

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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TERRORISING COMMUNITIES



BRITAIN

On 14 November, in advance of the publication of a National Security Strategy, Gordon Brown summed up the measures already in the pipeline and set out to Parliament his newest plans to 'root out terrorism and to strengthen the resilience of communities to resist extremist influence'. NICKI JAMESON reports on the Labour government's latest tranche of regulations aimed at terrorising communities.

The security budget, already £2.5 billion this year, is due to rise to £3.5 billion in 2011. An additional £240 million between now and 2011 from the Home Office budget will be allocated to finance counter terrorism policing. A further £400 million will be spent over the next three years through the Foreign Office, Department for International Development and British Council to 'tackle radicalisation and promote understanding overseas'. Yet another £70 million is being invested in 'community projects devoted to

countering violent extremism'.

The number of personnel employed in the security service will increase to over 4,000, having already increased from under 2,000 in 2001 to 3,300 today. Dedicated regional counter terrorism units 'responsible for overseeing investigations into those who recruit terrorists and promote hate' have been established, employing over 2,000 police and support staff.

New security measures will include:

- increased surveillance at railway

stations, airport terminals, ports and 'sensitive installations', including additional baggage screening and searching of passengers

- new guidance for cinemas, theatres, restaurants, hotels, sporting venues, commercial centres, hospitals, schools and places of worship, including advice on 'training staff to be more vigilant'

- 160 counter-terrorism advisers to 'train civilian staff to identify suspect activity' and ensure premises have secure emergency exits, use CCTV footage 'to best effect' and carry out regular searches and evacuation drills
- local authorities to be required as part of their performance framework to assess the measures they have taken to protect against terrorism.

The government is shortly to introduce a new Counter Terrorism Bill, which will contain yet stronger sentences for terrorist-related offences

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The war on Iraq has been removed from the headlines, except for reports of British or US soldiers' deaths. We are fed the occasional lie that 'life in Baghdad is returning to normal' and that 'the surge is working'. We are being conditioned to accept war as normal. Meanwhile, the leading groups on the British left squabble in public over the legacy of the Stop the War Movement and the remains of Respect, and they build nothing, absolutely nothing, to oppose the warmongering British Labour government. JIM CRAVEN reports on the war in Iraq.

Iraqi Ministry of Health figures and Iraq Body Count (IBC) both indicated a decline in the number of Iraqis killed over the summer and early autumn period. The number of US soldiers who died also fell from 126 in May to 39 in October, the lowest monthly figure for two years. However, it is premature to suggest that life for the Iraqi people is getting better or that, as US General Petraeus claims, the US 'surge' has improved their security. IBC figures show the number of Iraqi casualties each month is still greater

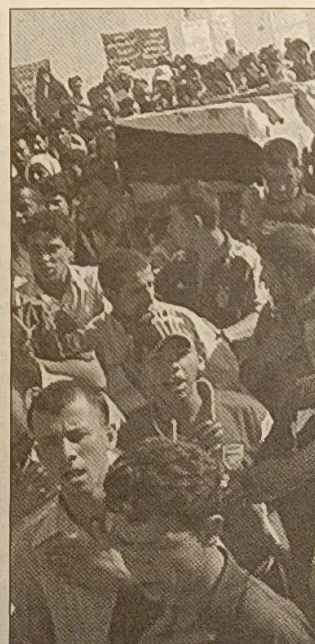
than the average for 2005 and that the total this year is likely to be almost as bad as last year, the worst of the occupation. Furthermore, provisional figures for October indicate Iraqi casualty figures are rising again. A recent Opinion Business Research survey, reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, states that the total number of Iraqis killed because of the invasion and occupation of their country is around one million and could be as high as 1.2 million. This reinforces The *Lancet* figures given last year of at least

655,000 Iraqis dead. Whatever the exact figure, it is certainly a catastrophic magnitude far greater than the tens of thousands admitted to by the imperialists. For US forces, 2007 has proved overall the deadliest year since the invasion. By the first week in November 853 US soldiers had been killed this year, bringing the total to 3,856.

Indiscriminate slaughter

The 'surge' tactics are to kill resistance fighters, create ghettos and terrorise the Iraqi population into submission or flight. They include greater use of air power without regard to the consequences for civilians. Every week Iraqis are killed by indiscriminate bombings and shootings. For example, on 7 October 26 Iraqi civilians were killed and 40 injured in a US air strike on Jazani Al Iman village in Dila. Four days later nine children and six women were killed in an air strike on a village in the Lake Thar Thar region. They were celebrating on the eve of Eid Al Fitr. Three days after that incident, two first aid

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Another funeral in Iraq

Welcome...

Genocide has been normalised. The utter devastation of Iraq is no longer news. Only the death of a British or US soldier merits significant media coverage; the fact that Iraq has been thrown back decades, the mass of its people reduced to destitution, prey to whatever imperialist savagery may be next unleashed is now not seen worthy of comment. That is why communists and anti-imperialists must constantly expose the horror of the imperialist occupation (pages 1 and 11) and the seemingly interminable list of British military interventions overseas (p12): the journalists of the bourgeois press certainly will not. Unending war: that is what imperialism offers the working class and oppressed of the world whilst fortunes are amassed by the already rich in the imperialist nations.

The normalisation of genocide is an indictment of those who led the anti-war movement in the US and here in Britain. Two million marched through London against the invasion of Iraq in February 2003. Where are they now? Completely demobilised by the disastrous leadership of the Stop the War Coalition, and in particular the SWP, which sacrificed every opportunity to build a real movement in favour of preserving its alliance with the cowardly and supine left of the Labour Party. Now its Respect coalition has split down the middle (p2).

In Cuba the mass of the people are actively involved in solving real and difficult problems that face them in this stage of the Revolution (p8). There is no room in socialist Cuba for careerist politicians: instead the people are enrolled to address urgently the problems of food production which threaten to create a dangerous position of dependency on imports. Genius lies in the people: in Cuba it is a genius that we are confident will solve these new sets of problems. We shall be fortunate to experience it through comrades Orlando Borrego, Jesus Garcia and Susel Rivera Antunez when they come to Britain next February (p9) on a speaking tour organised by Rock around the Blockade (RATB). Cuba is a pole of opposition to imperialism: hence the need of the US to continually ratchet up the blockade despite its overwhelming rejection at the UN (p9). The defence of Cuban socialism is crucial to building a genuine anti-imperialist movement in this country. FRFI urges all its readers to attend RATB mobilising meetings in their local areas and to get involved now in building the tour. Its success will lay the



San Francisco, California: demonstration against the war in October 2007

ground for tackling the left critics in Britain who have no answer to the principled positions of the Cuban Revolution.

Inspired by the example of Cuba, progressive and revolutionary forces in Latin America are developing their mutual collaboration. Symbolic of their progress was the verbal slap in the face that Chavez gave to the Spanish imperialists which led to King Juan Carlos storming out of the recent Ibero-American Summit (p5). In Venezuela itself a referendum on changes to the Constitution on 2 December will consolidate the power of the people against those who are acting as pawns of US imperialism (p4).

Imperialism breeds resistance – and not just in Iraq. Despite appalling pressure from the imperialist world, and with traitors in their midst in the form of Fatah careerists, the Palestinian people remain undefeated (p10). In Pakistan the Musharraf military dictatorship has been shaken by massive protests (p7). While corrupt bourgeois politicians of the past try to make deals with the army, thousands have been thrown in gaol and many face trial in military courts. The position of a crucial ally of US and British imperialism is under threat: the unravelling of imperialist designs for the Middle East has progressed a stage further.

Imperialism and racism go hand-in-hand. Within the US, vicious anti-immigrant legislation is being enacted across many states with Oklahoma in the lead (p6). The ruling class is terrified at the numbers and potential power of Latino immigrants,

documented or undocumented, and is now unleashing a wave of racist repression. In Britain yet another piece of anti-terror legislation is under debate (p 1 and 5); its aim is to brand as terrorists Muslims, in particular, and all those who stand against British imperialism. However, repression creates resistance: activists have come together to support those who face trial following the uprising at Harmondsworth Detention Centre in November 2006 (p16). Resistance can also bring victory: early in November Eucharika Jakpa received a letter confirming she and her seven-year-old son Timeyi had won the right to stay in Britain after a two year campaign in which they were supported by FRFI (p16).

As imperialism teeters on the edge of financial collapse (p6), communists, anti-imperialists and anti-racists must come together and take a principled stand in defence of the oppressed and working class. On page 14 we report the many activities in which supporters of FRFI are engaged on the streets against racism, repression, and in solidarity with Cuba. We urge all our readers to join in. We must show it is possible to build on a principled basis by making the RATB February Cuban speaking tour a resounding success, one which draws in hundreds of people determined to build a real movement inspired by the example of socialist Cuba. Get active now!

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NEWS

Respect: it all ended in tears

On 17 November the split in Respect was made final as Respect-SWP and Respect-Galloway (aka Respect Renewal) held simultaneous conferences in London. At the Respect-SWP conference the SWP bent over backwards to present some spurious democratic credentials; however, it was evident that the split represented a shattering blow for the organisation, four leading members having resigned or been expelled over the preceding days. The Respect-Galloway conference saw Galloway launch a vitriolic attack on the SWP leadership; his faction includes a motley collection of non-SWP social democrats as well as much of Respect's base in Tower Hamlets. ROBERT CLOUGH reports on the collapse of yet another social democratic alternative to Labour.

When Respect was set up in November 2003 we described it as a 'reactionary movement for the privileged', 'an attempt to rebuild a coalition between sections of the middle class and the better-off sections of the working class – the labour aristocracy.' (FRFI 176 December 2003/January 2004). The coalition, we argued, 'is not trying to build anything new. It is another attempt to recreate some magic formula of the Labour left.' Our conclusion was that socialists should not aid such a coalition but build a revolutionary working class movement.

Time has proved us right. The coalition was a shoddy and reactionary compromise between the anti-abortion Galloway and the anti-Cuba SWP. 'Respectable' politics took precedence over political principle. At its founding convention Respect rejected a call for the abolition of the monarchy and opposition to immigration controls to ensure it remained in step with the left of the Labour Party. The SWP used its numbers to prevent Respect from taking a position on abortion so as not to embarrass Galloway. It also ensured the defeat of a demand that Respect candidates be 'workers' representatives on a worker's wage' – there was not the slightest chance of this being acceptable to £200,000-a-year



Galloway speaks at the Respect Renewal conference

Galloway with his three houses. The SWP also rejected motions calling for the Respect convention to be organised in an 'open, democratic and transparent way' with 'space for debate...[for] different views, declarations and amendments.'

Four years on, Galloway and the SWP have been trading insults about each other's anti-democratic behaviour; such allegations represent the rare occasions that either faction have spoken the unvarnished truth: both relied on each other to 'suppress' any vestige of democracy within Respect. The SWP complained about its shabby treatment at Galloway's hands, reminding him how it had defended his unilateral decision to appear on Big Brother. More fool the SWP! More recently the SWP have also suggested that Galloway's trend was 'communist' in seeking to organise only within a limited Muslim constituency. Yet it had been party to all decisions that could have given rise to such accusations. Moreover it had never distanced itself from the coterie of businessmen who had funded Respect in its Tower Hamlets centre and who proved to be Galloway's principal allies.

Within months of its establishment Respect became no more than a vehicle for the electoral ambitions of its leadership. Even on those terms its success was extremely limited: one MP and some 20 local councillors despite the hopes of its founders that it would capitalise on the anti-war sentiment of 15 February 2003. Its achievements were pitiful where there was no sizeable Muslim population. Its early refusal to stand candidates in opposition to Labour lefts, or to stand where a split vote might let in the Tories, proved that it did not

represent a break from Labour, and that it could not serve as a pole of opposition to Labour imperialism and racism.

By coincidence 17 November saw another left conference: that of the Labour Representation Committee, set up by the Labour left, in its own words 'to secure a voice for socialists within the Labour Party'. Speakers included Tony Benn and MPs Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell, people whom the SWP has courted for the last few years through the Stop the War Coalition but who will never give up their positions of privilege. PCS trade union general secretary Mark Serwotka also spoke; on his way, he addressed the Respect-SWP conference calling for a 'united left alternative to Labour' – code for saying that there should be no rupture in the alliance with the Labour left. The SWP echoed this in its proposal to its Respect conference that there should be discussions with 'the RMT, the Labour left, the CPB and others' on 'the possibility of a jointly organised conference to extend the discussion on a solution to the crisis of Labour representation.' The possibility of breaking with Labour is completely ruled out.

Respect joins the list of those failed attempts to build a social democratic alternative to the Labour Party. The Communist Party of Great Britain and its anti-monopoly alliance, Socialist Alliance, Scottish Socialist Party and many others have all collapsed. However, in one very important sense they have succeeded: they have diverted attention away from the need to build a real anti-imperialist, anti-racist movement that breaks with the imperialist Labour Party. That job still needs to be done.

FRFI Fighting Fund

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! 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 work with all those who want to build a movement which represents the interests of the working class and oppressed. Your support throughout the year 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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Education

Hard times for the poor

In the Charles Dickens novel *Hard Times*, 1854, we meet Thomas Gradgrind, of Coketown, a rising capitalist and businessman. His tests and his targets, his measurements and his calculations remind us of nothing so much as of the British education system today.

'With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic... Time for the manufacturer becomes its own machinery; so much material wrought up, so much food consumed, so many powers worn out, so much money made'.

This is the very spirit of the cruel regime of measuring and testing that makes British school children the most examined in the industrialised world. One hundred years ago the masters had a scale which described people at the bottom in descending order as, 'simple', 'feeble-minded', 'morons', 'idiots' and 'imbeciles'. Today, annual results of national tests at the ages of four, seven, 11 and 14 record how many children have achieved 'the norm', below it or above it for each age group. These SATS, standard attainment targets or standard attainment tests (even the ministry cannot agree what they are supposed to be) are an uneasy and confused mixture of assessment about what has been learned and a mechanism for school accountability about what has been taught. 3,000 tick boxes of achievement will be involved on the pathway to obtain a level 5.

The tick box system

The Labour government's justification for this regime of national testing is that it raises educational standards. However, a report just published from the biggest inquiry into primary education in 40 years has denounced the testing regime as 'inadequate', concluding that it 'provides unreliable information on standards, encourages schools to neglect lower achievers, narrows the curriculum and increases pupils' anxieties'. This corroborates the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report this year which put Britain at the bottom of a league table charting the well-being of children across the developed world. The quasi-statistical scaffolding that has been erected around school and pupil assessment include tick boxes for emotional intelligence and social skills and discounts for special needs, English as a second language and free school dinners. A weighted 'value-added' number based on annual leaps in learning may be mixed in with such tick box scores to produce a mathematically complex model from which future achievements can be predicted. The idea is that data inputs will track the progress of each pupil but the road to this goal is littered with error. Research from 2001 suggests that more than 30% of pupils get the wrong levels in national tests and that the tests fail to measure important elements such as research skills and teamwork. Indeed, it is impossible to know whether the tick boxes measure children's attainment, teaching quality or school and parental income.

Privatisation is the goal

The measure, name, shame and blame method of education is a cover for attacking the state sector and softening up the system for privatisation. So enthusiastic is the Labour government to keep the support of its friends in big business that they will virtually give schools away. Interest groups like the Church of England or Lord Harris of

Harris Carpets become sponsors of new academy schools at knock-down prices. They have a political and ideological agenda and regard ownership of a school as a sign of philanthropy and civic pride. Lord Harris told the *Financial Times* in June this year, 'I have a very good relationship with Andrew [Lord Adonis, Schools Minister]. He rings me up and says "Do you want this school?" and I ask what it's like and if it sounds like the sort of place that we are interested in I say yes.'

Smash and grab

While some schools are gifted to sponsors, others become very desirable purchases and are subject to sudden takeover battles. Haverstock School in Camden was snapped up by HSBC, one of the biggest banks in the world, while its future was still under discussion by the local education authority, not that the school really belonged to Camden Council any more. HSBC bought a 50% stake in Haverstock in a deal signed with Kajima, a Japanese construction company (with business ties to Burma) that is refurbishing the school with £21 million from the local council. The initial Private Finance Initiative (PFI) agreement between Camden Council and Kajima for building the school was due to last until 2030. Quite who now owns the buildings and the debt is a legal maze that is beyond the comprehension of most voters. Haverstock comprehensive school was attended by Labour ministers Ed and David Miliband. Pimlico comprehensive school was chosen by Tony Benn and Jack Straw for their children. Westminster Council has long wanted to place Pimlico School in the hands of the private sector, largely because the school grounds, in a prime location, are ripe for property development. Although the council was considering giving the school to Westminster public school (very rich, very successful, very private) it made a sudden decision to give it to Future, a charitable trust run by John Nash, former chair of the British Venture Capital Association. Future also runs projects like Place2Be, a school counselling service, Street Pastors, an inner city church initiative and a string of private prep schools under the heading of Alpha Plus. 96% of Pimlico's 'stakeholder' staff, students and parents were against handing the school over to an academy. They were ignored and now campaign against ownership by Future using such tactics as putting the school up for sale on eBay and setting up an e-petition.

Not in our genes

The current regime of SATS, like the IQ (Intelligence Quotient) tests of the past, measure inequality in terms that are useful to the ruling class. Today's genetics-based socio-biology similarly functions to explain the uneven distribution of achievement in individ-

uals and groups across the population. In 1953 the scientists Crick and Watson uncovered the double helix structure of DNA revealing the molecule that carries genetic instructions across the generations. This discovery led to a massive outburst of support for a mechanistic view of life. For socio-biologists, the reproduction of all existence, from the smallest living micro organism, to the organisation of human society itself, is primarily determined genetically. Such quasi-scientific sociology tends to an individualist, competitive and static evaluation of mankind which downplays the effects of environment, society, power and property relationships. James Watson is today an extremely wealthy businessman and one-time head of the US Human Genome Project which attempts to make money from patenting gene sequences. When Watson recently stated that 'Africans are not as intelligent as we', he is as wrong and as racist as any other bigot. He has no authority to extend genetics to society. There is certainly a genetic explanation for cystic fibrosis, but it is wrong to deduce that there is a genetic explanation for poverty.

The fight against biologistics and racism

There has been a distinct history of the movement from bad science to bad sociology and from bad sociology to bad science. Scientific ideas require evidence to support them and too often the evidence produced has been



School pupils demonstrating against the imposition of an academy school in Camden

cooked-up statistics in the service of the ruling class – biologistics. In 1969 Arthur Jensen published an article in the *Harvard Educational Review*, 'How can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement?' He asserted that the most important difference between blacks and whites in their performance on [now discredited] intelligence tests was genetic and that no programme of education could equalise the social status of blacks and whites, so black school students ought to be educated for the more mechanical tasks to which their genes predisposed them. In Britain this pseudo-scientific view was taken up by psychologist Hans Eysenck and used in support of

campaigns against immigration from Asia and the Caribbean. Eysenck's *Race, intelligence and education*, 1971 and *The inequality of Man*, 1973 were explicitly adopted by the National Front for use in a series of pamphlets including *How to combat red teachers*, 1979.

There was no difficulty at that time in opposing either IQ tests or biologistics as bases for measuring intelligence/progress. A similar challenge must be raised about SATS and we must demand to know exactly what is supposed to be tested, question how it is being measured, and expose the purpose of the national testing regime today.

Susan Davidson

Health matters

HANNAH CALLER

Infection control crisis

In FRFI 199 we reported on the spread of MRSA and *Clostridium difficile* infections which resulted in the deaths of 30 people in Stoke Mandeville hospital in 2004. Now in a further scandal, a lengthy report from the Healthcare Commission on deaths related to *Clostridium difficile* at the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells hospitals in Kent found that 1,100 patients contracted *Clostridium difficile* at the Trust's three hospitals between April 2004 and September 2006. 345 mainly older patients with multiple medical problems died. The Commission concluded that 90 patients 'definitely or probably' died as a result of the infection and blamed the hospital trust board for paying too much attention to balancing the books and meeting government waiting time targets. The Commission said the trust failed to protect patients because the trust board was unaware of the first outbreak and slow to react to the second. Inspectors found contaminated bedpans, overflowing buckets of needles and sharp instruments, and food stored in medical fridges.

In Wales, cleaning is now performed by in-house staff rather than by contractors and the MRSA infection rate is less than half the English rate. In late October a further Healthcare Commission review found that there was inadequate patient protection from infection in 111 out of 394 organisations and that a quarter of NHS Trusts in England and Wales failed to comply with the basic hygiene code introduced in October 2006.



Overcrowding in Maidstone hospital

Destruction and privatisation

In his first few weeks as prime minister, Gordon Brown gave the impression that he was slowing down on NHS privatisation. This is not the case, however. In October the government announced that 14 private companies will be advising on or taking over the commissioning of the majority of NHS services. The companies include KPMG, McKinsey, BUPA, Aetna, Humana and UnitedHealth. In the US, UnitedHealth has just paid \$20 million in fines for failure to process claims, failure to respond to complaints and delayed payments. Aetna and Humana have repeatedly been fined over recent years for various misdemeanours including the use of unlicensed agents, payment delays, failure to give information and fraud. Simon Stevens, the European president of UnitedHealth was previously adviser to Tony Blair and his health secretaries.

Following his review of London health services, Ara Darzi has called on the remaining nine Strategic Health Authorities in England to prepare similar reports for their areas. A central recommendation of Darzi's London report was the development of the primary care polyclinic structure, serving populations of 50,000 and replacing traditional GP practices. The likelihood is that polyclinics will become a crucial part of health service delivery elsewhere. Given that Darzi has been one of the main promoters of Independent Sector Treatment Centres run by private companies it is likely too that polyclinics will be privately provided. A further step will be taken on the road to complete privatisation of health services.

*Stop privatising health care!
Defend universal health care provision!*

VENEZUELA

A revolutionary constitution

'The socioeconomic regime of the republic... is based on the principles of socialism, anti-imperialism, humanism, co-operation, efficiency, protection of the environment and solidarity, to the ends of assuring the development of the complete person living a dignified existence to the benefit of all' (Article 229, Venezuelan Constitution). **ALVARO MICHAELS** reports.

The revolutionary campaign to change 69 articles of the 350 in the 1999 Venezuelan Constitution began with huge rallies on 4 November, two days after the start of the founding congress of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). The referendum on the changes takes place on 2 December. Attacked by its opponents as anti-democratic, the campaign will establish a firm basis for a revolutionary social and political system, a horrifying prospect for the small Venezuelan bourgeoisie. As they are implemented, the changes will have enormous significance for the oppressed world wide. That is why the US government continues in its efforts to undermine and depose President Chavez.

33 of the amendments were proposed by the government, and 36 came from popular suggestions made through the National Assembly. In this battle the PSUV has launched Campaign Zamora organised through 24 regional committees. Socialist battalions – *batazos* – have been formed with 100 PSUV militants each. Every militant is responsible for nine voters so that over 12,750,000 voters will be met to have the proposals explained.

In preparation for the PSUV's founding conference, its members elected more than 11,000 spokespersons from 25,000 socialist battalions on 29 September. Prior to this, communities throughout the country held more than 91,000 battalion meetings to prepare policy. Nearly six million have joined the new party, more than 35% of all voters, 51% of them women. On 10 October over 14,000 spokespersons were

sworn in by President Hugo Chavez: 'Women are going to save the world!' he said. On 20 October the spokespersons elected the delegates for the conference.

Revolutionary amendments to the Constitution

These revolutionary changes express

The right to revoke mandates is protected. The right of political association is guaranteed.

Consultative referenda on communal, municipal and state issues can be held if requested by more than 20% of the relevant electorate. Changes in law by referenda (excluding the state budget, international treaties and human

The city becomes the centre of a network of smaller political units in the surrounding territories. All citizens have a new 'right to the city', that is, equal access to the benefits of urban life wherever they may live, breaking the infamous inequality between town and countryside imposed by capitalism. A national system of cities is established and urban land speculation is prohibited.

Discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, health, creed, political views, social or religious position is outlawed. Positive steps must be taken in favour of those currently discriminated against. All Venezuela's cultures are equal. Aristocratic titles and hereditary distinctions are no longer recognised.

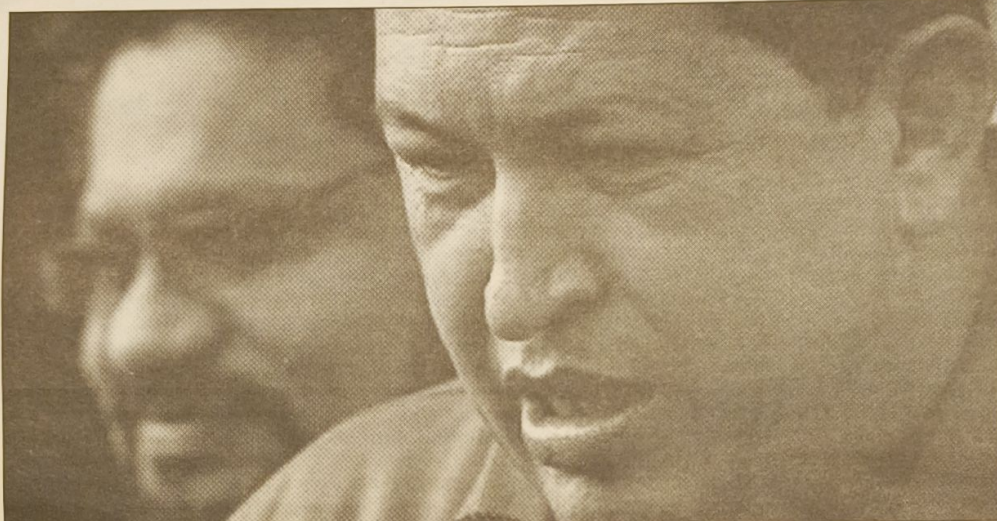
Everyone has the right to adequate housing 'that humanises family, neighbour and community relations' with priority to the family, especially the poor, with credits for housing. Everyone has the right and duty to work. All

nature, but prohibits monopolies so to promote fair competition. The central bank loses its independence, that is, its role in promoting neo-liberal economic dogma. Balanced development between regions, a transparent and efficient administration and a fight against corruption are embodied in the amendments. Agricultural development is a priority. Privatisation of state industries is forbidden. *Latifundio* – large usually uncultivated private landholdings – are prohibited, and are to be transferred to the state or other productive social organisations.

The new constitution will allow re-election of any presidential candidate without restriction (as in 170 other countries), and extension of the term of office from six to seven years. This will mean that Chavez will not be forced to step down at the end of his current term. The armed forces are at the service of the people and may never serve an oligarchy or foreign power.

From July onwards, as debates over the proposed changes in the Constitution started and as the process of creating the PSUV continued, the right wing and many centrists began a new terror campaign. US-sponsored right-wing students – shocked by the imminent disappearance of their class privileges – started clashes on the streets of Caracas. Masked gunmen have fired on university campuses; the purpose of these actions is to provoke a state crackdown to 'prove' the accusation of President Chavez's 'authoritarianism'.

Anti-government propaganda has been circulated in army barracks. Former Defence Minister Baduel, who resigned in July, called a press conference on 5 November, to which only opposition media were invited. He claimed that the proposed reforms would 'seize power away from the people'. Although he had sided with Chavez during the attempted coup in 2002, it was only because of his anxiety at the huge and potentially explosive mass support for the President. In government Baduel had pushed for reconciliation with the political right and big business. He opposed the extension of public ownership and favoured close collaboration with the far-right Colombian Defence Ministry. As minister, he failed to stop the murder of over 150 peasant land reformers and his military officials collaborated in the kidnapping of Rodrigo Granda, the foreign affairs emissary of the FARC in broad daylight in the centre of Caracas. But he is isolated and although he seeks a leading role in reversing Chavez's achievements, the intense solidarity shown by the masses with the government remains a solid and growing barrier to any government defeat in the referendum. Baduel was quite right though to say that the proposed amendments mean 'a transformation of the state, and a different model for the country'. He knows his class interests and he knows he is on the losing side. ■



President Hugo Chavez with FARC leader Ivan Marquez

the new 'geometry of power' – the replacement of the bourgeois state with the communal state announced by Chavez in December 2006. Changes to legislative regions and districts, popular councils and citizens assemblies, will promote the maximum political participation of the people.

rights) require approval by 30% of the registered electorate. The voting age is reduced to 16. All foreigners resident for 10 years may vote. The state alone will finance electoral activities. Foreign financing of political parties is outlawed, undermining electoral manipulation by the wealthy and their US backers.

employers must guarantee healthy, secure and dignified working conditions, with paid holidays.

All independent workers, from home makers to domestic workers, temporary workers, artisans, taxi drivers, small farmers etc will benefit from a Social Stability Fund to help ensure basic rights such as pensions and holidays. The working week is reduced to 36 hours, and for night workers to 34. Workers' co-management is to be promoted. The state will promote facilities for the development of physical, moral and cultural qualities of all. Education, a priority, is free and obligatory up to pre-University level. Prison reform guarantees human rights. Universities are self governing and University precincts inviolable.

The state will promote a productive economy based on common, not individual, needs, to achieve 'the greatest possible happiness'. It guarantees different forms of property ownership. It will create state economic units, communal or mixed and private in

ember 2007). Businessmen now lead the push for accumulation, as the most violent tasks of crushing the resistance to its agenda is for the moment complete.

Workers driven from Guatemala by the long terror will this year send home remittances that outstrip export values. In 2006 they were \$3.61bn, and are expected to exceed \$4bn in 2007. 97% of these remittances come from the 1.2 million Guatemalans living in the US, of which 60% live a cowed existence as 'illegals'. The Guatemalan rich refuse to pay tax, so that the 10% of GDP that the state raises is well below the Latin American average. The UN's 2006 Human Development Index placed Guatemala last in Spanish-speaking Latin America, below Honduras and Bolivia. It has some of the highest rates of malnutrition and poverty of any country in the western hemisphere.

The official post-war Truth Commission is constantly threatened anonymously – by spies, informers, government officials and clandestine death squads – for its work on secret police archives discovered in 2005. In 1999 the Commission stated that government forces and its paramilitary were responsible for over 90% of the killings in the civil war. The Roman Catholic Church reported similar figures in 1998 and two days later Bishop Juan Gerardi was murdered for issuing the report. The triumph of reaction in Guatemala is another bloody stain in the history of US imperialism, and satisfies the vile political instinct of Washington. ■

GUATEMALA

Climate of fear surrounds presidential elections

ALVARO MICHAELS

On 4 November, presidential elections in Guatemala resulted in victory for Alvaro Colom, an ex-businessman and Mayan priest. His success in the second round came after he courted votes from the ruling coalition Gran Alianza Nacional as well as former militiamen of the paramilitary *Patrullas de Autodefensas Civiles*. This enabled him to defeat Otto Perez Molina, ex-general and former head of military intelligence who had led in the first round of voting at the beginning of September.

Molina has been accused of atrocities during a hideous 36-year-long civil war which resulted in the deaths of 250,000 people during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The indigenous Mayans were butchered in their tens of thousands in a campaign led by General Jose Efraim Rios Montt (who was also head of state in 1982-83) and his paramilitary allies. Thousands of socialists, workers, indigenous leaders and human rights supporters were slaughtered as US imperialism backed the local ruling class to the hilt, with Israel sending arms and advisers.

Whilst the civil war formally ended

in 1996 with 'peace' accords between the government and the Guatemalan Revolutionary Unity, the terror continues. In 2006, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions stated 'There are now more killings per day than there were during the dark days of the civil conflict... Official estimates of some 6,000 extra-judicial executions per year certainly understate the real death toll'.

The violence continued through the elections, with 24 local politicians and 26 supporters murdered in the first round. Molina's Partido Patriota (PP), won most Congressional seats by calling for 'a hard hand', pledging to increase the size of the police force by 50% and revive the death penalty, with Colom's 'centre-left' coalition Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza coming second. Rigoberta Menchu, the indigenous leader who received a Nobel peace prize-winner for her protests against human rights abuses in the 1980s, got only 3% of first round votes.

The two leading parties were warned against violent election tactics by the OAS, itself anxious to see political stability – or as *The Economist* cynically put it 'something more sophisticated than mere repression' (10 Nov-

Colombian elections: a setback for Uribe



Colombian President Uribe

The Uribe government experienced yet another set-back at the hands of the people when growing oppo-

sition enabled the Alternative Democratic Pole to win the three main cities in Colombia, Bogotá, Medellín and Cali in elections on 28 October. The Mayor of Bogotá is regarded as the second most important political position after the President. This advance was secured despite the fact that there were 64 politically motivated killings and 12 kidnappings in the days leading up to the election. Half of the country's nearly 1,100 municipalities saw electoral violence or intimidation of candidates. The Alternative Democratic Pole now has a solid base for the next presidential elections.

Alvaro Michaels

Chavez confronts fascist-appointed relic Juan Carlos



Prime minister Zapatero with King Juan Carlos at the Summit

On 10 November, at the XVII Ibero-American Summit, an argument broke out between the Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero and his Venezuelan counterpart Hugo Chavez. The King of Spain, Juan Carlos I, intervened by shouting to Chavez, 'Why don't you shut up?' The King left the conference room shortly afterwards. The image was sent around the world and the Spanish media rushed to present the King as a decent democrat, willing to confront and defy 'Chavez's totalitarianism'. TV footage has been relentlessly broadcast, taken out of context, providing fuel for a diplomatic crisis between Spain and Venezuela. But, what really happened and what was the argument about?

The Spanish delegation patronises these summits, more interested in defending Spain's investments in South America than anything else. However, this time some participants seemed less docile than on previous occasions; Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina criticised Spanish diplomacy and the role of Spanish companies. The meeting was chaired by Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, close friend of Zapatero, who allowed him to justify the so-called 'Spanish social investment' in the region when it was Nicaraguan President Ortega's turn to speak. Chavez interrupted Zapatero, and in his intervention called former Spanish Prime Minister Aznar 'fascist'. Nothing shocking, considering that prior to the summit Aznar said Chavez was a 'new dictator', 'supporter of abuse, tyranny and impoverishment' and Aznar helped the failed 2002 military coup against the Venezuelan President. Chavez's insistence in calling Aznar fascist was the spark for King Juan Carlos Borbon to lose his temper and take on the role of the Chair with customary arrogance.

After the incident, Ortega continued his speech and criticised the gangster-type behaviour of Spanish multi-nationals and the lack of energy supplies in Nicaragua caused by Spain's Union Fenosa. At this point the King stood up and left.

King Juan Carlos had no right to take on the role of the Chair and ask anyone to shut up. At the summit he was the only head of state not democratically elected, having been appointed by the fascist dictator Franco. He is a multi-millionaire with ties to bosses convicted of corruption; he is close to tyrants from Morocco and Saudi Arabia and in 1977 he asked his friend the Persian Shah for \$10 million to fund the Spanish monarchy. Today he enjoys his over 1,790 million euros fortune (Forbes, 2003) sailing his massive yacht, shooting protected bears in Romania and Russia and poking his nose into Latin-American issues. This successor to Franco, never chosen by Spain's people, and his fam-

ily live in obscene luxury at taxpayers' expense, protected by laws preventing any legal action against him, no matter what he does. What sort of moral authority has this parasitic character to talk as he did to a president repeatedly re-elected over the last decade?

Maybe the King's reaction was due to the bad year he's had. On 7 February, the Princess's sister committed suicide with a pills overdose. On 14 April, Catalan nationalists presented Congress with a project to submit the royal budget to MPs' approval. On 20 July a judge ordered the seizure of a magazine which made a sexual joke about successors to the throne. On 13 September, Catalan nationalists burned pictures of the King at the end of a demonstration. On top of that, since the 2006 celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the Spanish Republic, the republican spirit has been growing, undermining the popularity of the monarchy.

Juan Carlos and Chavez are both Chiefs of the Armed Forces. Venezuela's armed forces are involved in social projects related to housing, emergency services and education. Spain's are part of an imperialist joint-venture which occupies Lebanon and Afghanistan. Chavez is a democratically-elected president of a sovereign country, trying to develop mass participation in meeting social needs. Juan Carlos is head of the state which colonised South America for centuries, leading a medieval institution based on inherited power and privilege, not subject to any control by citizens. Given the facts, King Juan Carlos Bourbon, why don't you shut up?

Juanjo Rivas

TERRORISING COMMUNITIES

continued from page 1

and new powers for the police to continue to monitor the activities of people who have been released from prison. The Bill is likely to contain a proposal to increase pre-charge detention of terrorism suspects from its current 28 days, a figure the government has never been happy with since being defeated on its original proposal of 90 days in 2005. There will also be measures to

- enable post-charge questioning of terrorism suspects
- allow the drawing of 'adverse inferences' from refusal to say something which can later be relied on in court
- extend use of DNA profiling
- ban people from travelling overseas and cancel visas
- freeze assets.

The government plans to create 14 new specially protected courtrooms. A single senior judge and a single senior lead prosecutor in the Crown Prosecution Service will be responsible for all terrorism cases.

Following the 2004 House of Lords ruling that indefinite detention without trial of suspected 'foreign terrorists' was unlawful, the government has brokered 'memoranda of understanding' with Jordan, Lebanon and Algeria so that Britain can deport asylum seekers from those countries in return for a promise they will not be tortured. Nine people have recently been deported and a further 24 foreign nationals are currently subject to deportation proceedings on 'national security grounds'. And although it has nothing to do with anti-terrorism, Gordon Brown ensured that his speech neatly conflated a selection of the tabloids' favourite bogymen by adding that '4,000 foreign prisoners are likely to be deported this year'.

The government plans to increase surveillance in prisons with a 'specialist unit... tasked with stopping extremists using prison networks to plot future activities'. But the web spreads to far more unexpected quarters, with Brown assuring Parliament that 'Following evidence that some of those involved in promoting violent extremism have made use of outdoor activity centres and sports facilities, we are working with Sport England to provide guidance for the sector to ensure that these facilities are not abused'. This presumably gives licence to monitor the activities of any non-white person who goes climbing, hiking, abseiling or canoeing.

Conviction for violent poetry

The proposed new Bill will be Labour's sixth anti-terrorism law since coming to power in 1997, with each Act more draconian than the last. On 7 November, 23-year-old Samina Malik was found not guilty of possessing an article for a terrorist purpose under Section 57 of the Terrorism Act 2000. The jury went on to convict her of collecting articles 'likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism' (Section 58 1). Though described in the press as the 'lesser charge', both carry a maximum sentence of 10 years.

Samina Malik, who changed her internet ID from 'lyrical babe' to 'lyrical terrorist' because it 'sounded cool', had downloaded manuals entitled *The Mujaheddin Poisoner's Handbook* and *How to Make Bombs*, and written and emailed out poems entitled *How to Behead* and *The Living Martyrs*. Like many other British young people she appears to have had a fascination with sadistic imagery and wrote poetry about her violent fantasies. Had she been a white boy obsessed with Death Metal lyrics about rape and ritual slaughter, or who fantasised about joining the British army and violently killing Muslims, or even about Nazism, in the absence of any actual violence this would have attracted little attention. And of course the *Sun* newspaper bloggers who, following Samina's conviction, commented that she should have her throat slit or be stoned to death, have not been hunted down and put on trial.

But as a Muslim living at a time when Britain and the US are waging bloody war against two Muslim countries, and the government is engaged in a propaganda offensive to ensure that support for the resistance in those countries does not grow, her every word and action has been scrutinised and criminalised. While Samina Malik's writings do not appear to have been anti-imperialist or even anti-British, with the targets of the fantasy violence largely 'infidels' or betrayers of the faith, her conviction is nonetheless a warning by the British state to every Muslim to stay away from religious radicalism, away from any view, opinion or thought that is not 100% supportive of the British Christian capitalist establishment. She has been convicted, not for any deeds or even plans, but for her fantasies and thoughts.



No fair trial - no comment

Even criticising the conviction of someone like Samina Malik could land you in court. When, after 21-year-old Scottish student Mohammed Siddique was found guilty of providing training material on bomb-making and spreading terrorist propaganda on websites, his lawyer Aamer Anwar read a statement which said he did not receive a fair trial and the 'verdict was a tragedy for justice and for freedom of speech', adding 'Young Muslims live in a climate of fear no different to that experienced by the Irish community in the last century'. This statement so outraged judge Lord Carlaway that Anwar now faces the prospect of himself standing trial for contempt of court.

Criminalising dissent

With no end in sight to Britain's wars against the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, the Labour government is stepping up its attack against potential supporters of resistance. At present the main targets are Muslims living in Britain but the massive and expensive programme of repression, surveillance and counterpropaganda set out by Brown is potentially directed not just at supporters of Islamic militancy but at everyone who opposes Britain's imperialist wars.

The murder of Jean Charles de Menezes

Metropolitan Police guilty

A jury has found the Metropolitan Police guilty of breaking Health and Safety laws over the fatal shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes on a London tube train on 22 July 2005. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the safety of non-employees. Jean Charles was shot in the head seven times at point-blank range.

This trial was designed to prevent, yet again, any individual officer being held accountable for the execution of an innocent man. It does, however, expose the contradiction at the centre of the government's so-called 'war on terror' in which it claims it needs to curtail

civil liberties in order to protect innocent lives.

In this trial there was no evidence from the two officers who shot Jean Charles, nor any of the 17 civilian witnesses to the shooting. All of those civilian witnesses' evidence would have contradicted the eight police witnesses who said that the cops challenged Jean Charles by shouting 'armed police'.

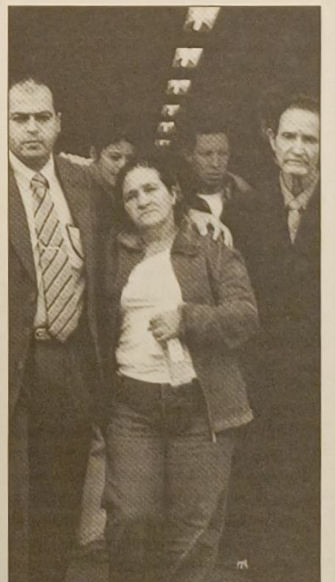
The court heard from a forensic witness that the police had doctored evidence, namely two photographs, one of Jean Charles and the other of terrorist suspect Hussain Osman, by lightening skin tone and elongating heads to make them look alike. Yet no-one is being charged with perverting the course of justice. It later emerged that Met Commissioner Sir Ian Blair had illegally delayed the Independent Police

Complaints Commission inquiry which resulted in a loss of evidence, most particularly CCTV film of the shooting.

The Met as a 'corporation' has been fined £175,000, plus £385,000 costs, which will be paid for by the tax-payer. The police have been backed by Labour politicians, including London Mayor 'Red' Ken Livingstone, who complained that the verdict will make it harder for the police to protect the capital against terrorism.

The family of Jean Charles de Menezes have consistently called for a public inquiry. According to a statement from their solicitors, they will now sue the police and take them to the European Court of Human Rights. The inquest into the death of Jean Charles will reopen in the spring.

Jim Willis



Members of the de Menezes family

How the West was really won

The first phase of the European invasion of North America led to the settlement of the eastern seaboard. Rivalry during the 18th century between capitalist Britain, France and Spain, in continental power and colonial conquest, culminated in British victory in the Seven Years War in 1763. By Crown Proclamation, the British declared that lands formerly occupied by France in North America ('New France') would be incorporated into a vast swathe of inland territory, stretching through present day Canada to the tip of Florida – the 'Indian Reserve'.

The Indian Reserve blocked the settlers' westward advance. To the fledgling capitalists of North America, this was one further impediment by the British Crown to their unhindered expansion. The American revolutionary war was fought by the settlers, not only for independence, but also for removal of restrictions on further settlement on native territory. Inevitably, although many tribes and nations were divided over British rule, the majority of the native population sided with Britain in the War of Independence. When the British were defeated, without consulting their native allies, they ceded former French territories to Spain.

The US repudiated the Proclamation. This set the stage for the 'Indian Wars', a series of conflicts between natives and settlers culminating in the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This led to the more or less forcibly 'negotiated' removal of the native population to the west and by the 1880s they were concentrated in 'Indian Territory' reserved for resettled tribes. This was basically the same territory as modern Oklahoma. Indeed, the state gets its name from the Choctaw name for the native population: *okla humma* – 'red people'.

Once again, native Americans were betrayed and their land expropriated. In a series of 'Land Runs' between 1889 and 1895 – known as the Land Rush – native land was seized for settlement. This led to the final destruction of communal land custody and its replacement with private ownership. The 'frontier' had now been closed. This episode culminated in statehood for Oklahoma on 16 November 1907.

Many fugitive slaves had found refuge amongst the native population and had also sought to settle outside areas of European settlement. As the frontier closed, the settlers set about terrorising black Oklahomans and instituting segregation. Although the state constitution avoided mentioning strict segregation, the spirit of the new state was clearly expressed in the very first piece of state legislation: Senate Bill Number One. Anyone with any African ancestry was declared black. 'Intermarriage' was declared a felony offence, as was 'miscegenation' – so-called 'race mixing'. This discrimination was only declared illegal – by the Federal Supreme Court despite Oklahoma's resistance – in 1967. Schools, railway stations, bus depots, churches, hospitals, restaurants – all were segregated, including even phone booths and cemeteries. Terrorism against black people came to a head in the Tulsa pogrom of 1921, which killed hundreds of black people and burnt black neighbourhoods to the ground. Lynching and other forms of racial terrorism continued for many years. It was only with the victory of the civil rights struggle that formal discrimination was driven out.

The 2007 pogrom

This rich racist heritage has fuelled the current attacks on Latinos. State Representative Randy Terrill, an extreme conservative Republican, has steered House Bill 1804, the Oklahoma Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act of 2007 into law. The Bill was supported by Democrat legislators and signed into law by the Democratic Party governor of the state.

State of Oklahoma celebrates a centenary of ethnic cleansing

The US state of Oklahoma was born in 1907 from a final frenzy of ethnic cleansing of Native Americans. Now, with the blessing of the Bush administration, Oklahoma is celebrating its centenary year with a fresh wave of ethnic cleansing, this time by driving some 20,000 Latinos out of the state.



Randy Terrill

Under this law:

- It is a felony offence, punishable by a minimum of one year in prison and/or \$1,000 fine to shelter, transport or employ any illegal immigrant.
- It is an offence to issue identification to any illegal immigrant – even library cards, driving licences and union cards. Up till now most states have been relaxed about checking applicants' immigration status when issuing driving licences, which are universally accepted as ID within the US.
- All new hires must be verified using US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) systems. DHS is responsible for repressing immigrants.
- Anyone charged with a felony or driving under the influence must have their immigration status verified. If they're undocumented, they will not be eligible for bail and the DHS will be notified.
- Anyone who fires a US citizen or permanent resident while continuing to employ illegal immigrants is engaging in discrimination.
- Public benefits are denied to anyone aged 14 or over who cannot prove they are lawfully resident in the US.
- Local authorities and agencies must cooperate with and not impede the hunt for illegal immigrants.
- No state aid for higher education, including scholarships or tuition payment is permitted to illegal residents.

The Act has bipartisan support from Democrats and Republicans. It was carefully crafted to navigate around typical legal objections and has so far survived legal challenges.

It's not about legality – it's about racism

The racist motivation behind the Act is evident: the same people who supported this Act are now trying to enforce English as the state's only official language, despite the fact that there are native speakers of at least 27 different languages resident in the state. A steady campaign blaming undocumented residents for crime, drug-smuggling and murder has been conducted by Terrill. They are also

alleged to cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars in benefits. Terrill conveniently forgets that crime has no nationality: his ideological companion and fellow white supremacist Timothy McVeigh committed the worst act of home-grown terror on US soil: the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, killing 168 and injuring more than 800 people.

Slavery was legal, segregation was legal – but they were unjust. And so is this vicious racist Act. Indeed many of its provisions recall the Fugitive Slave Act, designed to punish anyone who aided fleeing slaves or who refused to return them to their owners.

Significance

If Oklahoma is allowed to get away with this, numerous other states will follow. Georgia and Arizona already have legislation targeting employers, which is undergoing challenge in Federal courts. Terrill's Act will be mimicked in numerous other states – he is already advising lawmakers in other states how to write this kind of legislation. It is the most serious attack on the US working class in years. Quite apart from issues of basic justice and humanity, if this succeeds it will hold back the political struggle in the US for years. The consequences will be further repression of undocumented immigrants and of activists who support them; it will further



The terrorist pogrom against black people in Tulsa in 1921

divide the US working class and make political organising far more difficult; it will distract attention from the inroads the ruling class makes into civil and political liberties. The US economic crisis will require further attacks on the working class: further cutting of living standards and more unemployment. The US ruling class relishes the possibility of a divided working class blaming the most exploited section for the problems the ruling class has created.

This legislation is forcing the issue of immigration to the top of the political agenda, in an election year. Although immigration is a federal responsibility, over 1,400 bills concerning immigration have been introduced into legislatures in all 50 states – more than double the number last year. Since more than 180 have survived to become law, the line of defence has been through the court system. Perhaps the courts will save the day? So far it hasn't worked and legal objections have been thrown out. The Oklahoma Bar Association is protesting against the arrest and detention of lawyers in Pakistan, but is silent about these attacks on undocumented workers in their own state.

Where is the fightback? Typically and tellingly the Democrats support this Act. No serious political opposition can be expected from the Democratic Party. When front-running US Democratic candidate for President, Hilary Clinton, was confronted over drivers' licences for illegal immigrants, she refused to give a straight answer. If Democrats can't support issuing drivers' licences they're not going to defend illegal immigrants over these far more serious attacks.

The US left seems completely asleep about the issue, not even reporting it, never mind campaigning against it. Yet Oklahoma is ideal for a US and international sanctions or boycott campaign. Boeing produces wing assemblies there; Firestone and Michelin manufacture tires, Coca-Cola has a huge plant there. Mexico did \$431m business with the state last year; Canada about \$1,600m. If Terrill and co don't want Latinos in the state, we shouldn't be subsidising it in any way – they have stuck their necks far enough to reach the chopping block: it's time to teach them and their supporters a lesson.

Steve Palmer, US correspondent

Capitalism rocks and rolls

Every month or so we get told that 'we're over the worst' of the financial crisis, that we're 'turning the corner'. And as soon as we get round the corner, some bank sheepishly confesses how much they've lost. Here are the main write-downs since the last issue of FRFI:

- Citigroup – \$8-11bn, up from \$6.4bn in the third quarter.
- Merrill Lynch – \$7.9bn.
- Morgan Stanley – \$3.7bn in September and October alone.
- UBS – \$3.4bn.
- Barclays – \$2.7bn.
- Credit Suisse – \$2bn.
- Wachovia (4th largest US bank) – \$1.3bn.
- H&R Block – \$1bn.

Other casualties include HSBC, which lost \$3.4bn on its mortgage business and the \$1.5bn Corina Fund, which was forced into liquidation. Freddie Mac (Federal Home Loan Mortgage Company) lost \$2bn and Fannie Mae (Federal National Mortgage Association) lost \$1.39bn. Between them, Freddie and Fannie own or securitize some 40% of the total \$11.5 trillion US residential home mortgages.

The impact has spread beyond the immediate holders of mortgage-backed securities: some \$100bn of related securities have had their losses covered by bond insurers such as AMBAC, FGIC, CIGF and MBIA. As the write-downs have taken place, these insur-

ers have been hit, leading to falling share prices and lowered credit ratings. In Europe, Swiss Re has had to confess to losses of \$1.2bn. The lowered credit ratings of these insurers have affected the rating of the bonds they have insured. As a result 'Munis' (municipal bonds) have had their quality cut, despite the fact that these entities hardly ever default – unlike companies, cities can't just disappear overnight.

Faced with borrower defaults, lenders are trying to recoup their money by foreclosing on homes. But federal judges have thrown a wrench into the works by starting to insist that investors foreclosing need to prove that they actually own the mortgages. This is a legal requirement which has, astonishingly, been ignored in almost half foreclosure proceedings. But establishing ownership is difficult because, as we explained in FRFI 198, these mortgages have been sliced up and spread around among numerous different investors.

How bad is bad?

So how bad is it going to get? There are those on the left that scoff at the idea that this is anything other than a slight dip – after all, there's only \$400bn at stake, and capitalism blows that in a year butchering Iraqis and Afghans. Capitalists themselves aren't quite so optimistic: Jan Hatzius, Chief Economist at Goldman Sachs, the huge Wall Street investment bank,

puts the figure at around \$2 trillion – that's about 15% of US GDP and a lot of anybody's pocket money.

How does Hatzius arrive at these numbers? Well, like FRFI, he recognises that these 'assets' have served as the collateral for highly leveraged financial operations, forming the basis for expanding up to perhaps 10 times their supposed value. When the value of the underlying collateral disappears, so does the ability to lend on it. So losses of \$200bn implies some \$2,000bn of lending will not now take place – a massive credit contraction. Different calculations using the ABX futures index for these securities arrive at a similar number.

Heads roll – into gilt-lined baskets

Of course, individuals have had to pay the price at these companies. Merrill Lynch CEO Stanley O'Neal and Citigroup's Charles Price have walked the plank and resigned. The price of failure is high – O'Neal's reward for his screw-ups was \$156m and Price collected a cool \$95m on his way out. Meanwhile the US Agriculture Department quietly reported that 35.52 million people, including 12.63 million children, went hungry in the US in 2006, up from 35.13 million in 2005. Business as usual in the richest country in the world: the rich are still getting richer while the poor are getting absolutely poorer.

Steve Palmer

Dictatorship and resistance

The movement now challenging General Musharraf's imposition of emergency rule in Pakistan is the greatest threat to his control of the state since he seized power in 1999. Although it is dominated by largely bourgeois and petty bourgeois elements lacking the organisational capacity to foster popular participation in the struggle against military rule, the movement itself represents an opening of the political space within Pakistan that has historically been dominated by an extremely reactionary military. While the extant political parties in Pakistan, dominated as they are by the interests of the propertied classes, are not going to promote the interests of Pakistan's underprivileged majority once the current regime collapses, the current wave of popular protest presents an opportunity for the impoverished masses to organise and advance their own independent interests in a situation freed from the repressive authoritarianism of the military.

HASSAN JAVID reports.



Police attack demonstrators in the Punjab

The proclamation of emergency rule in Pakistan is the latest episode in a saga stretching back to General Musharraf's failed attempt to remove Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry from the Supreme Court in March 2007. Despite having tacitly supported military dictatorships throughout Pakistan's history, the judiciary had begun to assert its own independence by investigating reports of the Musharraf government's increasingly evident abuses of power. Consequently, the court proceeded to block the privatisation of the Pakistan Steel Mill, one of the largest industrial units in the country, on the grounds that the bidding process had disproportionately favoured groups with links to members of the government, and also started to look into the 'disappearance' of hundreds of people allegedly involved in terrorist activities. Musharraf's subsequent unconstitutional dismissal of Iftikhar Chaudhry was an attempt to coerce the judiciary into obedience and was met with fierce resistance by judges and lawyers across the country. In scenes reminiscent of the movement that toppled Ayub Khan, Pakistan's first military dictator in 1968, rights activists and political parties rapidly joined the lawyers who had taken to the streets demanding an immediate end to military rule. As protests wracked Pakistan's major cities, Iftikhar Chaudhry was reinstated as Chief Justice in July, following a ruling by a panel of Supreme Court judges formed to investigate the allegations levelled against him by the government.

Emboldened by the success of the movement, the Supreme Court then began to entertain petitions challenging the right of General Musharraf to remain president following the end of the sitting parliament's term in November. The movement continued to pile pressure on the regime, moulding public opinion against the government while encouraging the Supreme Court to curtail Musharraf's power. Faced with the prospect of a crisis of legitimacy, Musharraf, struggling to maintain a façade of democracy, sought a power-sharing deal with Benazir Bhutto, the exiled leader of Pakistan's largest and arguably most popular political party, before finally imposing emergency rule on the eve of what was expected to be an unprecedented ruling against military dictatorship.

After imposing emergency rule on 3 November, Musharraf justified his actions by citing the need to combat the rising tide of Islamist militancy

that had spilled out of Pakistan's restive Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and into the valley of Swat, arguing that it was necessary for the government to expand its powers in order to prevent the country from descending into instability. However, the brutal reality of Musharraf's emergency rule became abundantly clear as the police and security forces unleashed a campaign of unbridled repression against the thousands around the country sustaining the movement against the government's repeated assaults on democracy.

Thus, in the two weeks following the declaration of emergency rule, the Musharraf government proceeded to suspend the constitution and purge the Supreme Court of independent-minded

raf's eight years in power.

As seen through the eyes of the government, Pakistan under Musharraf has experienced an unparalleled period of economic growth, stability and progress. With foreign investment rising, and economic growth consistently around 7% since Musharraf took power, supporters of the regime point to proposed plans by Arab consortiums to build skyscrapers in Lahore and Karachi, the rapid influx of multinational telecom companies into Pakistan and the expansion of the financial services sector as indicators of an economic boom. Even if the assumption were to be made that Pakistan's economic growth could have been achieved without the \$18 billion received by the government since

military heads a corporate empire comprised of thousands of companies and organisations, the economic strength of the military cannot solely be judged by its formal budgetary allocation. Enjoying a virtual monopoly over sectors such as cement production and road-building, and controlling almost a third of Pakistan's heavy manufacturing, the corporate interests of the Pakistani military have been estimated to be worth \$20 billion. Given that none of the military's economic affairs are open to civilian scrutiny or audit, the military's continued hold on political power has also served as a means through which it has been able to enrich itself and a corrupt officer corps that has used its influence to retain privileged access to commercial projects and sources of capital. Like the comprador capitalists who have historically supported military regimes in Pakistan, the military itself has been one of the biggest economic beneficiaries of dictatorship.

The military's gross economic corruption, however, is surpassed only by the extremely repressive effect it has historically had on politics in Pakistan. Through its repeated interventions in government, it has effectively dismantled political parties and democratic institutions while strengthening those classes and actors within society that are most likely to support its rule. In this regard, Musharraf was no exception, seeking legitimacy through sham elections that declared him to be president and through the appointment of a puppet parliament controlled by religious parties and traditional elites who had defected from the previous government. Secure in his position as army chief and president, Musharraf then proceeded to implement an agenda of 'reform' that included brutally crushing an ethno-national uprising in Balochistan where the people, for the fourth time in Pakistan's history, rose up against the state to demand an end to the continuing exploitation of their underdeveloped yet resource-rich province.

Similarly, in the tribal belt bordering Afghanistan, the military banned the media and non-military personnel from investigating the extent of the state's military operations in the region as it indiscriminately bombed the area, at the behest of the US, in an attempt to 'root out Islamist militancy'.

Ironically, due to its alliance with Islamist parties in parliament, the Musharraf government has found itself dealing with the contradiction of having to appease an extremely vocal

fringe of Islamist extremism within Pakistan while, at the same time, combating 'terrorism' as part of the US' imperialist war in Afghanistan. As such, when the government made token efforts to modify rape laws that discriminated against women, or to change blasphemy laws that unfairly targeted non-Muslims, it was forced to roll back the proposed amendments in order to not risk invoking the ire of its religious partners. Even the roots of the infamous Red Mosque crisis earlier this year lay in how Musharraf had long tolerated the presence of an extremely violent, sectarian religious organisation in the heart of Pakistan's capital city.

Consequently, as the military regime's inadequacy and lack of legitimacy are increasingly exposed, Pakistan is standing at a unique juncture in history. Although close to 5,400 of the protestors who were jailed have now been released by the state, hundreds of the most vocal and prominent members of the movement remain incarcerated and are likely to be tried under draconian anti-terror laws by military tribunals. Furthermore, curbs on the media remain firmly in place and Musharraf has sought to introduce new laws preventing any decisions he takes during emergency rule from being challenged in any court of law. Despite this repression, however, the unflagging momentum of the movement and its increasing resonance with the populace has made it abundantly clear that the regime cannot survive for much longer.

Several factors must, however, be taken into account before sounding a final death knell for the dictatorship. Political parties, despite their initial support for the Chief Justice during the judicial crisis in the summer, have been hesitant to voice all-out opposition to the government. While parties deliberately kept on the political periphery by the regime, such as former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's PML-N, have mobilised against the government (and consequently been targeted by it), the religious parties and the PML-Q, the military's major allies in parliament, have reaffirmed their support for Musharraf. Crucially, the PPP under Benazir Bhutto has thus far refused to launch a campaign against the government, largely because it hopes the military will accommodate it as a full partner within any power-sharing scheme. Given that political parties need to play an active role in mobilising the masses in the absence of any alternative organisational channels, the opportunistic stance being taken by parties such as the PPP is aimed at impeding the growth of the movement. Additionally the United States, placated by a promise of elections in 2008, has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Musharraf, and has pledged to continue with plans to provide him with financial and military assistance in return for his continued cooperation in the 'war on terror'.

Despite a lack of condemnation from the regime's most significant patron, however, domestic opposition to Musharraf is likely to continue, and will be significantly boosted should parties such as the PPP decide to join the movement as Musharraf's grip on power inevitably weakens. Although it is clear that a subsequent exercise in electoral politics in 2008 will not necessarily lead to a meaningful deepening of democracy, a historic political defeat for the military will represent a major step forward for the people of Pakistan.



Students in Lahore demonstrate against Musharraf

judges who, had been trying to check the government's power. This crippling of the judiciary was accompanied by a sweeping, country-wide crackdown on a diverse array of 'terrorists': lawyers, politicians, academics, rights activists, journalists, and students. Even as militants in Swat continued to mock the state's feeble attempts to curtail their advance, thousands of dissidents were thrown in jail for exercising their right to protest and voice opposition to the government's increasing authoritarianism. Within hours of the proclamation of emergency, private TV channels that were critical of the regime were also forced to go off the air, allowing the government to use its monopoly over the media to then broadcast propaganda touting the 'achievements' of Mushar-

1999 in the form of international military and financial assistance, privatisation proceeds and loan write-offs, the fact remains that the Musharraf government has actually presided over an increase in income inequality over the past eight years. Little of the wealth that has been created has trickled down to the 72% of Pakistanis who live on less than \$2 a day and, by strictly adhering to the policy prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the government has instituted an economic order that facilitates greater openness to flows of capital without providing any protection for the poor.

Whilst debt repayment constitutes 27% of the government's budget, military spending accounts for a further 18%. However, in a country where the

'All of us, from the leaders to the rank-and-file workers, are duty-bound to accurately identify and analyse every problem in depth... in order to combat the problem with the most convenient methods...'

Raul Castro, 26 July 2007

CUBA

genius is in the people

A profound process of popular consultation is underway in Cuba. Demonstrating the real meaning of democracy, the Cuban government has created forums for everyone in the country to contribute to a great debate about Cuba's socio-economic problems and to suggest concrete solutions. This process was initiated in a speech by acting President Raul Castro on 26 July 2007, the 54th anniversary of the attack on Moncada Barracks. It marked exactly one year since Fidel Castro last appeared in public. HELEN YAFFE reports.

Since Fidel's illness, commentators outside Cuba have been searching for signs of change in Cuba's revolutionary government. Cuba's enemies eagerly anticipated an Eastern European style 'transition' with Fidel's exit; the end of socialism and opening up to neoliberalism. But there has been no power vacuum and no counterrevolutionary movement rising up to reject everything he stood for. Fidel has stood back and recuperated as the Cuban government has consolidated the socialist revolution in the process of transition to a generation of younger leaders. Cuba's enemies feel frustrated – transition has taken place, but not in the direction they wanted. Such frustration obstructs their ability to analyse or understand new developments.

Bourgeois journalists celebrated Raul's speech as representing a new turning towards the US administration, implying susceptibility to capitalist openings. This was disingenuous. Raul, as head of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), first reported on the military exercise Operation Caguairán: 'attaining levels of combat readiness superior to those of any other period', involving special defence training for a million Cubans. He then reasserted that Cuba would only enter talks with a post-Bush US administration: 'on equal footing'; if not, Cuba would: 'continue confronting their policy of hostility...'. Too excited about Raul's supposed nod towards US imperialism, commentators missed the important part: the promotion of a deeply democratic and socialist concept of people's power.

Raul expanded on themes raised by Fidel in 2005 – securing the future of the Revolution, the problem of productivity, corruption, parasites and new rich (see FRFI 189). However, in deepening the analysis in a concrete way, he initiated a new stage in the ideological battle to improve Cuban socialism. The important points he raised include:

1) Low salaries and high food prices: 'wages today are clearly insufficient to satisfy all needs and have thus ceased to play a role in ensuring the socialist principle that each should contribute according to their capacity and receive according to their work.'

2) Prices cannot go down until production and productivity go up: 'any increase in wages or decrease in prices, to be real, can only stem from greater and more efficient production and services offered, which will increase the country's incomes... To have more, we have to begin by producing more, with a sense of rationality and efficiency.'

3) The need to reduce imports. The import prices of oil, milk and frozen chicken have increased between 200 and 300% in four years, sapping Cuban hard currency reserves. Meanwhile, the cost to Cuban consumers, highly subsidised by the state, has barely changed: 'I am talking of products that I think can be grown here', he said, complaining about the abundance of *marabú*, a thorny bush invading productive land left fallow throughout the island.

4) The drive to rationalise production. Instead of transporting milk miles to a

pasteurisation plant, it will be distributed direct to communities around the agricultural producer. 'this valuable food product [milk] travelled hundreds of miles before reaching a consumer who, quite often, lived a few hundred metres away from the livestock farm.' This also reduces product losses and fuel expenses.

5) The problem of the US blockade. 'Some...do not perceive the real danger or the undeniable fact that the blockade has a direct influence both on the major economic decisions and on each Cuban's most basic needs.'

6) The need for foreign investment: 'that can provide us with capital, technology or markets...upon well-defined legal bases which preserve the role of the state and the predominance of socialist property.'

In 1996, one of the worst years of the Special Period, Raul made an influential speech calling for a political battle to secure the Revolution against the individualistic tendencies encouraged by economic reforms introducing some elements of the free market. He set out the need to 'examine the political and social situation in the country in order to derive from this analysis the ideological work our [Communist] Party has to carry out during these times of the special period.' (12 March 1996) The speech sparked discussions among all Cubans. The impact of his speech on 26 July 2007 was the same. Underlying Raul's speech is the concept of Cubans as citizens, not consumers, with responsibility to society: 'We need to bring everyone into the daily battle against the very errors which aggravate objective difficulties from external causes...'. Once again he outlined the leading role of the Communist Party (CCP) in addressing and solving the national problems.

In August, after discussions with the CCP provincial leaders, a process of popular consultation was initiated to give Cubans a forum to thrash out socio-economic problems. Meetings were organised in every CCP branch, work place, trade union, street committee, women's federation and in the Union of Young Communists. Raul called on the population to speak with frankness and realism. People have committed whole-heartedly



Raul Castro speaking in Camaguey on 26 July

to the debate, not just complaining, but suggesting improvements. Every intervention has been anonymously recorded and collected in central offices to be analysed, to provide a comprehensive assessment of the state of the country and the consciousness of its people.

This process demonstrates the Cuban government and CCP's trust in the population – Fidel's concept that the genius is in the people. The results will provide a unique insight into the state of production, trade unions and grassroots organisations. The risk lies in raising expectations which cannot be met. But the consultation is genuinely expected to generate many concrete solutions, although Raul warned that some problems reflect realities of the international economy and no government policies or resolutions can solve them. Some of the complaints reflect a search for individualistic solutions to material scarcity – proposals which would improve conditions for individuals but risk increasing private property relations and capitalist mechanisms. For example, opposition to rules that individuals can only sell their cars or houses to the state at low prices and obstacles to individuals or families starting their own farms on fallow land, or limiting the productive capacity of family or cooperative farms. The desire to remove state control is the outcome of the state's inefficiency in resolving production and distribution problems. Clearly, however, to concede these demands is to open the gate to capitalist property relations.

Structural and conceptual changes for improving socialism

Raul was clear that 'structural and conceptual changes will have to be introduced' and apart from rationalising

milk production, he gave two examples. One was in the relationship of the state to farmers and the other related to foreign investment. Commentators outside Cuba have jumped on these as evidence of economic 'liberalisation' – the adoption of capitalist mechanisms to determine production and distribution. In reality, Raul talked of the need to improve the efficiency of the state's payment to farmers for agricultural produce, not a transference of state land to private production. When he talked of securing more foreign investment it reflected a trend which has seen the Cubans cut the number of smaller foreign investors in Cuba, so mixed-enterprises have decreased by 41% from 2002 to 2006, whilst consolidating large investments in major infrastructural and development projects in strategic sectors like mining and energy. Much of this involves setting up joint ventures with state companies from fraternal countries, Venezuela and China. The result is to limit the sphere of operation of capitalist mechanisms, introduced via foreign capital, diminishing their impact on the Cuban consumer, whilst simultaneously strengthening the state's economic resources based on high value-generating activities, for example nickel and oil production. This closing of opportunities for private foreign capital, as well as the blockade, explains why the Economist Intelligence Unit placed Cuba 81 out of 82 worst countries for business!

Those jumping to promote 'liberalisation' include 'intellectuals' and 'economists' in Cuba, such as Pedro Monreal and Aurelio Alonso. In an interview given during the consultation process, Aurelio Alonso, deputy director of the magazine *Casa de las Americas* promoted private agricultural production: 'The family should not invest all its pro-



Cubans show solidarity with the Revolution

CUBA VIVE!

Cuban socialism charts dangerous waters

On 30 October, Cuba once again trounced the US at the United Nations, as 184 countries voted against the illegal US blockade of the island. Only three countries – loyal ally Israel and the miniscule and highly dependent Palau and Marshall Islands – stood with US imperialism. Although the US will continue to blatantly ignore the ruling, the vote represents a moral and political victory for Cuba, coming as it did just a week after President Bush launched a new initiative to foment international opposition to the Cuban Revolution.



Economic warfare

'Every means should be undertaken to weaken the economic life of Cuba to bring about hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the government' (declassified State Department document, 1960)

This is the 16th consecutive year that the UN has voted against the blockade – described by Cuba as an act of economic warfare – with a year-on-year increase in support for Cuba, despite behind-the-scenes threats and manoeuvres by the US. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Roque estimated that the cost to the Cuban economy of what he described as 'a blatant, massive and systematic violation of the rights of our people' has been \$89bn over the last 46 years – or \$222bn in current dollar terms. There is no part of the economy that has not been affected.

Yet with supreme hypocrisy, on 24 October, in his first major speech on Cuba since Fidel Castro stepped down temporarily a year ago, George Bush outlined what he described as the 'economic misery' of 'communism' suffered by the Cuban people. 'Cars pre-date the revolution...and some Cubans rely on horse carts for transportation. Housing...is in very poor condition...clinics for ordinary Cubans suffer from chronic shortages in medicine and equipment... There are long lines for basic necessities'. In the same breath, he called for Congress 'to show our support and solidarity for fundamental change in Cuba by maintaining our embargo on the dictatorship until it changes'.

A new Cold War

Bush's 24 October speech launched an initiative to set up an international multi-million dollar 'Freedom Fund for Cuba' to be given to Cuba once it has adopted what he called 'fundamental freedoms' and has 'made the transition to democracy' – all of which is imperialist-speak for 'has embraced capitalism'. Felipe Roque described it as 'an unprecedented escalation in the anti-Cuba policy of more blockade, more subversion and more attempts at isolation'.

The US maintains a twin-track policy against Cuba. On the one hand there is direct aggression, through a blockade designed to starve the country to its knees, and the funding of Miami-based terrorism against Cuba. But more insidious and more dangerous is its policy of political sabotage, through propaganda and the funding of dissident groups and proponents of capitalism within Cuba

itself. Bush's speech marked a significant ratcheting up of this threat, with a call to 'the Cuban people' to rise up against 'the ruling class' who have created a 'tropical gulag' and the seductive promise of millions of dollars worth of aid ('especially to Cuban entrepreneurs') if they do so. He used the example of Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia – where imperialism implemented precisely such a strategy – calling pro-US dissidents 'the leaders of the future' and – in an illegal bid to incite a coup – appealing to the Cuban police and military to side against the government, offering them a place in a future

regime if they did so. He paraded a series of anti-Cuban exiles in a well-worn attack on Cuba's record on human rights. Most sinister of all, he stressed again and again that the United States was not interested in 'stability'.

'Cuba's transition from a shattered society to a free country may be long and difficult. Things will not always go as hoped. There will be difficult adjustments to make...If Cuba is to enter a new era, it must find a way to reconcile and forgive those who have been part of the system but who do not have blood on their hands'.

Cubans chart their own future

While Bush's speech is little short of a manifesto for civil war it also gives, as Felipe Roque pointed out 'an idea of the level of frustration, of desperation and of personal hatred towards Cuba'. An embattled president whose time is running out, George Bush leaves behind an economy in freefall and a country enmeshed in an unwinnable war in Iraq and, like a cornered rat, is lashing out on all fronts. His speech describes an inversion of the real society the Cubans are building. Cuba's economy is growing and targets for oil production, for example, are being met; the transition of power to the vice-president did not signal the end of socialism but its consolidation. The democratic process of consultation taking place throughout the country to address the very real problems caused by the US blockade and the Special Period are hardly redolent of a breakdown of 'community and simple trust between human beings' or 'a disgraced and dying order'; in the first round of Cuba's municipal elections in October, turnout was 95%, with just over 3% of ballots spoiled (despite a campaign orchestrated in Miami for a mass

spoiling of ballot papers) – giving the lie to Bush's fantastical image of a people engaged in a final 'push for freedom' amid 'the dying gasps of a failed regime'.

In June, against US opposition, the United Nations withdrew its Special Rapporteur on Human Rights from Cuba as being unnecessary. Despite Bush's assertion that Cubans might be listening to his speech 'at great risk' on the illegal US-funded Radio and TV Marti, in fact it was substantially reprinted in the Cuban state newspaper *Granma* and 15 minutes of it shown on Cuban television. The Cuban government is not afraid of the lies and twisted propaganda of Bush's brutal and desperate administration. Bush tells us that 'The day is coming when the Cuban people will chart their own course for a better life'. The truth is that the Cuban people have been charting that course for the past 49 years, and that course is socialism.

Cat Wiener

Fundamental freedoms: the right to food

In early November UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, spent 11 days in Cuba discussing with officials, farmers, managers and ordinary people queuing for rations, as well as investigating claims of sub-standard food in Cuban prisons. In his report he stated 'We haven't seen even one malnourished person...[in Cuba] the right to being fed is a priority'. He hailed Cuba as a world model in feeding its population.

Cuba is one of 32 countries that include 'the right to food' in their constitutions and among the very few who meet that pledge to all, he said. However, he did point out that Cuba urgently needs to reduce its reliance on food imports. In November, Cuba signed a \$100m contract for rice with Vietnam, reflecting a drop in rice imports from the US, which no longer offers credit, from 175,000 tonnes in 2005 to 80,000 tonnes last year. However, this year's efforts at food production in Cuba have been set back by the recent tropical storm that has wrecked crops, homes and infrastructure in the eastern part of the island, causing millions of dollars worth of damage.



CUBA

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Palestine: Abbas acts for imperialism

In the run-up to the US-organised Middle East Peace Conference in Annapolis at the end of November, the open collaboration between Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority (PA), and his Fatah-dominated government with Israel and the forces of imperialism continues to gather momentum. **BOB SHEPHERD** reports.



Blair and Abbas

In the West Bank the PA government has signed up to a US-funded 'security plan' centred on Nablus, which has as its aim the disarming and dismantling of all the resistance forces there. In a speech marking Palestine National Day on 15 November, Abbas called for the toppling of the Hamas government in Gaza. This effectively gives the green light to an Israeli invasion of Gaza as they are the only military force capable of answering Abbas's call. On 23 November, the Arab League lent a spurious credibility to the Annapolis conference by agreeing to send representatives.

In October, Saeb Erekat, a Fatah leader and PLO chief negotiator in the meetings between Israel and the PA in the run up to Annapolis, stated that the joint meetings would draw up a document that would focus on solving the issues of Jerusalem, the borders, settlements, security, water resources and refugees. This document, he said, would be the starting point for the summit. However, both Erekat and the Fatah leadership know very well that Annapolis offers no resolution to any of these issues – not in the interests of the Palestinian masses anyway – but they need to create the illusion that the Fatah leadership is setting the agenda

for the summit. Erekat cynically called on the Middle East Quartet (UN, EU, US and Russia) to implement Bush's Roadmap for Peace, specifically Phase 1 which prohibits Israeli colonial settlement expansion. Erekat didn't mention that the bulk of Phase 1 deals with Israeli security and calls on 'Palestinians and Israelis to resume security co-operation... to end violence, terrorism and incitement through restructured and effective Palestinian security services' and for PA security forces to 'begin sustained, targeted and effective operations aimed at confronting all those engaged in terror and dismantlement of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure'. For imperialism the main issue is the destruction of Palestinian resistance, and the collaboration of the Fatah leadership is crucial for its success.

In July, Tony Blair was appointed the Quartet's special representative with a mandate to help the Palestinians develop their institutions and economy. He has put forward a plan which says that unless the PA security forces take severe action against the resistance in the West Bank there is no chance for a settlement. What he means is that the interests of imperialism in the region cannot be guaranteed without the defeat of the Palestinians. Blair pro-

poses a tripartite security council with himself, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Israeli Defence Minister Ehud to oversee the implementation of the plan. This proposal will certainly be one of the starting points for discussion at Annapolis.

Meanwhile the first steps have been taken. Under the direction of General Keith Dayton, US security advisor in the PA, and with Israeli support, the PA deployed 300 members of its security forces into Nablus at the beginning of November with the sole aim of confronting the resistance. Nablus and its neighbourhood have been the focus of armed resistance to Israel in the West Bank, and the area was deliberately chosen for this confrontation. On 14 November the US Consul General Jacob Walles, in Nablus with PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, announced that the US government was granting \$1.3m in aid to the city. He added that Bush would be asking the US Congress for a further \$375m aid for the PA. The same day the Governor of the Nablus area issued a statement in which he threatened to

crush Hamas in Nablus and the West Bank. On the morning of 15 November, 17 PA police vehicles passed unhindered through Israeli checkpoints on their way to the village of Aseera Al-Shamaleyya, north of Nablus, where they arrested 22 people accused of being Hamas supporters. Hamas condemned the arrests as the 'practical translation of the roadmap plan on the ground'. Hamas also deplored the 'inexplicable' silence on the part of other Palestinian resistance factions about the 'unjustifiable' arrests.

On 18 November the PA Interior Minister Al Yahya pledged to disband all resistance factions, saying that the seven years of the armed Intifada had been 'disastrous' for the Palestinians; the same day PA security forces entered the Ein Beit El-Ma refugee camp, also near Nablus, in an attempt to arrest PFLP activists charged with illegally firing their guns in the air at the funeral of a fallen comrade. Three days later the Israelis agreed to allow 25 Russian-made armoured cars through its checkpoints for use by the PA in Nablus, saying that it would

allow a further 25 through if there was significant progress in defeating the resistance.

In Gaza the Fatah leadership continues its attempts to destabilise the Hamas government. At the beginning of October, their contra forces began a series of armed attacks on Hamas. On 2 October they attempted to blow up the Gaza City police headquarters. However, the bomb exploded prematurely, killing three Fatah members and an innocent bystander. Three days later, a hand grenade was thrown at a police vehicle in the city, a bomb was set off at the home of a Hamas leader in Khan Younis and another bomb exploded outside the Rafah Municipality building. This last attack was linked to the campaign the Municipality is waging to restore land stolen by Fatah gangsters to public ownership. Gaza Fatah leader Zakaria Al Agha issued a statement in which he 'justified and understood' the bombings.

This climate of Fatah provocation and destabilisation lay behind the tragic deaths of seven people shot by Hamas security forces at a Fatah-organised commemoration rally for Yasser Arafat in Gaza City on 12 November. Abbas used this event to urge in a televised speech on Palestinian National Day that 'we must topple the junta who took control of the Gaza Strip by force'. His speech has given a green light to the Zionists to invade Gaza and topple Hamas since they are the only ones who could do so. Hamas leader Yehia Moussa, responded that this would be 'a proxy war that seeks... not only to get rid of Hamas but to create an appropriate political environment that would allow Abu Mazen [Abbas] to offer additional concessions'.

US imperialism is attempting to force the pace of Palestinian concessions, with Bush saying he wants a settlement in the next year. Now that the Arab League has agreed to send a ministerial representative supported by representation from Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the imperialists hope that there is sufficient momentum to once and for all destroy the Palestinian liberation struggle. They cannot be allowed to succeed. ■

Apartheid Wall: construction continues apace



A Palestinian boy plays on top of a home bulldozed by the Israelis

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 56.5% of the 721 km Apartheid Wall on the West Bank had already been built by May 2007, with work continuing on a further 10%. When complete, the Wall will annex between 47% and 60% of the West Bank, corralling over 92 Palestinian villages and communities with a population of almost half a million into Bantustans, ghettos and 'military zones'. The Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip will be forced to live on 12% of Mandate Palestine.

Over the last few months the Zionists' JCB and Caterpillar bulldozers have continued building the Wall around Ma'ale Adoumim city settlement, which will completely separate East Jeru-

salem from the rest of the West Bank. In the Salfit district, the most fertile area of the West Bank, almost all the Wall is complete, isolating more than 70% of the district's land. Construction has also continued around the Gush 'Etziim settlement bloc which will sever the last route between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, isolating the majority of Bethlehem's agricultural land.

In the meantime, Israel has continued to ethnically cleanse the areas along the Jerusalem-Jericho/Jordan Valley road of its Palestinian Bedouin inhabitants, to make way for further settlements expansion and the building of the Apartheid Wall. An estimated 30,000 Bedouins face expulsion and 51 families have already been served

with expulsion orders and forced into a concentrated village. A total of 24 Bedouin villages with a population of 52,000 people have so far been annexed in the Jordan Valley, along with their water resources and Eastern aquifer. The Jordan Valley itself is almost completely isolated from the rest of the West Bank.

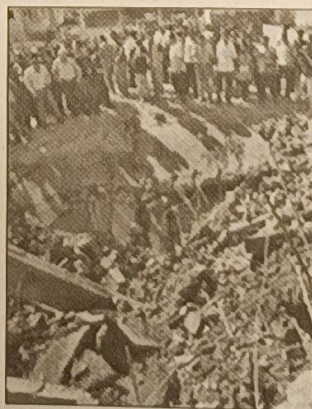
On 1 November 2007, the Stop the Wall Campaign reported that the racist Israeli occupation forces have completely bulldozed the Palestinian Bedouin community of Khirbet Qasa, west Idna, to the west of Hebron city in the West Bank, driving 263 people from their homes. 'In a matter of hours, the 263 villagers found themselves isolated from the wreckage of their tents and belongings, with only the clothes they were standing in', the report said.

Around Jerusalem the Wall is almost finished. 90% of the Jerusalem land will be lost. New Zionist settlements are also continuously under construction around Jerusalem on the annexed lands. Eventually some 25 Palestinian villages will be completely isolated from the rest of Jerusalem and the West Bank, ripped through, separating families, cutting social and economic ties and squeezing the population into five different ghettos. This is the brutal and racist reality of Zionist occupation.

Fiona Donovan

Israel's squeeze on Gaza

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israel has cut supplies of diesel to Gaza by more than 40% since 28 October, and supplies of industrial gasoline, vital for Gaza's power plant, by about 9%. This is the latest step in an ever-tightening economic blockade of Gaza. Its economy is now on the brink of collapse. Of the estimated 5,000 small industrial workshops in Gaza, 95% are now closed, and 80% of the population are dependent on food aid from UN agencies. The situation is made worse by the decision of the PA in the West Bank to stop the payment of wages in the next fiscal year to 17,000 PA employees in Gaza.



Bomb crater in Gaza

The main border crossings from Gaza have been effectively closed since June, with Israel stopping medical supplies and preventing the exit of severely ill Palestinians for medical treatment. According to the head of UNRWA: 'Restrictions imposed by the occupying power result in Gaza's hospitals being deprived of necessary medical equipment and supplies (91 drugs are now at zero stocks in Gaza, including many for children in the primary health care centres). At the same time, the closure of the Erez and Rafah crossings result in many seriously ill people being denied the opportunity to seek medical treatment in Israel, the West Bank or Egypt.'

On 19 November an eight-year-old Palestinian boy suffering from a brain condition died when Israeli border guards at the Erez crossing blocked his transfer to an Israeli hospital. He became the tenth Palestinian patient since August to die as a direct result of such obstruction. The Health Minister reported that half the kidney dialysis machines in Gaza were now out of order since Israel refuses to let spare parts enter Gaza. Hundreds of kidney patients face death.

A recent report by Save the Children documents that Israeli forces killed 38 Palestinian children between January and September 2007. Defence for Children International – Palestine Section counts 47 children dead with 30 of these killed in Gaza up to 5 November.

Bob Shepherd

NORMALISING GENOCIDE

continued from page 1

workers were shot dead in Mosul, prompting a sit-in protest by their colleagues. On 22 October, 13 civilians, including children, were killed and 69 wounded in US attacks on Sadr City. Eight-year-old Murtada Nair reported, 'I was going to buy eggs for breakfast, then I was hit by a helicopter.' Another victim, 11-year-old Ali Ahmad said, 'The pilot shot me when I crossed the street to buy bread.' The next day 16 people were killed by a helicopter raid on Dija in the Tikrit region. Farmers were fired on in their fields and when they tried to take shelter their homes were destroyed. The number of Iraqi civilians being killed and injured by the imperialist forces is becoming so great that even the Iraqi puppet government has been moved to complain.

In October the UN Assistance Mission reported 'an ever-deepening humanitarian crisis' in Iraq and that human rights are 'very grim' with indiscriminate killings and 'routine torture' in prisons. More than 24,000 Iraqis are being held prisoner by the occupying forces, including at least 860 children below the age of 16. The Iraqi government holds over 82,000 more prisoners. Virtually all the prisoners are held without charge or access to legal process. Evidence from Iraqi hospitals to be placed before the High Court in cases of torture by British forces says bodies showed signs of 'gouged-out eyes', 'serious injury to genitals' and asphyxiation and hanging of prisoners.

The 'surge' has accelerated the ethnic cleansing of mixed neighbourhoods and swelled the numbers of refugees. The rate at which Iraqis are being forced to flee their homes rose by over 70% in August and a further 16% in September. The UNHCR says there are now 2.2 million internal refugees in Iraq and estimates the number will rise to 2.5 million by the end of 2007, compared with less than half a million at the beginning of the year. A further 2.2 million Iraqis have fled abroad. This represents the biggest movement of people in the Middle East since the Palestinians were forced from their country in 1948. Altogether, around one in six Iraqis have had to abandon their homes. A report from the Iraqi Red Crescent Society said that over 80% of internal refugees are women or children under 12 years. It went on '... the majority suffer from disease, poverty and malnutrition. Children do not attend schools and are being sheltered in tents, abandoned government buildings with no water or electricity, mosques, churches or with relatives'. The government rationing system is breaking down. Levels of provision have been cut by a third and many people are unable to receive even that. The Iraqi Women's Rights Association reported a 25% increase since 2005 in the incidence of women having to scavenge on rubbish tips or turn to prostitution to feed their families. Tens of thousands of people in Northern Iraq are suffering from suspected cholera due to polluted water.

The refugees' plight has been made more desperate by internal restrictions on their movement. Only two Iraqi provinces now allow access to refugees from other areas. Most of the internal refugees live in 16 camps in Baghdad province. In Syria, where more than a million refugees have fled, one third of Iraqi children are unable to attend school and many Iraqi women have resorted to prostitution. Both Syria and Jordan, the



Demonstration against the separation wall in Baghdad

other main destination for Iraqi refugees, are closing their borders. Neither Britain nor the US has accepted more than a handful of Iraqis. It was only with great reluctance that the Labour government, in October, even agreed to help 500 Iraqi interpreters who had been working for the occupying forces and feared for their lives.

Labour imperialists still ally with the US

In Britain, defence analysts say an extra £3 billion is required immediately or commitments must be cut. Gordon Brown stated that British troops in Iraq will be reduced from 5,500 to 2,500 by next spring, though 500 of them will be re-deployed elsewhere in the region, probably Kuwait. Brown also hinted at a total pull-out by the end of 2008, but 'subject to conditions on the ground'. The Bush administration was reportedly 'furious' at British 'betrayal'. The British withdrawal from Basra Palace was delayed for five months because the US refused to move its consulate from there and threatened to send in its own troops. It is clear, however, that the British were defeated in Basra by the resistance of the Iraqi people. In 2003 the British government promised Iraq 'a stable, united and law-abiding state providing effective representative government to its own people'. A Washington Institute for Near East Policy report describes the legacy of the British occupation of southern Iraq as 'a kleptocracy' where 'well armed political-criminal mafiosi have locked both the central government and the people out of power'. (*Le Monde diplomatique*, November 2007).

As for any differences between the US and Britain, Gordon Brown used his Mansion House speech in November to stress that the US would remain Britain's number one ally. The speech is an annual opportunity to reassure the most powerful capitalists in the City that their interests continue to be served by the Labour government. British imperialism relies on its alliance with US military power to protect its global interests, which are second only to those of the US and cannot be maintained by the British military alone.

Iraqi people oppose oil theft

In his recently published memoirs, Alan Greenspan, former head of the US Federal Reserve, wrote, 'I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone

knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil.' Well, the war is about more than oil, for it is part of a wider US global strategy to maintain military hegemony so as to deter rising economic competitors such as China, Russia and the EU. A permanent base in Iraq will help the US dominate the Middle East and support Israel. But control of Iraqi resources, particularly oil, is certainly a major consideration. Iraq has 115 billion barrels of known oil reserves. Some estimate there may be a further 300 billion barrels yet to be discovered, which would make Iraq the second biggest source of oil in the world with 20% of global reserves. Furthermore, Iraq is the most under-exploited of all the world's major oil fields, presently providing only around 2.5% of the total.

Since the invasion the oil multinationals have been manoeuvring to get their hands on the oil, but have been held back by the security situation and the lack of an Iraqi oil law to give a paper veil of legitimacy to their pillage. Such a law was drafted by the oil companies in consultation with the Bush administration and the British Foreign Office three years ago. The law would allow Production Sharing Agreements (PSAs) that would give foreign companies control of around 85% of Iraqi oil for a period of up to 30 years at a very high rate of profit. None of the top six OPEC countries use PSAs. They prefer to keep control of oil in state hands and use foreign oil companies as contractors. PSAs are usually used only when conditions make exploration and drilling extremely difficult. But production costs for Iraqi oil will be very low. However, although representatives of the Iraqi puppet government were complicit in drafting the law they have been unable to get it passed by the Iraqi parliament because of widespread opposition both inside and outside the parliament, from Iraqi oil unions and from the Iraqi people. Asked whether there would be consultation with the Iraqi people and oil unions, a puppet government official replied, 'Well Iraqi workers, they come from a low class - they are not well informed about these things. They are always demanding something: whether it's higher wages or conditions, they are always wanting something.' When oil workers went on strike this summer the Iraqi government sent in troops. In September, US planes launched an unprovoked attack on workers in the Basra oil

fields. The Iraqi government is using legislation created by Saddam Hussein to try and ban all trade unions.

Despite the opposition, the puppet government is pushing ahead with plans to hand over Iraqi oil to the multinationals. Of course, there will be lucrative 'bonuses' for well-placed Iraqis involved in facilitating the deals. Evidence that the family of puppet prime minister Nouri Al Maliki is involved in the corruption has been 'classified' by the US State Department. At conferences in Dubai and London (none of these conferences are ever held in Iraq), the Iraqi government announced 'its' plans to privatise a whole swathe of state industries and services including: finances and telecom systems; rebuilding roads, railways, hospitals, schools, electricity and water plants; IT, hospital equipment and medicines; oil production tools, rail machinery and security equipment. 95% of tenders for contracts already received were from US multinationals.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has signed oil contracts with several foreign companies, including the Texas-based Hunt corporation, the Canadian company Heritage and the French firm Perenco. At least one Scandinavian company is already operating there under massive security. The Iraqi government claims these deals will not stand when the new oil law is passed. The dispute adds to the growing tensions over the autonomy of the KRG. In October, Turkey threatened to invade the region, ostensibly to attack Kurdish PKK guerrilla bases there. The PKK has long fought for an independent Kurdistan in the region bordering Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria. On 13

October, Turkish artillery fire hit the Iraqi village of Nezdoo. Ten days later Turkish planes, helicopters and ground troops penetrated up to 13 miles inside Iraq, claiming to have killed 34 PKK fighters. The US urged restraint, promising to pursue the PKK itself. For the time being the imperialists prefer oil negotiations to be centralised in Baghdad and don't want any interventions in the Kurdish region that they can't control.

The US Congressional Budget Office estimates the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could cost \$2.4 trillion over the next decade. Hundreds of thousands more Iraqis and Afghans may be killed or made homeless. Yet for the imperialists this will count for nothing compared with the prize of controlling Iraq and its oil. Iraqi oil reserves could be worth \$30 trillion over the next few decades and securing them is calculated as central to the US ruling class's global hegemonic ambitions. This is why the US imperialists have no intention of leaving Iraq.

The Iraqi people have demonstrated that they will not accept submission. A statement in September by the 1920 Revolution Brigades, a mainly Sunni section of the resistance, warned the imperialists that they could, 'Wander the shelves of history in search of methods to adapt (to maintain their occupation) and we will confront you with a form of variable, adaptable, and reversible asymmetric warfare that will set the standard for years and years to come...[The Iraqi resistance] has taught the world of oppressed nations and societies that a self-sufficient resistance movement in our modern times is possible, and can destabilise the most powerful opponents.' ■

Imperialists under fierce attack in Afghanistan

Problems mount for the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan. A US Congressional Committee reported, 'There is no security in Afghanistan. The central government's grip does not extend much beyond the environs of Kabul. In the provinces there is no functioning local government.' Violent incidents in the country are up 30% compared with last year, now averaging 550 every month. According to the US Council on Foreign Relations, 5,100 people were killed in the country in the first nine months of this year, 50% up on the same period of 2006. According to *The Guardian*, 'The possibility of military failure, previously unthinkable, is now openly discussed.'

Members of the British army admit it has experienced its most intense fighting since the Korean War. Major John Godfrey said, 'In an age when a modern army depends so heavily on technology, the Taliban could (and have) re-taught us many of the basic principles of soldiering. As a rule the Taliban are skilled and determined fighters. Their use of the ground, camouflage and concealment is quite simply outstanding.' The imperialists use the term 'Taliban' as a pejorative catch-all for everyone involved in the resistance. As General Dannatt, head of the British army, stated, this was a lazy tendency. He explained 'the great majority of the people we are engaged



against are those who are fighting with the Taliban for financial, social and tribal reasons'.

NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop admits that the force in Afghanistan has only 90% of the troops needed and there is a shortage of helicopters. In October, Gordon Brown again appealed for NATO members to commit more combat troops. Although several of the smaller nations have agreed to send small contingents and France and Germany have agreed to send military instructors, none of these will be going to the south of Afghanistan where the core of the fighting takes place. At the same time the Netherlands government is under public pressure to withdraw its 1,600 troops and the Canadian government, with the third largest contingent of combat troops, is reconsidering its position.

Jim Craven

Unending war

British military interventions overseas since the end of the Second World War

'The profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilisation lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked.' Karl Marx

1968 was the only year since the end of the Second World War when British military personnel were not killed on active service. On 12 October 2007 the British monarch unveiled a memorial in Staffordshire bearing the names of almost 16,000 British service men and women killed since 1948. The memorial has space for 15,000 more names. We do not know how many people British armed forces have killed since 1945. Below we list those overseas interventions that the British state acknowledges. Not included are covert excursions whose records are not available.

1969 and 2001 3,523 people in the north of Ireland were killed at the expense of 710 British personnel. This was a key struggle for the British ruling class: essential for its political rule.

British overseas assets are now over four times the size of Britain's gross domestic product. British imperialism is parasitic and aggressive. In

2007-08 Britain will spend £33.4 billion on the military; the world's second biggest military budget. Britain's military record since 1945 confirms that Britain is a leading imperialist power. In 2007, while still Prime Minister, Blair said, 'There are two types of nations similar to ours today. Those who do war fighting and peacekeep-

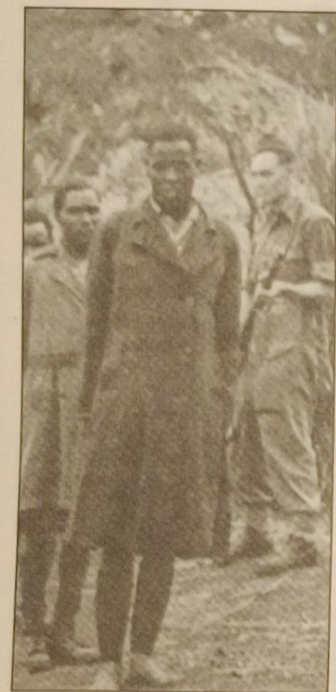
ing and those who have, effectively, except in the most exceptional circumstances, retreated to peacekeeping alone. Britain does both. We should stay that way. But how do we get the consent to do it?' That consent comes in various forms.

There are many on the left who, as in 1969, continue to deny the reality of British imperialism and who support the Labour Party. In 1979, the Labour Party left winger Tony Benn argued that, 'Britain has moved from Empire to Colony status. It is a colony in which the IMF decides our monetary policy, the international and multinational companies decide our industrial policy and the EEC decided our legislation and taxation policies.' By 2007 the theme had been adjusted, 'Britain is now, in effect, an American colony, seen in Washington as an unsinkable aircraft carrier.' Tony Benn is president of the Stop the War Coalition, of which the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) is the largest organised component. The SWP says that Britain is a subsidiary or subordinate

power to the US. In Iraq British forces are secondary to those of the US, but to present British imperialism as a supplement or appendage of the US hides the substance and significance of British imperialism that is essential for any socialist movement to understand. This is used to excuse alliances with the Labour Party. The record of British monopoly capitalism's foreign policy is one of near constant war, millions of deaths and broken lives - the Union Flag atop a mountain of corpses.

The sequence of British governments has been 1945-51 Labour, 1951-64 Conservative, 1964-70 Labour, 1970-74 Conservative, 1974-79 Labour, 1979-97 Conservative, 1997 onwards Labour. Be they Labour or Conservative governments they have demonstrated a readiness to deploy armed force in defence of British imperialism's interests. To the British left and British people we say New Labour = Old Labour = War Party.

Thomas Atkins and Trevor Rayne



British troops guard suspected Mau Mau, Kenya, 1955

When British troops were sent to the north of Ireland by the Labour government in 1969, the main British left organisations; the CPGB, Militant, International Socialists (SWP) and the organised labour movement approved. They either did not understand imperialism or chose to side with it. Between

- 1 1945-46 Java Restoring Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia.
- 2 1945-47 Italy Occupation army. Clashed with Yugoslav partisans around Trieste.
- 3 1945-52 Japan Occupation army.
- 4 1945-55 Germany Occupation army.
- 5 1945-89 West Germany and West Berlin British soldiers patrolled the borders.
- 6 1945-55 Austria Occupation army. On 8 May 1945 the end of World War II was signed in Europe and on that day British soldiers clashed with Yugoslav partisans over disputed territory, beginning the Cold War.
- 7 1945-46 Indo-China Restoring French colonial rule.
- 8 1945-48 Partition of India.
- 9 1945-48 Palestine Reinforcing British occupation army until the end of the mandate.
- 10 1945-48 Greece Participation in civil war against the communists.
- 11 1946 Albania Royal Navy challenges the Albanian government for control of the straits between the mainland and Corfu.
- 12 1946 Iran Countering Soviet influence and Kurdish and Azerbaijani republics.
- 13 1947 Aden Suppression of civil disturbances.
- 14 1948-49 Germany The Berlin airlift.
- 15 1948 Gold Coast (Ghana) Suppression of riots.
- 16 1948 British Honduras (Belize) Threat of Guatemalan invasion.
- 17 1948-60 Malaya Suppression of communist-led struggle. 350 British soldiers and 159 Gurkhas killed, with 6,710 communists confirmed dead and another 1,000 dead from starvation and illness due to the British strategy. The British Labour government banned several trade unions and imprisoned trade unionists. A 1970 Scotland Yard investigation into the massacre of 24 villagers at Batang Kali was halted by the Conservative government.
- 18 1948-49 Somalia Preventing re-unification of the country and maintaining protectorate.
- 19 1948-51 Eritrea Suppression of the Shifra revolt.
- 20 1949 China River Yangtze incident between the Royal Navy and the People's Liberation Army.
- 21 1950 Singapore Suppression of 'Hartog riots'.
- 22 1950-53 Korea The Korean war with four million Koreans killed at a cost to the British of 749 British soldiers dead.
- 23 1951 Iran Aqaba Iranian oil

- 24 1951-54 Suez Canal Zone.
- 25 1952-56 Kenya Suppression of the Mau Mau revolt. 11,500 Mau Mau were killed and 1,016 Kenyans were executed for breaching the emergency regulations. Just 12 British soldiers died.
- 26 1952 Monte Bello Island (Bikini atoll) First British atomic bomb test.
- 27 1953 British Guiana (Guyana) Constitutional crisis. British coup against the elected socialist government of Cheddi Jagan.
- 28 1954-83 Cyprus Suppression of EOKA and occupation.
- 29 1954 Egypt Intervention on the Nile.
- 30 1955 Singapore Suppression of riots.
- 31 1955 Buraimi Oasis Preventing incursion from Saudi Arabia and its allies.
- 32 1955-60 Yemen border incidents.
- 33 1956 Bahrain Suppression of riots.
- 34 1956 Hong Kong Suppression of riots.
- 35 1956 Singapore Suppression of riots.
- 36 1956 Egypt Suez crisis and invasion.
- 37 1957-59 Muscat and Oman Suppression of resistance struggle.
- 38 1957 British Honduras (Belize) Threat of invasion from Guatemala.
- 39 1958 Nassau (Bahamas) General strike.
- 40 1958 Iraq Military coup ousts King Faisal II.
- 41 1958 Jordan Military assistance to regime following Iraq coup.
- 42 1958 Kuwait Iraqi General Qasim claims Kuwait is part of Iraq.
- 43 1958 Lebanon Attempt to bolster pro-western Christian government.
- 44 1958 Nyasaland (Malawi) Suppression of riots.
- 45 1958 North Atlantic 'Cod War I' Iceland extends territorial waters from four to 12 miles.
- 46 1959 Gan (Maldives) Suppression of riots.
- 47 1960 Jamaica Suppression of Rastafarian uprising.
- 48 1960-61 Camerouns Aid to the government.
- 49 1961 Kuwait Prevention of Iraqi incursion.
- 50 1961 Zanzibar (Tanzania) Suppression of revolt.
- 51 1961 British Honduras (Belize) Imposing order after Hurricane Hattie.
- 52 1962-70 Yemen Civil war. Britain sided with Royalists. 200,000 Yemenis killed.
- 53 1962 British Honduras (Belize) Suppression of Belize Freedom Fighters.

- 54 1962 British Guiana (Guyana) Suppression of Georgetown riots.
- 55 1962 Brunei Suppression of revolt.
- 56 1962-66 Malaysia Confrontation with Indonesia.
- 57 1962-75 Vietnam Support of US war (see FRFI 196 April/May 2007).
- 58 1963-66 Borneo Counter-revolutionary intervention. British Labour defence minister Denis Healey said that the Borneo campaign would be recorded 'in the history books...as one of the most efficient uses of military force in the history of the world'. Total British and Commonwealth forces dead were 114 with considerably more than 600 Indonesians killed.
- 59 1963-67 Aden Attempted suppression of socialist-led national liberation struggle.
- 60 1963-64 British Guiana (Guyana) Suppression of riots and enforcement of State of Emergency against the elected socialist government of Cheddi Jagan.
- 61 1963 Swaziland Reinforcements sent to cover period of strike.
- 62 1963 Zanzibar (Tanzania) Preparations for election.
- 63 1964 Yemen Radfan campaign against socialist-led revolutionaries.
- 64 1964 Zanzibar (Tanzania) Suppression of revolt.
- 65 1964 Tanganyika (Tanzania) Army mutiny.
- 66 1964 Uganda Army mutiny.
- 67 1964 Kenya Army mutiny.
- 68 1964 British Guiana (Guyana) Communal riots.
- 69 1965 Mauritius Suppression of riots.
- 70 1965 Bechuanaland (Botswana) Guarding the BBC's Francistown radio station.
- 71 1966 Indonesia British Special Forces participate in coup which results in approximately one million people killed, many of them communists and communist supporters.
- 72 1966 Hong Kong Suppression of riots.
- 73 1966 Das Island Abu Dhabi oil dispute.
- 74 1966 Seychelles Suppression of riots against detachment of island possessions.
- 75 1967 Hong Kong Suppression of Red Guard riots.
- 76 1967 Libya Guarding oil installations and preventing coup against King Idris.
- 77 1968 Bermuda State of Emergency.
- 78 1968 Mauritius State of Emergency.
- 79 1969 Antigua Operation Sheepskin against a civil uprising.
- 80 1969 Anguilla Suppression of uprising.
- 81 1969 onwards North of Ireland

- Suppression of revolt - between 1969 and 2001 3,523 people and 710 British serving troops were killed.
- 82 1970 Cayman Islands Suppression of opposition to colonial rule.
- 83 1970 British Honduras (Belize) Guatemalan invasion threat.
- 84 1970 Jordan 'Black September' Operation Shoveller to protect King Hussein against an uprising in support of the Palestinians who were under attack from Jordanian troops. This was a critical intervention shaping the Middle East henceforward.
- 85 1971-76 Dhofar (Oman) Suppression of socialist-led revolt.
- 86 1972 Bomb scare on Queen Elizabeth II.
- 87 1972-73 North Atlantic 'Cod War II' Iceland extends territorial waters from 12 to 50 miles.
- 88 1973 Egypt RAF moves UN troops after Yom Kippur war.
- 89 1973 Pakistan/Bangladesh Operation Lucan RAF assist in exchange of refugees.
- 90 1973 Bermuda British governor and his assistant assassinated, State of Emergency imposed. Alleged assassin hanged, although the death penalty had been abolished in Britain it continued in the colonies.
- 91 1974 Malta Defence of British bases during anti-crown disturbances. Premier Dom Mintoff declared Malta a republic and negotiated end of bases by 1979.
- 92 1974 Falkland Islands/Malvinas Tensions over possession with Argentinian government.
- 93 1974 Kuwait.
- 94 1974 Diego Garcia (Indian Ocean) Removal of population. Labour government purchased the Chagos Islands from Mauritius for £3 million.
- 95 1974 Gibraltar.
- 96 1974 Cyprus Operation Ablant evacuation of British nationals after Turkey invaded.
- 97 1975-76 North Atlantic 'Cod War III' Iceland extended territorial waters from 50 to 200 miles.
- 98 1977 British Honduras (Belize) Guatemala invaded.
- 99 1977 Somalia British Special Forces supported their West German counterparts at Mogadishu airport after the Red Army Faction hijacked a Boeing 737.
- 100 1978 Lebanon Supporting UN force; transporting Fijian troops via Tel Aviv en route to Lebanon.
- 101 1979 Iran Revolution Evacuation of

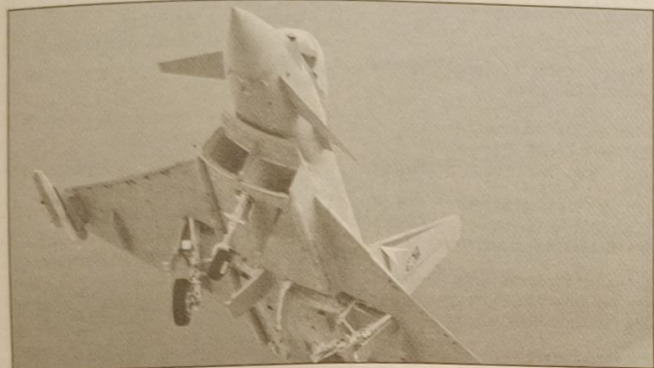
- westerners.
- 102 1979-84 Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).
- 103 1980 New Hebrides Operation Titan Royal Marines suppress civil unrest
- 104 1982 Falklands Islands/Malvinas war against Argentina.
- 105 1982 Egypt Part of UN force stationed in Sinai.
- 106 1983 Lebanon stationed in Beirut.
- 107 1983 Aden/Yemen Evacuation of British nationals.
- 108 1986 Gibraltar Reinforcement of air defences after US bombed Libya.
- 109 1986 Cyprus Reinforcement of Akrotiri base after US bombed Libya.
- 110 1987-88 Dubai Persian Gulf minesweeping by Royal Navy and RAF.
- 111 1988 Gibraltar SAS assassinated three Provisional IRA volunteers.
- 112 1991 Gulf War I.
- 113 1991-2003 Iraq RAF bombing raids and enforcement of no-fly zones.
- 114 1992 onwards (Bosnia) Yugoslavia.
- 115 1994 Yemen Evacuation of embassy.
- 116 1994 Kuwait Operation Driver to reinforce British garrison and warn Iraqi regime against invasion.
- 117 1995 Angola Operation Chantress with UN after civil war.
- 118 1997 Congo Operation Determinate to evacuate British nationals caught up in civil war.
- 119 1998 Congo Operation Ladbroke to evacuate British nationals.
- 120 1999 onwards Kosovo with NATO force.
- 121 1999 East Timor Part of UN contingent.
- 122 2000 East Timor With UN force.
- 123 2000 Sierra Leone Intervention in civil war and attacks on Gambia.
- 124 2001 Macedonia Operation Essential Harvest to disarm Albanian irregular troops.
- 125 2001 onwards Afghanistan.
- 126 2003 onwards Iraq.
- 127 2003 Congo Operation Coral with the UN on 'stabilisation duties'.
- 128 2003 Sierra Leone Operation Keeling to retrieve British soldiers captured by 'West End Boys'.
- 129 2004 Cote D'Ivoire Operation Phillis to evacuate British nationals.

'My name is O'Kelly, I've heard the revelly
From Birr to Bareilly, from Leeds to Lahore
Hong Kong and Peshawar,
Lucknow and Etawah,
And fifty five more all ending in "pore".'
Rudyard Kipling

The spoils of war – BAE announces rising profits

THOMAS VINCENT

On 9 August BAE Systems announced sales of £6.9 billion for the six months up to 30 June, an 8% increase on the same period last year. Operating profits for the period were £643 million, up 19% on the 2006 figure. BAE is the largest arms manufacturer in Britain and the fourth largest in the world in terms of sales, supplying customers in over 100 countries.



BAE Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft – sold to Saudi Arabia

BAE describes its growth as fuelled by the continuing US and British military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, which has led to 'numerous operational requirement orders', primarily for vehicles and small to medium grade ammunition. Recent estimates put the costs of the occupation of Iraq for Britain alone at a minimum of £6.6 billion to date. Arms expenditure by the 15 largest military-spending countries increased 7% after inflation during 2006. Sales by BAE's Land and Armaments group for the six months up to 30 June were 43% higher than a year earlier, compared to only 2.7% growth for BAE's Electronics, Intelligence and Support group. BAE's growing profits rely on the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. BAE is among the companies which have benefited from the increased demand for Mine Resistance Ambush Protected (MRAP) wheeled vehicles, as imperialist armies attempt to adapt to the challenges of sustained popular resistance and reduce the vulnerability of support vehicles. In June BAE signed a contract to supply 441 MRAP vehicles to the US military, and on 31 July BAE completed the £2.2 billion acquisition of Armor Holdings Inc., a major US supplier of utility vehicles which reported sales of \$2.4 billion for 2006. BAE has benefited from the higher growth rates of the US arms market, with their US-derived businesses expanding 12% in the first half of 2007. BAE has a direct interest in the expansion of the US war machine.

Saudi Arabia, a key ally of US and British imperialism, has long been a BAE priority. This September BAE announced the agreement of a new contract with Saudi Arabia to supply 72 Typhoon aircraft and associated training and support worth some £40 billion. In June the US Department of Justice notified BAE that it was commencing a formal investigation into BAE over charges of corruption which include its dealings with Saudi Arabia. However it is unlikely that an investigation would be allowed to seriously threaten imperialist interests. In December 2006 an investigation by the British government's Serious Fraud Office was dropped after warnings that it could 'damage national security'.

War is inevitable under imperialism, as imperialist ruling classes compete for a share of the plunder. In periods of crisis this rivalry becomes all the more intense. If the interdependence of the state and corporations was ever in doubt, in December 2005 the British government published its Defence Industrial Strategy, outlining in detail the long-term partnership between the Ministry of Defence and industry. BAE has taken an overtly political role in 'educating' the public

about the moral legitimacy of extreme violence when in the hands of the state, philosophising in its Corporate Responsibility Report 2006 that 'Human nature creates conflict, not the defence industry', and that 'The fundamental role of the defence industry is to support governments in providing national security to protect its citizens.'



In return, the violence employed by imperialist governments in putting down resistance benefits BAE and its shareholders. The underlying earnings of 15.3p per share during the first half of 2007 are 31.9% greater than for the same period in 2006. BAE's Interim Report 2007 describes the 'high tempo of military operations' being carried out by British and US forces overseas as the main factor driving demand, and looks forward to this continuing: 'While operations in these regions continue, near-term growth is anticipated.' A section of the British ruling class has a direct interest in the continued escalation of military conflicts and in the war drive of the major imperialist powers. The integration of the ruling class's command of different sections of the economy is exemplified by BAE Chairman Dick Oliver, who is also a non-executive director of Reuters Group plc and former group chief executive of BP. Ultimately such profits based on destruction are totally unsustainable and are another indication of the parasitic and decaying nature of British capitalism.

The Prisoners Fightback page will be back in the next issue of FRFI. Readers in prison are encouraged to send articles and material for publication.

REVIEW

Private health care: poor pay with their lives

Sick Michael Moored, 2007, US

Sick is the latest film by US documentary maker Michael Moored, acclaimed for his films *Bowling for Columbine* and *Fahrenheit 9/11*. The film is an indictment of the US health service, targeting the parasitic insurance companies which run the industry. *Sick* starts with a scene of a man stitching up his own leg – quite simply because he was too poor to afford medical insurance. Moored then interviews an uninsured man who cut off two of his fingers in an accident. He had to choose between paying \$72,000 to have both fingers sewn back on, \$60,000 to have just the main digit sewn back on or \$12,000 for the smaller finger. But Moored says the focus of the film is not so much about the 47 million people in the US who are living without medical insurance but those lucky ones with it.

In the US if you want health cover you have to pay for it. According to *USE Today* the average cost for a family health insurance policy topped \$10,000 in 2005. Yet, as Moored film highlights, even paying those huge fees does not guarantee that you receive treatment if you are ill. With the aid of former insurance workers and doctors, the film demonstrates that in the cold pursuit of profit the insurance industries adopt all means at their disposal not to honour a claim. One of the film's most cruel examples was that of a poor black woman who had managed to scrape together enough money to pay for health cover for herself and her daughter. When her daughter became ill in the middle of the night she took her to the nearest hospital. However, her insurance company refused to cover her at this hospital and forced her to take her sick daughter to another instead. She died on arrival. This is just one case out of many shown in the film highlighting the human suffering that this unjust system inflicts.

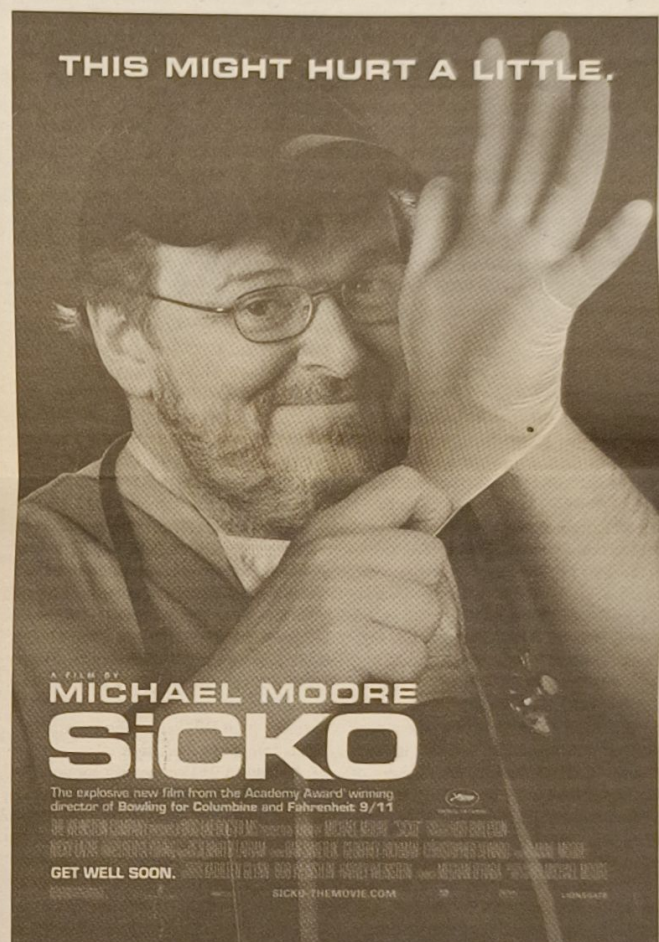
This state of affairs exists in the US because health care is a commodity like any other. If you can't pay you go without. If you pay a bit you may get treated – depending on conditions x, y and z. There is no intention of providing a quality service to all. Excessive premiums and super-inflated medication are the results of this profit-driven system. The insurance corporations and pharmaceutical giants, like the oil and arms companies, have huge political clout. *Sick* illustrates that successive US administrations have been financially backed by the 'health' sector including the current Bush administration and Hilary Clinton, Democratic nominee favourite for the next presidency. As a result legislation has always favoured those running the industry. From the McCarthy era of the 1950s up to the 1970s, a climate of anti-communism and right-wing fervour was prevalent in the US. 'Socialisation of health care' was presented as a dangerous move towards communism by the US ruling class. This reactionary sentiment culminated with Nixon's decision to fully expose to the market what limited health care provision existed and set in place the trend which exists to this day.

This film is aimed at a US audience to whom Moored hopes to demonstrate the insanity of their system of health care while showing that there are alternatives. He does this by visiting Canada, Britain, France and Cuba

and compares these countries' socialised health care systems to the US model. The contrast is remarkable. State-controlled systems are clearly shown as providing better care and paid for through taxation (and directly by the state in the case of Cuba). When he asks a woman from the US living in Paris why the French have better health provision she replies it is because the French people have a history of protest and demand security and welfare: 'In France the government is

tionable, but there is no doubting that he received excellent health care provision. The US system can be the best in the world provided you are a member of the ruling class and have got the huge financial means to buy into that system. But for the majority there is no such privilege and comfort, just anxiety and insecurity.

The true political strength of the film comes out when Moored takes some sick 9/11 firefighters to Cuba for treatment. In a hilarious scene in which queues form to board a boat



afraid of the people, in the US the people are afraid of the government.'

The only real weakness in *Sick* is that Moored over-praises the NHS and paints it as a utopian example of health provision. There is little mention of the long waiting lists and moves towards privatisation that have and are continuing to erode such provision. The existence of a two-tier system, where the rich can receive quicker treatment, is not mentioned. As a US film maker educating others in the US about their system Moored can be forgiven for this oversight. British viewers, though, should take heed and realise that privatisation of the NHS will lead to the same inequalities and insecurities as those existing in the US.

In response to the issues dealt with by the film Rudy Giuliani, former Mayor of New York and now Republican nominee for the US presidency said: 'I had prostate cancer, five, six years ago. My chance of surviving prostate cancer, and thank God I was cured of it, in the United States, 82 percent. My chances of surviving prostate cancer in England? Only 44 percent under socialised medicine.' The percentages he gives are ques-

from Miami to Cuba, Moored turns on their head prevailing US stereotypes about Cuba being a backward and dangerous enemy. The firefighters, heralded in the US media as heroes just after 9/11 had been left to rot by the US ruling class. Suffering from chronic lung disorders after inhaling the ash from the towers the firefighters were given treatment in a Havana hospital – treatment no better, no worse, than the average Cuban would get. For the first time in years they had a full medical check, a diagnosis of their condition, surgery, medication and full dental care to boot. One woman was in tears because she found it so difficult to believe that in a third world country she was shown such compassion and support yet in her country, the world's richest, she was left to fend for herself. Intentionally or not the film demonstrates that only a planned socialist economy can provide, and most importantly guarantee to provide (unlike in the case of Britain, France and Canada) full and top quality health provision for all.

Political, comical, timely, informative, thought-provoking, terrifying – *Sick* is documentary film-making at its

FRFI round up

Fight racism! fight imperialism!

The British ruling class is aiming to normalise genocide and make its ongoing brutality against the people of Iraq and Afghanistan an acceptable part of life for the British public. Likewise it continues to portray its attacks on the working class here and its unceasing erosion of democratic rights as inevitable and incontestable. Our task as communists in an imperialist country is to expose and confront this and to build the movement of those who do not accept imperialism's version of 'normality'. FRFI activists continue to be active on the streets across Britain.

On 3 November up to 50 people marched through south Manchester in opposition to the racist Labour government's anti-asylum policies. The demands were: For the right to work! Stop starving asylum seekers! No to destitution! Stop deportations! End all immigration controls! There were banners from NWASDG, FRFI and the British Libya Solidarity Campaign, and the march was supported by members of IOIR and the Anarchist Federation.

On the Monday after the demo NWASDG learnt that the campaign that first led to its formation had been victorious with Eucharika and Timeyi Jakpa winning their fight against the attempt to deport them to Nigeria (see page 16).

In Newcastle FRFI supporters have



Victory to the Intifada demonstration in Oxford Street, London, 11 November

Defend asylum seekers – fight racism!

In the last FRFI we reported that Sabah Abdul Rahman Kasim, a refugee from Iraq, had been arrested by Border and Immigration Agency officers on a bus in Manchester. North West Asylum Seekers Defence Group (NWASDG) has since learned that on 8 November Sabah was deported to Yemen. Just weeks after Sabah's arrest his friend Faraydun Abdullazada, an Iranian refugee and active NWASDG member was arrested in an almost identical way, this time with ticket inspectors collaborating with the police. Faraydun was with a Turkish refugee, also in NWASDG, who quickly phoned round comrades from the group, who organised a militant picket in front of the police station, with members of the RCG, the International Organisation of Iranian Refugees (IOIR) and No Borders. Within a few hours Faraydun was released and, as he has since said, 'without this protest I would have been in the same situation as Sabah.' As a communist, Faraydun would face imprisonment and even death if deported to Iran.

continued to work to strengthen Tyneside Community Action for Refugees (TCAR) and the Pledge of Resistance against dawn raids. When immigration police carried out two dawn raids in the West End of Newcastle on 24 October, TCAR activists and local people came out to monitor and oppose the raids. Four people were arrested for obstruction and are due in court in January, but no asylum seekers were taken. From 26 to 28 October TCAR representatives participated in a lively march from Sheffield to Lindholme Detention Centre organised by South Yorkshire Migrant and Asylum Action Group. On 2 November TCAR held a demonstration outside Government Offices North East against deportations and in solidarity with a TCAR member from DR Congo who is currently under threat of deportation.

London FRFI supporters continue to organise monthly demonstrations outside Communications House Immigration Reporting Centre and are working with other groups to begin a campaign in support of the Harmondsworth 4, who are due to stand trial following the uprising at the Removal Centre in December 2006 (see page 16 and FRFI 195).

LONDON

Wednesday 28 November 7pm
LSE FRFI Student Society with Rock around the Blockade (RATB)
Documentary film: *End of a Revolution?* followed by discussion with the producer Brian Moser
Room E304, East Building
London School of Economics (LSE)
Houghton Street, WC2
(Nearest tube Holborn)

Wednesday 12 December 7pm
LSE FRFI Student Society/RATB
Film: *The power of community – how Cuba survived peak oil*
Room S50, LSE

Saturday 15 December 8pm-2am
Rebel Music – benefit gig raising money for the Speaking Tour
Featuring Brothers Bab, 8-piece ska band with calypso twist followed by DJs
The Others
6-8 Manor Road, N16
£5 before 10pm, £7 after 10pm

Sunday 16 December 11am
Marx's London – a guided walk
Piccadilly Circus exit 1 (above ground)
Raising money for the RATB
Speaking Tour £5

Saturday 22 December 7.30pm
RATB fundraising meal
Thomas's Café and Sandwich Bar, 418
Essex Rd, N1
(Nearest tube Highbury and Islington)

Every Thursday 6-8pm
Victory to the Intifada!
Demonstration outside
Marks & Spencer

Democratic rights

In Newcastle police harassment had abated for two months following the Rally for Democratic Rights on 1 September. However, on 2 November four comrades were issued with summonses for collecting donations without a licence at a street event on 5 May against the deportation of the Akdogan family to Turkey. When they appeared in court on 13 November, a demonstration outside was held by Guler Akdogan, FRFI supporters, and members of Tyneside Solidarity Campaign and Tyneside Socialist Forum. The case was adjourned to 4 December. FRFI will continue to fight in the courts and through our continued activity on the streets for the democratic right to collect donations.

Victory to the Intifada

For seven years FRFI activists in London

EVENTS

Oxford Street, WC1
(Nearest tube Marble Arch)

Tuesdays 4 December and 8 January 1-2pm
Demonstration: Defend asylum seekers! Fight Labour's racist immigration laws!
Communications House
Old Street, EC1
(Nearest tube Old Street)

For further details call 020 7837 1688
Or 07790 896 430
Email northlondon@rcgfrfi.plus.com/
eastlondon@rcgfrfi.plus.com

NEWCASTLE

Thursday 31 January 7pm
Film: *The power of community – how Cuba survived peak oil*
Stage 2, Northumbria University Student Union, Sandyford Road

Every Saturday 3pm
Weekly meeting of Tyneside Community Action for Refugees
Downstairs at Amnesty Bookshop, bottom of Westgate Road. Monthly general meetings in St Thomas Church, Haymarket.
tynesidecam@yahoo.co.uk 07989879310

We also have street actions in Newcastle every Saturday 12-2pm and regular stalls in the West End: call or email for details

For further details call 07858 346 276
Or email frfinortheast@googlemail.com
Website: www.frfinortheast.co.uk

MANCHESTER

Saturday 15 December 12 noon
North West Asylum Seekers Defence Group (NWASDG) organising meeting

Friends Meeting House, Mount Street
(behind central library)
Contact NWASDG 07779 189 794
Email fightback_05@yahoo.com
Website www.asylum-seekers-defence.org.uk

The Cubans are coming to Manchester!
The Rock around the Blockade campaign in Manchester will soon be confirming the details of a fundraising gig and public meetings in the lead up to the Cuban speaking tour in the new year. To get involved or for details of the next organising meeting contact: 07940 988 203 email: ratb@riseup.net

Contact Manchester RCG: 07816 547 066
Email mrcrgfrfi@fmail.net
Website: www.manchesterfrfi.co.uk

GLASGOW

Thursday 6 December 7-9pm
Public meeting: Police, racism and the state
Govanhill Neighbourhood Centre, Daisy Street

Thursday 13 December 7-9pm,
FRFI 200 Readers' Group
R610, Boyd Orr building
Glasgow University

Saturday 22 December 12-4pm
Day of action against imperialism, war and poverty
Top of Buchanan Street, Glasgow city centre
Throughout January we will be holding organising meetings to help build for the Cuban speaking tour meetings in Glasgow.

For further details email
friscotland@yahoo.co.uk or go to
www.bebo.com/FRFI

have maintained the weekly pickets of Marks & Spencer, Britain's largest corporate sponsor of Israel. On 11 November FRFI comrades held a successful day of action with a mobile picket down Oxford Street stopping outside Marks & Spencer, Selfridges and John Lewis as part of the international week of solidarity against the apartheid wall. John Lewis is Britain's biggest stocker of Caterpillar clothing. Caterpillar makes the bulldozers used by the Israeli army to demolish Palestinian homes.

Stop the War

Demonstrations calling for the immediate withdrawal of imperialist troops are also continuing on a weekly basis in Newcastle. When Tony Blair spoke in South Shields on 14 November, at a public lecture hosted by Foreign Secretary David Miliband, FRFI activists joined a protest called by South Tyne-

side Stop the War and used lively street theatre to denounce Labour imperialism and demand the release of the prisoners held at occupied Guantanamo Bay.

In October, FRFI comrades in Glasgow supported demonstrations outside Celtic Park against the appointment of former Labour Home Secretary John Reid as chairman of Celtic FC. Banners reading 'No War Criminals at Celtic' and 'Rebel against Reid! No to Doctor Death!' were prominently displayed and seen by the thousands of fans going to the game. The protests involved over a hundred people, as Celtic fans, supporters' clubs, republicans and FRFI comrades stood against 'Doctor Death', chanting and demonstrating against this notorious racist, unionist politician.

FRFI will continue to be active over the coming months – see our events column above for information on how to join the struggle.

RATB round up

Remembering Che – fighting injustice

Throughout October, Rock around the Blockade marked the 40th anniversary of the death of Che Guevara and paid tribute to the enduring legacy of his thought and example with activities and meetings all around the country. On Saturday 6 October, we coordinated a national day of local demonstrations in city centres from Glasgow to Trafalgar Square in London.

Public meetings were held in Glasgow and at Dundee University, while in Manchester a film showing of *Che Guevara: hasta siempre* prompted a lively debate on the differences between socialist Cuba and capitalist Britain.

On 27 October Rock around the Blockade and the FRFI students' society at LSE in London organised a Che commemoration dayschool. The dayschool

was addressed by Jorge Trujillo, second secretary of the Cuban Embassy in London. Other speakers included global health care expert and long-time supporter of Cuba, Professor Theo MacDonald, who spoke on the theme of 'Cuba: physician to the world', showing how Che Guevara's internationalism lives on in the example of Cuba's internationalist health missions. Helen Yaffe then led a discussion on Che Guevara's economic and political thought. There was a high level of debate and discussion and a collection for the forthcoming speaking tour raised over £150.

Rock around the Blockade continues to campaign for the release of the Cuban Five, unjustly imprisoned in the US for their fight against terrorism. At the end of September, RATB in Edinburgh

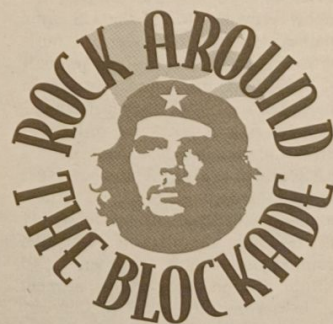
rounded off the International Month of Action for the Cuban Five with a vocal and colourful demonstration. Activists from the Hands Off Venezuela! campaign were amongst those who joined the protest. Comrades then marched to the US Consulate to demand the release of the Cuban Five. Venceremos!

Activities are being organised in all areas to raise £10,000 for our Cuba: socialism into the 21st century speaking tour (see p9 for details). On 21 October Rock around the Blockade members cycled 35 miles through Essex and raised £500. A further £200 was collected from a benefit meal held in London. Newcastle comrades made £250 at a Rebel Music solidarity gig in October. There are more gigs, meals, sponsored events, T-shirt sales and car-

boot sales in the pipeline – and don't forget to order our new 2008 Cuba calendar (see p15). Check the events list above and our website for updates and get involved in working to make the speaking tour the success it deserves to be!

Sectarians in the CSC

In October members of FRFI attended a meeting on the legacy of Che Guevara organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign in Glasgow. MSPs and a speaker from ICAP (Cuba's International Committee for Friendship between Peoples) addressed the meeting. When comrades attempted to distribute leaflets about the forthcoming Rock around the Blockade speaking tour, the CSC chairperson prevented us from doing so, stating that



under 'no circumstances' could we give out our leaflets at a CSC event. RATB in Scotland opposes this attempt to undermine work in solidarity with Cuban socialism and will oppose all such sectarianism, which serves only the interests of imperialists and opportunists.

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 ☐

Name _____

Address _____

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email _____

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LETTERS

FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX e-mail: editorial@rcgfrfi.plus.com
website: www.revolutionarycommunist.org

NHS parking charges: a tax on staff

Car parking charges have been introduced at NHS Hospitals in Glasgow. Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board have deemed this necessary to allow greater car parking facilities for staff and patients and to stop the use of hospital car parks as free parking. Staff will only be able to park on hospital sites if they have an official permit.

The Southern General Hospital in Glasgow is a large national and regional acute hospital which is at present undergoing major development to make it one of the biggest acute hospitals in the UK. Because of its specialised service to the public, we have experienced staff who travel in from rural areas to the hospital on a daily basis with no option of taking public transport.

To commence an early shift at 7.15am most of our staff rely on personal transport. If allocated a car parking permit, staff will have to pay up to £480 per year for the privilege of caring for the public.

No other public service workers, police and teachers for example, are penalised in this way. In effect staff are being taxed again.

Of real concern are those relatives who spend a lot of time at the bedside of loved ones, especially when they are at the end of their lives. Having been in this position myself, I do not think my priority would be to top up the parking meter at the expense of leaving the one I love.

There is also the question of students of all disciplines who cannot afford the £7 per day in order to train in their chosen profession. Placements can last six weeks or more and for a student on a bursary, this is not feasible.

Having worked as a nurse within the NHS in Glasgow for over 35 years, I, along with many others, oppose these charges on the grounds of being penalised for doing my job.

KATHY MULLOY
Glasgow

Farber: instrument of imperialism

In her article dealing with Samuel Farber ('False friend of the Cuban workers', FRFI 198), Helen Yaffe has done a fine job of showing up Farber's books as the anti-Cuban diatribes that they are. However, I question the implied assumption that he has a Trotskyist agenda. That is far too lofty an assumption for a man of no ideals at all!

Samuel Farber has caused immense problems among well-intentioned readers. He is known, as a speaker on public radio and on commercial radio in California, New York and North Carolina, as an anti-communist and advocate of implementing the neoliberalisation of Cuba once Fidel goes. I have heard him myself and his presentation of himself as a 'socialist' has to be taken in the most latitudinarian of contexts. In academic circles in the 1970s it was fashionable, if not *de rigueur*, to refer to oneself as a 'Marxist', especially among sociologists, but largely it fitted in with such academic privileges as long

holidays and a not particularly physically or mentally taxing lifestyle. Farber is a history professor at Brooklyn College whose academic claims to fame reside in three frankly anti-Castro books he wrote about Cuba and published in North Carolina. The fact that he himself is a Cuban – although schooled largely in the US – adds to his credibility.

To refer to him as a Trotskyist is surely a bit too much. Whatever we may think of Trotsky and his followers, most of them are on the side of global justice, peace and socialism. I wouldn't have thought Farber fits into that category. His books constitute a ready source of propaganda for the anti-Cuban brigade in Miami, but are touted as the work of a 'true socialist' disillusioned with Fidel Castro's leadership. He is surely no more than an instrument of US imperialism.

THEODORE H MACDONALD
Littlehampton

NEW EDITION Revolutionary Cuba: the streets are ours

An updated version of this Rock around the Blockade pamphlet, including new material on the Energy Revolution and the Battle of Ideas, will be available in February 2008. Order your copy now for the special pre-publication price of just £3 including p&p.

Please send me _____ copy/ies of the new edition of **Revolutionary Cuba: the streets are ours** at £3 each.

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Pimlico School sold off to highest bidder

Guess what? its happening again! Another school is turning into a business.

As long as I've read FRFI, you've written about education, and the PFI machine has always been just around the corner.

It turns out that Westminster Council in central London had been looking to pimp the real estate that Pimlico School sits on for years. After successfully fighting off a proposed plan to convert half of the site into private housing, it seems pupils, parents and teachers have finally been stumped. My old school has been bought for £1,000,000. Welcome to Pimlico Academy!

No matter how many horror stories I read about the fleet of sinking schools, nothing quite beats that real-life, smack-in-the-mouth sensation of utter

helplessness when capitalists swoop in. Trust me, I attended one of their open meetings: we sat in six rows at the back of the room while they helped themselves at the *en suite* sandwich bar before grumbling through their formalities. It quickly became clear that they'd already picked their suitor – the charity Future, owned by John Nash. It is most likely that the cash flow will be run by Alpha Plus, owned by Sovereign Capital of which Nash is also chairman.

We, as parents, students, ex-students and teachers were fully awake to the fact that these vultures had been circling for years and that the Ofsted report which slammed our school as a failure was the answer to all their prayers. Is it any wonder that we were reduced to a bunch of hecklers who

could do nothing to stop it?

Is it any wonder now that Terry Wrigley, former Ofsted inspector, has raised doubts over the inspection process, claiming it to be 'totally bizarre' and full of 'enormous question marks'? (p3, *West End Extra*, 16 November 2007).

The fact that the school didn't get any money out of the £12 million allocated by the council's school funds and that no formal notice was given prior to the inspection just affirms the fact that nothing can ever be expected from the British government. As long as it serves the elite it will never serve us. There is nothing we can do to change it – all we can do is destroy it.

ETHESHAM HAQUE
Peckham, South London



Pimlico School students campaign outside the school gates

Act now to support Alan Porter!

My name is Alan Porter and I am from Scotland. I am serving a life sentence in a prison in England. I am trying to persuade the Prison Service of England and Wales to transfer me to a Scottish prison. I think that as a Scottish national this should be my right but they are refusing to accept my application. I am therefore writing to ask for your help.

I was born on 10 December 1955 and brought up in Renfrewshire. I lived in Scotland until 1985, when I moved down to England. Four years later on 3 July 1989 Lewes Crown Court sentenced me to life imprisonment for killing a man in Brighton. It was a stupid, senseless act. I have never denied committing this murder or tried to blame anyone else for it, and of course I regret it terribly.

My life at the time was a bit chaotic, to say the least, and even part of the time I'd spent in England prior to getting life had been spent in prison for another offence. My intention was always to return to Scotland, where I had a council house that had previously been my grandfather's.

I started my sentence at HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs. I petitioned for a transfer then but it was refused.

I have every intention of going back to Scotland when I am eventually released and nobody seems to dispute that this will happen. But they won't allow me to transfer prior to then to serve my sentence. The short period of time spent in England prior to this sentence (and the fact that part of this time was passed in prison) means I have no friends, family or other connections outside of prison in England. But this is not the point. I am Scottish – ethnically and culturally.

I have repeatedly applied to the authorities in London to authorise my transfer to Scotland as such an application would have to be

agreed in England first and then in Scotland. I can't even clear the first hurdle as the Prison Service of England and Wales says that because I wasn't living in Scotland directly before my arrest and don't have family there who are lobbying for my return, I have to stay here. And the Scottish Prison Service won't even look at my application until it has been cleared in London.

I think that Scottish people are discriminated against by the legislation that allows them to decide my case on this basis (and the Race Relations Act accepts Scottish people as a distinct group who can suffer discrimination). A barrister here agrees with me; however we have been refused legal aid to take the case to court.

I am in a Catch-22 situation. I was refused a transfer to Scotland on the basis that I am not in touch with family and friends there. But I can only realistically establish any links once I'm there. At present I'm refusing to co-operate with the English prison system (ie to participate in offending behaviour courses, sentence planning etc) as a move to Scotland is all I am really concerned about.

Overseas prisoners can apply for repatriation to any country that has an agreement with Britain regarding transfer of prisoners under various conventions and treaties. Indeed the British government is seeking ways to speed up such transfers and increase their use, even to the extent of making them non-voluntary. These transfers can proceed purely on the basis of nationality and a prisoner from a country outside the United Kingdom only has to prove that he or she is from the other country. They don't need to have been ordinarily resident or have family or friends in the country. But I can't go to Scotland unless I can prove these things.

On the other hand, Welsh prisoners in prison in England can apply to transfer to prisons in Wales within the ordinary transfer system as the two parts of the UK form part of a single jurisdiction.

So prisoners from Scotland are in a no-man's-land, between the options open to Welsh prisoners and those open to prisoners of nationalities that are not part of the United Kingdom. This is clearly discriminatory and unfair.

I would therefore urge anyone who reads this letter and is concerned about this situation, both as it affects me personally, and in its wider implications for Scottish people's rights, to take the matter up by writing to the Scottish Parliament, MSPs, the Scottish press and anyone else who can lobby on my behalf.

ALAN PORTER NF1580
HMP Rye Hill, Willoughby,
Warwickshire CV23 8SZ

Alan has been an FRFI reader for most of his sentence. He has written to us on many previous occasions, but never about himself. All his previous letters have highlighted injustices in the system or campaigns for other prisoners being brutalised. We ask FRFI readers to return this solidarity and support Alan's campaign for transfer to Scotland. Applications for transfer from English to Scottish prisons are dealt with in England by the Ministry of Justice Policy and Rights Unit Cross Border Transfer Section, 1st Floor, Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, LONDON SW1P 4DF and in Scotland by: Scottish Prison Service Headquarters, Room 305, Calton House, 5 Redheughs Rigg, Edinburgh EH12 9HW.

Erratum: The article on Che's economic ideas referred to on p8/9, FRFI 199, was first printed in FRFI 139.

Prisoners need solidarity and support!

As a person involved in prison support I've been pleased to receive FRFI papers today.

From time to time I've had prisoner students over the years, and become concerned as many told me about themselves and their conditions. Then I had the experience, familiar to many, of being wrongly arrested and fitted up by the police here in Brighton and Hove and this, as may be imagined, only added to my desire to help prisoners. I now correspond with many here and overseas, where some of the prisoners are on death row.

I was with Pauline Campbell on a recent demonstration outside Send prison near Wokingham and am involved in corresponding with and actively helping in campaigns

prisoners are waging. I know 'the system' for what it is, and from my own experience alone I denounce the police, who ill-treated me at a time when my health was far from good, as contemptible bullying cowards. The police and judiciary get away with far too much and anyone whom the state doesn't like for whatever reason could be fitted up at any time; the numbers of deaths in police and prison custody is an outrage and I extend sincere condolences to all who have lost loved ones in this way. I tried, a while back, to commit suicide as a result of my ill-treatment by police so I have, in a real way, 'been there'.

GEORGE COOMBS
Brighton

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

Racist attacks on immigrant workers

Racist attacks have increased sharply across Britain in the last two years. Those under attack include Middle Eastern and Asian people targeted as a result of the government's racist 'anti-terror' campaign against Muslims. But also increasingly now under attack are central and Eastern European migrants who migrated to Britain to work following the admission of 10 new 'accession' states of the EU ('A10') in May 2004. In 2005 it was estimated that there are 49,000 racist attacks a year in Britain. CHARLES CHINWEIZU reports.

Scotland

Racist attacks have nearly doubled in the two years to 2007 – Scottish police recorded 5,000 racist incidents in 2005/6. Over a third of the 900 race hate crimes in Edinburgh were against Eastern Europeans. Polish worker Patryk Mnich was left fighting for his life after being beaten in a street attack in Pilgrimage. Police are now dealing with an average of three racist incidents every day; every weekend in Edin-

burgh immigrant workers, usually from Poland, are physically assaulted or face racist insults.

England

In Basingstoke in February 2007, a gang of 16 teenage boys and girls kicked and punched three Polish men for at least ten minutes in a shopping centre.

In Telford in August 2007, a month after swastikas and racist graffiti telling Polish people they were not welcome

was scrawled on walls, a 30-year-old Lithuanian was attacked with a paving slab, almost blinding him.

In Clacton teachers and students from Spain, Germany, Italy, France and China, staying with host families for a few weeks to improve their English and get a feel for life in Britain were racially attacked. One teacher was kicked in the head.

In Oxford a gang of four or five men dragged 20-year-old Polish security guard Jakub Mucha out of his car at a petrol station, stabbed him in the ear and beat him with baseball bats.

North of Ireland

At least 45,000 Eastern European workers have come to the north of Ireland from the A10 states since May 2004. In 2005/06, the police recorded 936 racial incidents – double that of the previous year. Many more incidents are not reported because immigrants do not trust the racist police. British-backed Loyalist paramilitaries are behind at least 90% of reported

racist attacks

On 20 May 2006 a Polish family was forced to barricade themselves into a bedroom in their house in Derry after three masked men forced their way into their home armed with a hatchet and an iron bar. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has said it believes the attack was racially motivated. The PSNI is still investigating the racist attack on three Polish immigrants by up to four men in a bar in the same city in 2004. One of the victims received 13 stitches after being glassed in the face, while another had his nose broken.

In Belfast in March 2006, seven men armed with baseball bats smashed their way into a house, attacking a 51-year-old man with a hammer. In Dunmurry in June 2006 two homes belonging to Lithuanians were attacked.

Labour government fuels racism

The government has constantly tried to blame Eastern European migrants for

'pressures on public services,' while the real pressures come from the running down and privatisation of health, housing and other services. These lies have contributed directly to the racist attacks.

The British state encourages migrant workers from Eastern Europe to come here as it wants their cheap labour. But it does nothing to prevent racist attacks; on the contrary, a climate of racial terror is of use to it, as immigrant workers are discouraged from settling permanently and deterred from agitating against exploitation and for better pay and conditions.

This attitude was graphically illustrated in October 2007 when, having learned of the thousands of Eastern European women kept as sex slaves in British brothels, many of whom were locked up, forced into prostitution, and told their families back home would be killed if they refused to obey orders, Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said that a blanket guarantee that none would face deportation 'would be likely to act more generally as a pull factor'.



FRFI supporters at No Borders demonstration outside Harmondsworth Removal Centre

Free the Harmondsworth 4 – no show trial

On 13 November activists from London No Borders, Crossroads Women's Centre, the Institute for Race Relations, National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns, Barbed-Wire Britain and Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! met to launch a campaign to defend and support the Harmondsworth 4, who face trial early next year following the uprising at Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre on 28 November 2006.

Harmondsworth is run by private company Kalyx, a subsidiary of Sodexo. The protest came the day after the publication of a damning inspection report by Chief Inspector of Prisons Anne Owens into conditions and treatment of detainees at Harmondsworth, and was directly triggered by the attempts of members of staff to prevent a group of detainees from watching a news broadcast about the report. Prison riot squads (Tornado teams) were drafted in to batter the protesters into submission. About 50 detainees were left in a courtyard all night and others were locked in their rooms even though parts of the detention centre were on fire.

The revolt was widely reported after a news helicopter photographed the words 'SOS: Freedom' and 'HELP' spelled out on the courtyard floor with bedsheets. Fearful that this would lead to support for the prisoners and make it more difficult to denounce them as violent animals, the government rapidly declared the airspace above the centre a 'no fly zone', citing vague 'security reasons'.

The campaign meeting heard from activists who had supported detainees who were tried following previous detention centre uprisings at Campsfield House and Yarl's Wood and agreed to contact the detainees who are to be put on trial for the Harmondsworth uprising and offer our support to them.

For more information email harmondsworth4@riseup.net

Labour boasts of deporting 45,000 people in 2007

The British Labour government has moved way beyond the days when it assured the public that it welcomed 'genuine' asylum seekers and was only introducing 'tough' measures to screen out possible abusers of the system. On 20 November the Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) issued a bullish press release, headlined 'Annual asylum applications at a fifteen year low: record number of foreign national prisoners removed'.

BIA boasted it had 'removed a record 3,500 foreign national prisoners so far this year' and

that in the quarter July to September has overseen a 15% increase in all enforced removals and 'voluntary returns' compared to the same period last year.

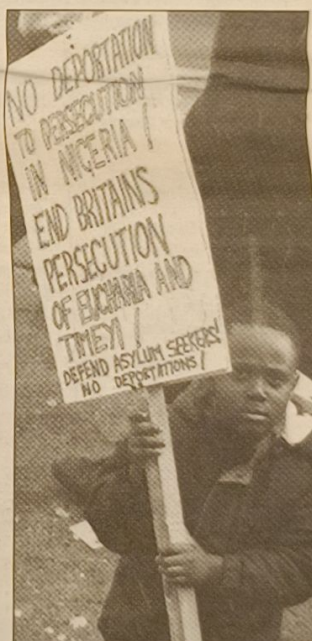
BIA crowed that altogether this year 45,000 people have been removed from the UK, including nearly 10,000 asylum seekers, and promised it would not rest on its laurels: 'We will toughen our borders further, which is why we are introducing biometric visas to tie travellers to one identity, an e-Borders programme which counts everyone in and out of the country, and ID cards

Samina Altaf and Family, Justina and Yonre Must Stay and Defend Abdullah Gawaan and Family.

DETC ran stalls in the city centre, at Longsight and Gorton markets, Gorton Park and Timeyi's school in Abbey Hey, Gorton, and succeeded in sending over 900 individual letters of protest to the Home Office. On 25 September 2006, 2,250 DETC signatures were presented to Home Office minister Liam Byrne MP by campaign stalwart Phil Tarbuck at the Friends Meeting House, Manchester.

Under all this pressure, driven by Eucharia's determination to fight for her and her son's life and their right to stay in Britain, the Home Office have given in and granted them indefinite leave to remain. Without this campaign, Eucharia and Timeyi would have been deported long ago, facing the same fate as the 18,280 asylum seekers deported last year.

Throughout, Eucharia and Manchester RCG insisted that the campaign should be political, emphasising the link between racism in Britain and British imperialist exploitation abroad such as in Nigeria. Some so-called anti-deportation organisations boycotted the



campaign because of the RCG's involvement and refused to publicise or support it, but all these efforts did not succeed in isolating the campaign, which, due to its consistent activity, raised its profile, thereby bringing attention to the treatment of asylum seekers in Britain, and to what British companies like Royal Dutch Shell oil company were doing in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

This campaign led to the forming of the North West Asylum Seekers Defence Group (NWASDG) in May 2006.

Manchester RCG would like to say big congratulations to Eucharia and Timeyi Jakpa for their wonderful and inspiring achievement. May their victory give inspiration to other asylum seekers campaigning against this racist Labour government, and strengthen the hand of those campaigning in support of refugees on a principled non-charity, anti-racist standpoint, in defence of all immigrants, against immigration controls and the oppression of refugees in Britain.

Manchester Revolutionary Communist Group



Liam Byrne: feeling smug

for foreign nationals in Britain.'

Borders and Immigration Minister Liam Byrne said '...the system needs to be faster and tougher. So foreign criminals will soon face automatic deportation in the new year and I'm opening almost 25 per cent more detention space by next Christmas – including a new detention centre right next to Gatwick Airport.'