric and harsh crimes against a child and his father, regardless of their nationality. The US is attempting to instigate the defection of a father who has been viciously slandered. Their efforts will be in vain.

This case was never about one boy's well-being: it is part of imperialism's continued war against socialist Cuba. The US has been exposed to the whole world over it. One day imperialism will learn it will never defeat the revolutionary peoples of the world.

Paul McKenna



Guantanamo naval base

The US naval base in Guantanamo is an area of Cuban land occupied by the United States for its own military interests, with no recourse to Cuban laws nor unaccountability to the Cuban government.

While the US blockade cripples the rest of Cuba, US military personnel in Guantanamo trade freely with the world. They even have their drinking water imported from nearby countries. Perhaps they think communism is something you can catch from the water!

During the rafter crisis of 1994, the US used the base at Guantanamo to dump thousands of would-be immigrants picked up at sea. In total 35,000 Cubans were held in tents for up to five months and denied even



In 1898, as the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain was close to victory, the US effectively took control of the island. In 1903 a lease signed by Cuba's puppet government ratified the right of the US to retain a military base in Guantanamo.

The base is 117 square kilometres and is inhabited by 3,543 people, the majority military personnel and their families. The perimeter fence stretches for 28 kilometres, enclosing five residential areas and two hospitals. There is also an industrial area and recently new technologies have been introduced to harvest salt. It is clear that the US military is not planning on packing up any time soon. Most significant is the size of the two airports situated on opposite sides of the bay. With runways of 3.2 kilometres, these are large enough to receive the biggest US airforce planes.

the basic right to walk around, before being taken to the USA.

On the way up to the highest point on the Cuban side of the border, our guides pointed out the lookout tower where two Cuban guards were shot at in 1998, without provocation or retaliation. The US army is eager for an excuse for hostile action.

Inside the Cuban mountain base, the brigade was shown a model of the Guantanamo mountains dotted by both Cuban and US lookout points with the US military complex stretching across the top. We then walked up to the top of the mountain to see the base for ourselves. Through the binoculars we could make out the details of the many complexes and could clearly see the Stars and Stripes flapping insidiously in the Cuban breeze.

Helen Yaffe

BARACOA MATERNITY HOME

Oriente, the destination for this year's brigade, is often described as the birthplace of the Cuban revolution. But it isn't just revolutionary ideas that are born there. In Baracoa we visited a maternity home and saw how the province aims to give its new babies a healthy start in life.

On the day we arrive 26 mothers-to-be are staying at the home, which has beds for up to 35 and was opened two years ago on the site of an old polyclinic.

'We're here for women suffering difficult pregnancies or those who live in rural areas and wouldn't be able to get to hospital easily when they start labour. Most patients from the countryside come to stay one or two weeks before their due date,' explains Dr Eloy Arcia, who runs the home with director Ezequiel Cantillo.

A typical day here includes healthy meals, bed rest for women who need it and an antenatal programme with classes on diet, breast feeding and positions and breathing during labour.

Dr Arcia blames the US blockade for many shortages. 'The blockade affects us in all senses. We have problems getting a lot of what we need here, including medicines, vitamins, maternity clothes and even a calculator or enough paper for the office,' he says. Added to this are the effects of the Special Period – a decade of economic belt-tightening that Cuba has endured since the collapse of its Soviet ally.

But the situation has had one

surprise positive side effect – an increase in breastfeeding, which became a necessity as powdered milk disappeared from the shelves. The authorities are keen to promote the healthy new trend.

20-year-old mother-to-be Ysuluidi Guesarte is resting in a chair underneath a mural of the correct technique for breastfeeding. She is expecting her first child this week and is here because she lives far from the centre of town. 'I'm a bit nervous because this is my first baby, but I'm happy here,' she says. 'We have health education seminars every day and I've watched videos on how to breast-feed and how to relax when I give birth.'

- Maternity leave for a Cuban woman is 18 weeks on full pay.
- An expectant mother works until week 34 of her pregnancy and then has 12 weeks at home with her new baby. Her job must be held open for her until then and if she needs to stop work before week 34 for health reasons she is entitled to do so on 70% of her salary. Pregnant women are not allowed to work at night.
- If a new mother is unable to return to work after 12 weeks, her job is held open for her for up to a year, although she is not paid. In special circumstances fathers can also take unpaid leave.

Hannah Bayman

Who paid the piper?

The CIA and the cultural Cold War

During the 1950s and 1960s, the United States Information Services [USIS], based within US embassies throughout Europe, sponsored the study of United States culture, particularly literature, to counteract the burgeoning influence of Soviet Studies. The funding for this came from the Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] and was funneled through other cultural organisations such as the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and above all, the Congress for Cultural Freedom [CCF]. In the early 1960s I was an undergraduate. The study of American literature appeared to me then to be stimulating new area of study. I continued in this field as a postgraduate and eventually became a lecturer in American literature, which I have remained for the rest of my professional life. The study of American literature, history, politics, sociology, film and so on, took off massively in the 1960s and 1970s and is now common in almost every university in this country. What Saunders shows in this book is that this apparently spontaneous growth of a new discipline was nothing of the sort. Not very far below the surface one finds clear evidence of a determined plan by the CIA to corral cultural and intellectual life after World War II to the service of US imperialism and the Cold War. The CIA became in effect the major artistic patron on a scale that would have made the Medici blink. This book plots the development of this enterprise that was only finally wrecked by the Vietnam war and the rise of the New Left. I write this review as someone startled to discover that my apparently autonomous intellectual development came about as a result of a secret plot by the intelligence services of a foreign country.

'During the height of the Cold War, the US government committed vast resources to a secret programme of cultural propaganda in western Europe. A central feature of this programme was to advance the claim that it did not exist. It was managed, in great secrecy by the USA's espionage arm, the Central Intelligence Agency. The centrepiece of this covert campaign was the Congress for Cultural Freedom, run by the CIA agent Michael Josselson from 1950 till 1967. Its achievements – not least its duration – were considerable. At its peak, the Congress for Cultural Freedom had offices in 35 countries, employed dozens of personnel, published over 20 prestige magazines, held art exhibitions, owned news and features service, organized high-profile international conferences, and rewarded musicians and artists with prizes and public performances. Its mission was to nudge the intelligentsia of western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and communism and towards a view more accommodating of the American way.'

For those who set up the CCF, the Cold War was, essentially, a cultural war. The Marshall Plan to bring economic aid to a starving and economically devastated Europe was thought to be useless as an instrument for the establishment of US hegemony unless it was accompanied by an ideological aid programme. George Kennan, architect of the Marshall

Plan, in a speech to the National War College in December 1947, introduced the concept of the 'necessary lie' as the vital element of US post-war diplomacy. Mirroring the Soviet Union's skilful use of propaganda, Kennan advocated a policy that was to be based on paradox and contradiction: the truth would be defended by lies; freedom by manipulation; democracy propagated by ruthless control; open government sustained by secret and covert activities. The main sustainers of this dreadful inversion would not be the right-wing ideologues or the erstwhile fascist sympathisers so hastily rehabilitated after the war, but those designated as the Non-Communist Left [NCL]. The main strategist for this roping together of the NCL into the US sphere was Arthur Koestler. Long admired in the West for his denunciation of Stalinism, Koestler was early recruited by the CCF to persuade left-leaning intellectuals that they should overcome their confused thinking and sceptical detachment from politics. Essentially, Koestler, having bounced himself out of the power structures of Eastern Europe, willingly embraced the feet of the new power elites of the West. Following the old adage of the need to fight fire with fire, Koestler persuaded the CIA to fight communism with ex-communists, defined as 'those who were disillusioned with communism but still faithful to the ideal of socialism'. Thus did the CIA get into bed with the socialists.

Three key texts stand as testimonies to this strategy: Arthur Schlesinger's *The Vital Centre*, Koestler's *The God that failed* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Apart from these three, the philosopher Isaiah Berlin, politician Averell Harriman, composer Nicholas Nabokov and critic and writer Melvyn Lasky, in addition to Josselson, were the prime movers and hired hands of the project. Most of these men had left-wing credentials that gave the necessary aura of authenticity to their positions. Although there was an attempt to set up a US version of the CCF, it was wrecked by the quarrelsomeness of homegrown US intellectuals and the integrity of few individuals like the playwright Arthur Miller and writer Mary McCarthy. (The social philosopher Hannah Arendt, however, was one of the staunchest supporters.) No such problems were encountered in Britain where intellectuals, politicians and artists flocked to the freebies and sold themselves cheap into dishonourable slavery for the price of a few days in a posh hotel or an overseas trip. *Encounter*, edited by the poet Stephen Spender, was the main intellectual organ of Cold War propaganda. Spender later claimed not to have known where the money came from for the loss-making journal, but his career was effectively ruined by revelations of CIA patronage. Orwell, on the other hand, was a knowing paid agent and handed over lists of his erstwhile Communist Party comrades to the British secret services while waging ferocious war against the left in his trite and grossly over-estimated works of fiction.

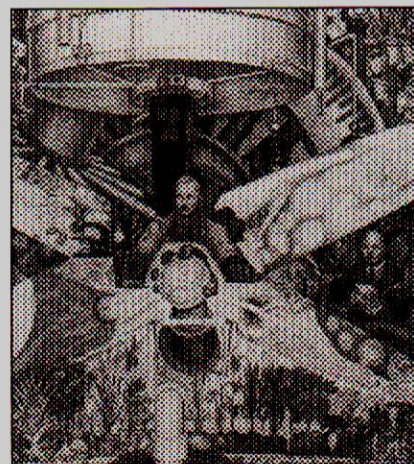
Almost every 'radical' or 'left-wing' journal of the Cold War was funded by the CIA. These included *Partisan Review* in the United States and *Transition* in Uganda. The whole list of academic and cultural journals

emanating from US universities in this period, and detailed by Saunders, was funded by the CIA through front learned foundations. In essence there was no natural sustainable market at all for the growth of a liberal, intellectual 'centre'; the illusion of one was created by creative accounting. The most startling artistic achievement of the CIA was the sponsorship of Abstract Expressionism – defined by Nelson Rockefeller as 'free enterprise art'. The fact that the free market could never have sustained such developments did not cause any hesitation in the CIA's embrace of the unsellable. The fact that most of these painters ended their lives in early violent deaths did not cast a shadow over the scheme to show the West as the natural home of free artistic experiment. And as Saunders points out, there was never any danger of the CIA running out of money.

The methods of bribery and manipulation were totalitarian but



George Orwell.



De Rivera mural (detail): Lenin on the right

there were moments of high farce as when the CIA commissioned a translation of TS Eliot's obscure modernist poem *The Four Quartets* and had copies air-dropped over the Soviet Union. As tragedy, there was the absolute nadir of McCarthyism and the communist purges of the 1950s. Falling between farce and tragedy is the collapse of the official Left in Britain. Labour leaders Hugh Gaitskell, Denis Healey and Anthony Crosland were all knowing and willing supporters of the CCF. After the Labour election victory of 1964 Josselson wrote to US cultural historian Daniel Bell, 'We are all pleased to have so many of our friends in the new government'.

The success of the CIA strategy depended on the dominant class definition whereby to be non-political was to be anti-communist. Intellectual freedom was the freedom to take up a pro-capitalist position. This position was succinctly denounced

and exposed by Conor Cruise O'Brien in 1966 as 'The inculcation of uniformly favourable attitudes towards American politics and practices'. The Vietnam war and the supine failure of the Old Left to raise any voice against it created the impetus for the revolutionary left in Europe and the States. It was the turning point as US soldiers were killing and dying in Vietnam while the bought and sold intellectuals of the left remained silent for fear of offending their masters. The rise of the New Left, uncontaminated by Cold War politics, marked the demise of the CCF and its tawdry band.

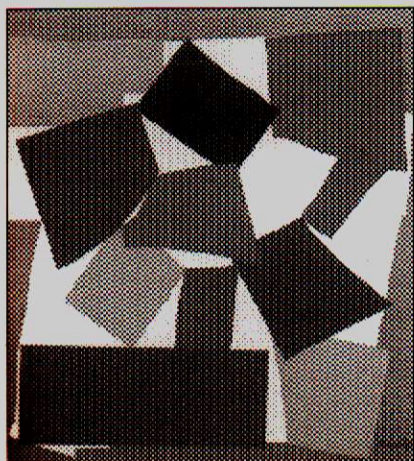
That there was a vibrant and alternative left against which the CIA felt the need to conspire is shown in Tim Robbins' *The cradle will rock*. This film, released to cinemas in Britain at the end of April, shows how the Theatre Arts Project, part of Roosevelt's New Deal, developed a revolutionary people's theatre in the heart of the failed capitalism of the depression. The film captures the exuberance and optimism that a new society could emerge from the debris of mass unemployment and poverty and of how this hope was undermined by the scare tactics of the red menace industry fueled by terrified megalomaniacs like William Randolph Hearst and Nelson Rockefeller. But not before one glorious, rumbustious and illegal performance of Mark Blitzstein's Brechtian musical which gives its title to the film. In the 1930s, to be an artist was to be on the side of the people, to be committed and to believe that art itself must dirty its hands with politics and the real lives of people. Even fascists like the poet Ezra Pound and futurist Marinetti believed in the political function of art. It was the task of the ideologues of the Cold War to create the myth of the neutral or unpolitical artist and to make that the position that paid off.

There is an overlap between the film and the book. At the end of the film, Rockefeller, who has just ordered the destruction of Diego Rivera's mural commissioned for the Rockefeller building because it featured the head of Lenin, discusses with Hearst how they can encourage a more aristocratic form of art. They hit upon the idea of patronage for those artists like Matisse who are content to focus on fruit and flowers. The encouraging of such art by grants and gifts will drive out the disturbing art which addresses social issues. What the film illustrates is the creative and unruly energies unleashed by the process of artistic creativity. It is these energies, anarchic and uncontrollable, which create such terror in the ruling classes and which they want to manipulate into the empty forms of the decorous and harmonious.

Saunders' book and Robbins' film both illustrate an uncomfortable truth about the distance between the rhetoric of the open society and the reality of control; of an intellectual environment in which our thoughts are not our own.

Jacqueline Kaye

Who paid the piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War, Frances Stonor Saunders, Granta Books, 1999, £20



Matisse: patronage for apolitical art



Kandinsky: the art of the 'free market'

Prisons Ombudsman shows whose side he is on

In FRFI 150 (October/November 1999) we reported that Jack Straw had appointed Stephen Shaw, the director of the Prison Reform Trust (PRT), as the new Prisons Ombudsman and commented that: 'Whether the "liberal" reformer, who Michael Howard considered too left wing for the job will now prove more or less useful to prisoners than ex-Admiral Sir Peter Woodhead remains to be seen.' We concluded that Shaw could demonstrate his willingness to take the side of prisoners by taking up some of the cases we were then highlighting on the Prisoners' Fightback page. These included the appalling repression at Woodhill control unit, moves to further restrict prisoners' phonecalls at Full Sutton and the treatment being meted out to **JOHN BOWDEN** and other prisoners on dirty protest at Long Lartin. The article below is John's account of how he tried to take his complaint to the Prisons Ombudsman and the response he received.

The appointment of Stephen Shaw as Prisons Ombudsman was greeted by prison reform pundits and the liberal press as an indication that the independence and integrity of that body was assured. In fact, as head of the PRT, Shaw had cultivated an extremely close working relationship with the Prison Service that bordered on a partnership and in the eyes of many prisoners transformed the PRT into little more than a liberal arm of the Prison Service.

Having been suitably rewarded with his latest career move, Shaw clearly intends to continue in the same vein and prisoners should have absolutely no illusions about his inclination to pursue their interests and rights at the risk of alienating his friends within the prison system.

In September 1999 two other prisoners and I staged a dirty protest in the segregation unit of Long Lartin in an attempt to resist and highlight the brutalisation of prisoners in the unit. For almost a month we were isolated in purpose-built 'anti-dirty-protest' cells and subjected to constant psychological abuse and occasional physical brutality. We were fed through small cat-flaps in the cell doors and our food was regularly adulterated and water withheld. Each day staff would silently approach our cell doors and suddenly hammer on

them with truncheons, usually every half hour or so, keeping us in a constant state of anxiety and stress.

Throughout the night powerful cell lights would be turned on and off for interminable periods, preventing sustained sleep. Dog-handlers would approach our windows during the very early hours of each morning and provoke their Alsatians to bark incessantly.

At no time were we seen by a doctor, member of the Board of Visitors, or even a governor. We were simply left to the mercy of sadistic prison officers whose intention was to break our resolve and destroy our psychological resistance.

A vital part of the torture was that we were deliberately and completely cut off from any possible source of support or outside influence, especially the intervention of lawyers. For the duration of our protest we were prevented from sending out any letters or making any telephone calls. This is in direct contravention of Prison Rule 39, which allows for correspondence with legal representatives, and Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which upholds the right to correspond with one's family. It was only through the support of other prisoners in the gaol that lawyers were alerted to our situation and that we managed to breach the secrecy around our treatment.



Prisons Ombudsman, Stephen Shaw

In subsequent correspondence with solicitor Vicky King, Governor Gary Nicholls claimed that the decision had been made on 'Health and Safety' grounds and that letters written by prisoners on dirty protests would be 'contaminated' and therefore pose a health risk to postal workers. In fact, this has never been an issue before and elsewhere in the prison system correspondence from dirty protesters is sent out in plastic envelopes. Vicky King made the point that: 'There are degrees of dirty protest and letters from dirty protest prisoners are (without exception in my experience) not necessarily contaminated. Every single cell in the prison system could be described as a toilet. Thus, if one were to adopt the arrangement that mail should never be sent from a confined space in which someone has defecated, then all prisoners would lose the right to correspond'.

In a complaint to the Prisons Ombudsman on my behalf, she wrote that: 'The major concerns in this case are that prisoners have a right to instruct solicitors of their choice at any stage during their sentence and that prisons have a duty to facilitate such correspondence. Whilst the manner in which such communication is

carried out may change depending on the circumstances, the prison cannot place a veto on such communication. This means that the fact that Mr Bowden was not allowed to write letters and the process by which he was stopped from doing so should be subjected to independent scrutiny.' Such independent scrutiny is the task for which the Ombudsman's post was created.

Incredibly, Stephen Shaw's response was brief: 'I have decided that no worthwhile outcome would ensue were I to take on Mr Bowden's complaint'.

So, a breach of a fundamental legal right is considered by the Prisons Ombudsman to be unworthy of investigation and he therefore concurs with the decision to hold prisoners incommunicado when it suits the system to do so.

The creation of a Prisons Ombudsman was one of the central recommendations to emerge from the Woolf Inquiry into the 1990 Strangeways prison rebellion and was considered the most effective means by which the prison system could be made publicly accountable in the way that prisoners' complaints of maltreatment are investigated. I can still recall, with some distaste now, Stephen Shaw attending a forum organised by prisoners at Long Lartin shortly after the publication of the Woolf Report. At the time he gleefully waved the report at us and said: 'This will make a real difference!' It certainly made a difference to his career and the Home Office can rest assured that, once again, a potentially important means of challenging its power has been neutralised and rendered harmless.

John Bowden is now in Bristol prison. He was moved there following an attack by 'Control and Restraint' screws on him and other prisoners on Saturday 22 April. Mark Barnsley, who was also assaulted, was originally moved to the segregation unit at Long Lartin and subsequently ghosted to Cardiff prison. Readers are encouraged to send messages of support to: John Bowden (B41173), HMP Bristol, Cambridge Road, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 8PS and Mark Barnsley (WA2897), HMP Cardiff, Knox Road, Cardiff CF2 1UG

INSIDE NEWS

Tear down the Bastille!

On 14 July supporters of the CAGE network will be commemorating Bastille Day with imaginative action highlighting the growth of the prison-industrial complex. CAGE is dedicated both to opposing the existing prison system and to trying to stop further prisons from being constructed. Meet at Golders Green bus station, London NW11 at 9am. For further details contact CAGE at PO Box 68, Oxford OX3 1RH, or telephone 07931 401962 or e-mail prison@narchy.fsnet.co.uk More info from www.veggies.org.uk/cage. Bring camping equipment.

May Day prisoners

There were 97 arrests on the London May Day demonstration. With the exception of four foreign nationals who the state fears would jump bail if released, most of those who were initially remanded in custody have now been bailed, those who entered guilty pleas been sentenced and the remainder remanded on bail. Of the sentences so far, James Matthews was gaoled for 30 days for defacing the statue of Churchill in a conscious political protest against imperialism and anti-Semitism, and Alan McAlavey was sentenced to 90 days imprisonment for assaults on the police. Anyone who was arrested and does not have any legal assistance should contact the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group on 020 8245 2930 or Moss & Co Solicitors, 020 8533 0615.

Lifer tariffs

As there are no national guidelines for the setting of tariffs for life-sentence prisoners and there is no centrally recorded information comparing different tariffs in similar types of case, I am currently conducting some research in order to assist one of my clients in getting his tariff reduced.

My client is serving a 20-year tariff for murder involving the use of a firearm. The prosecution suggested that this may be a contract killing and the trial judge adopted this interpretation when he recommended the tariff period to be served.

I am interested to hear from any mandatory lifer whose conviction for murder arose from an incident where someone was shot (whether an alleged contract killing or not). Please could respondents inform me how long their tariff is and whether it was set in line with the recommendations of the trial judge and Lord Chief Justice.

If any respondent is willing to forward a copy of their letter from the Tariff Unit setting out the recommendation in their case and the level at which their tariff was set, this would be extremely helpful.

I am hoping that enough lifers will respond to enable me to say whether there is any consistency in the tariff-setting procedure and whether certain groups of defendant are disadvantaged for any reason. If the research indicates that some prisoners have been treated unfairly then it may benefit other prisoners in a similar position.

Vicky King

Thanki Novy Taube solicitors.
1a Birkenhead Street, London WC1

STRANGEWAYS UPRISING DRAMATISED

From 9 to 14 May the Fink On Theatre Company presented *Crying in the Chapel* at the Yard Theatre in Hulme, Manchester. The play was a dramatisation of the 1990 Strangeways prison revolt and it played to packed houses, nightly turning people away. Each performance received rapturous applause from the audience.

The play had not been widely advertised, so clearly the capacity audiences were due to word-of-mouth recommendation. During the run, the producers, Pauline Stafford, Nicky Clarke and Chris Coghill, were approached with a view to re-running the play at a larger venue.

The uprising and siege at Strangeways lasted 25 days. The play manages, in 90 minutes, to encompass both chronological detail and sustained, highly charged drama throughout. The cast (many of whom were first-time actors drawn from the local community) gave at all times totally believable performances and, in some cases, quite brilliant ones. Neil Bell, who played Paul Taylor, must surely be destined for serious recognition.

The play covers the full spectrum of emotions: tense tight drama as the uprising develops, moving glimpses of the thoughts of the lads who defied the odds with such courage and tenacity, and great



gusts of humour that exemplified the tremendous spirit which sustained the rebels during the long days and nights of their resistance.

Crying in the Chapel speaks its mind with courage and conviction. It depicts clearly and accurately the role of screws in Strangeways in 'allowing' the initial disturbance to develop. Noel Proctor, the prison chaplain, described as a 'friend to prisoners and staff alike' by the *Manchester Evening News* at the time, is shown

somewhat differently through the eyes and words of the men who actually received his ministry. The audience is left in little doubt as to the reasons for the protest: Strangeways is shown to be the archetypal 'screws' nick, where brutality and repression rule the day and where 'happiness' for screws is well and truly 'door-shaped'. Finally, at the highly charged conclusion, the fate of those who dared to defy is dramatically documented, as each of the prisoners leaving the roof speaks to

the audience and details how many additional years' imprisonment he was sentenced to serve for his part in the revolt.

The script of *Crying in the Chapel* was largely adapted, with the permission of the authors, from *Strangeways 1990 - a serious disturbance*, the inside account of the Strangeways prison revolt. However, it is not a carbon copy of the book and the producers and cast have stamped their own mark on the material. The work they have put into researching and dramatising the piece was deservedly rewarded in terms of audience approval. On the last night, when the cast thanked the authors of the book, I told them how proud I had been of the men who shook the system by its lousy neck on 1 April 1990 and told the actors that they in turn had done the lads proud by their performance. I urge readers of FRFI to look out for future performances of this play.

Eric Allison

Strangeways 1990 - a serious disturbance by Nicki Jameson and Eric Allison is available from Larkin Publications, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX, Price £7.95 (+ postage and packaging £1)

Fink On Theatre Company are based at 41 Old Birley Street, Hulme, Manchester. 0161 868 0237.

Pinochet: from petty functionary to bloody tyrant

■ *Pinochet: the politics of torture*, Hugh O'Shaughnessy, Latin American Bureau 1999, £8.99.

Hugh O'Shaughnessy is the *Guardian* journalist who revealed on 15 October 1998 that General Pinochet was in the private London Clinic for an operation. It was Pinochet's second visit to Britain since the election of the Labour government and, but for O'Shaughnessy's article, he might have made others in the future. As it was, the following evening, acting on a warrant from Interpol, British police placed him under arrest. As a valued customer of the British arms industry, Pinochet had made numerous shopping visits to Britain over the years. He had been a valued ally during the Malvinas war. The advent of a Labour government had not changed matters: Blair has always been an enthusiastic supporter of British arms production and export. Pinochet's arrest was a profound embarrassment: Labour had known of his comings and goings but had made no attempt to restrict them. For the next 18 months, until Pinochet was eventually despatched to Chile in March of this year, he was to be a thorn in the side of Labour. It was left to Jack Straw as Home Secretary to work out how to send Pinochet back to Chile with the minimum political fallout.

O'Shaughnessy's book is a study of Pinochet, of a man who like so many Chilean army officers came from a stultifying middle class background. Postings in his early years (he joined the army in 1933) took him to Iquique, in the isolated north of the country; in 1948 he supervised the detention of communists. In the same year he was posted to Coronel to help suppress a movement amongst the coal miners. Further postings to the north (this time the even more remote Arica) were followed by a period in Ecuador and

then training in the US. By the time Salvador Allende was elected in 1970 at the head of the Popular Unity government, Pinochet was a brigadier-general and a deputy regional governor of Tarapaca, just south of Santiago.

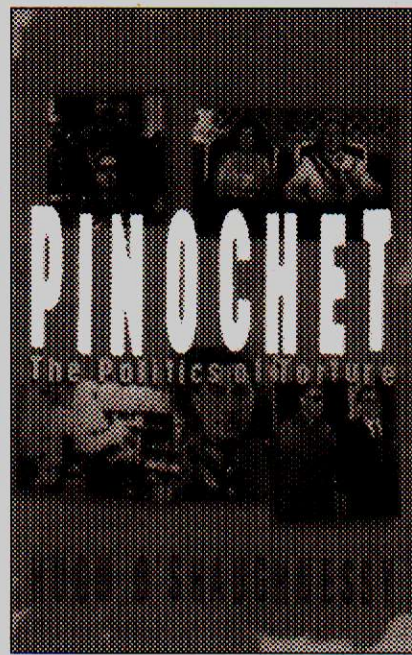
The assassination of the commander of the Chilean army, Rene Schneider, in October 1970, brought Pinochet to Santiago as commander of the capital's garrison. Schneider had paid with his life for his refusal to lead a coup against Allende; his successor was General Prats, later also to pay with his life, but at the hands of Pinochet. Yet this was in the future; there was nothing in Pinochet's behaviour to mark him out as anything other than a loyal, even fawning, functionary. He was to have close relations with Popular Unity ministers; he was in charge of security when Fidel Castro visited Chile for a month in late 1971. Even in July 1973, Pinochet was all set to violently put down a premature coup organised by junior officers influenced by fascist groups.

However, the process of destabilisation orchestrated by the Chilean ruling class and supported by the CIA had gathered pace throughout 1973. Yet General Prats was a significant obstacle to the ruling class in its drive to destroy Popular Unity; his constitutional standpoint ruled out a coup since the army was not a reliable ally of reaction. Throughout the summer of 1973 the upper middle class of Santiago took on themselves the task of driving Prats from office. Backed by the mass media, they organised a campaign to discredit and isolate him. In August, they succeeded. The scene was set for Pinochet to become army commander, and he took up his post less than three weeks before he led the coup against Allende.

Almost to the final moment,

Pinochet refused to commit himself to what he regarded as a risky venture. But once he had made his choice, he was to behave with a vindictive brutality typical of functionaries as soon as they achieve a position of power. Pinochet is on tape suggesting on the day of the coup (11 September 1973) that Allende be put in a plane into exile but that he be thrown out en route – a method of execution that his special police were to pioneer. The post-coup regime of torture, assassination and disappearance was not just directed against socialists and communists. In November 1974, a squad assassinated General Prats in exile in Argentina. Former supporters of the junta set up immediately after the coup were also disposed of particularly if they seemed to represent a threat to Pinochet's position. By mid-1974, he had manoeuvred fellow coup leaders out of power. In November 1974, he set up DINA, the dreaded secret police force; its commander, Contreras, was accountable only to Pinochet.

Economically, Pinochet's policies were a disaster. Chile became an experiment for the neo-liberalism espoused by Milton Friedman and the so-called 'Chicago Boys', former students who served Pinochet. Their programme resulted in terrible impoverishment of the mass of the Chilean people; the result of an intense privatisation programme was near-bankruptcy in 1981. The so-called economic miracle of the late 1980s was possible only because of increased demand for raw materials by the expanding world economy. By the time Pinochet was ready to give up power, standing down as army commander-in-chief in 1998, he had seemingly secured immunity from prosecution within Chile. Whether his detention in Britain will change this will depend on the outcome of



in-fighting between those implicated in the terror. Whilst Pinochet's supporters (particularly those in the Tory Party) were claiming he knew nothing about the 'excesses' of DINA, Contreras was spilling the beans. Pinochet had hung him out to dry in the late 1990s, and Contreras had received a seven-year sentence. The embittered police chief now sang like a canary about Pinochet's personal supervision of DINA activity. Others are now falling out with Pinochet; lacking his personal immunity as senator-for-life, they do not want to spend their last years facing the threat of imprisonment.

O'Shaughnessy's book is very useful as a summary of this period of Chilean history, and it is a gripping read. He makes much of Pinochet's narrow provincialism, his subservience to authority, the qualities of a petty functionary, to give an object lesson about how such types can become the epitome of ruthless brutality. The capitalist class survives because in its moments of need it has been able to draw on the likes of Pinochet to destroy working class opposition. It is no surprise that Labour wanted to let him go: his trial would have revealed too much about the reality of ruling class power.

Robert Clough

Latin America – from colonisation to globalisation

Noam Chomsky in conversation with Heinz Dietrich, Ocean Press, 1999, £9.95

This is a volume of interviews Noam Chomsky gave about US imperialism's relationship to Latin America over the period 1984-98. The problem with this sort of book is that it lacks the depth that might have come from a selection of essays. The spoken word does not allow for the degree of consideration or reflection that comes with a written article. Hence the material is very uneven and does not show Chomsky the committed anti-imperialist at his best. Whilst he makes many good points about the brutality of US imperialism, his analysis of the resistance to its neo-liberal onslaught is weak. In particular he shows little understanding of the dynamics of Cuban resistance. Whenever he mentions it – in interviews undertaken originally in 1991 and 1996 – it is to criticise the regime for alleged repression. There is no description of the Cuban people and their organisations as conscious players in a life-or-death struggle against imperialism. Given that one of the interviews had as its starting point the Pope's visit to Cuba in 1998, he might have expected an assessment as to how Cuba had survived since the collapse of the Soviet Union. But that is not forthcoming, which is a bit feeble given Chomsky's evident pessimism about its prospects in 1991.

Robert Clough

The heart of the war in Colombia

■ *The heart of the war in Colombia*, Constanza Ardila Galvis, Latin America Bureau 2000, £11.99

This book presents us with the short accounts of the lives of ten Colombians, displaced from their homes, along with 1.5 million others over the last ten years. The horrific class war that has run unchecked for half a century is reported here only in its most recent stage through the lives of some of the displaced and rural poor.

This is a not a broad political account: it seeks to portray the culture of violence, to give the reader a closer sense of the day-to-day reality and its effects on individuals. The ten-page introduction by Marcela Lopez Levy gives a background account of the war in Colombia. It takes it as understood that violence 'has consistently emanated predominantly from the most powerful in society and whose victims are in their majority poor'. The introduction explicitly states the belief of those speaking in the book that there has been political and economic 'overdiagnosis' of the conflict at the

expense of understanding the humanity of the victims. It seems to us, on the contrary, that not enough has been said about this war and it remains yet another shameful secret of 'western civilisation'.

However, these personal accounts we read in the first 100 pages, which deal with the individuals' childhoods, could, in their accounts of pain, brutality and sadness, be anywhere in the oppressed world and do not enable us to grasp the particular Colombian issues at stake. The second section deals with the participants' roles in the war and the further personal consequences. Here more can be learned about the day-to-day processes of the savage land clearances, the political shifts at the turn of the 1980s, the start of the 'dirty war' and the silence of the press in the face of massacre upon massacre. But this book is not designed specifically to deal with the overall political and economic issues at stake and once again the accounts could be from very many places in the oppressed world.

The stories are part of a process of personal rehabilitation through train-

ing workshops, supported by the editor, an exiled journalist working with the displaced, and are resolved in the third part of the book by a commitment to non-violent methods of achieving justice. The book is valuable for its presentation of honest and open discussion by those civilians caught up in the use of violence, but in the face of the systematic violence directed at anyone struggling for equality of rights in the region, including those pacifists such as priests, human rights activists and lawyers, the book's resolution to face violence with peaceful organisation is thoroughly Christian.

Nonetheless it is far better for the class conscious worker to read such accounts than the trash daily poured out by the millionaire media. The book contains innumerable reflections that for any other worker underlines the genuine nature of the accounts; it arouses an interest to learn more about Colombia's bloody history and its real roots in Colombia's enslavement to imperialism, and not 'human nature'.

Alvaro Michaels

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JUSTICE FOR MARK BARNESLEY DAY OF PROTEST 8 JUNE

PICKETS

Sheffield Crown Court 11am
Protest against Mark's unjust imprisonment and the continued withholding of evidence by the CPS.

Sheffield Star, York Street 2pm
Protest against their campaign of bias and untruth in reporting Mark's case over the last 6 years.

PUBLIC MEETING

Sadacca Centre, 48 The Wicker, Sheffield, 7pm. Speakers from the campaign and special guests and launch of booklet about Mark's case *Beaten up, fitted up, locked up.*

This new pamphlet, published by the Mark Barnesley Campaign contains previously unpublished material and information about the campaign. It is available from PO Box 381, Huddersfield HD1 3XX and costs £2. Cheques/POs payable to Justice for Mark Barnesley.

PROTEST AGAINST DIAMOND DEALING IN SIERRA LEONE USED TO FUND THE CIVIL WAR

Saturday 27 May, Hatton Garden
12-3pm. Nearest tube Chancery Lane.

Called by the National Association of
Sierra Leonean Organisations (UK)

FRFI round-up

RCG and FRFI supporters were very active over the May Day weekend, both in discussions at a May Day 2000 conference held in Holloway, London, and on the demonstrations on 1 May itself. Over 1,000 people attended the conference, to discuss a range of issues which are vital to building the new anti-capitalist movement – the nature of capital, the fight against multinationals, the struggles against racism, against poverty pay and against casualisation.

The conference itself was characterised by great openness and willingness to debate. Much of the audience was made up of young people new to class politics. Typical of the interest was a session on 'what is capital?' which was attended by some 70 people. The critical point was whether the discussion would remain at the level of theory, or whether the concepts that Marx used to analyse capitalism are relevant to the issues which face us today. In this, RCG comrades were successful. One person for instance asked about whether British workers were in fact consuming surplus value because of their access to pension funds which depended on the stock market. Whilst the main speaker dismissed this as of no importance, an RCG comrade was able to show that this was a crucial issue in an imperialist country like Britain. Capital is a social relationship, and we have to understand that social relationship in the concrete reality of a

small number of imperialist countries super-exploiting workers throughout the Third World. This has political and social consequences for the working class in the imperialist heartlands such as Britain; after all, workers in the Third World do not have private or company pensions. Others in the session asked about alternatives to capitalism. Again, the speaker felt unable to offer an answer. A German speaker made a very concrete point that the East German people brought down the Berlin Wall because they wanted freedom – the freedom to travel, for instance. But once the wall had come down, and capitalism had been imposed on them, the people found they had lost something very important – solidarity. More immediately, the living experience of socialism in, for example, Cuba should be analysed and assessed. We have to discuss alternatives.

There were sessions about Seattle, where one speaker pointed to the significance of the moment when trade unionists broke away from the official march and joined the activists – the police responded immediately with their armoured vans and trucks. This unity will be vital in the future, as in the past RTS support for the Liverpool dockers has shown. Comrades and supporters also attended sessions on the Simon Jones Memorial Campaign, on prisons and racism. Outside, a rota kept a lively bookstall going. Many people came up to take material

and engage in discussion. Over 150 copies of FRFI were sold and hundreds more of back issues handed out free.

Whilst openness and willingness to debate were the defining features of the newer participants, this was not so of the organisers, virtually all of whom come from the old autocratic left, and they have certainly not lost their anti-democratic habits. Three weeks before

applies if they do not belong to movements you don't like. Your practice is no different from that of the bulk of the left in this country – sectarian. Needless to say we got no reply.

The issue of democracy in the new anti-capitalist movement is vital. Whilst there is a deep distrust of organisations such as the SWP, their influence has to be dealt with politically. They do attract young people who believe they are joining an anti-Labour organisation. When they discover how opportunist their organisation is, they either leave or adapt: The new movement however cannot just ban the SWP, because such a ban will be exploited to divide and split those who really want to fight the Labour government. Bans and proscriptions are a legacy of the old dead movement, and are methods favoured by those attempting to protect a privileged and minority position. Revolutionary political positions cannot be developed without the maximum of democracy – this has always been the position of FRFI.

The SWP's positions can only be defeated if they are engaged politically. Elsewhere in this issue we show how Livingstone attacked the May Day demonstrators in order to curry favour with his Labour masters. Yet in its 6 May issue, *Socialist Worker* said nothing! On page 15 it said 'Tony Blair, politicians of all parties and every section of the media lined up to denounce Monday's May Day protest in London'. Absolutely

LETTERS

write to
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OR check out our
website: <http://www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk>

the event they rejected a request by FRFI to have a stall in the conference. We responded by saying 'we find it ironic that the only people who try to deny our rights to sell our literature and put forward our views are on the one hand, the British police, and the other, yourselves. In your case it is all the more ironic given that your website is called freespeech.org. Your main leaflet also argues that in the new movement "everyone must be involved: old and young, male and female, all cultures and all sexualities". Now you are saying that this only

EVENTS

For details of all our meetings, look at our website www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk under Supporters.

London
Labour and the multinationals: 7:30pm Wednesday 14 June
Fighting the racist Asylum Law: 7:30pm Wednesday 12 July
For details of venues, phone 020 7837 1688 or e-mail us at rcgfrfi@easynet.co.uk

North west
Preston: FRFI Readers' Group next meeting: Wednesday 14 June, upstairs at The Stanley Arms, Lancaster Road, 7:30pm
Manchester: For information on meetings: fightpov@freenetname.co.uk

Midlands
For details of meetings in Birmingham, Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham and Sheffield: contact 020 7837 1688, or e-mail revcom@talk21.com or write to FRFI, PO Box 22, Alford, Lincolnshire
Rock around the Blockade Brigade 2000 Report Back meetings
London: Saturday 27 May 4:00pm Lucas Arms, Gray's Inn Road. (nearest tube King's Cross).
For details of other meetings, contact 020 7837 1688 or visit our website under Cuba Vive.

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Boycott Bacardi – corporate vampire

NUS – No Union Sellout!

Despite a growing campaign to boycott Bacardi, based not only on its unstinting support for the United States blockade but also emerging evidence of its sinister activities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, at the end of April the National Union of Students voted to accept a three-year 'sole supply' deal worth £625,000 with Bacardi rum. The exclusive deal will ensure that Havana Club, the authentic Cuban rum jointly owned by the Cuban government and the French drinks company Pernod Ricard – whose sales bring much-needed hard currency into the Cuban economy – cannot be stocked in student bars in Britain.

Don't let them get away with it! Student groups around the country are planning an offensive against this Bacardi/NUS collaboration for next term and in London, Rock around the Blockade will be organising a demonstration outside NUS HQ in Holloway Road (which also found itself covered in Boycott Bacardi stickers over the May Day weekend).

Bacardi, as regular readers of FRFI will know, made its fortune from the exploitation of impoverished sugar workers in

pre-revolutionary Cuba, before fleeing the island shortly before the revolution of 1959 to set up its headquarters on a private island in the Bahamas. The company, the biggest rum producer in the world, continues to exploit badly-paid labour in countries like Mexico and Puerto Rico. Meanwhile, it uses its ill-gotten gains to fund violently counter-revolutionary Cuban exile groups in Miami, such as the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) which supports acts of sabotage and terrorism against Cuba and was behind the campaign to prevent six-year-old Elian Gonzalez from being returned to his father. As well as its documented support for the illegal United States blockade of Cuba, Bacardi has a history of funding counter-revolutionary activity in Latin America and opposing independence movements in countries such as Puerto Rico.

The NUS is perfectly aware of Bacardi's role. Last year, in response to growing pressure for a boycott of Bacardi, the NUS Ethics Committee posed a series of questions to the company and was assured of Bacardi's support for the US blockade. But what can one expect from an organisation that has repeatedly sold out its own members' interests over the years and paved the way for the introduction of student loans?

Now the NUS has sold any ethical or moral pretensions it may have had for a £625,000 hand-out from Bacardi. The rum company's actions are typical of all multinationals, which use bribery and corruption as a matter of routine to secure and defend their monopoly positions. Bacardi couldn't have hoped for an easier or cheaper target than the NUS.

Contact us on 020 7837 1688 for how you can get involved in the campaign. You can also contact the NUS at 461 Holloway Road, London N7 6LJ or fax 020 7263 5713 and let them know what you think of their sellout.

Boycott Bacardi Spice

In June, former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell is to open London's trendy Vine Two cocktail bar, where staff have banned Bacardi rum in protest at the multinational's attacks on Cuba. Instead, customers at the new bar in Islington – including guest of honour Geri – will enjoy classic rum cocktails made with Cuba's national rum, Havana Club.

Barman Clinton Herring says 'I read about the things Bacardi is doing and how they are exploiting the Cuban people and the Cuban image and I told the other lads here. They hadn't realised what was happening either until they read the Boycott Bacardi pamphlet and



Boycott Bacardi stall in Bristol

after that we made a decision not to stock it in the new bar. To a professional, Havana Club is a better rum, anyway...Bacardi isn't even made in Cuba...

'We're going like a rocket to get ready for our opening night, which Geri is hosting...I certainly won't be serving her Bacardi.'

Exposing Bacardi – in Britain and abroad

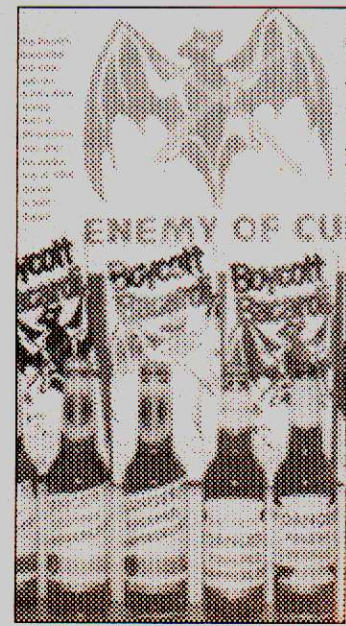
On 1 April Rock around the Blockade organised a 'Bacardi Fool Day' in city centres in Manchester, Lincoln and Bristol – Bad Luck Day for Bacardi. The Bristol Cuba Vive group used 'subvertising' to market Bacardi for what it really is – a 'corporate vampire and enemy of Cuba'. Advertising billboards were 'corrected', and bottles of Bacardi and Bacardi Breezers were transformed into samples of red poisoned vampire blood, with a health warning! Cuban music was played from the city-

centre stall, speakers disseminated the real facts about Bacardi, people petitioned and shots of Havana Club were given out! Our activities soon saw off nearby promoters for Bristol clubs who were handing out Bacardi leaflets. In the evening, under cover of darkness we transformed ourselves into blockade-busting bats and targeted the pubs in the centre of Bristol and well-known student spots.

Meanwhile, two activists from Rock around the Blockade were attending the XIIth Congress of Latin American and Caribbean Students in Cuba at the request of the Union of Young Communists. As well as meeting and hearing about the struggles of young people from all over the region, it was a fantastic opportunity to hand out information about Bacardi and make links with communists and activists in countries such as Mexico, Puerto Rico and

Jamaica who have promised to research and send us any information they can unearth about Bacardi's activities in their countries.

In London, our Bacardi-busting bats were out again in force on 1 May (see report page 9) and we are planning to take the boycott Bacardi message to as many festivals as possible over the summer – contact the campaign if you can help out. And, on 24-25 June, at the Scala, near King's Cross in London, Bacardi is the sole sponsor of what is being billed as 'Britain's biggest ever salsa event', Salsa UK. We reckon that's definitely worth a visit. Again, contact the campaign for details – e-mail rcgfrfi@easynet.co.uk, tel 020 7837 1688 or write to us at BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.



**FIGHT
RACISM**

FIGHT IMPERIALISM

Sierra Leone: imperialism on the march

On 6 May Prime Minister Blair ordered British troops to evacuate UK, European and Commonwealth citizens from Sierra Leone. Three days later Blair announced that the troops were in Sierra Leone to back up the United Nations forces. On 17 May British paratroops killed at least four Revolutionary United Front (RUF) soldiers 20 miles from the airport they were stationed to protect. Media and politicians' talk of a quick 'in and out' mission or the dangers of 'mission creep' sucking British forces in is deliberately misleading: Africa is deliberately being reoccupied by imperialism.

The Labour government's 1998 Strategic Defence Review (see FRFI 145 October/November 1998) intended to extend and quicken the global reach of British forces. Envisaging 'small scale' wars over resources, ethnicity and inequality the Review was guided by concepts such as 'expeditionary warfare', 'rapid deployment' and 'long range strike capacity'. The then Defence Secretary, now NATO Secretary General, George Robertson said British forces would be 'a force for good' carrying out 'peacekeeping and humanitarian missions'.

When Blair ordered approximately 1,000 British paratroops, marines and SAS to go into Sierra Leone, the Royal Navy's latest assault ship, the helicopter-carrying HMS Ocean, was in the vicinity, as was one of the Royal Navy's three aircraft carriers, HMS Illustrious. Within a week, eight British ships were patrolling off Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone. A British officer runs the Sierra Leone defence force headquarters and the

Sierra Leone police are under a British commander. Prior to the overt deployment of British state forces, the covert forces of Sandline and Executive Outcomes had been operating in Sierra Leone. The British military intervention has not been made up on the spur of the moment in response to a crisis: it is well prepared and forms part of a regional and global strategy. This is the other side to globalisation.

One objective of the British state is stated frankly by the *Wall Street Journal*, 'What appears to lie behind the breakdown of the peace process in Sierra Leone was US and British determination to wrest control of Sierra Leone's rich diamond mining areas from the RUF rebels. For several months Washington and London have been leading efforts to break the financial power base of the RUF by trying to centralise the diamond trade... Rival mining companies, security firms and mercenaries from South Africa, Britain, Belgium, Israel and the former Soviet Union have poured weapons, trainers, fighters and cash into the country. They have backed the government or the rebels in a bid to gain access to the country's high quality gems.' The world's diamond trade is dominated by De Beers, part of the Anglo-American Corporation, and based in South Africa, London and Antwerp.



Poverty and terror in a Freetown refugee camp

Rivalry over diamonds has helped to produce the poorest country on Earth. Female life expectancy in Sierra Leone in 1997 was 38.7 years and for men 35.8 years. The infant mortality rate was 182 per 1,000 live births. 66.7% of adults were illiterate. 66% of the people had no access to safe water and 64% no access to health services.

Sierra Leone's pain is an extension of much of Africa's fate. More than 40% of Africa's people live on less than \$1 a day. A World Bank official

states that only 15% of Africans today live in 'an environment considered minimally adequate for sustainable growth and development.' 200 million people have no access to health facilities. African per capita income grew by a third between 1960 and 1980 but has fallen by a third since. This is the result of 'free markets', of opening Africa up to investment and trade, of mounting debts and corruption: a continent going backwards, states crumbling, people being driven to death.

'Robust rules of engagement'

On 17 May British paratroops were supposedly stationed guarding Freetown's airport, 20 miles from the airport and acting on intelligence reports, the paratroops waited for the RUF. The paratroops said that they saw the RUF on nightsights. The RUF started firing in the bush. The British soldiers fired illuminated mortar rounds and let off a 'wall of fire'. They summoned two helicopter gunships that fired revolving machine guns at the RUF while the paratroops gave chase on the ground. The RUF retreated ten miles, losing at least four combatants in the process. The British press and television referred to a 'ten minute firefight'. Blair's press secretary Alastair Campbell said it was 'all within robust rules of engagement'. Blair told the House of Commons 'We can be very, very proud of our armed forces and what they have done in Sierra Leone.'

In the same week as this 'proud' act by British soldiers and aircrew the British government ordered four C-17 aircraft from Boeing and £1 billion worth of missiles from a European consortium of companies. C-17s can carry heavy tanks and artillery anywhere.

The intervention in Sierra Leone is Britain's 98th separate overseas military operation since the end of the Second World War. Half of Britain's top 20 industrial companies are engaged in arms production. One in ten of Britain's manufacturing workers is employed to produce weapons. Approximately 36% of the British Army and half the Royal Navy are stationed overseas. Britain is the second biggest holder of overseas assets in the world, after the USA. Last year British companies invested more abroad than those of any other country. This is why the Labour government produced the Strategic Defence Review, this is why the SAS is in Sierra Leone, this is why we are to be 'proud' of British soldiers for their premeditated murder and this is why we have to revere Churchill and the Cenotaph. Britain is an imperialist nation and once again it is on the march.

Trevor Rayner

Ireland - IRA opens up arms dumps

After Peter Mandelson suspended the Executive on 11 February the 'peace process' seemed to be at a dead end. Gerry Adams, delivering his presidential address to the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis in April, said 'If asked, "where stands the Good Friday Agreement today?", most nationalists, and all republicans, would say that it's dead'. *An Phoblacht* reported his speech under the headline 'Onus on Blair and Mandelson to end vacuum'. In its view, it was up to Blair and the British government to make the decisive move to get the peace process back on track. Less than a month later, however, it was the IRA which ended the 'vacuum' by issuing a historic statement pledging to open arms dumps to inspection by agreed third parties.

Intensive discussions between the British and Irish governments, Sinn Fein and the Ulster Unionist Party led on 5 May to a joint statement from the two governments. It set June 2001 as the goal for the full implementation of the Agreement, and 22 May 2000 as the date for the restoration of the Assembly and Executive. However, 'paramilitary organisations must now, for their part, urgently state that they will put their arms completely and verifiably beyond use.'

The next day the IRA stated: 'the IRA leadership will initiate a process that will completely and verifiably put IRA arms beyond use... We will resume contact with the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD)... In this con-

text, the IRA leadership has agreed to put in place within weeks a confidence-building measure to confirm that our weapons remain secure. The contents of a number of arms dumps will be inspected by agreed third parties who will report that they have done so to the IICD. The dumps will be re-inspected regularly to ensure that the weapons have remained secure.'

Cyril Ramaphosa, a former ANC leader, and Martti Ahtisaari, former president of Finland, were named as the 'third party' arms inspectors. On 9 May, RUC Chief Constable Flanagan announced that five military bases would soon close, amongst them Fort George in nationalist Derry.

The response of Ulster Unionist Party leaders David Trimble and John Taylor was at first positive. Trimble called a meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council [the policy making body of the Ulster Unionist Party] for 20 May to discuss the IRA statement. However, as the meeting approached, both Trimble and Taylor began to raise new obstacles; the right to fly the Union Jack on public buildings, and the retention of the name of the RUC became major stumbling blocks. For Trimble, the meeting of the 858-member UUC was a big test of his leadership. The previous meeting of the UUC on 12 February had passed a resolution preventing the UUP from re-entering the Assembly if the RUC's name was dropped from the

police force. Blair and Mandelson have been determined to help Trimble overcome the anti-Agreement forces in his party, safe in the knowledge that Sinn Fein are locked into the 'peace process' with no where else to go. On 17 May the Labour government passed a bill which allows the name Royal Ulster Constabulary to be incorporated in any new official name of the police force, and which places the issue in the hands of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. So Sinn Fein, which had always demanded the disbandment of the RUC, now seems incapable of even getting it 'rebranded'!

Despite these concessions Trimble did not feel confident of gaining a majority at the 20 May meeting of the UUC and postponed it for a week. To those who criticised him for trying to lead the UUP back into the Assembly before the IRA decommissioned any weapons Trimble said, 'The IRA wouldn't have made this offer if we hadn't put them to the test. We must put them to the test again.' The truth is that behind all Sinn Fein's rhetoric about Blair's and Mandelson's responsibility to fill the vacuum, it is they who have had to make all the concessions to get back their places in the new northern Ireland Assembly. They could now pursue the same strategy in the 26 Counties as they are prepared to discuss entering a coalition government with Fianna Fail after the next election!

Bob Shepherd

Zimbabwe - the slide to barbarity

President Mugabe has now scheduled elections for 24/25 June. Zimbabwe's economy is forecast to contract this year by 5%, making it one of the world's fastest shrinking economies. Since 1990 African leaders like Mugabe have been encouraged by world financial institutions to 'ditch their socialist baggage': the result is that personal greed and corruption have taken its place. This, together with the defeat of Mugabe's constitutional referendum earlier this year, is the background to the occupations of white-owned farms and the political violence reported in the British media. After 20 years in power ZANU-PF may lose the election, so it is waging a repressive campaign against the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) while at the same time opportunistically exploiting the legitimate resentments of Zimbabwe's people over the failure to distribute land to the landless peasantry, while Mugabe's cronies get rich.

In Britain, Labour Foreign Minister Peter Hain has been keen to denounce the Zimbabwe government particularly for not protecting the white landowners. When Mugabe and ZANU-PF were negotiating Zimbabwe's independence in London with the British government in 1979-80, it was the British government that insisted on clauses to protect white land ownership. Now, with 7,000 white farmers apparently threatened, the British government is very quick to resume its former colonial mantle:

£36 million is on offer from Britain if Mugabe's government applies land reforms in a fashion approved by the British government.

The British media coverage has been, as usual, fundamentally racist. They have concentrated on the attacks on white farmers, so that few people in Britain realise that, of the 24 people murdered in political violence in the three months to May, a but four were black members of the MDC.

Whatever the result of the elections Zimbabwe's future is grim. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank have suspended funds. Domestic debt has doubled in a year. The budget deficit has ballooned towards 20% of Gross Domestic Product as civil servants, war veterans and village chiefs receive pay rises ahead of the elections and Zimbabwe maintains 11,000 troops in the Congo. Gold and tobacco have been sold forward and earmarked for debt repayments. A severe shortage of foreign exchange has resulted in factory closures as fuel and other inputs dry up. Tobacco output is down as are tourism revenues.

The poverty, inequality and corruption which are destroying Africa are the products of imperialism. Whatever the outcome of the election in Zimbabwe these problems will not go away. The masses in Zimbabwe will remain in the grip of misery imposed by imperialism and its henchman Mugabe, until the struggle for socialism is victorious.