

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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IRAQ: COALITION RETREATS UNDER FIRE

On 28 June, two days before planned, the Coalition forces announced they had restored 'full sovereignty' to Iraq. A ceremony took place in a military compound behind four US Army checkpoints guarding the event from the Iraqi people. Three days later Saddam Hussein, now formally in Iraqi custody, was presented to a US-selected Iraqi judge in a court packed with US soldiers dressed as civilians and chosen US journalists in a display timed to coincide with US breakfast television. The performance over, Saddam Hussein, still of course in Iraqi custody, was whisked back in a US military plane to a US military base in Qatar where US soldiers guard him. This is the substance of Iraq's newly found freedom – a sham. The interim government is confined to a US guarded fortress in Baghdad. TREVOR RAYNE reports.

The transfer of sovereignty show was brought forward to try and thwart expected guerrilla attacks. During June over 100 Iraqis were killed and 300 wounded in attacks. Violent confrontations between the Coalition forces and the resistance averaged 35-40 a day. By 1 June 810 US soldiers had been killed in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion. Three US troops and an Iraqi civilian were killed on 11 July by a roadside bomb in northern Iraq. This took the death toll among foreign nationals in Iraq to over 1,000 including 889 US sol-

diers. By 21 July the US military toll exceeded 900 dead. On the day that 'sovereignty' changed hands 19 year old Gordon Gentle became the 60th British soldier to be killed in Iraq when a roadside bomb exploded in Basra.

US Army research states that one in five US soldiers returning from Iraq suffer from serious mental health problems. This is defined as an inability to function in society. According to US Army scientists, guerrilla warfare causes more mental damage than traditional warfare.

Over 330,000 US soldiers have been deployed in Iraq and 30,000 in Afghanistan. Britain retains 8,500 troops in southern Iraq. Iraqi civilian dead as a result of the invasion and occupation are estimated to exceed 11,500, but the now dissolved Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) did not record Iraqi deaths.

It has been the scale and success of the resistance that forced the occupation powers to concede even this show of sovereignty to the new interim government, just as they resorted to the Governing Council that preceded it. The interim government is intended to bestow legitimacy on the continuing occupation and to try and isolate the resistance. After the armed uprising across Iraq in April and the failure of the Coalition to subdue Falluja and take Najaf from supporters of the Shia cleric Moqtada Al Sadr, the Coalition powers must change tactics and give the appearance of making concessions to try and recoup their political position.

The resistance has demonstrated its ability to mount co-ordinated attacks across much of Iraq. On 24 June resistance forces targeted police stations and government buildings

from Mosul to Baghdad. The road from Baghdad to its airport can only be used by the occupation forces for six designated hours a day while it is swept by helicopters and armoured vehicles. The main road from Baghdad to Falluja is out of Coalition control. Falluja, Samara, Ramadi, Baquba and the centre of Najaf are all reported to be out of Coalition control as US forces have been driven from city centres. Travelling south from Baghdad to Najaf the journalist Robert Fisk witnessed almost no Coalition forces and saw destroyed and deserted police stations. 'US forces are under so many daily guerrilla attacks that they cannot move by daylight along Highway 8 or, indeed, west of Baghdad through Falluja or Ramadi. Across Iraq, their helicopters can fly no higher than 100 metres for fear of rocket attack.' (*The Independent*, 20 July 2004). As the occupation forces turn to co-opt local allies so the resistance targets these allies (ministers, regional governors, state officials, police and army recruits).

A client regime

For all their talk of democracy and elections the US and British govern-

ments intend to impose a client state on the Iraqi people. They cannot allow control over the Middle East, Iraq's oil and the prospects for future profits to be forced from US and British imperialisms' hands. They intend Iraq to have a lightly-armed army with no heavy weaponry yet be capable of suppressing the Iraqi people. For air power and tanks the Iraqi government will have to turn to the US and Britain. The US accounts for 80% of the interim government's \$1.5 billion defence budget. The US plans to have 14 military bases in Iraq.

Alongside the Coalition forces are the growing bands of mercenaries serving western contracted firms and Iraqi government forces and any former resistance groups that can be bought off. Imperialism will be endlessly flexible for as long as it can retain the minimum conditions for extracting the resources and profits from Iraq, no matter what chaos this plunges the Iraqi people into.

The United Nations' Security Council voted to support the transfer of sovereignty on 8 June. Almost the first thing that the new interim

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Welcome...

In early July, two years after Israel began the construction of its Separation Wall, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) finally declared it to be totally illegal. The wall aims to encircle the Palestinian people, trapping them in a concentration camp on their own land. Eight metres high, built of concrete, electric fencing and razor wire, with trenches, cameras and armed checkpoints, the apartheid wall will run for over 400 miles within the West Bank territory. The people of the Palestinian Intifada (uprising) will not be subdued, despite the vacillation of the corrupt Palestinian Authority (see page 7).

The US has said it will veto any decision to enforce measures against Israel over the wall in the UN Security Council. The British Labour government opposed the ICJ investigation in the first place. 'Do as I say, not as I do' is the slogan of the warmongering imperialists as they kick over piles of international treaties which at other times they stack high to justify imperialist interventions throughout the world.

Every day the US and Britain are violating the Geneva Conventions and Human Rights laws. They use illegal detention and torture, any means necessary, to intimidate those who may stand between them and their imperialist privileges and superprofits. The US has been quite open about this, claiming that the Geneva Conventions do not apply to the 'new paradigm' of the war on terrorism and re-defining torture as 'the intention to deliberately inflict serious harm over prolonged periods'. Recently three US Supreme Court rulings challenged the legality of the detention of 'enemy combatants' without trial. But like the ICJ condemnation of Israel's apartheid wall, the decision means little, and the prisoners remain in solitary confinement, with no fair trial in sight (see pages 8 and 9).

The British Labour government has had an easy time. Although it was a whitewash, the Butler Report clarifies that the government used phoney intelligence to justify the brutal bombing of Iraq. The government lied to Parliament about investigations into the inhumane treatment of Iraqis in British army detention. Prime Minister Blair admitted that British intelligence knew about

torture of detainees back in June 2003. British detainees remain illegally held by the US in Guantanamo (see pages 8 and 9). But in the Mother of Parliaments, all is quiet and Blair keeps grinning as he climbs over another mound of twisted corpses and ripped up international treaties.

It is up to us, the people in the streets, to confront these imperialist war criminals. In the case of Israel we can start by a simple boycott of Israeli goods, taking direct action to expose Israel's allies in Britain. This does a great deal more than just writing to MPs. This is the aim of the regular boycott pickets of Marks and Spencer, the biggest British corporate sponsor of the Zionist project.

The aggressive reaction from right-wing Zionists in Britain is testimony to the success of the pickets. It is a sign of their desperation. In London despite six months of counter-demonstrations by Likud fascists, the pickets are going strong after nearly four years. In Manchester, attacks by Zionists have swelled the ranks of the pro-Palestinian protesters (see page 14). M&S has been in the news a lot recently, not for its immoral support for Israel, but because it symbolises all that is absurd and disgusting about capitalist high finance (see page 4).

Despite a tribute in George Galloway's recent book (see page 5), sadly the left social democrats in Britain, have not joined the boycott pickets. The pickets are open to all anti-racists and yet we have never had support from the leadership of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Socialist Alliance, Stop the War Coalition, Galloway's own Respect coalition, the Socialist Workers' Party or any of their campaigns. Why is this? Perhaps they do believe that writing to MPs is more effective than real campaign work. Or perhaps they are far too busy trying to become MPs themselves? The European and local elections this summer became a substitute for campaigning by the British left. Judged by their own declared aims, Galloway and the SWP's electoral project has been a failure. The cost for the anti-war movement has been high. It now barely exists (see page 5).

Real mobilisation and political awakening would have moved the masses to directly challenge the racist Labour gov-

ernment and, via that, the pro-imperialist Labour Party. This is avoided by the British left, because it would undermine its own political strategy in Britain which is based on using the trade unions as a left-wing pressure group on the Labour Party to win concessions for privileged workers. This is the basis for the SWP's opposition to the Cuban Revolution (see page 11). This also explains why the Respect coalition could agree to drop opposition to asylum legislation from its platform. For them, the official labour movement is the most important agent of social change in Britain.

We in the Revolutionary Communist Group, however, believe that the most oppressed sections of British society are potentially the most revolutionary. They have no illusions about writing to MPs or the parliamentary road to socialism. In Britain these people include the youth, who after losing their recreation facilities are criminalised by anti-social behaviour orders for hanging out in their own streets and the council tenants who are bullied into voting for privatisation of their homes (see article on this page), asylum seekers forced into destitution by the social fascist policies of the Labour government, the slave labourers, immigrants in Britain who face racist attacks and obscene exploitation (see page 16), and the thousands locked up in prisons whose incarceration coincides with the needs of the capitalist system (see page 13).

And the RCG stands with the most oppressed around the world. In Bolivia where the poor are struggling to keep control of their own natural resources (see page 10), in Nepal where the People's Army stands on the threshold of revolution (see page 6) and in Venezuela, where the Bolivarian revolution prepares to defend itself against the fascist ruling class and its friends in the US. And in Cuba, where the Revolution continues to make its indelible contribution to revolutionary Marxism, an inspiration throughout the world (see page 11).

Join the fightback! Fight racism and fight imperialism! Send us your contributions:

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BCM Box 5909
London WC1N 3XX

Camden Council steps up attacks on the working class

SUSAN DAVIDSON, NICKI JAMESON, BARNABY MITCHELL

The leadership of Camden Council in north London is in the forefront of reforming local councils along lines set down by Labour central government. It began by restructuring the council into a 'cabinet-style' affair, after a consultation in which local residents were asked which of three similar options they preferred. The majority favoured retaining the previous system. This was ignored and Tony Blair made council leader Jane Roberts a Dame. Since then Camden Council has been first in the queue to implement every piece of repression or privatisation that the government brings in.

Housing

In FRFI 176 we reported on the Labour government's sell-off of council housing to the private sector, either to Housing Associations ('stock transfer'), Private Finance Initiative consortia or through the so-called Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) option.

We also reported the rejection of these three options by Camden Council tenants, 77% of whom voted against the proposed ALMO. After defying a £500,000 campaign by Camden Council to convince tenants of the merits of ALMO, local people are now demanding what is rightfully theirs: the £283 million of investment promised by the government if they had voted for the ALMO. Tenants, who have suffered the decline of the condition of their homes for over 20 years, have petitioned the housing minister Keith Hill, demanding that the money be made available for the Camden Council Housing Department to invest directly in their homes.

It is no surprise that on his first visit to Camden after the No vote, Mr Hill spoke only to council officials and ruled out meeting with tenants, referring to anti-ALMO activists as 'communists'. Hill simply refuses to accept the ballot result, citing the low turnout. When a radio interviewer asked if he would take the same approach if Labour was elected on a low turnout at the next election, he had no answer!

The problem is not confined to Camden. In Birmingham the government was prepared to make £650 million available to the council to write off debt if they agreed to Stock Transfer, but now that the tenants have rejected the sell-off, not a penny extra is being made available.

Camden tenants have also initiated an investigation by the district auditor into whether the £500,000 spent by the council on the most expensive ALMO campaign in Britain was a misuse of public funds. In 2003 councils in Britain spent £65 million, out of tenants' rent, on glossy PR campaigns to promote council house sales. Last year the House of Commons Public



Camden youth face ASBOs to keep them off the streets while the playgrounds are being sold off

Accounts Committee concluded that selling off council housing costs the taxpayer at least £1,300 per home more than if improvements are carried out by the council.

Anti-social behaviour

Large sections of Camden are now covered by blanket anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs). Any group of more than two people can be asked by police to disperse, and no-one under the age of 16 can be on the streets after 9pm. The first high-profile days of the Camden Town ASBO were marked by a massive police presence, including a mobile CCTV camera van, helicopters and marine support units on the canal. 64 individuals, mainly drug users, were served with exclusion orders. Meanwhile, in the back streets, young teenagers on bikes, who had previously behaved well, taunted the police and rode off laughing. In Somers Town, the other ASBO area, policing has so far been low-key but it is clear that the spectre of 'gang violence' will be used to prohibit young Asians from gathering in the streets during the summer holidays.

The measures in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act constitute a generalised attack on freedom of movement and are racist and anti-working class in their application. The parliamentary committee that scrutinised the Act in 2003 was at a loss to understand why it was necessary to introduce such a draconian law. It asked the government to 'explain why existing powers (...such as those under the Public Order Act 1986, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997) were not sufficient'. The use of these blanket ASBOs stigmatises and criminalises entire sections of society by labelling them as a problem. It punishes parents living in cramped flats without gardens by making them keep their children inside for no reason. It does nothing to solve genuine problems of crime.

Blair announces, Camden pounces

Under the Education Act of 1996 'parents have a duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time.

Failure to do so may result in court action, a fine of £2,500 and/or a three-month custodial sentence'. Eight years on, with the Education Act reinforced by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, Tony Blair has announced zero tolerance and a target of 100% punctuality and attendance for all school students. Some Camden schools have seized on this encouragement from the Prime Minister to bully parents.

School newsletters carry warnings that from September 2004 Penalty Notices (in English only) will be issued to parents/carers for poor attendance, frequent lateness and holidays in term time without school permission. The penalty will be £50 if paid within the first 28 days, rising to £100 after 42 days. This could result in a fine of up to £1,000 and a criminal record. How does this help families, burdened by multiple problems, whose children are finding school difficult? Clearly some Camden heads would rather show support for Blair than for their pupils.

Banned food found in Camden schools

As if this were not enough, Camden pupils are also being fed over-priced and possibly dangerous school meals.

School dinner supplier Scolarest won a five-year deal last year to provide services to Camden schools. Scolarest recently lost contracts to supply schools in Wandsworth and Richmond after it was exposed as serving mutton described as lamb and was forced to change the name of dishes 2,500 schools nationwide. The school meals service costs a scandalous and badly spent 44p per meal. Serious health risks emerged after mothers raided their school's kitchen in May and discovered banned Thai chicken in freezers. The European Union banned imports of Thai chicken in January following an outbreak of Asian bird flu and Camden told Scolarest to stop serving remaining stocks in February. The mothers have been reprimanded by council officers but say they will take over the kitchen if the quality of food does not improve immediately. Meanwhile the council will review the Scolarest contract at the end of the year.

website: www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk
www.revolutionarycommunist.com

FRFI fund-raising appeal

We continue to need your generous donations

FRFI reports on and supports the struggles of the oppressed resisting imperialism throughout the world. It is the only newspaper in Britain to expose the true nature of Labour imperialism. We salute Cuba's struggle to build socialism. We campaign tirelessly in support of the Palestinian Intifada. We work with all those who want to build a new movement which genuinely represents the interests of the working class and oppressed. In this, your financial support remains vital. Please continue to dig deep!

Send your donations payable to Larkin Publications to FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

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IRAQ: COALITION RETREATS UNDER FIRE

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government's Prime Minister did on being sworn in was to thank the Coalition forces for 'liberating and rebuilding Iraq'. Whatever else may be said about the ministers of the interim government they are gentlemen of a shared pedigree that can be relied on only to invite those of similar breeding to their party. The President trained as an engineer in the US and Saudi Arabia before becoming a businessman in Saudi Arabia. One of the Vice Presidents spent his exile in London. Prime Minister Allawi is a businessman, who qualified in neurology at the University of London and was by his own admission on the payroll of MI6 and the CIA, and served 12 other intelligence agencies. The defence minister was a property dealer in London. The foreign minister has a Masters degree from a British university. The new oil minister is British educated and so on. Their pedigree is as old as British colonialism. One week into its existence the interim government announced the Order for Safeguarding National Security, in effect martial law – although the Coalition forces had to remind the new body that only the Coalition forces (now calling themselves the Multinational force) had this power.

For the interim government to wield any independent power it would need control over oil revenues. Oil and gas revenue has been transferred from the UN-approved Development Fund for Iraq to the interim government, but four advisers from the US embassy in Baghdad will monitor and advise on the use of the revenue. Newly appointed US ambassador John Negroponte assured the US Congress that the interim government will not be able to sign any long-term oil contracts.

The British-run firm Erinyes guards Iraqi oil installations with 18,000 mercenaries to hand. Iraq's sea and air ports remain under Coalition control, like Umm Qasr sea port, patrolled by the British firm Olive, and Baghdad International Airport, whose security is handled by a firm called Custerbattles, employing Nepalese Gurkhas alongside South African and British mercenaries. These are all paid for out of the Development Fund for Iraq.

There are currently ten separate investigations underway into the alleged mismanagement of \$65 billion of Iraqi oil revenues under the 'oil-for-food programme' (1996-2003). According to the investigation the culprits are variously the UN, the US and France. The CPA inherited the spirit of kleptomania; 'For the entire year that it has been in power in Iraq, it has been impossible to tell with any accuracy what the CPA has done with some \$20 billion of Iraq's own money,' says



Sabotage of oil pipeline in south Iraq

Christian Aid. KPMG, the auditors, said the Development Fund for Iraq is 'open to fraudulent acts' and its 'book-keeping methods prone to error'. \$20.2 billion flowed into that fund from 28 May 2003 to 19 June 2004. Out of the fund contracts were

awarded with no documentation recording decisions taken or justifying the basis on which they were made.

Of 129 CPA decrees about a quarter were passed in its last month. Should anyone in the interim government get it into their head to disregard a

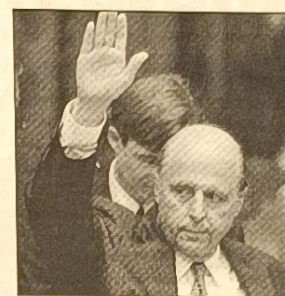
decree, for example the decree governing media and communications licences, then funding and resources will be denied by the Coalition. There are up to 3,000 US embassy staff in Iraq with 200 advisers assigned to the new ministries. Iraq is being occupied, robbed, humiliated and is fighting back.

Return of the old guard

The interim government has moved swiftly to restore the repressive apparatus of the previous state. Ministers talk of restoring order by 'cutting off the hands' and 'slitting the throats' of the resistance, language familiar to the Ba'athist regime. Prime Minister Allawi is a former Ba'athist official. The interim government intends to return former Ba'athist commanders to their military posts. Allawi's cabinet includes five middle-ranking Ba'athists and he proposes to reintegrate 15,000 civil servants sacked in May 2003 by the CPA when it prohibited senior and middle-ranking Ba'ath party members from office.

The interim government will award substantial pensions to disbanded security staff. It has invited the 1,200 strong Falluja Brigade to join the Iraqi armed forces, offered to arm them and put them on the Defence Ministry's payroll. At the same time the interim government has offered to pay compensation to people in Falluja whose homes were

damaged by US bombing in April. Allawi has offered Moqtada Al Sadr amnesty from a murder charge if he agrees to get his militia to lay down their weapons. In mid-July the interim government said it would allow Al Sadr to



US Ambassador Negroponte voting to support Israel at the UN

reopen his newspaper that was banned in March. Poor urban working class supporters in Baghdad and elsewhere are pressuring Al Sadr to continue to resist the occupation. President Al-Yawar said his government would offer an amnesty for 'people who have not committed too many atrocious acts.'

The US has replaced the inept and rather inexperienced head of the CPA Paul Bremer with ambassador Negroponte. His previous postings include Central America where the revolutionary currents of the 1980s were fought with fascists and US-financed death squads. It is not surprising that Robert Fisk reports the surfac-

ing of former Ba'athist intelligence agents mingling with US troops in Baghdad. The resistance includes former Ba'athists, nationalists and religious fundamentalists. Imperialism will use divisions among them to attempt to weaken the resistance. It needs to distance the resistance from support among the people. The people's weariness of destruction, robbery, kidnapping and the like could be turned against the resistance. Attacks on police and military recruits could be presented as denying the Iraqi people some security. 'Dirty tricks' are to be expected. The US will continue to use its monopoly of air space to attack Iraqis. On 18 July Prime Minister Allawi said he gave permission for US helicopters to fire four missiles at a house in Falluja, killing 14 people including women and children. This was the sixth US air strike on Falluja in five weeks.

Whatever the state of the battle for Iraq and the fates of the US and British governments, the global forces that propelled the war are still in play. A recent International Energy Authority report states that the growth of global oil consumption in the decade to 2005 will be twice that of the previous decade to 1995. China is now the world's second biggest oil consumer after the US with a 40% increase in imports over the past year. China and Japan are competing for Siberian oil reserves. The US, Europe, China and Russia are competing for Caspian Basin reserves and the US is establishing bases across Africa to secure its oil and other resources for itself. However, the Middle East remains key to future oil supplies.

Democratic Party presidential contender John Kerry said he is prepared to deploy more US troops to Iraq but would prefer them under UN jurisdiction. 'We have to succeed in Iraq. We simply can't allow it to become a failed state...a breeding ground for anti-American terrorism'. French and German imperialism show little sign of assisting the US and British ruling classes in the Middle East without a share of the spoils. At the June NATO summit in Istanbul France rebuffed the US and British request that NATO train Iraqi forces by saying that training should be done by individual countries and not under NATO authority and not in Iraq. Wrangling over the terms of Iraq's \$120 billion foreign debt continues with German Chancellor Schroeder insisting that debt forgiveness depends on the transfer of genuine sovereignty to Iraq. The more distant the Iraqi government is from the US and Britain the better are France and Germany's chances of securing oil contracts in exchange for debt write-offs.

A fight for world domination is underway. What we have seen in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq will be early skirmishes in a global conflagration if we do not destroy the machine that produces wars: imperialism. In Iraq the resistance has forced the occupiers on to the retreat; retreat under fire can turn into a rout.

Ronald Reagan – 'Madman, imbecile and bum'

On 5 June 2004, former US president Ronald Wilson Reagan died aged 93 years. George W Bush has evoked Reagan's name consistently during his time in power and the media coverage of this death brought out paeans of praise from Democrat and Republican alike as well as from old allies like Britain's Margaret Thatcher.

Reagan's eight years in office represented one of the most bloody periods in the history of the western hemisphere as his administration funnelled weapons, money and other aid to right wing death-squads in Latin America. More than 70,000 died in El Salvador, 50,000 in Nicaragua and 100,000 in Guatemala. He called these terrorists 'freedom fighters' and described them as 'our brothers, these freedom fighters and we owe them our help. They are the moral equivalent of our founding fathers'.

Reagan tripled US debt to three trillion dollars in his Cold War arms race with the Soviet Union. At the same time, he created an extra two million homeless in the US by cutting the budget of the Department of Housing. On 5 August 1981, Reagan fired 11,359 striking air traffic controllers and smashed their union PATCO. The irony was that PATCO had been one of the few unions to support Reagan against Carter in the presidential election nine months earlier. Under Reagan, the top tax rate dropped from 70%



to 28% in seven years. His financial policies became known as Reaganomics.

HIV-AIDS became a widespread epidemic in the US during his presidency, helped along by Reagan's socially conservative, Christian fundamentalist approach which saw the disease as inflicted by God to punish the immoral.

In 1983, Reagan ordered the US marines to invade the British Caribbean colony of Grenada. The reasons Reagan gave for this unprovoked attack, which resulted in the deaths of 40 Grenadan soldiers and more than a dozen Cuban aid workers, in an interview in the *New York Times* on 27 September 1983, were lies. He said Cuba was building an airport at Port Salinas capable of handling warplanes including Soviet long-range bombers. The truth was it was a project funded by Britain and the EU and the main contractor was British. It had no facilities for fuel or armoured

munitions dumps or hardened bays for parked warplanes. The 9,000-foot runway was exactly the same length as the one in Barbados, necessary for flights fully laden with tourists.

He claimed the Marines found warehouses stacked to the ceiling with arms and ammunition to supply terrorists. The truth: 190 crates of assorted small arms. Some were modern Soviet-made arms, but most had been left behind by the British Army and were World War Two vintage. One crate contained Marlin 0.30 calibre carbines made in 1870. So no weapons of mass destruction there either.

During the Iran-Iraq war Reagan supported both regimes at various times, trying covertly to maintain a balance of power.

The major scandal of his administration was the Iran Contra affair. National Security Advisor John Poindexter and Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North hatched an elaborate plot to sell arms to Iran and give the profits to the anti-democratic Contras in Nicaragua. Both actions were contrary to Acts of Congress. Reagan got away with it because his subordinates took the blame. This led to Reagan being nicknamed 'the Teflon president'.

Reagan's anti communism was first manifest when he was president of the Screen Actor's Guild (SAG) from 1947 to 1952 and again in 1959 to 1960. He took part in the McCarthy witch-hunt against leftists in Hollywood, testifying against SAG's members and his friends.

He was an FBI spy with the codename T10.

When the socialist Polish government suppressed the counter-revolutionary *Solidarnosc* in 1981, Reagan imposed sanctions on Poland. He revived the B1 bomber programme, began production of the MX Peacekeeper missile and oversaw deployment of the Pershing 2 missile in Germany, despite protest by the German people. Reagan was a Cold War warrior who made that war often times hot. To circumvent the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, he proposed the Star Wars programme and also deployed Cruise missiles in Britain.

Many of the problems facing our world today have their roots in the Reagan years. It was Reagan who armed the Mujahideen war lords and fundamentalists in Afghanistan in their war against the socialist government. This paved the way for the Taliban and Al Qaida. It was Reagan and Donald Rumsfeld who armed Saddam Hussein with mustard gas and Tabun nerve agent. According to the *LA Times*, Saddam's forces used US-built Bell 214ST helicopters to bomb the Kurdish villages with nerve gas in 1988.

This planet is a better place without Ronald Wilson Reagan. Unfortunately, there are still a lot more like him. Bad actors and bad Presidents alike.

Jimmy German

1 This is how Fidel Castro described Reagan in response to a verbal attack on Cuba, Nicaragua, Libya, Iran and North Korea in July 1985

Ireland: Tensions escalate as Loyalists march through the Ardoyne

PAUL MALLON

Nationalist youth across the Six Counties fought street battles against both the British Army and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in response to the Loyalist summer marching season. Sinn Féin was forced into policing its own community. The peace process was already in crisis because of the refusal of Unionism to share devolved power with nationalists. In June Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, stated that 'the days of the Belfast Agreement are over'. Now the refusal of nationalists to have their rights trampled on by loyalist bigots threatens to destabilise the fragile political process completely. Prime Minister Tony Blair has had to admit that the British government may now have to look for a solution beyond the Good Friday Agreement.

On 12 July over 100,000 Orangemen, women and children marched across the north of Ireland. Trouble flared in the nationalist Ardoyne when, despite a Parades Commission ruling that only the Orange Orders could march past nationalist shops, hundreds of loyalist supporters were permitted to walk up the road singing the Orange anthem, protected by 2,000 British soldiers. Barricaded behind steel fences, nationalists turned on riot police with bottles, rocks, bricks and trees uprooted from gardens. Tensions run high in this area of Belfast where loyalist death squads have carried out hundreds of terror attacks against Catholics. North Belfast is also the area where three years ago loyalist mobs besieged the Catholic Holy Cross School terrorising children on their way to school.

The British army and PSNI used water cannon to disperse the nationalist protests, which continued for hours. One local man suffered a heart attack and died at the scene. The ambulance had been prevented from going beyond the PSNI lines.

Local Sinn Féin representatives attempted to prevent conflict. Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams explained his party's role by saying: 'Despite the efforts of republican and nationalist stewards, the deep-rooted anger... which had been building for some time within republicanism and nationalism, exploded'. In one incident senior Republicans intervened to save 15 British soldiers from a group of nationalist youth using baseball bats and bricks. The PSNI stated that 25 police officers received injuries, as did British soldiers. Many more local residents were rushed from the scene covered in blood, the result of PSNI/ British Army baton round attacks. Sinn Féin's



Gerry Kelly suffered a broken wrist from a baton attack as he attempted to restore order.

Vested in the Good Friday Agreement are the hopes of the middle class who seek an impartial police force to govern a normalised Six Counties. However impartiality is not an option for the rebadged RUC, the PSNI, whose role is to defend British imperialist interests in the north of Ireland. This means defending the rights of the Unionists and hence the subjugation of the Catholic community. It is this supremacist tradition that the Orange marches represent.

The Republican Movement has been manoeuvred into a position of political weakness, resulting in several acts of de-commissioning by the IRA. This process of 'demilitarisation', enshrined within the Good Friday Agreement, is supposed to work in tandem with the 'political process' and the withdrawal of British troops. Yet British troop levels have remained static since January 2002 at 13,500 soldiers. This compares to 8,500 deployed in the occupation of Iraq. Britain maintains a greater military presence in Ireland than in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Gibraltar, Kosovo and Iraq combined. According to the British Ministry of Defence 'there will always be a British military garrison in Northern Ireland' even if so-called 'normalisation' is achieved.

In reaching out to a 'progressive' side of Unionism, Sinn Féin risks alienating its support base within the nationalist working class. Leading up to the marching season, the Sinn Féin newspaper *AP/RN* (8 July 2004)

suggested that 'dialogue, respect and accommodation are the challenges facing the Orange Order today'. The Unionist response came almost immediately on the streets of Springfield and Ardoyne. In Lisburn council, Unionists for the second year running voted themselves on to all the key chair and vice-chair committee posts.

On 13 July nationalist youths responded to another loyalist march in Lurgan by attacking the police station with petrol bombs and bricks. The British army also came under attack.

The mass street protests by nationalists are a legitimate expression of anger and frustration at the lack of any political progress. The recent election of two Sinn Féin members to the European Parliament will change nothing. While loyalist attacks continue and nationalists' rights are trampled on, resistance from the nationalist youth is inevitable. Sinn Féin is boycotting the police boards, but it might just as well be on them given the role it played in assisting the British military in 'calming' the Ardoyne protest. On 13 July, Ardoyne residents vented their frustration at the role played by Republican leaders, including Adams and Kelly, in a meeting *AP/RN* described as 'frank and occasionally heated'.

With the Republican movement increasingly dependent upon a political process that discriminates against nationalists, such tension and the emergence of new forces of resistance are inevitable. The street battles in Ardoyne may be the beginning of such a trend within a nationalist working class sick of bigotry and discrimination. ■

Marks & Spencer: 'retail theatre'

TREVOR RAYNE

There was appreciation in the City for the 'virtual bid' made by Philip Green and friends for Marks & Spencer (M&S). Being a virtual bid meant that no bid was made at all but Mr Green had said that he was thinking about a bid and, given the magical powers of money, that was enough to make a lot of people a lot of money – hence the appreciation.

Poor trading figures released in early April stirred murmuring in the City: heads might roll. Mr Green, owner of Arcadia (Top Shop and Dorothy Perkins) and Bhs, marshalled his troops. Among these was Stuart Rose, 'a long and close acquaintance of Mr Green's'. Mr Rose was a former chief executive of Arcadia, Argos and Booker. Mr Rose quickly snapped up 100,000 M&S shares. M&S acting chair Paul Myners (formerly of the *Daily Telegraph*, Rothschild, National Westminster Bank, PowerGen and much else besides) had other plans for Mr Rose and on 31 May announced Mr Rose as the new M&S chief executive. Understandably aggrieved at this gross disloyalty Mr Green seized Mr Rose's lapels outside M&S's Baker Street headquarters and amid expletives told him that 'I could have made you £250 million if you had stayed with me – I could have made you so rich'. No doubt true, but Mr Rose is already very rich. The spat over and no hard feelings, Mr Rose offered to take Mr Green to Harry's Bar for dinner.

On 3 June Mr Green declared his virtual bid with a virtual offer of 290p to 310p a share, later raised to 400p. Matters between Mr Green and Mr Rose did not improve. Indeed, a sinister undertow crept between the 'long and close acquaintances'. Mr Green rang Mr Rose up to sing 'If you go down to the woods today, you'd better go in disguise,' and other lines from *Teddy Bears' Picnic*. Mr Rose suspected his mobile phone records had been stolen and that someone was interfering with his wife's mail, chiefly bank statements. Using the Data Protection Act, Mr Rose asked that Mr Green disclose any information he was holding on him. For whatever reason, Mr Green told his bodyguard to go out to Marylebone Road, near his Bhs office, and collect prostitutes' cards and deliver them to Mr Rose with a note attached: 'Dear Stuart, please find enclosed the information that I have on you. Here's a picture of the two girls that had dinner with you at Harry's Bar a few weeks ago. I enclose the £10 which they told me to return to you. Philip.' Mr Rose said this was 'very Philip'.

Readers might find this a bit comical, but amid the virtual bidding were some moments of genuine artistry as M&S share prices rose from 260p to 360p. In March Mr Green told friends that he was lining up M&S for a

takeover; these friends had friends who no doubt also had friends. Two examples of the money-makers' art will have to suffice. The Reuben brothers, like Mr Green, live in Monaco where the tax climate is favourable. Upon news of the impending virtual bid they bought 760,000 M&S shares. A few days later they visited their bank BNP Paribas and told them of their own plan to take over M&S. News, of course, travels. They paid 6p each for share options and sold them later for 63-64p, making £437,000 profit and well worth the trip to the bank.

Michael Spencer, owner of Icap, the world's biggest inter-dealer broker, is, like Mr Rose, a director of Image Restaurants, including such illustrious venues as The Avenue. They met, naturally enough, for a drink at a London club to discuss Image Restaurants. The next day Spencer bought £5.5 million worth of M&S shares. This perspicacity and ability to read the markets is a skill Michael Spencer, like many of Mr Rose and Mr Green's friends, has in



Mr Rose and a dummy

abundance. One needs to know that insider dealing is a crime and not something these gentlemen would entertain.

Far from it, Mr Green and Mr Rose maintain some of the finest company in the land. In the Green corner were Goldman Sachs, Merrill Lynch, Barclays Bank, HBOS bank and the Royal Bank of Scotland, who together offered a virtual £7.5 billion for the imaginary bid. Mr Green's prospects looked up when he recruited Lord Stevenson to his team: 'a very smart move – no one is better connected'. Lord Stevenson is chair of HBOS and of Pearson, publisher of the *Financial Times* and *The Economist*, and chair of the House of Lords Appointments Committee. In the Rose corner were Citigroup, Morgan Stanley, Cazenove and M&S's banker for the past 100 years, HSBC. In the end it seems to have been the sober judgment of Standard Life and Legal and General that tipped the balance in Mr Rose's favour. Although to have the world's number one and number two banks on your side does help when real and unreal money is involved.

Sadly, there were casualties,

but then in competitive markets there must be and all to the good. M&S directors Luc Vandeveld, Roger Holmes, Stella Rimington and Vittorio Radice left to boost the confidence of the markets, but their departures are softened by £15 million in pay offs. The removal of the 'flamboyant' Vittorio Radice may suggest what lies in store for M&S as it seeks to recapture its stolid middle class, middle England customers. Formerly a director of Habitat and Selfridges it is Radice who coined the notion of 'retail theatre' where shopping will be as entertaining as watching a film or football.

However, new blood there is in the form Anthony Habgood, also currently or previously a director of National Westminster Bank, Tootal, PowerGen, Geest and Bunzl, and Steven Holliday, chief executive of National Grid Transco, qualifications well suited for clothing and food retail for sure.

In the end, after six weeks excitement, it was probably Mr Rose's strategic plan that won the day against Mr Green. 'Less is more' was the watchword. Less on offer to customers, squeeze suppliers, reduce mark-downs, close down stores, cut staff and fuel bills and save on plastic bags: marvellous stuff! Mr Rose also proposed to sell the M&S credit card, loans and insurance business to HSBC for \$763 million and, together with a little help from the banks, give shareholders £2.3 billion in September. Mr Rose arranged for a revaluation of M&S properties which duly added £3 billion to their worth so that M&S can borrow more and keep the shareholders satisfied. Mr Green took his virtual bid away saying, 'I don't want to spend £12.5 billion and have a heart attack. We've been treated shabbily.' He did sound an optimistic note, saying that he reserved the right to come back with another bid in six months and for many in the City, in London clubs, Harry's Bar, and Monaco those six months cannot come soon enough.

Now you must ask yourself whether you have got what it takes to be a multi-millionaire – and whether you want to shop at M&S. ■

Other reasons not to shop at M&S

M&S is the number one British corporate backer of Israel and Zionism and has been for many years. Of 13 high street and DIY chains Greenpeace branded M&S the worst offender for selling furniture made from wood from the most endangered areas of the planet. M&S wood is destroying the habitat of orangutans and Sumatran tigers. Winner of the Company of the Year from Business in the Community for being a 'responsible employer', many M&S branches are hostile to trade union membership among their employees.

Failure for Respect – the European elections

The outcome of the 10 June European and Greater London Assembly (GLA) elections was a major setback for the political strategy of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Its Respect coalition failed to get any candidate elected to either the GLA or European parliament. Out of the ten European constituencies Respect stood in, it only broke the 1.5% barrier in three, and only in London did Respect poll more than the British National Party (BNP). BOB SHEPHERD reports.

In the GLA elections Respect failed to win a seat from the party list; its best showing by far was in City and East London where they got 19,675 votes, 15.0%. The City and East constituency covers Tower Hamlets and areas with a large Muslim community. Within a few days, George Galloway had announced he would stand as a Respect candidate in a local constituency at the next general election – a move that used to be known as carpet-bagging.

The political argument used by the SWP and George Galloway to justify the formation of the Respect coalition and its participation in the European and London elections was twofold. First, the war on Iraq had mobilised hundreds of thousands of people in opposition to 'Blair and the New Labour clique'. Second, that alongside this there is a crisis of electoral representation, a democratic deficit at the heart of British politics. In the words of SWP leader John Rees: 'The views of ordinary people in this country are failing to find any register inside the mainstream political process.'

The response of the SWP was to extend the parliamentary strategy it had pursued through the Stop the War Coalition (STWC) for stopping Britain's participation in the war. STWC tried to create an alliance of anti-war but pro-imperialist MPs, those who were concerned at the potential damage to British imperialist interests in the Middle East if war went ahead. These included the likes of Lib Dem leader Charles Kennedy. Having tried to use demonstrations against the war on Iraq to pressurise parliament, the SWP now wanted to use the demonstrators to elect Respect candidates.

Galloway expressed the hopes of Respect: 'If just half of the people who marched against war in London last year vote for Respect in June, then a new political force will be born. If we get a million votes then we will knock them off their seats in Westminster and change the political face of Britain forever'. The SWP saw that the proportional representation system for the European and GLA elections provided an opening for a 'left' alternative to 'New Labour'.

To this end, the SWP made sure that Respect offered no real challenge to the Labour Party. For instance, during the GLA and London mayoral elections, Lindsey German made it clear that Respect was against Blair and 'New' Labour but not against Labour candidates such as Jeremy Corbyn or Ken Livingstone. Within days of being elected, Livingstone was calling on tube workers to cross the picket lines during a one-day strike at the end of June.

The decision to concentrate on an electoral strategy led inevitably to the winding down of an already declining STWC. The consequence of this was clear with the feeble STWC mobilisations for the hand-over of power in Iraq on 30 June. Street activities against the occupation of Iraq are practically non-existent. Respect achieved its largest votes in Muslim areas. The political mobilisation of these same Muslim communities against the war and in support of the Palestinian Intifada has been pushed into the dead end of electoral politics.

The failure of the anti-BNP strategy
Nor was the SWP's strategy any more successful in dealing with the BNP. Nationally, the BNP got over 850,000

votes in the European election, more than three times the support for Respect. Worse, however, was the vote for the more 'respectable' racists of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which gained over 2.25 million votes and twelve MEPs. Two of UKIP's MEPs, Jeffrey Titford and Mike Nattrass, are ex-members of the New Britain Party which was founded as a pro-Rhodesia and anti-'coloured immigration' party. UKIP fought a campaign which singled out asylum seekers for vitriolic attack, and which rode on leader Robert Kilroy-Silk's well-known anti-Arab racism. Both the votes for UKIP and BNP were a vote for racism. Only an anti-racist position can deal with this – but the SWP avoided this by allying with Ken Livingstone of the racist Labour Party in Unite Against Fascism. It proved completely ineffectual.

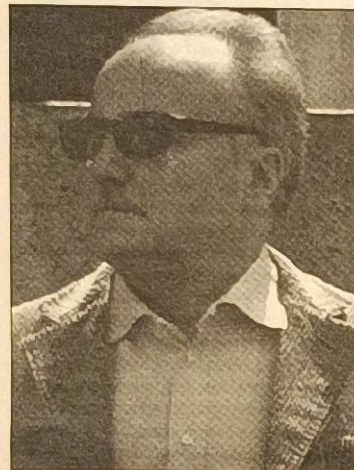
The SWP's intervention in the electoral arena was a logical extension of the opportunist political line it had peddled in the STWC. It relied on keeping an alliance with sections of the Labour left and its goal was to reclaim the Labour Party from New Labour. This pointless objective has been a disaster for the development of a real anti-imperialist movement in Britain. It sucked the life from the anti-war movement, restricting it to what is acceptable to the Labour left, then led it into the dead end of Respect. For this the SWP must take full responsibility. It put the gravy train of elected office before the real political task that faces any serious movement in Britain, building a militant, anti-imperialist movement on the streets which opposes the Labour Party.

The election and the Scottish Socialist Party

In the 10 June election to the European Parliament the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) polled 61,356 votes or 5.2% of the overall ballot. It failed to get anyone elected. By contrast, in the May 2003 election to the Scottish Parliament, six SSP members were elected and the party received 128,026 votes (7.7% of the ballot). But in the European election there was only one vote per person, forcing people to choose between SSP and Labour. In the 2003 election, it was possible to vote Labour as first choice and then vote SSP as second, allowing voters to support the SSP without opposing Labour.

However, behind this election result lies the fact that the SSP have simply stopped campaigning against the war and occupation in Iraq. No street events, no public meetings, no campaign – the situation in Iraq and Palestine are given scant coverage in its weekly newspaper *Scottish Socialist Voice*. The SSP must bear the primary responsibility for the miserable turnout of around 200 at the only (token) anti-war demonstration in Glasgow on 30 June. Given the organisation claims a membership of over 5,000, it is clear that it has chosen to demobilise the anti-war movement in Scotland. After the June election the SSP focused on a legalise cannabis demonstration held in Glasgow on 17 July, which attracted a derisory 150 people. What a statement of futility!

Paul Mallon



George Galloway: 'If just half of the people who marched against war in London last year vote for Respect in June, then a new political force will be born.'



Ken Livingstone: uniting to keep Labour in power

Review

Memoirs of an opportunist

■ *I'm not the only one*, George Galloway, £10, Penguin Books 2004, 184pp

George Galloway has played a leading role in the anti-war movement and more recently in the Respect coalition. What strikes one in reading his book are the frequent expressions of shallow opportunism: the legacy of a career spent covering up for Labour. If the reader expects a coherent anti-imperialist statement, he or she will be disappointed.

Of course there are sections which have a certain strength, as when he describes the effect of sanctions on Iraq. Yet he does not mention that many of his current allies such as Tony Benn and CND supported these sanctions in 1990 in the lead up to the first Gulf War. Later he speaks of his admiration for Fidel Castro and the gains of the Cuban Revolution. But for many years he remained a member of the Labour Party which has always been a determined oppo-

nent of revolution. And now his principle ally in Respect, the SWP, is virulently hostile to both Cuban socialism and Fidel Castro. On the one hand an alliance with progress, on the other an alliance with reaction.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of the book is when Galloway describes his relationship with the Labour Party. Important questions such as why he was a member for so long are left unanswered. We need to remember he was an MP whilst this government introduced the most appalling and racist laws against asylum seekers and the most draconian 'anti-terror' laws, whilst it bombed the Balkans and Afghanistan and whilst it maintained the sanctions he deplored against Iraq. Yet he never resigned – he had to be forced out.

Galloway writes about New Labour's 'hijacking' of the party, concluding that 'people had waited a long time for a Labour government

only to find Tony Blair presiding over a grotesque caricature of what the Labour Party stands for'. By contrast he waxes lyrically about the 'jewel in the crown of the 1945 Attlee government', the welfare state, but omits to mention that this was paid for by the super-exploitation of the British empire. He regards Attlee's imperialist Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin as 'great' – the same Bevin who used military force to prop up imperialist interests in Greece, Malaya, and Vietnam and played a leading role in founding the NATO imperialist war alliance.

And what of his principal proposal for reform of Parliament?

'The House of Commons is too big. India with a population of one billion people has a parliament of just 500 members. We need half as many MPs as we have, being paid twice as much and having proper offices and staff.'

Certainly no concession here to

the socialist standpoint that a workers' representative should receive a worker's average wage!

Having spent a lifetime covering up for Labour he now finds time to cover up for imperialist Europe:

'Europe must find a role in the world that reflects its burgeoning economic power... It will have to show the people of Europe that we favour a different model from the US – one based on democracy, fairness and justice... The single currency – in principle a good idea – will have to be under the management of elected representatives of Europe... a people's Europe can help to restore equilibrium in a dangerously unstable, unjust and unsustainable world'

A single currency is a necessary step towards the creation of a European imperialist alliance capable of challenging US hegemony. This is not about restoring equilibrium, it is about the redivision of the world.

Galloway rehearses the old Ben-

nite view that portrays Britain, the second imperialist power in the world today, as little more than colony of the US:

'We want a special relationship with the people of America. We don't just want the Lewinsky-type special relationship: one-sided, unequal, illicit, easily dispensed with by the more powerful partner and requiring the weaker partner to be endlessly on her knees... We are an independent European country, not the fifty-first state of the United States of America.' (emphasis added)

This is petty nationalism of the worst order – who is the 'we' supposed to include?

Nor does he mention his fundamentalist anti-abortion views. It is just a further example of his selected reading of both his personal history and that of Labour imperialism. In the final pages of his book, he mentions the Marks & Spencer pickets. Fine – but it is about time he got down to one and helped rebuild a movement on the streets rather than through the ballot box.

Louis Brehony

Remember Soweto: youth in South Africa

TREVOR NGWANE

On 16 June South Africa celebrated Youth Day, commemorating the Soweto student uprising of 1976, when thousands of black school children and youth rose up against racist rule and hundreds were shot dead by police. This was one of the most historic episodes in the struggle against apartheid as young people faced tanks, brick in hand. Today we acknowledge the debt post-apartheid society owes to the heroic youth of 1976 as the country celebrates ten years of democracy and the demise of apartheid. For many, after the reminiscences follow the questions: What has happened to the youth of 1976? What is happening to the youth today?

Youth constitute the vast majority of South Africans, and what is happening to them is a good measure of what is happening to the masses in South Africa. In South Africa unemployment among young people is estimated to be as high as 70%, compared with the country's average of 40%. The scourge of HIV/AIDS hits the youth the hardest with many infected. Meanwhile, the government is responding with too little too late, after being forced to act by social movements through mass action and the law courts.

The Soweto uprising was sparked off when the then Department of Bantu Education (sic) tried to impose the Afrikaans language as a medium of instruction in all African schools. In Soweto the youth revolted, refusing to be taught in the language of their oppressor. On 16 June 1976, the students decided to march to the local stadium to discuss a plan of action that involved all the schools. The march wormed its way through Soweto's narrow and dusty streets emptying schools of students on their way to Orlando Stadium. The police soon blocked the road and demanded that the students disperse. Then they started shooting. The first victim was 13-year-old Hector Peterson. War had been declared and Soweto erupted in open and revolu-



Demonstrating against apartheid, Soweto, June 1976

tionary class struggle for many months.

One of the students' demands was equal education. In the 1960s, Prime Minister HF Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, had made it clear in parliament that 'swart mense' (Afrikaans for black people) had no need for higher education because their role in society was to be 'drawers of water and hewers of wood'. The struggle against inferior education has always been important in South Africa. Many political activists and leaders were won to the struggle against apartheid during their student days.

In 2004 the struggle for free, high quality public education continues. During the 16 June commemoration events organised by social movements in South Africa such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum, the Landless People's Movement, the Education Rights Project and Khanya College, the message was clear: the ANC government has failed the youth of South Africa by adopting neo-liberal capitalist policies. There is nothing for the working class to celebrate but rather they should remember what those who

died were fighting for and draw lessons for our struggles today.

The real beneficiaries of post-apartheid South Africa are the elites, old and new. The Oppenheimer family, owners of Anglo American Corporation, the colossal octopus of South African business, has increased its wealth phenomenally in the past 10 years. Cyril Ramaphosa, former general secretary of the ANC and of the National Union of Mineworkers, an important COSATU affiliate, became a billionaire overnight. It is the children of this bourgeoisie who fill the expensive private schools and this allows the government to neglect state schools. Even less wealthy parents are inclined to bus their children to slightly cheaper private schools kilometres away from the townships.

Public education is in a bad state in South Africa. The ANC government had its work cut out when it undertook the mammoth task of redressing the grim legacy of apartheid education 10 years ago. Much has changed but very little has been achieved. At the beginning of June, students at Wits Uni-

versity, one of the biggest in the country, went on strike until the campus authorities reversed their decision to cut student loans by half. Many working class parents find themselves having to bear a greater economic burden educating their children as the state withdraws funds, following the IMF policy of cutbacks. The government recently released figures showing that 43% of South African schools have no electricity, 27% no water, 50% have no flush toilets and use pit latrines or the bush and 80% of the schools have no libraries. It is perhaps no wonder that 60% of all children who enrol in Grade 1 do not make it to matriculation. The Department of Education allocates less than 1% of its budget for adult education. Many students who are now adults could not finish their education due to the repression of apartheid education. The class of 1976 finds that there are no adult schools they can go to for education to meet the challenges of a free South Africa. South Africa has a high functional illiteracy rate.

When the ANC was unbanned in 1990 one of the first things it did was to close down community, civic, women's and youth structures which had organised the struggle against apartheid, such as the United Democratic Front, the largest mass-based organisation in South African history, the Federation of South African Women and the South African Youth Congress. In place of the latter two the ANC Women's League and ANC Youth League were formed. These organisations have failed miserably to take forward their predecessors' work. The ANC Youth League is a vociferous supporter of President Mbeki; its leader, Malusi Gigaba, has recently been rewarded with a cabinet minister level position as advisor to the president. Meanwhile, the Umsobovu Youth Fund, a very high-profile multimillion-rand youth development fund set up by the government, has been wrecked by scandals of inefficiency, failure to dispense funds to needy

youth and conflicts of interest stories.

Many working class youth lead frustrated lives, tantalised by high-tech media campaigns advertising a consumer lifestyle few can afford. Unemployment is endemic, and those who do find jobs are forced to accept highly exploitative conditions. In November 2003 there was a nationwide strike by workers at Checkers Shoprite, a food chain store which employs about 70% of its staff on a casual basis. The strike was a first in that it was led by casual workers and supported by full-time workers. Most casual workers are youth.

Not surprisingly, many youth are disaffected about politics, feeling that politicians only benefit themselves. During the recent general election, the majority of youth in South Africa did not vote. In the early 1990s, Nelson Mandela commanded the youth to 'go back to school' – the struggle is over, leave politics to adults. But 10 years later the youth of South Africa still have much to struggle for. The student uprising in 1976 followed closely the 1973 Durban strikes, a wave of militant campaigns by workers fighting for better wages and conditions. It was this movement of workers fighting for their needs that led to the birth of the South African trade union movement, which has a proud history of militant struggle against apartheid capitalism. In 1984-6 there was a more sustained and comprehensive wave of struggle that gripped South Africa and culminated in the release of Nelson Mandela, and the unbanning of political organisations and ushered in the era of transition from apartheid to democracy. At one point all political and civic organisations were outlawed by the apartheid regime but the unions, in particular COSATU, continued the struggle. In the famous 1984 stayaway on the East Rand called jointly by organised students and organised workers, the condition for the full realisation of the power of the youth in struggle was identified. Unity of students and workers is an important condition to carry the struggle forward.

As the class contradictions sharpen in South Africa and the social movements win more youth to their ranks, we can expect the youth will again take up the mantle of struggle. But when that happens it will indicate the waking up from a deep political slumber of the South African working class, ready once more to enter the political arena as an independent force fighting behind its own demands.

Nepal: king bows to multiple pressures

ANDREW ALEXANDER

In the last issue of FRFI we reported the ongoing street demonstrations against the dictatorial King Gyanendra in the cities of Nepal. The king responded to the pressure of the demonstrations and the political isolation he was under by reappointing Sher Bahadur Deuba as prime minister. Deuba, the head of a break-away faction of the Nepali Congress, was sacked by Gyanendra in 2002 as part of his coup against parliament. As well as the protests forcing the king's hand, Deuba's reinstatement is the result of pressure from the unity of the five main parliamentary parties. A unity which Deuba's appointment has now split, with the arch-reactionary Communist Party of Nepal joining Gyanendra's side and others refusing to accept the new prime minister, seeing him as a continuation of 'regression'. The Maoists, led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN(M)), have refused a third ceasefire and negotiations with Deuba under the present circumstances, dismissing him correctly as a puppet of the king.

However, this political manoeuvre

by the king has not lessened the demonstrations against his autocratic rule, nor will it do so. For it is an attempt to spread the illusion of a multi-party government in Kathmandu and bring back to life the now defunct 1991 constitution of Nepal, an illusion that will not easily fool the oppressed Nepalese people.

Ultimately though it was the imperialists, perhaps more than anyone, that turned the king's hand. Recently the ambassadors of Britain, France and Germany stated that the participation of all the parliamentary parties in the government is 'essential to end the political deadlock in the country' and urged the king to accept a political package including multi-party government and negotiation with the Maoists, with the proviso that both sides give up their arms. They stressed that the 'multi-party government was the only solution to the present political crisis.'

'Political deadlock' and 'political crisis' show the two main contradictions in Nepal: the 'political deadlock' being that between the king and the parliamentary parties since 2002, and the 'political crisis' being the revolutionary war which the Nepalese state

has failed to defeat. The pressure to deal with the first contradiction – that of finding unity between the king and the parties – has not just come from the Europeans, but from the US and India as well. India, in particular, has made the most manoeuvres of late into Nepali political life with the new Indian foreign minister, Natwar Singh, making Nepal his first foreign visit. 'It is no coincidence that Nepal is the first country I am visiting after taking office,' he said. The Indian ruling class is also now openly debating in the Indian media if the time is now right to make a direct military intervention in Nepal just as it did in Bangladesh in 1971 and 1987 and Sri Lanka during the tenure of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

The inter-imperialist rivalries concerning Nepal are also now becoming more apparent. The French, Germans and Chinese would like to see the UN as a mediator in Nepal but the US, Britain and India are reluctant about UN involvement and would like to see the Maoist problem solved 'internally'. By this they mean for Nepal to be under their control directly, not jointly run with other powers. This is something



Anti-monarchy demonstration in Kathmandu

which has been reflected in the arms sales to Nepal, with these three countries, and India in particular again, being by far the biggest suppliers. Bush's new ambassador to Kathmandu, Michael Malinowski, also claimed the US will add to the \$40m in 'humanitarian assistance' it has given to Nepal and stated that 'critics of American policy in Nepal, like Franco, should put their money where their mouth is'.

The continuing split between the imperialists, the ongoing power struggles between the king and the bourgeois forces and the growing urban and rural resistance by the people to tyrann-

ny can only go towards aiding the revolution further. The CPN(M)'s demand for a Constituent Assembly, a politically unacceptable idea among the monarchists and parliamentary parties until a few months ago, has now become an item of national debate. The Maoists have successfully pushed their political agenda and are clearly winning the political war. What remains now is to break the military stalemate with the newly armed Royal Nepalese Army and bring final liberation to the Nepalese people.

Victory to the Nepalese revolution! ■

Palestinian masses demand reform

As the Palestinian Authority (PA) demonstrated its complete unwillingness to offer any serious resistance to Ariel Sharon's Gaza disengagement plan, Gazans in their thousands have taken to the streets in opposition to Yasser Arafat's leadership. The PA leadership, including Arafat himself, has been a byword for corruption. Now the working class and oppressed in Gaza have had enough of PA leaders enriching themselves whilst they face appalling poverty in what amounts to no more than a huge prison camp. ROBERT CLOUGH reports.

Sharon's disengagement plan will not constitute a complete withdrawal from Gaza – the major settlements in the north will remain. Nor has any final decision been made: in an effort to woo political support from the extreme right-wing of Zionism, Sharon has said that no decision will be made about the first steps until March 2005. Yet with US support he has already been able to manoeuvre Egypt and Jordan into acting as his agents in a process whose purpose is first and foremost to guarantee Israeli security. By the beginning of July, Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman had agreed with the PA a timetable for PA reform and a new Palestinian ceasefire with a target date of the end of September. Following this, the guerrilla organisations would be disbanded through their co-option into the proposed new security forces; these would then receive training from up to 200 Egyptian police officers. Egypt has also agreed to provide 1,000 police to seal tunnels underneath its border with Gaza, and to arrest anyone found using them.

Egypt's role as a broker of Zionist interests has aroused intense opposition from the nationalist and Islamic forces, who in a joint statement at the end of June warned both Jordan and Egypt not 'to take over the Palestinian problem' and argued that 'our people expect the Arab nation to act according to the logic of support for the Palestinians and not the logic of "security" since this turned things on their head, making the problem the Palestinian people and not the occupation'. However, PA prime minister Ahmed Qureia at the same time publicly praised the quisling role of the Egyptian government, describing it as a 'safety net' for the Palestinian people.

By early July, Arafat and Qureia were pitted against each other. Both directly and through Qureia the Egyptians were demanding that Arafat cede control of the security forces in Gaza which were under the control of Ghazi Jabali, an Arafat supporter. On 17 July, Al Aqsa brigade members seized Jabali, demanding that he be sacked for stealing £7m of PA money. Arafat had no choice but to comply. However, he then installed as replacement another loyalist, his cousin Moussa Arafat. Al Aqsa brigades denounced the appointment; in response Moussa Arafat sent his forces to seize control of TV and radio stations in Gaza as well as the main police stations. On the same day, Qureia offered his resignation as prime minister; Arafat rejected it since it would reinforce his political isolation. Continuing demonstrations in Gaza forced Yasser Arafat to capitulate, sacking his cousin on 19 July, 48 hours after making the appointment.

Neither PA faction offers any future for the people of Gaza. Israeli intentions are to cut Gaza loose, permanently separating it from the West Bank and ensuring it is no more than a huge prison camp for Palestinians completely under Zionist control. Arafat and Qureia are like warlords,

fighting each other for control over the Gazan people rather than leading them and the mass of the Palestinian people in a struggle for liberation.

Meanwhile there has been no let-up in Zionist terror – although this has been completely unreported in the British press. Between 24 and 30 June, Zionist forces killed 17 Palestinians including two children. The following week, the death toll was again 17; this time six were children, whilst between 8 and 14 July, 13 Palestinians were murdered, including a woman and a child. In the three weeks, dozens were injured, and more than 130 houses were demolished. Amongst those killed was a 70-year-old man in his wheelchair crushed to death when Israeli bulldozers destroyed his house around him despite the protests of his family. Between 1 June and 19 July, 92 Palestinians were killed, and six Israelis. The UN Under-secretary General for Political Affairs Kieran Prendergast, reporting to the Security Council on 23 June, said that 3,437 Palestinians had died since the start of the Intifada compared to 942 Israelis. In the same period 33,770 Palestinians and 6,008 Israelis have been wounded.

The Israeli army has reported that house demolitions averaged 15 a month in 2002, rose to 45 a month in 2003, and now average nearly 100 a month in 2004. In the middle of June, the Israeli army issued orders for the confiscation of 4,500 acres of Palestinian land to extend the separation wall around the Ariel settlement which lies 20km inside the West Bank. The Israeli war machine grinds on relentlessly as the Zionists attempt to completely destroy the Palestinian people.

This is the backdrop to the petty feuding within the PA leadership. Having abandoned the struggle for national liberation with the 1993 Oslo peace agreement, its members are reduced to fighting each other for the tiny crumbs imperialism is prepared to hand them. The Zionists have meantime manoeuvred so that they negotiate not with the PA but with Egypt and Jordan – the situation that existed back in the 1970s and 1980s. Their common aim is the isolation and defeat of the revolutionary Intifada. Anti-imperialists must stand fast with the risen Palestinian people, and step up their solidarity actions.

Victory to the Palestinian people!

'Moussa Arafat was just the biggest and worst symbol of corruption. What Arafat has done so far is not a response. Just shuffling a few people around suggests he is behaving in the same manner as before... We are for reform. Not for Ahmed Qureia. If anything he is part of the problem. He is part of the old guard.'

Abu Shakir, leader of Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in Gaza, quoted in *The Guardian* 22 July 2004



Al Aqsa brigade's flag flown from a roof during the protest against corruption

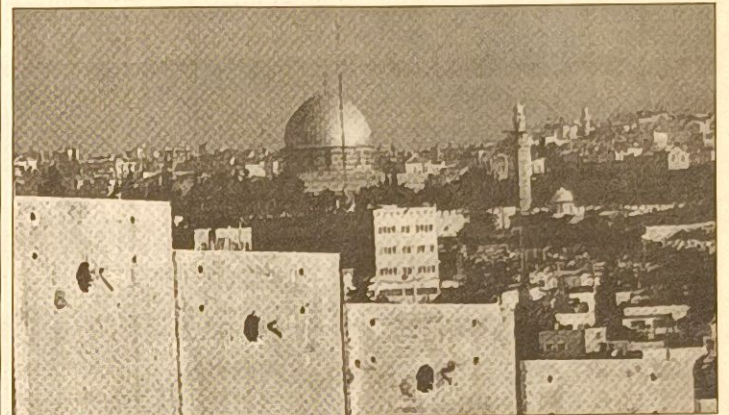
Zionists set up industrial estates along the Separation Wall

In FRFI 170, we reviewed an article by Adam Hanieh in *Monthly Review* (Vol 54 No 5) on class and political economy in Israel and Palestine. One theme was the way historically Zionist capital had exploited Palestinian workers in order to establish a viable capitalist economy and state. Palestinian labour was treated as a reserve army, to be employed and then expelled from the labour force as Zionist capital and political conditions required. Following the 1993 Oslo accords, Zionist capitalists used undocumented workers from Europe and Asia to replace Palestinian labour within Israel so that 'by 1996,

the number of Occupied Territory Palestinians employed in Israel had fallen from 120,000 to fewer than 30,000, whilst the number of 'illegals' had risen to about 300,000' (FRFI 170). With the start of the present Intifada, the number of Occupied Territory Palestinians employed in Israel has fallen to zero.

Now, however, the construction of the Separation Wall in the West Bank has created conditions where Palestinian workers can return to the labour force under conditions of high security and discipline. *Le Monde Diplomatique* (July 2004) reports that proposals for industrial estates that

Zionist wall condemned by international court



The Apartheid Wall cuts through the West Bank

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has declared the Separation Wall being built by the Zionist government on Palestinian land to be totally illegal. In a damning judgement issued from The Hague at the beginning of July the ICJ stated 'the construction of the wall and its associated regime are contrary to international law'.

Quoting several sections of human rights legislation, including the 4th Geneva Convention, the Court ruled that 'Israel must immediately cease construction of the wall in all areas, dismantle parts already built and repeal any legislation or regulations relating to the wall'.

The Separation Wall, a combination of eight-metre-high concrete, electric fencing and razor wire, with trenches, cameras and armed checkpoints, is planned to run for over 400 miles inside the West Bank territory. Effectively creating a concentration camp for the Palestinian people, it cuts through Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods; destroying homes and farms; isolating communities and controlling the movement of the Palestinian people. As a result, nearly 50% of the West Bank territory will be annexed to 'Greater Israel', including almost all of the Palestinian areas in East Jerusalem. The first 90-mile section of the wall was completed in July 2003 with the remainder due to be finished next year. Already thousands of Palestinians have seen their homes destroyed to make way for the wall

and many have been killed or injured in protests against its construction.

The ICJ ruling condemns all these actions by the Zionists and states that Israel must make reparations for damages caused by the construction of the wall. Its judgement reiterates the illegality of Israeli settlements; the unilateral demarcation of a new border in the West Bank; the seizure and destruction of property; the effective annexation of occupied lands and settlements and the demographic changes in Palestine as a result of the wall's path. Furthermore, the Court dismissed as irrelevant the Israeli excuse that the wall is for security or self-defence. It ruled that Israel has a responsibility to bring to justice the crimes of any person involved in the 'planning, construction and use of the wall'.

On 21 July, the United Nations General Assembly voted by 150 to six with 10 abstentions, pressing the Zionist state to abide by the ICJ ruling. The six countries opposing the resolution were Israel, the US, Australia and three small Pacific island countries which are US dependencies. However, the resolution stopped short of calling for sanctions against the Zionists as the ICJ ruling urged, and this allowed Britain and EU countries to vote for it. As expected, Israel has denounced both the ICJ ruling and the UN vote, and with US support will ignore both. Anti-imperialists must redouble their efforts for a complete boycott.

Jim Craven

were part of the 1993 Oslo accords are being revised so that they will be constructed along and astride the wall. Palestinian capitalists, like Abdel-Malek Jaber, head of the Palestinian Estate Development Company aim to work with Israeli industrialists to build factories to employ up to 100,000 workers. Driven off their farming land, the Palestinians will be forced into cheap labour with no alternative to unemployment running at 45% on the West Bank.

Although only 200 km of the proposed 700 km of the wall has been completed, it is viewed as an ideal security zone with few, if any, Palestinians crossing into Israel for work in the future. Additional attractions for Israeli business are that the industrial zones will not be subject to Israeli environmental laws on pollution, nor to Israeli labour laws, wages and conditions so overall production costs will be 70% less than they

would be in Israel. At a time when Israeli enterprises are displacing 'illegals' and relocating to the Far East because of the high cost of Israeli wages, the capitalists cannot resist the logic of exploiting the nearby plentiful and cheap labour. With 60% of Palestinians currently living below the poverty line it is calculated that they will be prepared to accept low wages – around 1,500 shekels (\$332) per month compared to the Israeli minimum wage of 4,500 shekels (\$995).

Expressing the standpoint of the treacherous Palestinian comprador bourgeoisie which the Palestinian Authority represents, Jaber says, 'Israel is a developed country and part of the globalised economy. We cannot afford not to make use of that'. The 'we' is not the mass of the Palestinian people who through their actions in Gaza are rejecting such naked collaboration.

Susan Rose

Human rights:

US Supreme Court ditches liberty

'The practice of arbitrary imprisonments is, in all ages, the favourite and most formidable instrument of tyranny.'

Alexander Hamilton, 1788

In June 2004 the United States Supreme Court handed down three landmark decisions. In each case prisoners being held indefinitely by the US government as 'enemy combatants' were challenging the legality of their imprisonment before the nation's highest court. The rulings, which placed only the most superficial limitations on the US government's practice of arbitrary imprisonment, were heralded in the bourgeois US press as a 'reaffirmation of the rule of law' (*New York Times*) and 'a stinging rebuke' of the Bush administration (*Washington Post*). In fact, the decisions represent a toothless concession to the Bush administration's lawless practice of indefinite detention and undermine due process to an extent unseen since the Supreme Court permitted the mass internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Of the three cases brought before the Supreme Court, two dealt with US citizens, Yaser Esam Hamdi, captured in Afghanistan in 2001, and José Padilla, captured at an airport in Chicago in 2002 and held indefinitely since then for allegedly contemplating



Detainees in Guantanamo Bay concentration camp

terrorist acts. The third case was brought by 14 detainees at Guantanamo Bay, who, like the others, have been held in solitary confinement, without charge or legal representation.

To understand the significance of the Supreme Court's decisions, it is worth returning to the Constitution, the upholding and interpreting of which is the sole duty and mandate of the US Supreme Court. Article V of the Constitution's Bill of Rights states that

no person 'shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law'; Article VI states that 'all accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, ... to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation, ... to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence'.

It is hard to imagine a violation of these principles more thorough and

indisputable than the actions of the US government in the last two years – holding thousands of people indefinitely in solitary confinement, often under conditions of torture, without charging them with a crime, without providing any possibility of a public trial and without permitting legal counsel. The Supreme Court's decisions should have been open and shut: the US government must either provide full due process of law to those being detained, or it must release them. Of the nine members of the Supreme Court, only one Justice came to that conclusion.

The plurality of the Court, in the Hamdi and Guantanamo Bay cases, made brave noises about the importance of due process and the rule of law as basic tenets of freedom, then proceeded to undermine them. (The third case, José Padilla's, was dismissed on a technicality.) Despite the rhetoric, the ultimate ruling of the Court was that the indefinite detentions were legal and could continue, as long as the appropriateness of the prisoners' status as 'enemy combatants' can be determined by some undefined 'neutral decisionmaker'.

The Court's invention of a 'neutral decisionmaker', for which there is no legal precedent, as a substitute for 'a speedy and public trial' is troubling in several respects. First, the Supreme Court is accepting the category 'enemy combatant', which is an innovation the Bush administration created for the sole purpose of avoiding due process of law. Second, as one dissenting Justice, Antonin Scalia, pointed out,

the Court's decision is tantamount to making 'illegal detention legal by supplying a process that the government could have provided, but chose not to'. And third, the vagueness around what constitutes a 'neutral decisionmaker' can only have one outcome. Already, the US government has announced its intention to assemble kangaroo-court military tribunals to serve as the 'neutral decisionmakers'.

The only thing less coherent and less justifiable than the Court's decisions themselves has been the reaction of the liberal press. Across the board, the decisions were hailed by 'progressives' as a victory for freedom and due process and a 'defeat' for Bush. Never mind that, beyond the rhetoric, not a single thing changed in the status of the prisoners, who remain in solitary detention, still without any meaningful hopes for a fair and public trial. The important thing for liberals, operating within the myopic framework of capitalist electoral politics, is the election in November; and for that purpose rhetoric – even rhetoric devoid of substance – will do just as well as the real thing.

So in the most developed bourgeois nation, that most proud bastion of what once was progressive about bourgeois ideology – individual liberty – has suffered a crushing defeat. And liberals refused to notice, because they thought that the sugarcoating on that defeat might help them win an election.

Dalton Hilliard
US correspondent

Israel – in the military service of imperialism

Israel's survival is based on sophisticated military technology and a foreign policy constantly aimed at preventing the isolation of the Zionist state. Israel's brutally repressive instruments and methods have, over the years, been passed into the hands of the most sadistic and reactionary regimes and occupation forces in order to protect the interests of US imperialism. A former leader of Israel's Knesset said: 'The only type of regime that Israel would not aid would be one that is anti-American'.

Although Israel initially allied itself with Britain and France, after the 1956 Suez crisis it turned to the US. It proved itself as a loyal ally of US imperialism in its defeat of Arab nationalism in the 1967 war. Today we see Israel playing the role of 51st state.

Southern Africa

Israel played a vital role as imperialism's middleman in southern Africa. Israel's partnership with apartheid South Africa was essential in maintaining the survival of white supremacy for over 40 years.

The most bloody and despicable tactics were used to keep the black population at bay. Israel was South Africa's closest military ally, offering training,

intelligence and technology. Some of the vast arsenal supplied to South Africa by Israel included Uzi submachine guns, Centurion tanks, missile boats, Kfir jets, hundreds of Gabriel missiles, howitzers, armoured personnel carriers (made in the US), 196mm recoilless rifles (made in the US), communications equipment, radar systems and intelligence technology, aeroplane parts and ammunition for tanks, jets and artillery. However, this was just the tip of the iceberg as the majority of the weapons provided were made in South Africa under Israeli manufacturing licences. Hundreds of South Africans graduated from Israeli military camps and many Israeli instructors were sent to South Africa. The two countries were also involved in collaboration over nuclear weapons.

During the international boycott of apartheid, Israel relabelled South African goods and shipped them on. In 1977 the UN mandatory arms embargo was passed. The US was forced, overtly at least, to comply but Israel simply ignored it.

In 1975-6, Israel supported US interests in Angola against the revolutionary movement fighting Portuguese rule. Angola was of vital strategic importance for imperialism but, post-

Vietnam, public feeling in the US was against any new direct foreign intervention. Hence the bandit movements FNLA (whose leader was on the CIA payroll) and UNITA were armed directly by Israel with weapons captured from the PLO in Lebanon. This enabled Israel, and the recipients, to mask their origins. In 1975 South Africa invaded Angola to prop up white minority rule. The US saw Israeli involvement as a crucial element in supporting the South African Defence Forces against troops from socialist Cuba who were fighting alongside the revolutionary Angolan MPLA.

Latin America

Israel has long supplied training, equipment and expertise in repression to the most reactionary forces from Nicaragua to El Salvador and most of all, Guatemala.

Guatemala has a history of ruthless dictatorships which have carried out bloody and severe repression and torture. What is unique is 'the extent to which those who carried out the deliberate policies of endless killings have proclaimed their indebtedness to Israel, as the source not only of their hardware, but of their inspiration. Israel became the main support of the

Guatemalan military regimes, as attested to by both General Romeo García and General Ríos Montt'. Montt, who was the dictator in 1982-83, admitted 'Many of our soldiers were trained by the Israelis';² the then chief of staff of the Guatemalan army declared that Israeli soldiers were the model to follow.

To erode the broad base of peasant support for the revolutionary movement, from 1954 to 1984 the regime militarily enforced agricultural resettlement, resulting in the murder of 100,000 civilians. Ríos Montt's 'Beans and Bullets' programme was conceived with the Israelis in 1982. The programme gave food and housing to peasants who cooperated with the government and used force against those who did not. This violent crusade killed over 10,000 indigenous people. Plan Victoria, implemented with Israeli help, forced over a million peasants into counter-revolutionary 'civil defence patrols'.

As the Carter administration became edgy about Guatemala, Israel took over as its biggest arms supplier. The Israelis provided computerised systems to track and hunt down activists and instructions on how to torture and murder them in the most horrific ways. These are the lengths that imperialism will go to maintain its global rule.

Of great significance is Israel's role in undermining the Cuban Revolution. There are connections between Israel and the counter-revolutionary Miami Mafia. The founder of the right-wing Cuban American National Foundation, Jorge Mas Canosa received an award in the 1990s from the Mayor of Tel Aviv, for 'support for the state of Israel and

the causes of freedom, democracy and human rights'. Both the Executive Director and the Chair of the Board of the 'Center for a Free Cuba', Frank Calzon and Manuel J Cutillas, are known Zionists (the latter is a former Bacardi director).

At the UN, Israel plays the role of stooge of US imperialism, as can be seen in the annual vote on lifting the illegal US-imposed blockade.

	For	Against	Countries against lifting the blockade
1992	59	2	USA, Israel
1993	88	4	USA, Israel, Albania, Paraguay
1994	101	2	USA, Israel
1995	117	3	USA, Israel, Uzbekistan
1996	138	3	USA, Israel, Uzbekistan
1997	143	3	USA, Israel, Uzbekistan
1998	157	2	USA, Israel
1999	155	2	USA, Israel
2000	167	3	USA, Israel, Marshall Islands
2001	167	3	USA, Israel, Marshall Islands
2002	173	3	USA, Israel, Marshall Islands
2003	179	3	USA, Israel, Marshall Islands

Iraq

Technology developed by Israel during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon is now being used by occupation forces against Falluja. US officers are suspected of having accompanied the IDF on 'missions' in Gaza. And, as images of tortured Iraqis emerge, it is becoming increasingly likely that Israel has been providing expert interrogation advice to the US. The imperialist apprentice has become the grand master of terror and repression.

Louis Brehony

1. Belt-Hallahmi, *The Israeli Connection*, Pantheon, 1987
2. *Miami Herald*, 27 May 1984

Torture:

Bush and Blair try to cover their tracks

In the wake of publicity at the end of May detailing torture of detainees in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, the US and British governments continue to pretend that this was the work of depraved individuals. Seven US soldiers and four British soldiers are facing courts martial as a result. The true situation, however, has little to do with the reckless or sadistic behaviour of prison guards or squaddies. The necessity for the torture and barbaric ill-treatment of prisoners results from the desperate need of imperialism to protect its privileges and its super-profits. In this war to maintain global dominance, anything goes.

'The Blessings of Liberty'

Ever since 'neo-cons' assumed power with GW Bush's election as US President they have been bolstering US global domination by expressly refuting international treaties and obligations on the environment, on the World Criminal Court, on mutual extradition, etc. Repudiation of the Geneva Conventions and Human Rights laws are simply following a pattern already set. With the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre and the subsequent declaration of the War on Terrorism and invasion of Afghanistan, the US administration has adjusted its legal niceties to include indefinite detention without trial and torture for the opponents of US imperialism.

In January 2002 the US President's Legal Counsel, Alberto Gonzales, advised Bush:

'In my judgment, this new paradigm [the War on Terror] renders obsolete Geneva's [the Geneva Conventions] strict limitation on questioning of enemy prisoners and renders quaint some of its provisions.'

In August 2002 the Bush administration began redefining torture and inventing for itself a torturer's charter: torture was now defined narrowly as the intention to deliberately inflict serious harm over prolonged periods. If this didn't give the US enough scope to brutalise prisoners of war, the legal advisers also argued that in times of war the President could override all international treaty obligations, and indeed US domestic law itself.

Readers should not have any illusions that rogue lawyers brought this about. The power relation is the other way round: the Bush administration required these powers, the hired lawyers duly obliged with legal justifications. All it required was for the captives from Afghanistan to be declared 'illegal combatants' not prisoners of war, and then shipped to detention centres all over the world, not least the US Military Base in Guantanamo Bay, and the vicious circle was complete. Detainees could be tortured and interrogated at will in a legal black hole.

In December 2002 Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defence, authorised an experiment using torture ('a variety of interrogation techniques') on a selected group of Guantanamo detainees. The experiment worked but was clearly thought too monstrous by sections of the military, so the generalised use of this regime was shelved. Nonetheless, by April 2003 Rumsfeld had issued new rules for interrogation

in Guantanamo Bay under the authority of Major General Geoffrey Miller who had taken over control in October 2002. What Miller did, which was crucial for the torture and 'interrogation techniques' to work, was to reverse the normal command structure so that Military Intelligence had control not only of interrogations, but also of conditions of detention. Prisoners could be kept in isolation, deprived of sleep and food, humiliated and 'softened up' for questioning.

Then came the war on Iraq, and more importantly the increasingly successful resistance to Coalition rule. The US and Britain needed better intelligence about the resistance and resorted to the methods they knew best. Despite the fact that the detainees in Iraq were clearly prisoners of war and therefore supposedly protected by the Geneva Conventions, the torturers moved in. In August 2003 Major General Miller was sent to Iraq from Guantanamo Bay to evaluate prison operations. The recent Senate investigations into the torture have revealed that Miller's interrogation techniques were then widely circulated in Iraq 'from documents that were posted on the walls of Abu Ghraib prison to debates among senior military lawyers in Baghdad'. Miller handed out lists of procedures to battalion commanders. The normal command structure was reversed as in Guantanamo Bay. Less than two months later in Abu Ghraib the torture photographs were taken.

Significantly, two senior officers, Brigadier General Janis Karpinski and Colonel Thomas Pappas, have both pointed the finger at Miller for the torture regime at Abu Ghraib. Both have testified to army investigators that Miller specifically urged the use of dogs. Such allegations cannot be allowed to stand, because from Miller there is a direct line of command which leads back to Rumsfeld and Bush. Karpinski has been relieved of her command.

'Iraq is a big place with a lot of sand'

Lord Butler

Rt Hon The Lord Butler of Brockwell, KG, GCB, CVO, educated at Harrow and Oxford University; Civil Servant and Mandarin; Private Secretary to Edward Heath and Harold Wilson as Prime Ministers; Principal Private Secretary to Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister; Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service 1988-98; Non-executive director: ICI plc, HSBC Holdings plc; Chair, Intelligence Review Committee 2004.

The British establishment is still turning out fine filibusterers, hair-splitters and loyal servants. They principally inhabit the House of Lords from whence they are hired at intervals to oversee reports on the Government's gross turpitude and to find no-one responsible. Lord Hutton was one: Lord Butler is just such another. The Butler Report has confirmed what everyone knew, but Tony Blair was unwilling to admit: the September dossier on Iraq was fabricated rubbish. Somewhere between the intelligence operatives and 10 Downing Street a lot of doubtful 'intelligence' was changed into certainties. These certainties were used to bolster the argument for invasion of Iraq. As a result thousands of Iraqi civilians were killed in order to meet a 'clear and present danger' which did not exist.



A victim of torture in Abu Ghraib prison, Baghdad

All the President's men are anxious to ensure that none of this affects Bush in election year. In his evidence to the Senate Armed Services Committee in May, Under Secretary of Defence, Stephen Camborne argued (ludicrously): 'the notion that this decision [to suspend the Geneva Conventions] in some way undermined the Geneva Conventions is false.' Bush himself has replied to all questions about torture and interrogation techniques with: 'The authorisation issued was

that anything we did would conform to US law and would be consistent with international law'. That's OK until you realise that his administration had advised itself that US law and international law either allowed torture or were not applicable.

Despite the brutality of its treatment of detainees, let alone its entire prison system, the US still has a freedom of information act and arms of government which are willing and able to scrutinise what the President and his administration are doing. It is because of this that the details of torture in Iraq have been investigated and made public. Matters stand rather differently in the Mother of Parliaments.

Government by deception

The exposure of the *Mirror* torture pictures as fakes and the resignation of the *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan, allowed the government to claim that, unlike its Coalition partners, the British Army was above reproach. When Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram was asked in Parliament about the progress of another inquiry into torture of Iraqi prisoners uncovered in June 2003 which had received remarkably little media coverage, he claimed not to know. The government allowed a few weeks for the fuss about torture to die down before it revealed that four of the soldiers responsible for the original and genuine torture pictures from Iraq would finally be court-martialled. These pictures emerged when one of the soldiers from the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers took his war snaps to the local shop for developing and printing. The shop staff were so disturbed by the images of torture, including sexual humiliation and a naked, manacled and gagged detainee hoisted in a net from a forklift truck, that they reported it to the police,

Nothing had been done until June 2004, a year later and the perpetrators still have not been suspended from their regiment.

At about the same time in June it was revealed that Parliament had been misled by an unfortunate miscalculation. The number of investigations being carried out into the mistreatment of Iraqi detainees and civilians by British troops is not 30 but 75, including 36 deaths.

In Britain, Parliament is so servile that despite the fact that Britain has been the architect of torture regimes around the world (see FRFI 179), the government does not need to work hard to cover its tracks. We know that the Guantanamo detainees have been tortured and are illegally detained. Is Parliament perturbed? Not a bit. Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary, issues blandishments every few months about talks with the US. Then they are forgotten about.

Questioned by the Intelligence and Security Committee (government appointees) about the government's knowledge of the torture regime in Guantanamo Bay, Blair informed them:

'On a few occasions [MI5 and MI6] staff did become aware either through their own observations or comments from detainees, that some detainees were being held in austere conditions or treated improperly. The concerns of these staff were passed on to the US authorities...'

and further in June 2003 that:

'intelligence personnel saw hooded and shackled Iraqi detainees being interrogated' [place not disclosed].

Did anyone ask what the 'austere conditions' were? Or what precisely being 'treated improperly' encompassed? What were the concerns of the staff and what did the US authorities do? We will never know, but we suspect that no one even asked the questions.

Ghost detainees

As a result of the fudged US Supreme Court ruling on 28 June, detainees in Guantanamo Bay, and arguably in other US detention camps in other countries, have a right to challenge their detention through the US courts. The exact extent of the detainees' rights is yet to be made clear (see page 8). Rumsfeld is now speeding up the detention reviews which he promised over a year ago. These are military tribunals where the detainees are denied independent lawyers. The administration hopes that these tribunals will be ruled sufficient to meet the Supreme Court's ruling. Meanwhile the lawyers for some detainees, including the British, have lodged habeas corpus hearings in US courts.

There is a long way to go before these detainees see justice. The Taguba report into Abu Ghraib prison pointed to an even worse problem:

'Detention facilities operated by the 800th MP Brigade have routinely held persons brought to them by other government agencies (eg the CIA) without accounting for them, knowing their identities, or even the reason for their detention. The joint Interrogation and Debriefing Centre at Abu Ghraib called these detainees "ghost detainees".'

Since the official end of the Coalition occupation the number of detainees in Abu Ghraib has fallen from 6,500 to 3,300, including three women and 22 boys under 18. No one knows if the other detainees have been released or simply transferred to another prison or another country. There is every reason to believe that there are 'ghost detainees' in Guantanamo Bay, and further that there are unknown prison camps across the world. Whatever the conditions these detainees are held in, the British government is just as much implicated as the US. They certainly know the truth and must be held responsible.

Carol Brickley

1 There was also a second dodgy February dossier which was also a pack of lies.

Venezuela

Chávez calls for struggle against imperialism

ALVARO MICHAELS

On 3 June, after a long and fraudulent campaign against President Chávez by opposition parties, the Venezuelan National Electoral Council (NEC) declared a presidential recall referendum. Funded by the US National Endowment for Democracy, and shepherded by ex-US President Carter's 'Democracy' circus, the Venezuelan ruling class hopes to defeat Chávez in the referendum on 15 August. At the same time the constant demands by the poor on President Chávez to establish real social justice and to use more oil revenues for the masses means that the class struggle in Venezuela will intensify. The US is set to become even more openly involved in trying to destroy these democratic victories.

Following a check of the recall petitions, 2,451,821 signatures were eventually accepted, only 15,738 more than the 2,436,083 legally necessary. Such was the extent of the fraud that the NEC initially invalidated 1.2 million signatures, but it then allowed a three-day 'repair, remove or resubmit' process in May.

Workers at a Coca-Cola plant in Antimano, Caracas, were fired from their jobs for refusing to 'repair' their signatures, which were included in the anti-Chávez drive either without their authorisation or under pressure. The workers complained about this and similar intimidation at Coca-Cola plants in the states of Carabobo, Lara, Bolívar, and Monagas. Billionaire Gustavo Cisneros, who also owns Venezuela's biggest TV network, and who is the main economic supporter of the anti-Chávez movement, owns the Venezuelan subsidiary of Coca-Cola.

74,000 people, whose signatures appeared in the original sheets, removed them. In one case in Caracas, 5,382 signatures of dead persons were discovered. NEC member Jorge Rodríguez announced that between 15,000 and 50,000 people who had died had not been removed from the electoral register that was being used for the re-verification process, despite the fact that this information had been sent by the competent bodies to the Electoral Register Commission. The number of 'repaired' signatures using forged or cloned IDs probably reached as high as 40,000 nation wide.

To remove Chávez, the opposition will need to get more than the 3.75 million votes he received when he was elected. It therefore needs to find an additional 1.35 million votes. But for the working class, the referendum campaign offers a necessary opportunity to deepen the revolution and to increase the organisation of the people to turn it into a mandate for the government's education, health and social programmes.

The new electoral campaign

Chávez himself immediately accepted the NEC decision and called on revolutionaries to wage what he called 'the battle of Santa Ines' (a battle in 1859 where peasants defeated the landowners), to soundly defeat the counter-revolutionaries in the referendum. A million supporters demonstrated for Chávez on 6 June in Caracas. In all the pro-Chávez demonstrations in June the

poor severely criticised the organisation of the Commando Ayacucho in the recall campaign, demanding better organisation during the referendum campaign itself.

As a consequence, a new campaigning organisation has been established. Chávez' Commando Nacional Maisanta is to lead the 'Bolivarian Circles' that have already grown spontaneously within working and unemployed communities. These will be organised nationally as the 'Commando Popular Bolivariano' (CPB). Electoral campaigns will explain the Constitution and the government's programme to the workers. Following President Chávez's significant anti-imperialist speech in May, the military will work with the Circles to prevent violent attacks by the opposition in the recall campaign. Each local 'Circle' will have a centre of operations and 'basic action units' working in seven areas including registration and mobilisation of electors, organisation of provisions, communications and self-defence. The necessity for such preparation was underlined by a number of armed attacks on offices of parties supporting Chávez during the recall campaign.

Peter DeShazo, US Under-Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere, has announced that the US will only recognise the results of the referendum if it takes place in 'free and fair conditions' and in an environment 'free of intimidation and violence'. Since all the violence during the last five years has been instigated by the counter-revolution, such statements are clearly preparing the ground for the opposition to claim foul play if it is defeated.

On 14 July, President Chávez signed agreements on cross-border energy

projects with Colombia, in part to end the provocations on the border with Colombia, which counter-revolutionaries use to brand the Venezuelan government as 'terrorist' or 'supportive of terrorism', and more particularly to allow Venezuelan troops to keep a clearer eye on armed right-wing terror groups operating out of northern Colombia.

The economy

Socially and economically the mass of the poor have demanded that the leadership of the MVR (Fifth Republic Movement) and its allies in government take significant steps to change the country. 67 per cent of the people live in poverty whilst 35 per cent live in extreme poverty. Three quarters of the population is either unemployed or works in the informal sector, and there have been 43,000 murders in the past five years.

The government has budgeted \$1.7 billion for social projects this year, up from just a few million in past years, whilst \$1 billion from the Central Bank's foreign reserves of \$24 billion and \$750 million from the State Oil Company (PDVSA) have also been allocated to social ends. Venezuela's economic position provides a real basis for these changes. It has the largest oil reserves outside the Middle East, with proven reserves of nearly 78 billion barrels. It is the third largest oil supplier to the United States, behind Canada and Mexico and just ahead of Saudi Arabia, and it sells its products through Citgo, its Tulsa-based retail arm. Venezuela exports about 1.34 million barrels of oil a day to the United States, 13 per cent of US imports (March 2004).

As a result of big business's war on

the Chávez government, the GDP dropped 8.9 per cent in 2002, then a further 9.4 per cent in 2003. But the oil price rises and strict management of the economy have led to a rapid recovery. The economy grew 30 per cent in the first four months of 2004, recovering from the economic damage committed by the oil bosses in 2003. In 2004 the economy will expand by 8-12 per cent, repudiating the IMF scare stories of last year. The current balance of payments account is strong, and the past flight of capital is under control. \$37 billion will be invested in PDVSA between 2004 and 2009.

US imperialism

In the next 50 years Venezuela will become the only state in the Western

Hemisphere to export oil. It possesses, along with Colombia, the natural and human wealth US business needs for the next 40 years. To start, the US consumes 33 per cent global hydrocarbons, one in four barrels of oil, 40 per cent of the world's petrol, and has 25 per cent deficit in its energy consumption. Yet some 90 per cent of world current reserves of oil and gas are in the hands of Islamic OPEC, Russia or the Islamic regions of the previous Soviet Union. Strategically Venezuela is vital for the US. With new technology it can be regarded as having reserves of 800 billion barrels, greater than all the other reserves of OPEC. The US wants complete freedom to gain access to the resources of Venezuela. They must be stopped.



Chávez waving a flag with supporters at a rally in Caracas

Bolivia

Bolivians declare 'nationalisation or death'

FIONA DONOVAN

On 18 July, the Bolivia people were obliged under threat of fines or imprisonment to vote in a referendum on the sale and export of their country's valuable hydrocarbon resources, worth more than \$100 billion. It took place nine months after Bolivia's 'Gas War' of October 2003, a massive popular uprising, forced millionaire president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada to flee the country. However, his unelected successor, Carlos Mesa, made sure that the popular demand for the nationalisation of these resources was not included amongst the five questions in the referendum. Despite the heavily government-funded media campaign, 60% of the 5.1 million eligible to vote in South America's poorest country defied their government once again in a boycott of what they termed the 'tramparendum' (trampa means 'trap').

The national unions of the workers and peasants (COB and CSUTCB) led by Jaime Solares and Felipe Quispe respectively, and supported by the Co-ordination for the Defence of Gas and the Neighbourhood Association of El Alto (FEJUVE) campaigned for a boycott of the referendum. There were protests all over the country; signatures were collected for the Popular Referendum demanding the nationalisation of the gas; and placards hung near voting tables declaring 'nationalisation or death'. In the end,

- 640,000 did not register;
- 1,800,000 or 40% of those registered boycotted the referendum;
- A further 600,000 voted but spoiled their ballot papers.

Of the five questions, only the second, giving Bolivia formal ownership of its untapped fuels, received a significant majority (72%) of the valid ballots. Those in various forms approving the

sale of gas and oil had a bare majority or even less.

Hence a majority of Bolivians rejected the charade despite divisions in the opposition movement. The Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) led by Evo Morales, that had until recently 35 MPs, gave its full support to President Mesa and backed the referendum, believing it would lead to eventual nationalisation of hydrocarbons through 'democratic' means. MAS MP Loayza slandered Felipe Quispe by accusing him of receiving back-handers from the government, and peasant leaders loyal to the MAS in relatively more wealthy Santa Cruz demanded that Quispe and Solares be sent to jail for their boycott calls. Not surprisingly, Jaime Solares and other leaders of the genuine opposition accused Evo Morales of treason for his standpoint. Quispe himself resigned as an MP on 26 May because parliament approved an 'immunity law' which means that no US citizen can be taken to

national or international court for crimes against humanity in Bolivia's national territory.

The predictions of Aymara and Guaraní peasant and union leaders that the referendum would strengthen the grip of the foreign oil companies over Bolivia's resources and destiny are already coming true. Mesa has now started to work jointly with the World Bank to draft a new Law of Hydrocarbons that will guarantee the operation of the petrol companies and open the way for export. The most immediate impact of the referendum is to extend no less than 78 contracts with oil companies. Hence Repsol (Spain) and Petrobras (Brazil) will increase their export of Bolivian gas to Argentina from 4 to 30 million cubic metres per day over the next 20 years. Another 30 million cubic metres of gas have been sold to Mexico and sales of gas to California have now resumed after they were halted during the Gas War. Unsurprisingly the referendum got the full backing of the multinational oil companies, the international trade organisations such as the World Bank and IMF, the neo-liberal parties of Bolivia that shared power with Sánchez de Lozada and maintain a two-thirds majority in the Parliament, and Bolivia's wealthy elite.

The struggle of the popular anti-imperialist forces within Bolivia will continue. The only popular mandate is for the nationalisation of all Bolivian hydrocarbon resources.

The oppressed people of the world support socialist Cuba – why doesn't the SWP?

According to the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Cuban Revolution has never been socialist because it was not the 'self-emancipation of the working class.' A new book, *Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution* by Mike Gonzalez, the SWP's expert on Latin America restates this view:

'Che looked on the workers' movement, students and protest only to support and supply the guerrillas. He described himself as a Marxist now. Yet for Marx, a revolution was the moment when the working class achieved its own liberation through collective action. This does not appear in Che's worldview – or in his political writings – any more than it does in the political pronouncements and manifestos of Castro.'

It is vital for Gonzalez to assert this point to justify the counter-revolutionary position of the SWP, which advocates the overthrow of the revolutionary government by the Cuban working class. Gonzalez continues: 'And if that was how the revolution was to be made, then it was also how the society which emerged from the revolution would be.' (p79) Presumably it is this 'original sin' of the Cuban Revolution that allows SWP cadre to recommend the website of right-wing terrorists in Miami, set up by Jorge Mas Canosa. In the July 2004 issue of *Socialist Review* Gonzalez suggests that the majority of people in Cuba do not benefit from the country's resources and that workers are not represented. He concludes that: 'the task for socialists is to seek by every means possible to help workers organise in their own interest. And if that means organising against the state, then so be it.'

The SWP adapts Cuban reality to its dogmatic theory, violating the first principle of Marx himself – historical materialism. The facts confound the SWP's line. The Cuban working class, the rural proletariat and the peasantry made the Revolution and have benefited massively throughout its 45 years. The participation of the Cuban working class was not led by the trade unions, because communists and other radical left wing trade union activists had been assassinated in the late 1940s and replaced with economic leaders and outright gangsters. Eusebio Mujal, head of the Cuban Workers Congress (CTC) became a millionaire in one year. He was a rabid anti-communist.

When Batista seized power in 1952, Mujal allied the CTC with the dictatorship. It was impossible for that trade union apparatus to support the revolutionary movement against its puppet master. Mujal warned trade unionists not to support the general strike called in April 1958 by the 26th July Movement (M26J), headed by Fidel Castro. Gonzalez just says the strike 'was a disastrous failure. The unions did not respond'. (p78) There is no mention of the repression meted out to undermine the strike. In Havana 200 M26J militants were murdered by Batista's troops who gunned down striking workers in the streets. In Oriente province workers did strike en masse and M26J militia destroyed and appropriated the property of US companies. Most dishonest is Gonzalez's refusal to mention the revolutionary general strike on 2-3 January 1959, which undermined US attempts to organise a military junta

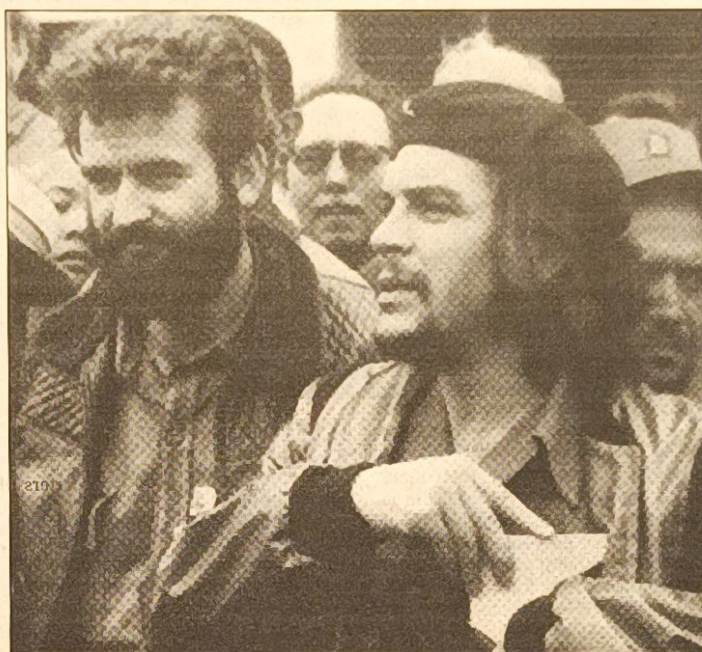
after Batista fled. The strike was total and the country was paralysed as crowds cheered the Rebel Army into Havana.

Blinded by dogmatism, Gonzalez states: 'The 26 July Movement had supporters and sympathisers scattered across the island, but they were not connected with the trade unions or any other organisations outside their own circle'. (p59) Precisely because of the corrupt, pro-imperialist nature of the trade unions, the task facing the revolutionaries was to encourage workers to step outside the control of the trade unions, to set up independent workers' organisations and join other revolutionary organisations in the cities, which they did. In the logic of Gonzalez's argument, when workers fought, either in the urban underground or in the mountains with the Rebel Army, they did not constitute the 'armed working class', because the decision was not passed at their local union branch meeting.

The reactionary role of the trade union apparatus during the Cuban Revolution disturbs the SWP because it exposes the dogmatism of their own political strategy in Britain which gives the existing trade unions, and through them the Labour Party, the key role in building a socialist movement. To recognise other sections of the working class as the real agents of social change is to undermine the SWP's claim to the leadership of the left in Britain, which is based on their trade union constituency.

Activists from Rock around the Blockade, an anti-imperialist campaign in solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, continually expose the SWP's position as contrived from a series of half-truths and outright lies. Gonzalez himself drones from platforms about the Cuban army controlling prostitution, gays being persecuted, AIDS sufferers locked up, no elections, no democracy, no workers' representation, the government exploiting workers in the interests of multinationals, while Cuba's support for Angola against the apartheid regime of South Africa is dismissed as Soviet 'imperialism'.

Now the SWP has an organisational alliance with George Galloway, an ardent supporter of both Cuban socialism and Fidel Castro. In this light it is interesting to note that two key SWP lies have disappeared in Gonzalez's book. Gonzalez's purpose is to reconcile the anti-capitalist movement's admiration for Che and Cuban socialism with the SWP's ahistorical counter-revolutionary position.



First lie: The Revolution was fought by a bunch of middle-class men in the mountains with no relationship to the cities.

At Marxism 2003, the SWP's annual meeting, Gonzalez described Cuba as: 'The command model, the idea of a revolution conducted and run by revolutionaries with the passive support of the masses.' In this account, the Revolution was carried out by a small militarised core, with no participation in the cities.

Now Gonzalez's book recognises the existence of M26J urban movement led by Frank Pais: 'Pais would be a key figure in the 26 July Movement, as organiser of the urban movement.' (p53) Gonzalez now shamelessly criticises Che for doing what the SWP has done until now – censoring the importance of the urban underground movement.

Discussing Che's upbringing Gonzalez says: 'More important, perhaps, than these directly political questions is the matter of the social class to which the family belonged' (p10) and speculates about 'how clearly he bore the marks of his class' (p13) with an anecdote about a beggar rejecting his help. Considering the class background of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, it is ridiculous that the SWP attempts to discredit both Che and Fidel Castro for being middle-class. Clearly it is not individual class background that is important but the class interests such revolutionaries represent in the movement.

Within months of Batista's coup in March 1952, Fidel set up the M26J, recruiting from the poor constituency of Havana where he had been standing as a congressional candidate. Within a few months 1,500 members of the M26J were engaged in military training. They made an alliance with Frank Pais and another group in Santiago, Cuba's second city. Of those who attacked Moncada Barracks on 26 July 1953, 'most were factory workers and shop assistants' (Hugh Thomas, *Cuba*, p36).

The attack failed militarily and 61 of the 125 participants were massa-

cred. Politically, however, it sparked a movement throughout the country, demanding the release of the survivors. In May 1955, less than two years later, Batista submitted to public pressure and the prisoners were released. Clearly then, Fidel and the M26J already had public support. Gonzalez doesn't think so: 'who were the guerrillas beyond the small self-selecting group who had landed from the *Granma*?' (p63)

The urban wing of the M26J had sections for labour organisation, civic resistance, students, urban militia, propaganda and treasury. Life in the cities was more perilous than in the mountains, because of the iron grip of the dictatorship. Nonetheless the M26J's National Workers' Front organised work stoppages, the M26J's Civic Resistance organised National Strike Committees and the M26J's National Student Front agitated in schools. The urban militia carried out sabotage and burned sugar cane. Frank Pais, the movement's leader, was assassinated on 30 July 1957. He was 23 years old. The following day, 60,000 people attended his funeral, businesses shut and workers went on strike spontaneously for several days until Batista's repression forced them back to work. This courageous and revolutionary history is censored by the SWP and Gonzalez who writes: 'The nature of the guerrilla struggle, and its leadership by the 26 July Movement under Castro, also meant that no mass organisations or organs of workers' self-defence had grown in the course of the revolutionary war. That was a necessary consequence of a war conducted until its very final moments in areas remote from the centres of population and political culture.' (p101)

Second lie: Che knew nothing about Marxism

In 1991 *Socialist Worker* claimed that Che was 'never inspired by anything which remotely resembled Marxism.' This is repeated frequently from SWP platforms. Gonzalez now identifies Che with Marxism, admitting that even before arriving in Cuba: 'He had

begun to read his way into Marxist writings in a slightly more systematic way.' (p54)

In 1963 Che instigated a 'Great Debate' between Cuban revolutionaries, members of the old Cuban communist party and internationally renowned Marxists. The debate was about how to move away from the laws of motion of capitalism and construct socialism in Cuba. Key to the debate was the question of moral versus material incentives. Gonzalez characterises Che's advocacy of moral incentives as an expression of idealism or subjectivism. Gonzalez asks: 'Why did he lay such emphasis on the question of a new consciousness? It was certainly not for economic reasons, or because committed people are more efficient producers.' (p149) He is wrong. Che wrote: 'We maintain that the development of consciousness does more for the development of production in a relatively short time than material incentives do.' (*On the Budgetary Finance System*, February 1964)

Che criticised the socialist bloc for using the 'dull instruments of capitalism' – the law of value, the profit motive, material incentives – in building socialism. The law of value determines the distribution of the social product according to the socially necessary labour time embodied within it. The law of value is at the heart of capitalist production. For Che Guevara, moral incentives and voluntary labour were key to undermining the law of value because they contradict its logic, under which workers sell their labour power in order to purchase their subsistence, while creating profits for the capitalists.

Gonzalez's book is marred by factual errors, dubious referencing, spurious assertions and derogatory statements, backed by no evidence. Gonzalez has pulled his information from several mainstream biographies of Che and quotes some of Che's best known works via secondary sources, implying that he has not read them. A few examples follow:

On pages 71-2 Gonzalez claims that during the guerrilla struggle 'the 26 July Movement was also in regular contact with the CIA...and money had already reached the Movement from US government agencies.' No evidence or reference is supplied for this claim.

On page 137 he quotes Jon Lee Anderson favourably: 'There is no longer any doubt that his [Che] and Fidel's paths had begun to diverge.' A few pages later Gonzalez states that: 'While the economic argument was developing with growing ferocity, Fidel was moving towards the position that Che was defending.' (p141)

As examples of baseless derogatory comments; on Che's youth, Gonzalez says: 'Apart from his sexual dalliances with women workers, there is little evidence to suggest that Ernesto had very much contact with working people.' (pp16-17) On the Rebel Army's arrival at La Cabana fortress on the triumph of the Revolution, Gonzalez says Che: 'opted for a kind of mass marriage ceremony within the fortress, legitimising the uninhibited sexuality of the youth soldiers.' (p95)

While Gonzalez's book spreads its counter-revolutionary nonsense in Britain the Cuban people prepare for an attack by the US. Cuba's best defence from imperialist aggression is to continue to strengthen the remarkable achievements of Cuban socialism, in healthcare, education, culture, science, sustainable development and in international solidarity. As Gonzalez's words ring hollow round the walls of Marxism 2004, Cuba continues to make an indelible contribution to revolutionary Marxism. ■

Helen Yaffe

Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution, Mike Gonzalez, Bookmarks Publications, 2004, £8, pp186

Imperialism unmasked

■ **Globalisation Unmasked**, 2001, 183pp and **System In Crisis**, 2003, 260pp, both by James Petras & Henry Veltmeyer, Zed Books, £14.95

Globalisation Unmasked, written before 9/11, is a critique of the ideology of globalisation. The authors delve deeper than the rhetoric of 'the global interdependence of nations', 'the global village' and 'accumulation on a world stage' by examining the class forces and relations involved. Imperialism is a better term to use. 'The concept of globalisation argues for the interdependence of nations, the shared nature of their economies, the mutuality of their interests and the shared benefits of their exchanges. Imperialism, in contrast, emphasizes the domination and exploitation by imperial states and multinational corporations.'

Globalisation ideology promotes the neo-liberal economic agenda throughout the world as a natural unfolding of the market, obscuring the reality imposed on the majority by a tiny minority for selfish benefit. Globalisation was imposed to combat the capitalist crisis, including an over-accumulation of capital with fewer opportunities for investment with acceptable rates of profit and an intensification of international competition. Imposed at the time of, 'The breakdown of communism, the defeats of the revolutionary left and the subsequent decline in labour and social movements.'

Many globalisation apologists argue that the nation-state is anachronistic or weak due to globalisation, but in fact, the nation state, far from weakening with globalisation, 'became an essential political support in spreading the message.' It is the imperialist states, using their control of the IMF and World Bank, which impose a uniform global policy. Nation-states set the rules for the WTO, EU, NAFTA etc to remove democratic accountability from anything that hinders neo-liberalism.

'Non-elected officials play a major role in shaping macro-economic decisions that affect the basic structures of the economy and the living standards of nations.' The state is strong; it is democratic accountability that has been weakened. 'New authoritarianism,' say the authors, 'is a hybrid, combining electoral processes and individual freedoms with highly elitist decision-making structures...Citizens cannot engage in meaningful debates within a civic culture where threats and blackmail are the weapons of a set of interests.' Capitalists threaten capital flight, factory relocations, stopping aid, sanctions, military force and bribe part of the electorate with proceeds from privatisation, tax cuts etc.

The chapter 'Democracy and Capitalism' provides a long account of democratic regimes throughout the world overturned by imperialism, to which we could now add the kidnapping of Aristide in Haiti. They show democracy is contingent for the capitalist class. It depends whether 'democratic rules are compatible with the perpetuation of capitalist property relations, the class structure and state institutions.'

The chapter 'Privatisation' describes 'an attack on civil society and democratic politics.' The role of NGOs is exposed. 'The great majority of NGOs...are neither non-govern-



Los Piqueteros demonstrating in Buenos Aires

mental in funding nor in their local collaborative policies'. Their role is to 'contribute to the weakening of civic and social movements that confront the neo-liberal model'.

System in Crisis follows the neo-liberal/globalisation process beyond 9/11. Rather than the world changing because of 9/11, it was the relative decline in US economic and political power that necessitated a change in course: 9/11 was the excuse. The US economy was in recession and stock markets dropped. US imperialism had failed to dispose of Saddam Hussein, sanctions against Iraq, Iran, Libya and Cuba were being broken, and 'The Palestinian intifada, the advance of the Colombian guerrillas and crises in neo-liberal client states further weakened the notion of a New World Order.'

In Latin America the 'war on terror' was preceded by the 'war on drugs' imposed by Clinton's administration. Both 'wars' were used to impose US imperialist power. 'The advance of the FARC/ELN in Colombia, together with the independent foreign policy of the Chavez regime in Venezuela and the revolutionary government of Cuba, represents the alternative pole.' Venezuela was subjected to an attempted coup and Cuba to a tightened blockade with increased support for counter-revolutionaries. Plan Colombia was bolstered: 'Airspace, sea coasts, and river estuaries were colonised by US armed forces. Military bases were established in El Salvador, Ecuador and Peru...and US officials established a direct operational presence in the defence ministry in Bogotá.'

System in Crisis concentrates on Latin America, devoting a chapter to the Argentinean crisis. However, the book doesn't just examine imperialist oppression, it documents and analyses the inevitable opposition to it, showing their victories, strengths and weaknesses. There are chapters on 'Latin American peasants against the state', 'Indigenous peoples arise' and 'Los Piqueteros' (the movement of unemployed in Argentina).

In 'Right/Left polarisation', the authors show the way forward achieved by some movements and lessons we need to learn in Britain. 'The "street" and not the ballot box is the road to creating authentic forms of democratic representation against corrupt, impotent and complicit official political institutions...there is a striking contrast between the power, integrity and effectiveness of the

mass, leftist socio-economic movements and the impotence, opportunism and marginality of the left electoral parties...The extra-parliamentary Left should decisively break its ties to the electoral Left and concentrate on expanding its mass base beyond its original sectoral constituencies, developing a strategy for state power...the extra-parliamentary Left must develop continuity of action, directly intervening in day-to-day struggles. Mass mobilisations at international events must become subordinated to the building of continuous organisations that lead to national class movements...[which] must confront the fact that the main adversary is American and European imperialism, and not some vague notion of "globalisation" or "empire".'

Highly recommended reading for all in the anti-capitalist and anti-war movement, it puts the politics and actions of the leaders of the British anti-war movement to shame. Victory to the oppressed peoples fighting imperialism!

David Hetfield

New threats, old imperialism

■ **Wars of the 21st century: new threats, new fears** by Ignacio Ramonet, 2004, available from Ocean Press at www.ocean-books.com.au

Ignacio Ramonet, editor of the French paper *Le Monde Diplomatique* and president of the French NGO Action for a Tax on Financial Transactions to Aid Citizens (AT-TAC), has written this compelling critique of the current global situation. He links together the main threats facing humanity – war, economic inequality, environmental destruction, unrestricted technological change (such as genetic cloning) and AIDS.

Ramonet sets the stage by reminding us of some unsettling facts, for example that 'the 225 greatest fortunes in the world is equal to the earnings of the poorest 2.5bn people...that the total wealth of the 15 richest people in the world is greater than the GNP of all the sub-Saharan African countries.' Ramonet's ability to gather wide-ranging problems together in such short space without belittling them is excellent, but ultimately his book lacks a clear economic analysis and anti-imperialist understanding.

Ramonet, like Chomsky and Pilger, is an intellectual and progressive journalist. His strength is to write with anger, tenacity and accessibility about the intolerable situation we face. His weakness is his inability to put forth an alternative, a solution – this is a result of the fact that he has no concrete understanding of imperialism. He considers the US to be a 'proto-world state' – the first of its kind to enjoy such huge global hegemony. To a degree he is correct, but he underplays the role of other imperialist powers and the scope of rising inter-imperialist rivalries. On the Iraq invasion he says 'the US by recruiting once-proud British forces as mere auxiliary troops, while holding at arms length obliging but non-essential allies such as France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Canada and Japan,' but the reality was a definite rivalry.

The book is a victim of time and rapidly changing events of the war.

Throughout he refers to the US victory in Iraq and the consolidation of its hegemonic power as a result. The rise in resistance has smudged a lot of the ink on his pages.

This book, like many recent works, confuses the true nature of globalisation and nation states. Instead of mentioning imperialism he writes about globalisation as some new entity that has just come into existence. States, he appears to suggest, are no longer the necessary bodies that they were and multi-national companies can now conquer markets without them.

His section on the Middle East is the weakest part of the book. Though writing from a relatively pro-Palestinian stance, there is an underlying acceptance of the right of Israel to exist while referring to the Palestinian liberation fighters as 'Islamic fundamentalists.' He also goes on to claim that 'both sides are being manipulated by extremists' and describes how the 'Palestinian leaders who opt for terrorism continue to ignore the democratic character of Israeli society that freely elects its leaders.' The section on the war against Serbia however is one of the most excellent overviews of the complex conflict that I have read.

In his final chapter 'Another world is possible', Ramonet puts forth the 'model' town of Porto Alegre and such collectives as the World Social Forums with NGOs at their helm as the main opposition which can build an alternative to neo-liberalism. The criticism is often fine but there is no heed of revolution or socialism. Despite its huge gains there is not one mention of the Cuban Revolution, next to nothing on the progress of the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela and as for the Nepalese revolution, that is reduced to one line – 'a recent outbreak of Maoist guerrilla violence in Nepal'.

Despite such shortcomings, I do suggest that people read this book, it contains a wealth of information. But the desperate situation Ramonet eloquently portrays demands something more.

Andrew Alexander

Raising the temperature

■ **Fahrenheit 9/11**, Miramax 2004, directed by Michael Moore. On general release.

In May 2004, Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11* won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes film festival – the first time since 1956 that a documentary has won the top prize. The Disney Corporation refused to distribute it in an election year in the US; worried that an anti-Bush film might endanger the tax breaks Disney receives for its theme parks in Florida where President Bush's brother Jeb is governor.

When it opened in the US in June, despite playing in only 868 cinemas across the country, it took \$21.8 million at the box offices in the first weekend, the best opening for a documentary and also the best for a Palme d'Or winner, beating *Pulp Fiction* which opened with \$9.3 million in 1994.

The film exposes the relationship between George Bush and the Bin Laden family and the US's cynical use of the events of 11 September 2001 to spark fear in the minds of the US people about the terrorist threat and therefore to justify war in

Afghanistan and Iraq. Bin Laden family members living in the US were allowed to fly out of the country at a time when all other flights were grounded. The film clearly shows how imperialist wars are about satisfying commercial interests of industry, the military and the oil companies and how these are tied to the Bush family, members of his administration, the Saudi Arabian government and Bin Laden family.

Michael Moore shows the viewer the opulence of the ruling class in the US, President Bush commenting on the horrors of war while more interested in his next drive on the golf course, Black Congress representatives standing up to expose the disenfranchisement of the black votes in the 2000 election and being cut off at the microphone by the senators. The audience laughs, almost with embarrassment, at President Bush in a primary school class, sitting for minutes reading a book about a little goat after he is informed of the Twin Towers attack. Moore shows the poor in the US, with poor housing, education,

little chance of employment and a bleak future. He shows us young servicemen and women in Iraq singing songs of war as they raze houses, kill civilians and hood and taunt prisoners. Moore shows the Iraqi civilians killed by the US forces and the cries and screams of those finding their loved ones mutilated and dead. He uses the death of a US soldier in Iraq to illustrate how 'national pride' can easily be changed to anger when it is clear that there is no good explanation for why these young soldiers are being sent to their deaths.

Fahrenheit 9/11 gives a message that is not in the mainstream media and it is definitely recommended viewing. However, being aimed at a US audience in an election year, in terms of a British audience the film lets Britain – and in particular the warmongering Labour Party – off the hook. Its real success will be measured not by how many people see the film, but by how many people are shaken out of their apathy and begin to organise and get active.

Hannah Callier

Locked up in the land of the free

On 30 June 2002 the US prison population reached two million for the first time in history. By 30 June 2003, 2,078,570 prisoners were held in Federal or State prisons or in local jails – equivalent to the imprisonment of 480 out of every 100,000 US residents. No other country imprisons its population on anything like this scale, and prison is just the end point of a massive all-powerful, omnipresent 'criminal justice' and policing system, under which up to another five million people are on probation or parole at any one time.

Among the US socialists who have sought to explain the economic and political background to mass imprisonment in the US are Christian Parenty and Richard D Vogel. Their writings are invaluable for anyone seeking to understand not only the current US situation, but the direction in which British 'criminal justice' policy is being guided by social fascist Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett. NICKI JAMESON reports.

Economics and imprisonment

Vogel's essay, 'Capitalism and Incarceration Revisited' (*Monthly Review* September 2003) begins with his conclusion 20 years earlier that the 'overall trends and year-by-year correspondence between economic conditions and imprisonment establish quite clearly the relationship between capitalism and incarceration – prisons under capitalism are, as Marx pointed out long ago, dumping grounds of the industrial reserve army. In very few respects are the social consequences of the un- and under-employment of people under capitalism as clear as they are in the fluctuations of the prison population.'

in imprisonment after the early 1980s, with no concomitant surge in overall unemployment, demonstrates what Vogel calls 'a fundamentally changed relationship between capitalism and incarceration'.

This relationship is one in which simply comparing overall figures for incarceration and unemployment tells us nothing. The additional factor that must be included in any meaningful analysis is race. 'The Bureau of Justice Statistics... predicted that a young black man aged 16 in 1991 had a 28.5 percent chance of spending time in prison during his life. This prediction counts only felony convictions and does not include time spent in local or county jails. When social class differences within

since the end of the Second World War...national minorities have traditionally served as the reserve army of wage laborers for American capitalism – a function that accounts for their overrepresentation in American prisons.'

The sheer number of prisoners is now so great that it actually serves to distort the true unemployment figures. Imprisonment is no longer a result of unemployment; it has become an alternative to it. Just as there was less unemployment in wartime because the working class were drafted, 'the prison system now holds enough of the reserve army of wage laborers for extended periods of time to actually keep the official unemployment rate down.'



Prisoner uprising at the Attica Correctional Facility, New York State, 1971

Vogel then tests this thesis by overlaying graphs of incarceration and employment for the period 1926-1996. This reveals 'a high rate of incarceration accompanying the economic dislocation of the Great Depression when, in 1931, 52 persons per 100,000 civilian population were sent to prison. Correspondingly, the lowest rate of imprisonment occurred during the Second World War (28.4 per 100,000 in 1944) when unemployment dropped to 1.2 per cent.'

As soon as the war ended, both unemployment and incarceration began to increase, and continued with little interruption until the 1960s when the Vietnam War led to a drop in both rates. The 'current and most dramatic trend of incarceration' then began following the US defeat in Vietnam.

The rises in unemployment and incarceration immediately after the Vietnam War continued to reflect the same relationship that existed in the earlier decades of the 20th century. However, the sudden upward curve

the black population are factored in the prospect of poor black males being incarcerated is probably double this figure – closer to 60 percent. And, if we add the differential jail incarceration rates for blacks, a 75 percent likelihood of going to prison is not an unreasonable estimate.'

The large number of black and minority ethnic prisoners is not simply a result of prejudice among sentencers, although this too is present. It is a direct product of the role that the non-white working class plays in US capitalism.

'Liberal critics are quick to lament racial discrimination in the criminal justice system but always steer clear of the basic structure of capitalism that accounts for the concentration of national minorities in prison...The unemployment rate for black males is consistently twice that of white males...[who] have faced serious unemployment only during times of economic recession, while...minority males have faced recession (and depression) level unemployment

Social apartheid – 'quality of life' for the rich; 'zero tolerance' of the poor

Parenty's 1999 book *Lockdown America – Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis*, guides the reader through the massive militarisation of the US police and immigration service, which began with President Richard Nixon's quest to re-establish social control after the turbulent late 1960s, when 'capitalism hit a dual social and economic crisis.'

In particular, the enforced retreat of three police forces from the 1965 Watts rebellion had caused a crisis of police confidence. Just as 15 years later in Britain, inner-city uprisings would lead the police to draw on the experiences of the occupying army in the north of Ireland, the US police looked to the military in Vietnam for ideas. This resulted, on the one hand, in rapid buying up of helicopters, computers, microfilm fingerprint files and electronic maps, on the other in 'soft' strategies of incorporating sections of the community, buy-

ing off key people and gathering intelligence.

Nixon was prevented from fully realising his plans due to continued resistance and the Watergate scandal. The drive for militarised social control ultimately took off in the 1980s as 'a response to the vicious economic restructuring of the Reagan era...To restore sagging business profits, the welfare of working people had to be sacrificed...the criminal justice crackdown has become...a way to manage rising inequality and surplus populations.'

So, from then until now, there has been an unrelenting build-up of weaponry by the state, both in terms of actual hardware and in the shape of laws and powers that pervade every area of life and seek to control every form of behaviour. These laws are universal on the statute books but selective in their application. They are 'sold' to the population in the guise of 'the war on drugs', 'the fight against organised crime' or even the desirable sounding 'quality of life', but in reality amount to all-encompassing social and racial control of the working class.

'Quality of life' (QOL) is the other side of the much-discussed coin of 'zero tolerance' (ZT). This form of policing should be studied by readers in Britain, where it is being brought in under the guise of dealing with 'anti-social behaviour'. The 'quality of life' under discussion is that of the mainly white middle class, which is perceived as threatened by the mere existence of poor working class people on the same streets as them.

ZT/QOL policing was developed by then New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton under Mayor Rudi Giuliani, using the ideas of right-wing criminologists James Q Wilson and George Kelling. The doctrine is one of 'vigorous enforcement of even the most trifling municipal codes in the theory that preventing "disorder" will prevent violence... Police were advised to...control "panhandlers, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, loiterers, the mentally disturbed." According to the theory, enforcing laws against public urination, graffiti, and inebriation will create an aura of regulation that helps prevent brutal crimes like rape and murder' (p70).

ZT/QOL policing appeared to be a success – between 1994 and 1998 overall crime in New York dropped 43 per cent. But at what cost? 'During the same period another set of statistics has also emerged. Complaints of police brutality...jumped by 62 per cent...while...the city has paid out more than \$100 million in damages arising from police violence... Bratton's response was "That's too damn bad"' (p83).

At the same time, the government is waging war on immigrants. Writing in 1999, Parenty describes the vicious state racism: 'the combined force stops Latino drivers and pedestrians at random, conducting warrantless searches...cops and [immigration] officers humiliate Latinos on public highways and interrogate children on their way to school'. In a single raid 432 undocumented migrants and two US citizens were deported, some wearing only their underwear. Post-2001, many of the three million Arab American citizens now have experience of the same treatment.

The aim of this terror is to ensure that immigrant workers live in fear, do not organise, do not rebel, and do not ask for higher wages or better conditions. They remain a cheap, expendable source of labour. At the same time, they can play the role of convenient scapegoat for the eco-

nomic problems now beginning to affect the whole of US society.

Overwhelming force is also increasingly used in the everyday policing of black and Latino working class areas of cities. Parenty describes the operations of the 'super-cops' of the Fresno, California Violent Crime Suppression Unit (VCSU) as 'a sneak preview of a future American police state'. The VCSU was formed in a massively hyped-up response to genuine problems of crime and gang warfare but continued heavily armed, paramilitary operations long after every gang member had been incarcerated. The Unit acts unashamedly as an army of occupation – 'If police are soldiers instead of civil servants, and their task is destruction and conquest, then it follows that the civilian community will be the enemy' (p112).

Resistance and repression

The US state learned from its policing experiences that it must employ multiple layers of repression in order to continue to rule. It has learned the same lesson in relation to the prisons themselves. In 1971 prisoners at the Attica Correctional Facility in New York, staged a highly politicised revolt, which was put down by maximum force by 200 state troopers who shot dead 33 prisoners and 10 guards who had been held hostage. Despite the unprecedented rise in numbers of prisoners since then, there have been very few incidents of major rebellion within the prison system.

To keep the imprisoned population subdued, the US state has employed a wide range of tactics, including sensory deprivation and isolation, forced labour, chain-gangs, shooting of prisoners in exercise yards, the use of informants or favoured bullies, and the encouragement of gang warfare. Perhaps foremost among the control strategies, however, has been the development of the total lockdown prison or 'supermax'. By using a type of prison where every prisoner is effectively in permanent solitary confinement, and only leaves their cell when chained and escorted by paramilitary guards, the prospect of organisation or rebellion can be prevented.

Like capitalism itself, the prison system contains the seeds of its own destruction. Vogel ends his essay with a description of a system heading for crisis:

'Current indicators suggest that the chronic economic recession that was avoided during the last twenty years is upon us. This...will provide a flood of new prisoners that will have to be accommodated in a system that is presently at, or near, capacity. The economic costs of mass incarceration and correctional control...are already staggering and cannot be maintained...As the economy contracts and tax revenues dwindle, federal and state governments are slipping deeper into deficit. Prisons are already being targeted for budget cuts...Ironically supermax prisons might be the first to go – the cost of keeping masses of men in concentrated solitary confinement has proven to be much greater than even regular maximum security incarceration. [This] alone could spark widespread prison insurrections because it would put the "troublemakers" back among the general prison population...protest and resistance would follow and the voice of American prisoners, silenced for so long would be heard again – it would echo the "sound before the fury of those who are oppressed" proclaimed at Attica in 1971.'

Defend the right to picket

The weekly Saturday picket of Marks & Spencer in central Manchester has been under intensifying attack since mid-June. On 19 June, an ex-member of the Israeli Defence Force, having spent some time talking to M&S security and the local representative of the fascist Likud, threatened to bite the ear off one protester and chased another who dared to film his intimidation. Two weeks later he returned with half-a-dozen fellow Israelis who attempted to intimidate picketers, tore up leaflets, destroyed placards and tried to turn over our stall. Some 20 minutes later, the police arrived, and after further altercation, arrested the ringleader.

The next week a report in *The Jewish Telegraph* quoted the ringleader anonymously calling on Zionists to prevent us setting up outside M&S on the next Saturday, 17 July. Manchester VTI spent the week mobilising support for the picket. When Saturday arrived, 50-plus picketers assembled to defend the picket from the Zionists. Half-an-

hour into the picket, 20-25 Israeli and British supporters of the fascist Likud arrived and tried to create disorder so that the police would intervene and close the picket down. Hurling abuse and threats, they tried their utmost to provoke a reaction. They failed. One of their number was arrested and their counter-demonstration descended into chaos. Eventually they withdrew, 20 minutes before the end of our picket.

As if by coincidence, the front page of the *Manchester Evening News* on the same day carried the headline 'Marks in free speech storm'. It reported that 'Bosses at Marks & Spencer in Manchester are planning to use controversial Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) against protesters'. It revealed that M&S had been collating information on the picket with a view to getting the council or police to take out an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) in order to stop the picket. This follows the recent use of ASBOs in Birmingham against two hous-

ing activists. It seems that M&S would like to use the Likud counter-demonstration to prove that the picket provokes alarm and fear amongst the general population!

On 24 July, a national Betar-Likud mobilisation brought up to 70 Zionists to attack the picket. Apart from their ritualistic abuse, they attempted to drive the picket away by singing God Save the Queen! Having failed to close down the London picket, these fascists are now concentrating their attention on Manchester.

At the end of July, two picketers will appeal against their convictions for obstruction and fly-posting. We will continue to defend our right to demonstrate in support of the people of Palestine.

Meanwhile London VTI continue their regular Thursday evening picket of Marks & Spencer's flagship store at Marble Arch. On 11 June police told two M&S picketers arrested in April for using a megaphone that they will not face charges. Since then police have backed down and re-

moved the barriers, allowing us to talk to the public and get support. The Zionist counter-demonstration has proved ineffective in halting us. M&S staff have become more aggressive: a stone was thrown at a protester from an upper window of the Marble Arch store; and a bucket of water was thrown at the picket on Holloway Road in North London. Pickets have continued in Leicester, Glasgow, Dundee, Durham, Middlesbrough and Newcastle.



EVENTS

LONDON

Every Thursday:
Picket of M&S

Oxford St (Marble Arch end)
6-8pm

Meeting on Palestine

Wednesday 8 September
Street stalls will also take place every Saturday

For details on venue and time, email:
victoryintifada@hotmail.com or
call 020 7837 1688

MANCHESTER

Every Saturday:

Picket of M&S
Market St, Manchester City
Centre from 12-3pm.

Email:
victory_intifada@hotmail.com or
call: 07816 547 066
For more information on other
FRFI activities,
email: manchesterfrfi@
revolutionarycommunist.com
To contact Salford University FRFI
Society, email: salfordfrfi@
hotmail.com

MIDLANDS

For further details contact: 07917
284 488 or 07817 740 188 or
email: midlandsrcg@hotmail.com

DURHAM

For information about pickets of
M&S in Silver Street, contact:
07813 073 846

GLASGOW

Pickets of M&S
Saturday 7 and 21 August and
4 and 18 September
All at M&S in Sauchiehall Street
between 12-2pm:

DUNDEE

Pickets of M&S
Saturday 28 August and
11 September
Both at M&S in Murraygate,
Dundee between 12-2pm
To contact FRFI in Scotland or to
find out more about our events
and activities call 07779 785 529
or email:
frfiscotland@yahoo.co.uk

Rock around the Blockade round-up office@ratb.org.uk www.ratb.org.uk

RATB challenges SWP lies



Every year, 10 million children die from hunger, malnutrition, lack of clean water or easily curable diseases: not one of these children is Cuban. Cuba has an infant mortality rate lower than that of the United States, life expectancy of 76 years, universal free health care and education. Cubans say they are working towards a society that 'leaves no child behind'; its literacy rate exceeds that of most European countries and the US and no one is homeless. And Cuba is exporting the gains of the revolution to others: 20,000 Cuban doctors and other health professionals are currently serving in 64 countries. No wonder then, that throughout the oppressed nations of the world, ravaged by imperialist plunder, the Cuban Revolution is held up as a shining beacon to follow. Who could fail to be inspired by its example?

Step forward Mike Gonzalez of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and author of the SWP's latest salvo against Cuban socialism, *Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution* (see review on page 11). So in mid-July Rock around the Blockade activists took the opportunity to challenge the SWP's attacks on Cuba at 'Marxism', the SWP's annual jamboree in London, where Gonzalez was speaking. In fact this year Gonzalez, after years of our interventions at his meetings, steered clear of saying anything about Cuba at all, contenting himself instead with a snide

and completely depoliticised biography of Che Guevara. It was left to Chris Harman to trot out the same old SWP lies about Cuba: lies about attitudes to homosexuality, trade union participation, AIDS. Not a mention of the gains of the Revolution, Cuba's participative democracy, the US blockade, the escalating menace posed to the socialist island by US imperialism. No, the SWP had one aim and one aim only: to poison the minds of the audience against Cuba, to preach counter-revolution. Thanks to our intervention, they failed.

We were poised to expose the SWP's lies. Previous experience of being excluded from SWP meetings and denied the right to legitimate debate meant we knew we had to resort to subterfuge to ensure the truth about Cuba was heard. So when the chair called 'Chris Bacardi' up to speak - a name designed to appeal to a man who would not have been out of place in a Miami bar - it was a thinly disguised activist from RATB who challenged Gonzalez on every point, winning enthusiastic support from the audience. Meanwhile other RATB activists dodged the SWP's thuggish stewards to hand out leaflets and erect a banner on the stage next to Gonzalez which read 'The oppressed people of the world support Cuban socialism - why doesn't the SWP?' before being manhandled off the stage, assaulted and bundled out of



the meeting. The answer to the question lies in the SWP's politics. By denigrating and denying the gains of the Cuban Revolution the SWP shows its true colours: against socialism, against revolution and against the interests of the oppressed people of the world. 'Marxism 2004'? Marx would be turning in his grave.

For real revolutionaries, there are plenty of ways to become involved in supporting Cuba. In the run-up to the RATB brigade to Cuba next spring, there is much fundraising to do. RATB activists have been busy around the country raising money through Rebel Music club

nights, working for the Workers' Beer Company at festivals, petitioning on street stalls against the US blockade and for the release of the Miami 5, the five Cuban political prisoners incarcerated in the United States.

Our London Rebel Music club night in July was advertised in the *Guardian* Guide, *Metro* and dozens of other weekly listings. But when the listings appeared, every magazine contained the words '...raising money for a dictatorial regime in Cuba'. It emerged that this smear had been maliciously added by Alex Sarll of the Press Association, which provides listings to most local publica-

tions. When challenged, Sarll poured more vitriol on to Cuba and the Revolution, showing his ignorance and arrogance.

Clearly we face a continuing battle in Britain against the forces of social democracy determined to undermine the Cuban Revolution. We will continue to fight this battle while at the same time educating people about the lessons of Cuba, which shows us that a better world is possible and in the interest of all of humanity it must be defended.

Join our activities. Rock around the Blockade has been supporting the growing and vital links between socialist Cuba and the progressive Chavez government in Venezuela, working closely with the Hands Off Venezuela! campaign in this country. We are planning a joint week of action from 9-15 August, culminating in a march to and demonstration outside the US Embassy in London on 15 August. We will have speakers at meetings on Tuesday 10 August (on Cuba and Venezuela) and Wednesday 11 August (on revolutionary women in struggle). For further details about how to get involved contact Rock around the Blockade on 020 7837 1688.

In Scotland, Rock around the Blockade in Glasgow will be showing *The Revolution will not be televised*, a film about the revolutionary process in Venezuela, on Thursday 19 August, 7.30pm at Friends Meeting

House, Elmbank Crescent, Glasgow G2. In Dundee, the film will be shown at 7pm on Thursday 23 September, Room G7, Dundee University, Tower Block, Perth Road. Rock around the Blockade will be holding street events and meetings in both cities in August and September - call 07779 785 529 or e-mail scotlandratb@yahoo.co.uk for more information.

We continue to have stalls at festivals, and petitioning sessions; the next Rebel Music club night will be on Friday 3 September in London at Electrowerkz at the Angel and in early October in Manchester. Join us on a bar bust - help expose Bacardi's counter-revolutionary role in an alternative and inventive way that people will not forget.

- Join RATB and get active - £10 (waged), £4 (low waged), £2 (unwaged, student or pensioner).
- Join our e-group and be kept up to date on news from and about Cuba.

Send off for our T-shirt with an image of Che Guevara on the front and a quote by him on the back, 'a true revolutionary is motivated by great feelings of love' for £7 and a badge with a picture of Che Guevara and the words 'Rage against the US blockade' for 50p (both including p&p).

CHOOSE THE RCG

If you believe that the treachery of the opportunist British labour and trade union movement must be challenged, then there is no alternative - Join the RCG!

I would like to join/receive more information about the RCG ☐

I would like to join an FRFI Readers & Supporters Group ☐

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Campaigning against deaths in women's prisons

In the June/July issue of FRFI, I wrote about the five demonstrations I have organised outside women's prisons this year, in response to the deaths of women prisoners.

Since then, a further two protests have taken place. On 27 May 2004, following the death of Heather Waite, aged 28, a demonstration was held outside Holloway Prison. The seventh, and most recent protest, was outside Buckley Hall Prison, near Rochdale, on 18 June 2004, after the death of Rebecca Smith, 40, a mother of two. On both occasions, I was arrested and charged with obstructing the highway. The date for my London trial has been fixed for November, and I am awaiting a date for the Rochdale trial.

Holloway Prison has now recorded two deaths since April 2004. Another Holloway prisoner

was taken to hospital in May 2004, and remains in a coma. Following the death of remand prisoner Julie Hope, 35, in April, Governor Edd Willetts told reporters that it was a 'miracle' that more inmates did not die, and that up to four inmates try to hang themselves each day.

The problems, though, are not peculiar to Holloway. Unless there is a radical change in the way women offenders are treated, the crisis in women's prisons is likely to continue. Six out of seven women prisoners have been convicted of non-violent offences, and two-thirds are mothers. Courts must take a more responsible attitude, make greater use of community sentences, and stop sending these women to prison. Women with mental illness and/or drug dependency problems should receive care, treatment and rehabilitation in an

appropriate setting, and that does not include prison.

All prisoners, whether male or female, are entitled to be treated with respect, and to have their human rights upheld. Not all women prisoners can get access to toilets at night, which is a breach of Article 3 (inhumane and degrading treatment) of the Human Rights Act 1998.

In September 2001, the Home Office published its new 'Government Strategy on Women Offenders', which marked a shift in policy towards developing community provision for those who do not present a risk to the public. And yet, since 2001, the female prison population has continued to rise, as has the death toll.

When Labour came to power in 1997, 2,629 women were incarcerated in prison. That figure has now risen to 4,487 (as

at 16 July 2004). This government has presided over a shameful increase in the number of women sent to jail. Since my daughter's death at Styal Prison in January 2003, a further 21 women have died whilst in the 'care' of our penal institutions.

It is time to end the death toll of women prisoners and the medieval practices in women's jails. Meanwhile, I run the risk of acquiring a criminal record, and have to face two criminal trials later this year, as well as dealing with my daughter's inquest in January 2005. However, I remain determined to continue to do everything possible to raise awareness about the unacceptable treatment of some of the most vulnerable women in society.

PAULINE CAMPBELL
Malpas, Cheshire

PSC sectarianism

What have you lot at Marks & Spencer been doing to upset the local PSC? The last time we were in Manchester at a meeting on Iraq, that PSC woman (Linda Clair) launched into a thinly-veiled attack on the M&S picketers.

This time there was no veil when we took our stall along to a green anarchist radical book fair somewhere in Ancoats.

I wandered over to the PSC stall and introduced myself as a fellow campaigner on Palestine. I mentioned that I'd been on the

M&S picket, which was something I knew was happening in Manchester.

Oh, how I regret speaking! It might not be his sort of thing, but I didn't expect him to see me as the enemy and launch a furious assault. I don't know if he was speaking for the group, but 'we', he said, 'don't approve of those kind of activities, which simply serve to irritate and provoke ordinary people out shopping! He then said that 'many people' (he didn't say who) had complained to PSC about facing 'intimidation'

from protesters. I said I had not witnessed any intimidation, except by Zionists, M&S staff and racist members of the public. 'Oh, yes', he said, 'but it occurs outside M&S because folks passing in the street are "provoked" by the manner of the protesters'. His colleague pitched in, suggesting that perhaps it was just one or two bad apples causing the problem but he was having none of that and insisted 'many people' were involved in causing ill feeling.

I haven't been on an M&S picket for a while - other things happening. Still, I feel very angry at his tirade.

KIM
People against Global Imperialism

Poor priced out of healthy diet

Undernutrition - the result of a diet poor in essential vitamins, minerals and proteins - leads to poor cognitive development and educational achievement in children, an increased risk of ill health and reduced life expectancy. In 2003, the Department of Health spent £17m on the provision of free fruit in English schools for children aged 5-7. But in the same period, the food industry spent £252m on television advertising of fast food, pre-sugared breakfast cereals, sweets, snacks and fizzy drinks.

The most recent study by the children's charity NCH into the diets of 55 families across Britain living on low incomes is shocking. It found that almost half the parents had gone short of food to meet the needs of another family member, with one in five families stating that they didn't have enough money for food. The diets in the study were poor: more than a quarter of the children never ate green vegetables or salad; 10% never ate fruit, while 90% ate sweets and chocolates and crisps regularly. The diets of the parents were similar. The study also found that there has been no real change over the last 12 years. Significant numbers of children and adults are experiencing food exclusion in the world's second most powerful imperialist nation.

While the government blames the growing problem of obesity on the poor, castigating them for their unhealthy diet and lifestyle, the study found that healthier foods cost about 15% more than less healthy foods and that the recommended five-a-day fruit and vegetable items were 38% more expensive in rural areas than in urban ones. The minimum needed to provide a family with an adequate diet has been calculated as £62.84 per week - beyond the means of a family on income support. While the cost of a healthy shopping basket has almost doubled since 1988, the cost of an unhealthy one has increased by only a third. In isolated rural areas providing fresh fruit and vegetables is more difficult. Almost a quarter of the shopping bill of such families was the travel costs.

The study exposes a society that cannot provide for its poor, who are doomed to a life of under-nutrition with all the consequent negative health effects.

HANNAH CALLER
North London

What justice for Carr?

I seek to draw the left's attention to the appalling sexism meted out by the tabloids to Maxine Carr. It is similar sexism that led to Ian Huntley murdering Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman and the press having to be banned from identifying rape victims.

Before, during and since Maxine's trial tabloids displayed contempt of court by filthily lying about her. She was convicted of conspiracy to pervert justice - exactly what the tabloids did! But charges against her were not dropped, nor the tabloids prosecuted. The tabloids lied not

for love or folly, but to cash in on child murder. Such hypocrisy - especially in light of the charge against Maxine's mother for obstructing justice.

So Maxine may not have had a fair trial. She probably could not prove that Huntley intimidated her into lying for him (he denied this), which would have acquitted her.

The same male-dominated legal system operated when a judge made sexist remarks to her and the state showed no interest in sexual abuse claims re Huntley (the Richard Report): had they

prosecuted him, instead of prosecuting Maxine for lying on CVs, the Soham tragedy would never have happened.

Maxine's trial by tabloids contrasts sharply with their lionisation of Louise Woodward, convicted of child manslaughter (originally murder), quite unlike Maxine, but, unlike Maxine too, Louise had rich parents.

Well, what is the left doing about this hypocritical, sexist witch-hunt meted out to Maxine Carr?

GLENN HARFIELD
Hove, Sussex

Hands off Venezuela!

As you will know, the referendum against Hugo Chavez in Venezuela has been set for 15 August. Although it is certain that the opposition has used fraud and violent intimidation to abuse this unprecedented constitutional right (imagine if we could have voted Blair out a year ago, before the war), supporters of Chavez's Bolivarian Movement are confident of success. They intend to use the results as living proof of their leader's popularity, which must then prove to the world that Chavez is fulfilling his promise to redistribute wealth and build a more just and free society.

In London, the Hands Off Venezuela campaign and others will be holding a Week of Solidarity with the Venezuelan people, starting on Monday 9 August with the opening of a

Latin American Liberation exhibition at the rampART social centre in Whitechapel. We also hope that day to present the Venezuelan Ambassador with a petition (modelled on the Brazilian Declaration) which states 'If I were Venezuelan, I would vote for Hugo Chavez'.

The culmination of the week is on the following Sunday, the day of the referendum, when we will be holding a picket outside the US Embassy to tell them to keep their hands off Venezuela! We are meeting at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park, London at 1pm and I hope that as many of your readers as possible will come along. More information is available at www.handsoffvenezuela.org.

CHARLEY ALLAN
solidarityweek@yahoo.com



What we stand for

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

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

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

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

► While the working class bears the brunt of the crisis, laws like the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act and anti-trade union legislation have been introduced to criminalise the right to protest. The RCG opposes all anti-working class laws and fights to defend democratic rights - the right to organise and protest.

► Britain is an imperialist country. Ireland is Britain's oldest colony and the nationalist working class of the Six Counties is subjected to military occupation and brutal repression. The RCG supports the struggle of the Irish people for self-determination and calls for the immediate withdrawal of British troops.

► Internationally, oppressed nations are driven into poverty and debt by imperialism as multinationals extort superprofits from the labour of the poor. Throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America and eastern Europe the effects of the free market are obvious - low wages, appalling work conditions, poverty and starvation for the mass of the people; environmental degradation, corruption and repression in government. The RCG supports the struggle of all oppressed people against imperialism.

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

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

► The Labour Party is a ruling class party which defends capitalism. It has never defended the interests of the working class. The RCG fights for the independent interests of the whole working class. We do not support any of the pro-capitalist parties in elections.

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

The defence of the working class and oppressed can only come from the working class organising democratically and independently in its own interests, in Britain and internationally. The Revolutionary Communist Group stands for the rebirth of a socialist movement internationally to destroy capitalism and imperialism and replace them with a socialist society, organised to defend the interests of the working class and oppressed. Join us.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!
BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX
Telephone: 020 7837 1688. Website:
<http://www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk>

Respect?

We were very upset to see, as we left the Respect Festival in Victoria Park on Saturday 17 July, a group of police swooping on a crowd of young boys and detaining them under S60 of the Public Order Act. The boys appeared to be aged 14-16 and we counted 20 black and two white boys detained by 30 police officers. Each one was photographed before being allowed to leave. The pretext was apparently 'a search for weapons' but there certainly weren't any found on anyone while we were there and the exercise seemed to be one of pure intimidation, racist and not at all 'respectful'. We have written to Ken Livingstone to complain and hope other people will do the same, as it makes a mockery of the whole 'anti-racist' festival concept to allow the police to wade in and stop and search groups of black youth in this way.

MEGAN AND JANE
North London

Venezuela week of action

Joint week of action
9-15 August,

March to and
demonstration outside
the US Embassy in
London on 15 August
Details see page 14

**FIGHT
RACISM**

FIGHT IMPERIALISM

Racist onslaught on asylum seekers

Seventy-four per cent of all refugee organisations have reported seeing clients refused support although they had applied for asylum within a few days, many within hours, of arrival. Many are forced to sleep rough, lacking essential toiletries and clothing, some with poor physical and mental health. (*Hungry and Homeless*, Refugee Council, April 2004). On 21 May 2004, after the homelessness charity Shelter and others fought through the courts on behalf of three such destitute refugees, three Appeal Court judges ruled that this was illegal, and contravened Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (subjecting people to inhuman and degrading treatment). Home Secretary David Blunkett now plans to appeal to the House of Lords in defence of his 'tough measure' and to end 'abuse' of taxpayers' money.

Another appeal court ruling in 2002, that only evidence of torture can stop the deportation of refugees, was unanimously overturned by five law lords on 17 June, as it would have denied asylum seekers the rights to a fair trial, to worship, and freedom from slavery. However, according to the Home Office, this ruling 'is unlikely to make much difference in practice.' And so it transpires, as the UK has been secretly deporting 'failed' refugees to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia, two extremely dangerous war zones. Evidence has been obtained by BID (Bail for Immigration Detainees, www.biduk.org) and the UNHCR of

Since 8 January 2003, about 14,000 people have been left destitute as a result of the Labour government's implementation of Section 55 of the racist Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, which denies state support to refugees who don't claim asylum 'as soon as reasonably practicable' after arrival. These 'failed' asylum seekers, including victims of rape and torture, are not allowed to work and have no other means of support.
CHARLES CHINWEIZU reports.

torture by the DRC authorities of failed asylum seekers returned by Britain to Kinshasa. Since August 1998, over 3.3 million people, mostly women, children and the elderly, have died in the war in that country, mainly from disease and starvation, and more than 2.25 million have been made homeless, most beyond the reach of humanitarian agencies. In Somalia, more than 100 civilians have been killed since April alone. In the words of failed Somali refugees living in poverty in Salford, '[we] fled because we were raped, [we] saw our sons, husbands and fathers killed. [We] lived every day in fear.' (*The Observer*, 28 March 2004.) These deportation decisions are 'routinely based on ignorance of the actual status of claimants and of conditions in Mogadishu' (Prof IM Lewis, *The Guardian*, 17 June 2004). Labour immigration minister Des Browne 'announced' the unannounced policy change on 13 May in a written Commons answer, but the policy of delivering people into the hands of torturers has been going on since

March (UNHCR).

Blunkett also plans a 'blitz' on 'bogus marriages' and 'fake' colleges. Colleges offering non-EU nationals English language courses will have to be given accreditation, and make sure 'that students actually turn up and stay on their courses'. 'Sham marriages' involving particular categories of overseas nationals will be restricted to specialist registry offices linked to the immigration service. If the registrar is not satisfied, then the happy 'sham' couple will have to apply for written permission costing £200. This racist 'blitz' has already resulted in hundreds of raids of marriage ceremonies in Britain, contravening EU human rights legislation.

Failed asylum seekers who avoid deportation will be forced to do unpaid community work. Anyone who refuses will be left destitute. Those awaiting deportation will now be electronically tagged and tracked using satellite equipment like that to be used to monitor sex offenders. Meanwhile the money allocated to detention centres, such as Lind-



Prison officers in riot gear and armed with tear gas prepare to attack protesting asylum seekers at Harmondsworth immigration removal centre on 20 July. Detainees revolted following the second death at the centre in three months.

holme, Doncaster, is not being spent on the detainees who are being held in 'filthy and dilapidated' conditions, according to the chief inspector of prisons Anne Owers (Prison Inspectorate report, 16 June 2004). Floors caked in dirt and chunks of plaster falling off the walls, with no telephones or chairs were reserved for detainees, while the staff quarters were in excellent condition. 'Troublesome' detainees were being sent to segregation or punishment cells in neighbouring prisons.

The government has also announced that it will use quotas to bar

thousands of young visitors to Britain by restricting working holiday visas issued to people from certain countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Pakistan and Bangladesh. This is claimed to be due to abuse of such trips as 'a backdoor route to permanent settlement', but will not affect travellers from Australia, South Africa and Canada. Simon Woolley of Operation Black Vote opposed the quotas on the grounds they will 'play into the hands of...the BNP...and fuel right-wing bigotry'. So don't vote for the BNP, but vote for the racist Labour party instead!

Racism and the Chinese community

Morecambe and lies

The deaths of 21 Chinese cockle-pickers who drowned at Morecambe Bay in February this year threatened to go the way of other similar tragedies to befall exploited migrants in Britain - reduced to the oblivion of statistics.

However an unlikely person, David Eden junior, director of the Liverpool Bay Fishing Company, exposed the truth. The Chinese cocklers suffered daily racist attacks, and after he hired them, three weeks before the tragedy, he and his family began to receive death threats. In the weeks before the tragedy, British cocklers threatened to boycott firms that bought Chinese-picked cockles; they doused Chinese produce with diesel and destroyed it. It was to avoid the British racists working as cocklers that the Chinese braved bad weather conditions and the incoming tides on the day of the tragedy. Gina Tan, a Morecambe Bay resident who personally knew all of the victims, claims the survivors were 'treated worse than animals on that night'. The only people to be charged by the police, after weeks of investigation, are not English, but three Chinese survivors of the tragedy.

British racism

The historical oppression of the Chinese working class by British imperialism is the basis for their oppression in Britain today, as exploited workers and victims of racism. Social, health and welfare needs of this community have always been very low on the agenda



Memorial to the 21 dead at Morecambe Bay

of British imperialism. As laundry workers in the past or now as restaurateurs, they have faced attack either by the racist police, or by vigilante thugs whose activities the police frequently ignore or condone.

As Min Quan (MQ), the Chinese branch of The Monitoring Group notes, there are those 'who believe that race crimes against the Chinese community and police misconduct are isolated incidents. Contrary to this belief Min Quan's casework experience has demonstrated that such problems are common occurrence.'

Britain's 400,000 Chinese community is employed mainly in the catering industry, is overwhelmingly working class and, due to decades of discrimination, largely self-employed. There are approximately 11,000

Chinese catering establishments, usually family-owned, with high levels of female employment. The community is thinly spread throughout the country, often in isolated pockets, and therefore more vulnerable to racist attacks. These attacks not only take place in catering shops, but also in the streets and in homes.

In February 2000 a survey of Chinese catering establishments by MQ found 31% had suffered physical attacks, 56% racial abuse and 58% 'refusal to pay' problems. Police often 'trivialised' or were 'indifferent' to Chinese concerns. Further, 'racial harassment and violence against the Chinese community is widespread...across the country... Many of the victims...have faced racist violence for many years but

with nowhere to turn to for support and help.' Under-reporting of racist crime is highest in the Chinese community. 20% of physical assaults are never reported to the police, because up to 50% of victims felt 'the police would not help or would be sympathetic to the perpetrators.' When the police bothered to turn up to incidents, they often did nothing and made very few arrests, from which even fewer actual prosecutions resulted. In some instances they arrested and cautioned the victims.

Racist attacks

One story in particular highlights the tragic reality of experience for Chinese migrants in Britain. Mr W ran a takeaway in Brent, west London, and since 1999, suffered an ongoing campaign of racism from about 20 'hooligans' [who] demanded free food and drinks, played football inside the shop, shouted racist abuse, damaged the furniture, smashed the window, stole the delivery bike, [and] ...cash box three times and ferociously assaulted staff... Mr W reported the incidents to police [but] received little attention and no justice [and] soon after gave up and suffered in silence.' On 2 August 2003, a youth grabbed the cash box and ran. The police were informed, a name, address and description provided. He was asked to call if he saw the youth again, which he did two days later. While he was on the phone to the police, the youth smashed the front window and ran off. When the police arrived, they had to be told the name, address and description again.

They advised him to replace the window by claiming on his insurance. They then left. Later that evening, as Mr W waited outside his shop for the window repairmen, 'a group of approximately 15 hooligans...all armed with wooden sticks or metal bars with the perpetrator at the forefront' attacked him chanting 'fucking Chinese, kill him, kill him' (MQ Newsletter, October 2003) Mr W ran but was chased and cornered. He fell by a tree, as the gang continued the assault, kicking, punching and smashing him with the sticks. He soon lost consciousness, was taken to hospital, where he was treated for 'a broken rib, shattered elbow, a cut in the lower chin and multiple bruises.' The attackers then returned to the shop and smashed it up. The police did not contact Mr W in hospital, nor was an officer allocated to the case. 'After MQ's intervention the case was allocated to a part-time officer who works at the station one day a week.' A full statement was finally taken from Mr W on 14 August, ten days after the assault, and the CPS decided not to prosecute the two people arrested due to 'material inconsistency'. (See www.minquan.co.uk)

It is important to realise that this is just one incident of thousands that occur in Britain every year. The Chinese have always been part of the special oppressed layer within the working class, and the scale of the onslaught on them is increasing. The only way to defeat racism is by fighting its foundation - imperialism.

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