

# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

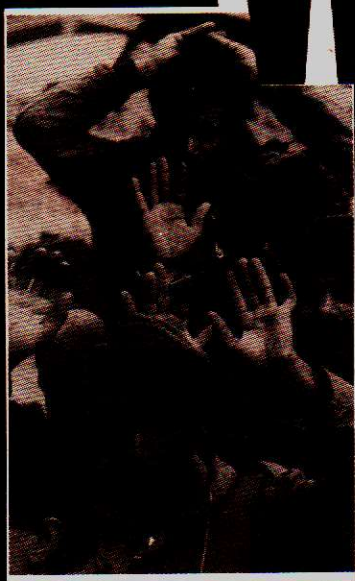
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## WORLD OF WAR



# SLUR RIOTS



# NATIONS SLIDE TO BARBARISM

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# Sterling and Maastricht – a socially explosive mix

'There is going to be no devaluation, no realignment', anything else 'would be a soft option... a betrayal of our future.' Thus John Major struck a pose as the iron man of British capital. Factories close, homes are repossessed, workers are laid off in their tens of thousands and economic pundits write menacingly of 'riots in the streets'. Yet there is a rationale to this folly. DAVID REED and TREVOR RAYNE report.

With Britain's entry into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in October 1990, the City of London finally chose to commit itself to be part of a future European-wide capitalist bloc, to seek the only means to secure its role as the world's leading financial centre. To do this requires a 'strong' currency. Major and Lamont have thrust themselves forward as the placemen of rentier capital, the bankers, the currency dealers, international stock traders and speculators – the most parasitic section of British capital.

However, Major's and the City's project is becoming ever more perilous as it confronts the \$900bn hot money, flowing every day through the world's currency markets. To maintain the parity of the overvalued Pound, in August the Bank of England was forced to throw \$1.3bn of its gold and foreign currency reserves on to the markets. It had no impact. The speculators merely pocketed it. The markets were not impressed. So in the first week of September the government arranged a £7.25bn foreign currency loan, the equivalent of one third of official currency reserves to hold the Pound steady over the period of the French referendum on Maastricht. It will be used to buy Pounds in order to support Sterling's international value, as well as to finance Britain's spiralling public sector borrowing. Thatcher's once-thrifty housekeepers have thrown caution to the winds. It has had little effect. The Lira was devalued on 14 September. The Pound could well be next.

The scale of the speculation that is taking place against the Pound and a string of other currencies has been magnified by the combined effects of a probable substantial 'No' vote in the French referendum and the gap between very low US interest rates and high German ones.

US interest rates are low and the dollar undervalued as Bush tries to revive the US economy ahead of the Presidential elections in circumstances where the huge US government debt prohibits tax cuts and increased

borrowing. German rates are high as its government pumps up to \$120bn into the east as part of its reunification programme, increasing the budget deficit and fuelling the demand for funds. National interests brush aside fruitless gestures at international co-operation.

International money, however, is backing the Deutschmark for both the high interest earnings and the likelihood of its revaluation against other ERM currencies.

Speculators are focusing on the weakest links in the European chain of currencies. When set against the 'convergence criteria' for monetary union established at Maastricht (see FRFI 108) and the parlous state of the British economy, the Pound is one such weak link. In effect European currencies are being measured against the 'mighty' Deutschmark and the German economy. The needs of German capital are exacting their price across Europe.

In promoting the City of London's global ambitions, the Tory Government is wreaking social and economic destruction. GDP has fallen 4.2 per cent over two years and is set to fall a further 0.5 to 1 per cent by the end of 1992. Manufacturing output fell by 8.2 per cent between its peak in 1990 and May 1992.

Industrial and commercial companies' (ICCs) profitability fell from a peak of 11.5 per cent in 1988 to 7.3 per cent in the first quarter of 1991 and has remained at this level. The financial deficit of ICCs in 1991 was £11.3bn, the fourth successive year of such deficits. Company failures in the first six months of 1992 were 30,722, an increase of 33 per cent over the 1991 rate for the same period. Failures are expected to reach 80,000 this year.

Gross consumer debt as a proportion of income is barely below its peak of last year of 91 per cent. Personal sector debt as a proportion of personal sector assets has risen to 15 per cent and mortgage debt has reached 29 per cent of the housing stock. The number of borrowers in arrears of more than six months rose to a new peak of 305,000 at

the end of June. According to the Bank of England *Quarterly Bulletin* the value of nearly 1m house owners' properties has fallen below the value of their mortgage.

Between April 1990 and July 1992 unemployment rose nearly 1.2m to more than 2.7m, from 5.6 per cent to 9.7 per cent of the labour force, using the government's own manipulated figures (using the former method of calculation estimates put unemployment at 3.87m). The number of long-term jobless (unemployed for more than one year) has now reached 905,000.

The trade deficit continues to increase and is expected to reach £11bn in what has proved to be longest recession since the 1930s. The rise will accelerate when and if growth revives.

The public sector borrowing requirement is mushrooming. By July this year, four months into the new financial year, it had already reached £11.3bn or £14.7bn excluding privatisation receipts. It is projected to reach £33bn this year and £40bn in 1993-4. On current spending plans and a limited recovery, it could reach 8-9 per cent of GDP by 1996 when the UK is pledged to reach the Maastricht target of 3 per cent. As the *Financial Times* (12 September 1992) has pointed out the government is incapable of financing such a deficit and 'cuts that effect millions of people are likely to be imposed'.

Major proclaims he is conquering inflation. In September he was triumphant that inflation had reached a four year low of 3.6 per cent. This rate, still higher than all Britain's major competitors, was won at the devastating cost of more than 1.1m workers' jobs. Undeterred our 'iron man' blunders on to his target of zero inflation. Every one percentage fall in inflation in the early 1980s required a 2.3 percentage increase in unemployment. Zero inflation using the same criteria will require an extra one million unemployed each year to the middle of 1995. Such a socially destructive programme can only produce a socially explosive response. ■

million. Unions traditionally representing the unskilled or semi-skilled workers have fallen significantly: the T&G from 2m to 1m, the G&M from over 1m to some 600,000. The response of the trade union barons has been to consolidate their property empires, and direct their appeal to the better-off sections of the working class.

With unemployment standing, in real terms, at more than 3.5 million, the TUC is still running for cover. More and more they will exclude all those who want to fight the attack on the working class; they will revert to the exclusive methods of the craft unions in the 19th century.

## TUC runs for cover

ROBERT CLOUGH

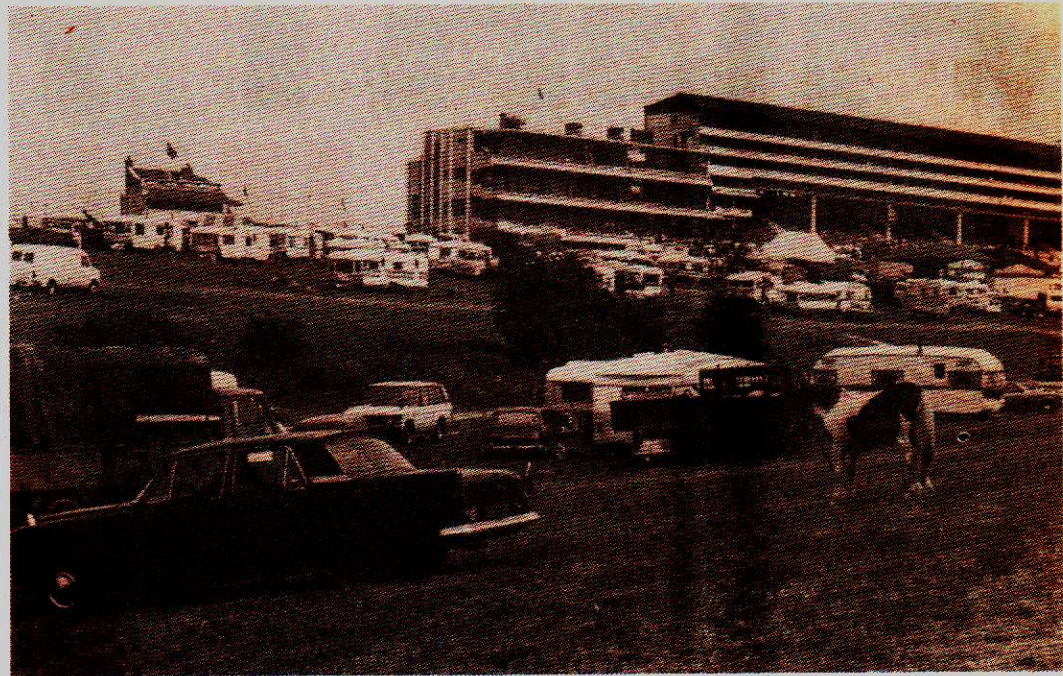
The TUC Congress met this year amid increasing internal squabbles and doubts as to whether it will survive for much longer. Its irrelevancy to the mass of the working class has already been demonstrated over the last 13 years of Tory rule.

'New realism', adopted by the TUC in 1983, expressed the narrow self-interest of more prosperous workers anxious to ben-

efit from the 'people's capitalism' of Thatcherism at the expense of the rest of the working class. The reactionary policies of the EETPU and the AEU represented this most clearly.

The invitation to the Director-General of the CBI to address this year's Congress shows how far 'new realism' will go in prostrating itself before the ruling class.

The 13 years of Tory rule have wreaked havoc with trade union membership. TUC membership in 1979 was more than 12 million; today it is about 7.7



## Tories attack Travellers

LIZ KWAST

**New government proposals could give one in three Travellers a criminal record... and make them homeless into the bargain. Gypsies and Travellers have had much publicity recently, and most of it has been negative. This is not a new phenomenon. If a group of nomadic people arrive in an area, an outburst of public indignation is almost certain. Recent headlines in local papers such as 'Gypsies out!' and 'The army should have dealt with this rape of rural Britain' are not isolated incidents but mere examples of the consistent attitude displayed towards nomadic people in Britain.**

Many Travellers have to park their caravan or bus on land that does not cater for their needs. At least one in three of all Traveller families is forced to park on bits of land that have no facilities such as water, electricity, waste collection etc. Accusations from the general public such as 'they always make a mess', and 'they are dirty', fail to take this into account. Travellers need access to health care, education and employment, like anyone else, and will therefore try to find a stopping place that allows them to benefit from what all settled people take for granted. This demand for 'authorised' sites led to several highly publicised con-

frontations between Gypsies and the police in the early 1960s.

As a result, the Caravan Sites Act (1968) put a duty on all local authorities to provide sites for nomadic people. In spite of incentives such as a 100 per cent grant from Central Government to cover the building costs, the Act has failed to solve the problem. More than 20 years after its implementation, at least one in three of all Traveller families still do not have a legal place to park.

The government has recently published a set of proposals to address the problem. Of course, there can be no question of forcing local authorities to perform what is, after all, their statutory duty. In a fine example of Tory logic, the government has decided to turn the problem around and blame the Traveller community. The press release on the new proposals talks about 'the intolerable nuisance caused by illegal camping' and fails to address the fact that this is due to a lack of site provision. Great emphasis is placed on the financial burden on the community, but it fails to mention that evictions are far more costly.

The government proposals to curb illegal camping would make it a criminal offence to park anywhere without the landowner's permission. Fines would be incurred and magistrates could prohibit offenders from returning to within one mile of the illegally-occupied

site for two years. Even the fact that most Traveller families would not be able to pay the hefty fines has been considered. Rather than running the risk of putting pressure on already overcrowded prisons, the proposals suggest that the caravan or bus can be impounded. This would make a Traveller family homeless, but no solutions are offered for such situations. It is to be supposed that these families would have to join the ever-growing ranks fighting for a bit of space in a hostel.

The proposals also contain suggestions that the Travellers should be 'encouraged' to move into housing. Although some Travellers do wish to live in houses, many prefer to continue their nomadic lifestyle. Apart from the fact that this reeks of attempts to eradicate a culture, it fails to take into account that there is already a profound lack of housing.

These proposals were put forward by the government after considerable pressure had been exercised by Tory MPs. Rather than fighting this racist attitude, the government has decided to adopt a line that will pacify these bigots in time for the Party Conference in October. I can see little difference between this policy and that of the German government which is currently considering a change in the asylum policy after a set of neo-Nazi thugs ran riot in the streets of German cities. ■

## Riots in Blackburn

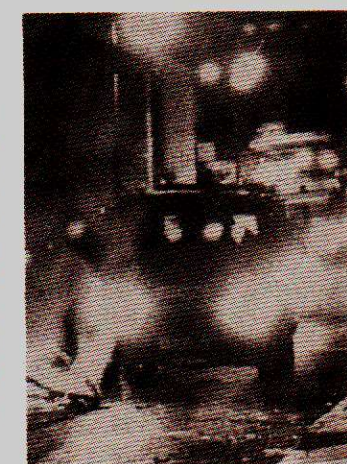
NIGEL CAFFERTY

**In the last week of July Blackburn's streets erupted into violent riots, as the inhabitants of Brookhouse and Bartwell fought pitched battles against the police.**

Events were sparked off by an incident in a local cafe which finally brought to a head a long-running dispute within the mainly Asian community. The police – equipped in full riot gear – cordoned off the area, baton charged groups of youth, and unleashed police dogs. At one point, they were confronted by a crowd of three thousand who showered them with bricks, bottles and petrol bombs, and vehicles were set on fire. Eleven police officers were injured.

Ultimately, whatever the im-

mediate trigger for the three days of rioting, these scenes have little to do with the 'Inter-ethnic warfare!' and 'Summer Madness!' screamed about by



the paid liars of the local press and media, and everything to do

with the anger and frustration of the youth of Brookhouse and Bastwell who have had to bear the brunt of the decay of Britain's inner city estates, in an region described as '... one of the most deprived areas of the country', where unemployment stands at 40 per cent, almost half the available housing stock is in a state of decay, leading to chronic overcrowding, and 90 per cent of local children are eligible for free school meals.

Yet rather than attack these very concrete reasons for the anger that erupted in July, the deputy leader of Blackburn's Labour-controlled council, Gail Barton, placed herself fairly and squarely on the side of the British state. 'As a council we will do all we can to support the police... in their attempts to... bring the area back to normality.' ■



# Yugoslavia – great power politics

The war in former Yugoslavia has had tragic consequences for all the peoples concerned. The smouldering embers of national resentment and memory were breathed back to life in the late 1980s as Yugoslavia disintegrated. Rival nationalist cliques, often with a less than overwhelming popular mandate, were the most enthusiastic of those fanning the flames. The fires have now engulfed Croatia and Bosnia and threaten Kosovo and Macedonia. Two and a half million refugees are the living, wandering testament to the inferno.

MAXINE WILLIAMS

What is currently happening in Bosnia, with a republic dismembered between Croatia and Serbia, leaving nowhere at all for the Muslim population, may seem awful enough to contemplate. The Serbian and Croatian nationalists seem hell-bent on their destructive course. Only exhaustion, or, in the case of Serbia, international isolation, seem likely to halt the process of territorial acquisition. The recent signals from Serbia that the previously 'Teflon-coated' Milosevic could be superseded by more cosmetically acceptable alternatives may be a sign of this.

But the fires of Balkan nationalism, once stoked, are not readily extinguished. And the greatest danger of all lies not so much in the internal forces, dark and dreadful though they may be, as in the ambitions of the regional powers and imperialist nations. Most informed commentators have agreed on the apparent diffidence of the EC and the USA in relation to this conflict, now well into its second year. They have strongly noted the impotence of the United Nations forces currently in Croatia and Bosnia. Yet, as the war in the Gulf showed, when

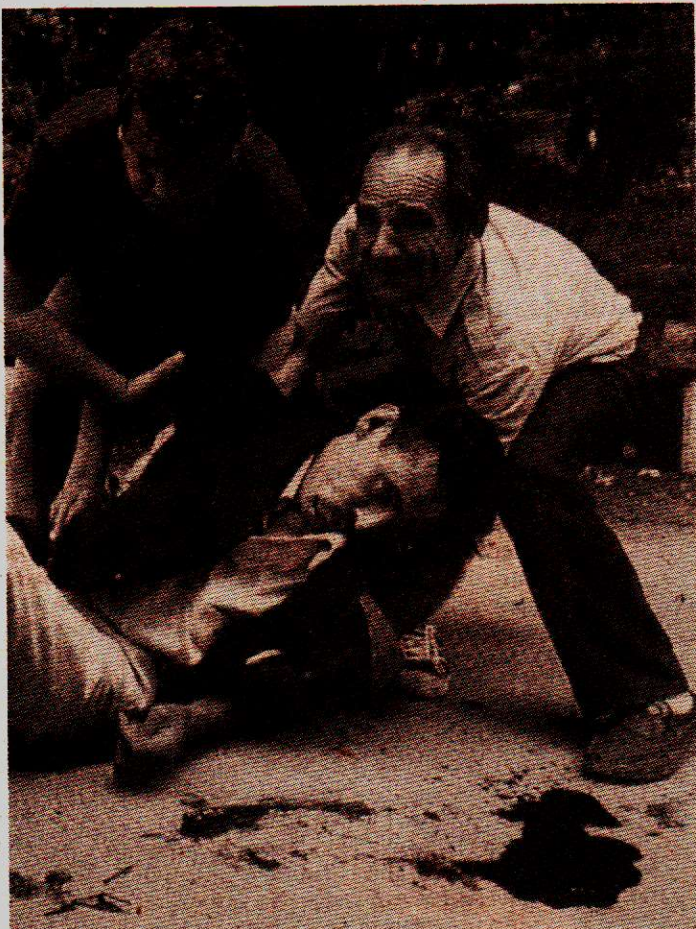
these powers choose to act, they do so decisively. Their apparent difficulties in Yugoslavia stem not from lack of will, but lack of unity. They do not agree on the best course. Different interests are pulling them in different directions. It is these different interests, also reflected in current debates about the viability of the Maastricht Treaty, that pose the greatest threat to peace in the Balkans and ultimately in Europe itself.

*'The great powers chose their victims from among the weak ... On the territory of the nearest and largest potential victims, the long disintegrating Ottoman Empire, war was indeed a permanent possibility as its subject people sought to establish or enlarge themselves as independent states and subsequently fought each other, drawing the great powers into their conflicts. The Balkans were known as the powder-keg of Europe, and indeed that is where the global explosion of 1914 began.'*

Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*

**The Balkan carve-up – who wants what?**

It is early days yet in terms of clear imperialist power blocs,



Wounded citizen in Sarajevo

alliances and antagonisms. But the signs are there. In 1991, the EC was seriously at odds over the future of Yugoslavia. Germany, re-united and triumphal, nurtured its ambitions over that sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, which had, traditionally, been its own. Against US and British opposition, Germany forced through recognition of independent Croatia and Slovenia. Croatia and Slovenia, the richest and most industrially developed areas of Yugoslavia, had once formed part of the

Habsburg Empire and had economic, cultural and political ties with Germany. German insistence won the day with appalling consequences. Recognition for Croatia without guarantees there immeasurably strengthened the virus of both Serbian and Croatian nationalism. 'By forcing the European Community to recognise Slovenia and Croatia, even at the expense of the hallowed common foreign policy, Germany revealed its naked interest in the Habsburg Balkans.'

(Misha Glenny). Germany backed Croatia even while Croatian leaders openly lobbied for the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina between themselves and Serbia. That division has now become a ghastly reality with its symbol, Sarajevo, bombarded, cold and hungry.

Initially, Britain and the USA appeared more ready to listen to Serbian claims to speak for what had become the fiction of a federal Yugoslavia and under which Serbian nationalism cloaked its ambitions. France in late 1991 appeared to be backing the Serbs. The destabilising effects of Serbian nationalism and its potential to cause incalculable chaos, particularly in Kosovo (with a huge Albanian majority under Serb armed domination) may have concentrated the minds of the EC powers but it has thus far failed to unite them sufficiently to allow meaningful military intervention. Whether this will change as they put more military forces in, ostensibly to guard relief supplies, remains to be seen.

Whilst Germany concentrates on the northern regions of Yugoslavia, the USA has its own agenda in the former Ottoman Balkans. The USA has been carefully building its influence in Albania and Bulgaria. Added to this is the role of the major US ally in the region, Turkey. Turkey is in an expansionist mood. Only this year President Turgut Ozal happily said that the situation in the Balkans presented Turkey with 'a once in a lifetime opportunity for Turkey to restore its economic, diplomatic and cultural influence among Muslim vestiges of the Ottoman empire.' Turkey supports the Albanians and the Bosnian Muslims. Stung by continued EC refusal to admit it to

are gravitating towards the Turkish sphere of influence. War in Macedonia has the potential to draw the imperialist powers into backing regional allies and therefore greatly intensifying the divisions between the EC and USA and within the EC itself. Misha Glenny warns:

*'Europe is not integrating, it is dividing again along the line of the Great Schism, the most persistently unstable border on the continent – The re-emergence not simply of old Balkan conflicts but of local and more international alliances and strategies implies considerable danger for the stability of southern Europe, central and eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.'*

Others put the point more starkly. Writing in the *Financial Times* Edward Mortimer said:

*'The worst mistake would be for different west European states to identify with opposite sides in a local conflict – as nearly happened with Germany backing the Croats and France the Serbs in ... 1991.'*

He goes on to warn that if European union does not successfully allow a united foreign policy amongst European nations, they will:

*'almost invariably come into conflict with each other. Among those nation states Germany would be the strongest and the only way for the other states to avoid falling under German hegemony would be to band together, in time-honoured fashion, as an anti-German alliance ... it is hard to imagine that Germany would long allow them the monopoly of nuclear weapons. Thus Europe would experience, at best, a new balance of terror or, at worst, a downward slide towards a new world war.'*

In relation to Yugoslavia, Britain, an imperialist power in its dotage, has so far adopted its now habitual posture of alternately kissing the behinds of Germany and the USA. (This posture is known as 'international statesmanship' and its living embodiment is Lord Owen.) Britain may finally have to fix its lips firmly to one or the other posterior and the shape of British international political and military alliances for the next decade will be clarified.

The post-war existence of socialist Yugoslavia, whatever its weaknesses, allowed the various ethnic groups and republics to co-exist and to have an existence independent of the imperialist powers and their historic ambitions in the Balkans. Those days are gone and instead we are seeing the bloody birth of a new map and the resurrection of those conflicts which dominated the area from the 1870s culminating in the First World War. It was precisely those conflicts which were fuelled by great power interests in the late 19th and early 20th century. As the imperialist powers again set out to divide the fruits of their cold war victory, are they again leading the world to bloody slaughter? ■

\* *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, Misha Glenny, Penguin Books 1992 £5.99

## Challenge to Turkish ruling class

**Today, the destinies of the Kurdish and Turkish working class are more interlinked than ever. Within the last month, the Turkish state which, with the consent of the imperialist countries, continues to repress the Kurdish national liberation movement, also banned a strike by public health workers. The Turkish bourgeoisie is resorting to ever harsher military methods to resolve the Kurdish problem which it regards as a major impediment to its expansionist ambitions in ex-Soviet Central Asia. MURAD AKIN writes.**

The Turkish bourgeoisie, with the assistance of Kurdish bourgeois politicians, is seeking to reduce the Kurdish revolution to an issue of cultural reform. But the Turkish bourgeoisie must act fast. The Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) has given Turkey until autumn to solve this problem. Following that it may enforce even greater concessions and come out against Turkey's use of military methods.

Last month, parallel with major new battles against the Kurdish militia, the Turkish army, bombed the city of Sirtak. They claimed the guerrillas had infiltrated the city whose inhabitants are widely believed to support the guerrillas. Later on they detained some hundreds of civilians. They did not find the heavy weaponry allegedly hidden in the city. While all this was happening, the press in imperialist

countries with its 'respect for human rights' never informed the public of the state terror in Sirtak.

On another front, within the space of two months, four members of the daily revolutionary newspaper *Özgür Gündem* were assassinated by state paramilitary forces. *Özgür Gündem* is a new journal published by Kurdish and Turkish revolutionaries. It aims to assess developments in Turkey and abroad from a revolutionary perspective. No suspects were arrested, no investigation was opened. Instead, the paper's correspondents were arrested and one of them disappeared. This attack sheds light on two of the Turkish bourgeoisie's objectives: firstly, to prevent Kurdish and Turkish revolutionaries from having access to any legal channels to reach the masses; and secondly, to sabotage this bridge which

connects Turkish revolutionary intellectuals with the Kurdish revolutionary democratic movement.

The Turkish bourgeoisie is also murdering revolutionaries in cities such as Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara whilst pretending to capture them. On the one hand, it is banning our workers' strike. On the other, it is taking steps to legalise the now social-democratised Revolutionary Workers' union DISK.

Turkish socialists are making strenuous efforts to prevent state-instigated nationalism within the working class from turning into hostility between Kurdish and Turkish workers. Despite the attacks they are being subjected to, revolutionary organisations and Turkish intellectuals are now siding with the national liberation movement. Despite their military weakness and despite the heavy blows they suffered in the past, Turkish and Kurdish revolutionaries are now creating the kind of solidarity they have been striving to establish for so long.

Today, the Turkish bourgeoisie, which lays off striking workers, which beats up civil servants fighting to unionise, which assassinates socialist ac-

tivists and bombs civilian towns, is having difficulties trying to play the role of yet another Israel in the Middle East.

In the battle against the Turkish bourgeoisie a significant new front was opened up last month. At the First Preparatory Conference of the Party for a Socialist Turkey, whose foundation is scheduled for 6 October, it was resolved that 'the new party aims to overcome the impasse facing socialism in the world and in Turkey, by creating a new tradition which draws from Marxist and Leninist principles'.

Resolutions were also approved in solidarity with the Russian, Kurdish and Turkish revolutionaries. The Resolution of Solidarity said: 'The Party sees it to be its duty to organise the solidarity of the Turkish working class with the Kurdish people and against the policy of forced assimilation and all the bloody scenarios staged against the Kurdish people'. Some partisans of this movement and other revolutionaries from other movements are now in Kurdistan to expose the atrocities of the Turkish state and to show their solidarity with the Kurdish struggle. ■

*'... the Great Power politics of regional interests in Europe's war zone should be viewed with considerable interest by all those hoping for a peaceful future in Europe ...'*

Misha Glenny, *New Statesman* 26 August 1992

membership, Turkey has offered all Balkan countries membership of the new Black Sea Economic Community. This Community has the potential to significantly rival the EC in the region, should it prove popular. Turkey's critical role as a potential power in the Middle East, the Southern Balkans and the central Asiatic areas of the former Soviet Union – all areas in which US imperialism has the keenest interest – cannot be left out of the equation of imperialist power play.

### The slide to war

The balance of forces and interests in the region will become clearer should the war spread to Macedonia. Most informed observers predict that if this takes place a full-scale Balkan war is on the cards. Albania and Bulgaria will be drawn into the conflict. Greece, an EC member, with its implacable opposition to Macedonian independence, is already pro-Serbian, and has so far prevented the EC granting the recognition to Macedonia which it gave to Croatia and Slovenia. Macedonia's rulers



# Government and fascists collaborate against refugees

MAXINE WILLIAMS

Violent racist attacks continuing for almost a week in late August on a refugee hostel in Rostock acted as a signal for similar assaults throughout Germany. In Rostock hundreds of openly fascist youth attacked the hostel using petrol bombs and stones. On the third night of such attacks local police withdrew and the fascists set it on fire with a hundred Vietnamese refugees left inside. A huge crowd of local residents, sometimes 3,000 strong, gathered each night in support of this action, chanting 'Foreigners out!'. When the hostel was set alight they obstructed the passage of fire engines. The attacks only ended when the remaining 200 refugees were moved out of the area. In the next week there were attacks on refugee hostels in at least seven cities as violence spread to Eisenhuttstadt, Cottbus and Halle. In addition, the fascists bombed a holocaust memorial in Berlin.

The tone for the response of the authorities was set by local interior minister Lothar Kupfer, who said that he had 'a certain understanding' for the fascist attackers. Whilst he received some criticism for this statement it was not, in essence, different from the position of other German politicians. Far from denouncing the attacks and their racist motives, politicians such as Chancellor Kohl immediately called for measures to greatly reduce the number

of those gaining asylum in Germany. Indeed there is some evidence that the authorities have failed to take firm action to prevent the attacks, precisely in order to implement this agenda of changing the asylum laws.

Many German politicians have been at pains to deny that the attackers are fascists, claiming they are victims of social problems. In saying this, they have two aims. Firstly, they are anxious to prevent the impression growing internationally that history is repeating



itself in Germany. Secondly, they are keen to use these outbreaks to pin the blame for problems of unemployment (currently running at three million in former East Germany) and lack of housing on 'foreigners'.

Chancellor Kohl and the Christian Democrats have been trying for some

time now to change Germany's asylum laws. In the wake of fascist attacks, they again renewed their pressure on the Social Democrats to support this step. Shamefully, the SPD looks set to agree. The message for the fascists is clear: racist acts of terror will succeed. They will be enormously strengthened and will grow in confidence and size.

The scale of the wave of racism and xenophobia in Germany is a sign of what is to come. Last year alone there were 2,380 recorded crimes of violence against foreigners, including 338 firebomb attacks on hostels. 60 per cent of Germans favour a halt to the admission of asylum seekers. If they achieve this, then attacks on remaining refugees and the 1.7 million Turkish workers in Germany are likely to increase rather than diminish.

Following re-unification, German nationalism received a major boost. The German ruling class has political and imperialist ambitions that have been repeatedly thwarted in the past. Now the most powerful economy in Europe, it is rivalled in the world only by the USA and Japan. It is no coincidence that at the same time as they are nearing agreement on keeping refugees out, the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats appear ready also to change the constitution to allow German troops to take part in overseas multinational operations. Alongside imperialist ambitions invariably grows the cancer of nationalism. The neo-Nazis are but the most visible sign of this. ■

## US dual strategy in the Middle East

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

President George Bush's latest military move against Iraq is more than just a dangerous electoral stunt to boost his faltering Presidential election campaign. It constitutes an important step of a long term, dual US strategy. On the one hand the US Administration, which has now given the go-ahead for the \$10bn loan guarantee to Israel, is working hard to restore 'good relations' with Zionism. On the other it continues its efforts to undermine and destroy Saddam Hussein and install a pro-US regime in Iraq. By 'normalising' and strengthening US-Israeli relations - on US terms - and destroying the most powerful Arab state in the Middle East, the US hopes to secure unchallenged domination over the whole region and its oil reserves.

The 27 August US, British and French ban on Iraqi planes flying south of the 32nd Parallel was one element of this strategy to effectively recolonise Iraq. The air exclusion zone covers an area of 54,000 square miles. It amounts to a third of Iraqi territory, includes Basra, the country's second city of two million people and most decisively contains 70 per cent of Iraq's very large proven oil reserves. To secure Saddam Hussein's government's compliance with this stage in the dismemberment of Iraq, the US has stationed over 200 high-powered military aircraft in Saudi Arabia and on an adjacent aircraft carrier.

Together with the severe economic crisis resulting from the UN embargo on Iraq, criminal Bush hopes these measures will further destabilise Saddam Hussein's government. Meanwhile, in August, the US Administration met a delegation from the Iraqi National Congress - a pro-US imperialist coal-

ition which includes the PUK, the KDP, as well as Sunni and Shiite leaders - to search out obedient proxies. Time is on the side of US imperialism. For as long it is not challenged by new upheavals in the region it can afford to await the internal collapse of the Iraqi government.

Alleged Iraqi attacks on Shiite dissidents in Iraq's southern marshes provided the pretext for the 32nd Parallel exclusion zone. In Israel it was the election of the alleged 'moderate' Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin which offered the US grounds for restoring firm relations with Zionism. Rabin is no moderate. He is distinguished by his predecessor Shamir only by the fact that he is prepared to talk peace while making war. But this was all the US was asking for. Rabin's posture has enabled the US to dupe the Arab bourgeoisie into believing that it intends seriously to follow through the 'peace process'.

The reality is very different. Rabin is opposed to self-determination and independence for the Palestinian people. He has blocked some funds for settlement building. But he supports 'security' settlements - which constitute the majority - which serve just as effectively to render Palestinian independence on a single terrain impossible. Rabin, in the words of the *Middle East International*: 'has probably done more to effect the dispossession of the Palestinians than any other individual Israeli.'

In 1948 he personally ordered the expulsion of Palestinians from Lydda and Ramla. In 1967 he was Chief of Staff and ordered the destruction of three villages near Latrun forcing 10,000 inhabitants to flee. In 1974-77 he was an accomplice to Gush Eminent's settler colonisation campaign in the West Bank. When the Intifada broke out he was Defence Minister and advised soldiers to 'break Palestinian bones'. Negotiations on this man's terms will

bring no just and lasting peace for the Palestinian people. They will only strengthen the stranglehold of bourgeois politics and extend the influence of US imperialism and Zionism. ■

## Somalia

TREVOR RAYNE

'Pouring in food to relieve immediate distress will prolong the pain of adjusting to market economics' *The Times*. And the dead shall stand on their own two feet! Such is the response of the ruling class to the millions devastated by famine in Somalia.

Strategically placed on the Horn of Africa overlooking the approach to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, Somalia was colonised by Portugal in the 16th and 17th centuries; in the 18th by the Ottomans; with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, by France, Britain and Italy. The first combat deployment of military aviation in Africa was made by the RAF in 1920 to quell a rebellion.

On 1 July 1960 the British and Italian regions merged into the nominally independent Republic of Somalia. Following the Ethiopian Revolution 1974-75, the Somali government was implicated in the Front for the Liberation of Western Somalia which attacked Ethiopian forces claiming territory annexed during colonial times. The Front was funded by the Shah of Iran and Saudi Arabia and backed by the USA and Britain. In 1980 the US secured bases for its nuclear aircraft and submarines. By the time of its 1988 Peace Agreement with Ethiopia, Somalia had some 840,000 Ethiopian refugees, and 22 times as much was spent on the military as on health. The country, ravaged by colonialism and interventionist wars, received \$508m in aid: 57 per cent of the national income - a wreck, deliberately created and maintained. A famine created by imperialism. ■

## Talks resume after Ciskei massacre

CAT WIENER

On 7 September, 32 unarmed ANC supporters were mown down in a hail of Ciskei security force machine-gun fire at Bisho on the bantustan's border. The South African police accompanying the march withdrew moments before the massacre began, in a clear act of complicity with the atrocity committed by the Ciskei puppet regime.

Cyril Ramaphosa, ANC, who led the 70,000-strong march, immediately blamed the regime, and said that this would seriously hinder the resumption of talks. The regime responded by attacking the march as an act of provocation by the ANC and SACP. But while 30,000 mourners gathered at the 'border' that night, the ANC and regime held senior level emergency discussions a few miles away and, three days later, the ANC announced that official talks would resume. Ostensibly, these will deal with the question of violence; in practice, the scene has been set for the constitutional negotiations broken off in May to resume.

After the break-down of the Codesa talks, the ANC issued a 14-point set of conditions for their resumption, which included steps to deal with the violence and the release of political prisoners; the mass action campaign - the mass stayaway of 3 and 4 August which attracted 90-95 per cent support, the 70,000-strong march to Pretoria led by Mandela - was focused on achieving these demands, fuelled by militant grassroots anger following the Boipatong massacre on 17 June. On 7 August Mandela told a press conference 'Unless the 14 demands... are met in full there is no way the ANC will return to the table.' However, in contrast to this radical tone, Mandela had already indicated to the regime that the ANC would in fact settle for less. But the regime made not even a token concession, offering instead a general amnesty on prisoners that would have allowed white racists to go free on an equal basis with political prisoners, and which the ANC quite correctly rejected. Equally, the regime's purported 'shake-up' of the security forces was intended only to ensure that members of the police and army implicated in the violence by the Goldstone Commission could be quietly

retired to avoid embarrassing public indictment.

The ANC felt it could not return to the talks on this basis without seriously losing support.

Meanwhile, however, the PAC held a second round of talks with the regime on the question of setting up voter registration. Without making any concessions on questions such as the armed struggle, sanctions or the principles adopted at the Patriotic Front of October 1991, the PAC appeared to be winning concessions from the regime (see *interview with PAC*, p5). AZAPO also set up talks with the regime in Zimbabwe under a neutral chair.

The ANC was, to some extent, in a double bind of its own creation - unable to return to the negotiating table without jeopardising grassroots support, unable to continue its boycott of talks without losing, as it saw it, its advantage with the regime.

At the same time, apartheid foreign minister Pik Botha boasted that the regime's so-called 'moderate' alliance - embracing bantustan stooges such as Ciskei's Oupa Gqozo and based on a concept of federalism to protect white minority privilege - would win a majority in a democratic election.

After a reportedly stormy three-day meeting of a tense and divided NEC on 3 September, the ANC issued a carefully-worded statement: on the one hand stating that the boycott would continue but at the same time indicating to de Klerk that the way was open for bilateral talks to the exclusion of other parties. 'Once the settlement is agreed within the bilateral forum, [it] would then be taken into a multilateral forum. But this later forum should not be allowed to undermine the basic bilateral agreement' stated their strategy document (our emphasis). Most bourgeois commentators interpreted this as confirmation that talks behind closed doors had never stopped, and the ANC would resume talks as soon possible without losing credibility. The massacre at Bisho on 7 September was quickly followed by an invitation to Presidential level talks by de Klerk. The ANC leadership's acceptance marks a rapid turnaround from its more recent militant standpoint. The issue is now whether its supporters, who, in June, were so vocally critical of the Codesa negotiations, will follow. ■

## STOP THE SPRINGBOK TOUR

On 10 September City of London Anti-Apartheid Group issued a press statement announcing that it will oppose the forthcoming Springbok rugby tour. It has called a meeting of other interested organisations to form a Springbok Reception Committee. It has also written to England Rugby captain Will Carling calling on him and other team members to withdraw from the matches.

This stance was taken with the full support of the PAC, BCMA/AZAPO and SACOS and the SACOS Rugby Union.

The matches are scheduled for early November in Leicester, Leeds, Bristol, with a match against England at Twickenham on 14 November. Leicester Trades Council has wholeheartedly endorsed City AA's stand, and is holding a series of meetings to mobilise mass action against the Leicester match.

For details of how you can get involved in the STOP THE SPRINGBOK TOUR CAMPAIGN, phone 071 837 6050 or come to City AA's rally.

## HART DENOUNCES APARTHEID TOUR

New Zealand anti-apartheid group HART, which led successful campaigns against apartheid sport in the 1970s, wrote to ten South African

newspapers opposing the All-Blacks tour of South Africa. It was, they said, opposed by all decent New Zealanders and represented only the interests of the friends of racist South Africa. Nothing had changed for black people in South Africa to justify the lifting of the boycott. For this principled stance they were subjected to a barrage of criticism not only by New Zealand Prime Minister Bolger and the Rugby Union, but also by the local ANC support group and the ANC rep in New Zealand. HART however stood firm, saying Bishop Tutu had called for the boycott: 'HART will not be gagged by anyone'; and that they put first the interest of the black people of South Africa. ■

## Rally

### Stop the Springbok Tour

Wednesday 7 October  
7.30pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,  
WC1 (nearest tube Holborn)  
CITY OF LONDON ANTI-APARTHEID GROUP

## RCC COMMUNIST FORUM

### Sunday 27 Sept

### Isolate South Africa!

SPEAKER: CAROL BRICKLEY  
2.30pm CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQ  
LONDON WC1 Nearest tube Holborn.  
Admission £1/50p unwaged



# Perspectives for ending apartheid

**Dramatic events have shaken South Africa. In particular the issue of state-sponsored violence has been starkly exposed by two massacres – at Boipatong in June, and at Bisho, Ciskei in September. Pressure has built up for negotiations to resume. Bilateral talks have begun between the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the regime, and days after the Ciskei massacre, the African National Congress (ANC) resumed its own negotiations. CAROL BRICKLEY and DAVID REED interviewed Comrade Gora Ebrahim, Foreign Secretary of the PAC, during a recent short visit to London, about the PAC's perspective.**



The press and media have reported that the PAC has been drawn into the negotiating process, with the implication that you are now prepared to enter Codesa-style negotiations. Is this true? First let me say that the press has been misrepresenting the PAC position from the outset. The PAC has never been opposed to talking to the regime, but it has insisted that the talks must take place under certain conditions: they must take place under a neutral chairperson, at a neutral venue, and must centre around the modalities of setting up an elected constituent assembly.

We conveyed this to the regime after our 1990 Congress. The regime replied in April 1991 accepting these conditions. But we forfeited this opportunity in favour of the Patriotic Front. We argued that this offer should be taken up by the Patriotic Front. Unfortunately some Patriotic Front members did not abide by the decisions made at the conference in Durban (November 1991). The PAC, however, remained committed to the principles that it adopted at its Congress, as well as those endorsed by the Patriotic United Front.

Eventually on 10 April 1992, the regime agreed to meet the PAC in Abuja, Nigeria – at a neutral venue under a neutral chair. There we discussed two issues, the issue of neutrality and the issue of democratisation of the negotiating forum. All sides agreed publicly to have further talks on these issues.

On 11 and 18 August, meetings were held between the regime and a delegation from the PAC, as a follow-up of the Abuja meeting. The issues discussed were those agreed upon at the Patriotic United Front. The agenda was laid down by the PAC: the elected constituent assembly; the transitional authority; the democratisation of the negotiating forum; preparation for a meeting between President Makwetu and FW de Klerk at a neutral venue with a neutral chair. Those were the four items that we put on the agenda, which were agreed upon by the regime. The regime wanted to add to this. Knowing full well that the PAC makes a very clear distinction between violence and armed struggle, the regime put forward violence, and attacks on the security forces as two items on the agenda. The PAC delegation accepted these on condition that they would be discussed last. Of course the regime wanted to discuss violence first, but in the end they agreed to our terms.

So, yes, we are talking to the regime, but we are talking on the basis of what was agreed at our 1990 Congress and at the Patriotic United Front. We have not accepted the conditions that other organisations have accepted; that you suspend armed struggle whilst you are talking; that you must agree to lift sanctions; that South African judges will convene the meeting; that the Trade Centre will be the venue. The PAC hasn't agreed to any of that. The talks that the PAC is conducting are nothing like Codesa.

But let me emphasise one fact: in Abuja and in our meetings with the regime inside the country, it was made abundantly clear that under no circumstances would the PAC join a reconvened Codesa. In fact a joint statement issued by Roelf Meyer (regime minister) and myself categorically stated that a new, more representative forum must be established.

In the PAC's view, the regime is in a dilemma. According to the constitution on which it bases itself, the regime would be compelled to hold an election by March 1994. They recognise that if nothing else is agreed to replace that constitution, they cannot hold another all-white election in South Africa. It would not be accepted internally, or internationally. The regime is therefore looking for a mechanism to perpetuate its illegality in a quasi-legal form, and to give it a longer lease of life. The regime has worked out that that mechanism can only be an Interim Government that would suspend the present constitution but delay majority rule. That is why some people were so sure that there would be an Interim Government by last June, because the regime is desperately keen on estab-

lishing an Interim Government; but for its own purposes.

The PAC, therefore, took this factor into consideration during discussions with the regime. Firstly, time is on our side; it is not on the side of the regime. Secondly, we decided that we must force the regime to accept a democratic formula. We have now succeeded in getting the regime not merely to say that the new constitution will be drawn up by an elected body, which in our view is the constituent assembly, but we have gone beyond that to demand tangible evidence of their commitment to this principle. In our view, that tangible proof will be that before the end of October they establish mechanisms and begin voter registration on a common voters' roll. The regime has undertaken to do this. Now it is our duty to pressurise them, to make sure that they stick to it.

**Why has the regime agreed? Why do they want talks with the PAC?**

First, I think there is a broad acknowledgement, not only on the side of the regime but even amongst the Western missions there and governments outside, that the PAC's principled and consistent position has won it tremendous support inside the country. You cannot deal with the situation inside the country without the Pan Africanist Congress. The regime stated this themselves in the bilateral meetings. The other factor that the regime is very worried about is that the PAC's armed struggle continues. The regime itself reported that this year alone 117 soldiers, policemen and security agents have been 'dealt with' by the Azanian People's Liberation Army.

But you see, it is wrong to assume that the regime is only now wanting to talk to the PAC. People overlook the fact that as far back as August 1990, they wrote to the PAC asking for talks.

**The press in Britain describes this process as drawing 'the extreme right wing' and the 'extreme left wing' into the negotiating process.**

As far as we are concerned, if you say that the PAC's demand that the constitution must be drawn up by elected people is an extreme left-wing demand, then the PAC is a left-wing organisation. In contrast they describe those who demand that invited guests draw up the constitution as 'moder-

ates'. But to us they are sell-outs.

**But what does the regime hope to achieve in talks with you?**

I don't think it's a question of hoping to achieve anything from us. If the regime wants to solve the problem in the country, then it must solve those problems with the players on the field. It went ahead with Codesa without the PAC. Codesa has come to a standstill. The regime, the ANC, everybody, today accepts a formula put by the PAC, the constituent assembly.

You might ask why the regime is not demanding that we put an end to the armed struggle? I say that they are asking us to end the armed struggle, but we have said very clearly that we will only abandon the bullet once the ballot is secured, and that therefore the ball is in their court. And the regime knows that if the PAC says 'no' in the morning, it will not say 'yes' in the afternoon.

**There's been some speculation that the regime is prepared to go it alone with its so-called allies – like some bantustan leaders – on the basis that it now believes it could win an election, or at least that the ANC would not win an outright victory.**

The PAC, from the outset, has been saying 'Let us go to the electorate to set up an elected constituent assembly.' If they have now accepted that, then they have accepted the demand of the PAC. If the National Party is saying that it can win a majority inside the country, then let's go to elections, and let us see whether that will happen. But we are saying the regime must accept that elections must be in a unitary state without bantustans or the break-up of the country. It hasn't agreed to this.

In talks we pointed out that Pik Botha has been boasting that the National Party only needs ten per cent more to become the majority party, so we asked 'what are you waiting for?'

**The ANC at the present time is conducting what they call 'mass action' to force the regime to accept certain demands leading back to Codesa, or some other type of Codesa. In your view what has been the result of that development, especially in view of the recent massacre in the Ciskei?**

I think we tend to confuse the two issues. On the question of negotiating with the regime: the ANC ran into a

deadlock long before the Boipatong massacre. Boipatong further exacerbated the situation, but it certainly was not the cause of the breakdown. Now we have another massacre in the Ciskei. This had also nothing to do with the breakdown of the talks per se.

The ANC began the talks with the regime. Now let us use some elementary guidelines. When you negotiate, you don't first strip yourself of all your weapons. The ANC went into talks, abandoning armed struggle, lifting sanctions, conceding to the regime on Codesa's make-up. Those are not the kind of positions that you take in a negotiating process if you hope to achieve anything. For instance the PAC has held the same kind of bilateral talks with the regime and got more than they got in Codesa in five months; we did it in eight hours. And yet we made no concessions whatsoever to the regime. The regime knows full well that the PAC is not an organisation that will easily consent to whatever they want.

The ANC found itself, after abandoning the armed struggle and sanctions, with only one card, and that is the card of mass action. It said it was going to use this mass action to get the regime to agree on the 14 demands it put forward in May. Two days after the demands were issued the ANC began shedding much of it, including the sports boycott; so the regime knew from the outset that the ANC leadership would not stand by these demands come what may.

The regime then forced the ANC to play its last card, mass action. First, there was the two-day strike on 3 and 4 August. Generally speaking there was observance of that strike, but not because people supported the demands of the ANC. People stayed away out of fear more than anything else. We have had discussions on this, for example with taxi driver associations, with other organisations inside the country. The support for the ANC that you can judge was those who joined the marches, including the march to Pretoria. Throughout the country only 80,000 people marched. What was the purpose of the marches? It was to get the regime to accede to the ANC's 14 demands leading back to Codesa. We must ask ourselves clearly: has the regime conceded to those demands? They haven't.

So, now the ANC strategy is no longer to target the regime, but to target the

puppets of the regime. And they chose the weakest of the puppets, the Ciskei. Yes, of course there is abhorrence of the massacre itself, but there are equally mixed feeling on the tactics of the Ciskei march and whether it achieved anything. We are not very sure now that the ANC would call another march against the Ciskei. I think this is something that you will begin to see. If you use a march, or if you use a strike, this is not something that you can prolong. This is something that has to be sharp and decisive. If you fail at the first attempt it is very difficult to persuade people to come back.

I think that the ANC's agreement to go back to talks with the regime despite the fact that the 14 demands have not been met, is a recognition of two things: that the regime will not give in to the demands, and that the mass action will not achieve what the ANC hoped.

**So if they are going to begin negotiating with the regime again, what chance is there for the reconstitution of the Patriotic Front?**

For the PAC the position is very clear. We are going to continue to put the demand for the reconvening of the Patriotic United Front. We have the backing of the OAU and the Frontline States for the reconvening of the Patriotic Front. We see no reason why it should not be reconvened.

**With or without the ANC?**

Well we would prefer it to be with the ANC, but the fact of the matter is that we cannot give the ANC the veto over the Patriotic Front. We are going to press for the reconvening of the Patriotic United Front, and we are hoping that a meeting will held within the next two months.

**But in one sense time is running out, because the ANC is resuming bilateral talks with the regime at the same time as talks between the regime and the PAC. That puts the regime in quite a strong position, riding two horses, doesn't it?**

No, it doesn't put them in a strong position. What will the ANC be demanding, besides on the question of violence? It cannot demand anything other than an elected constituent assembly...

**That's not really true. In Codesa they were ready to agree to an Interim Government with certain protection for minority privileges. They've already agreed that, so there's no reason to believe that they wouldn't agree it again in bilateral talks.**

But even if they go into an Interim Government, even if it is only for the consumption of their membership they will still have to demand an elected constituent assembly. That is one of the 14 demands. The regime has agreed with us that voter registration should be underway from October. I don't see how the ANC can say it doesn't want voter registration on a common voters' roll in the country.

**But the regime wants an Interim Government which will extend minority privileges beyond 1994. The ANC has been prepared to give them that, with a constituent assembly perhaps running alongside it, but the application of a new constitution delayed for quite a long time in favour of that Interim Government.**

If the PAC had not taken a pro-active position, then what you are saying perhaps would be correct. But the PAC can put to the people the question 'Why must we delay? Why must we go into an Interim Government? The regime has agreed to these things – you now have a common voters' roll. Why must you now go through another process?' Now people are recognising that there is in fact an alternative to Codesa.

**So your strategy, with whatever allies there might be within a Patriotic Front, will be to press for an immediate election for a constituent assembly, and that assembly will not be fettered by any prior agreement?**

Not fettered by any prior agreement. We have made that very clear.



In his book *The Culture of Contentment*, J K Galbraith describes the parasitic and decaying character of US capitalism and shows how, in creating ever-growing inequalities in wealth, it is also creating forces which could destroy it. Remedial action by those in power to tackle this social crisis is resisted because it would alienate what Galbraith calls the 'contented majority'.

In part one\* of this article DAVID REED examined Galbraith's arguments in relation to the United States. Part two looks at the relevance of Galbraith's ideas in the British context through a review of an important book, *The Economic Legacy 1979-1992*\*\* which consists of papers given to a conference convened by the Cambridge Journal of Economics in October 1991 assessing the economic consequences of three successive Tory governments.

Like Galbraith's book this collection of papers is a critique of monetarism and points to the economic and social damage inflicted by monetarist policies. Throughout the book it is assumed that Thatcher's policies were not inevitable and some kind of Keynesian intervention of a more or less radical kind could have prevented the rapid deterioration in Britain's overall economic position (see, for example, p57 and p286-9). The book was completed before the election in April 1992, with some anticipation of a Labour victory.

The electorate, as we now know, despite the recession, preferred the Conservative Party's promise of economic recovery and further tax cuts to the Labour Party's proposal of economic recovery based on modest tax rises to finance modest increases in public spending. In Britain, as in the United States, there appears to be also a 'contented majority' which will resist any encroachments on its own privileges through, for example, increased taxation, to mitigate the political, social and economic effects of the recession. While *The Economic Legacy* does not deal with this phenomenon it does offer us the raw economic material with which we can begin to explain its political significance.

### The contented majority

In Galbraith's book the 'contented majority' determines the outcome of elections in the United States. It is not a majority of the population, but a majority of those who vote. It includes well-paid, skilled workers and their families as well as middle class workers in the 'professions'. The policies of both the Republicans and the Democrats are tailored to win its allegiance. For this reason the poor, the oppressed and the low paid - the oppressed working class - are excluded from the bourgeois 'democratic' process. No political party represents their interests.

A similar situation exists in Britain. Britain's electoral system means that it is impossible to be elected to power without winning the vote of a sizeable section of the skilled and better-off working class and middle class. They are a part of Britain's 'contented majority', which again is not a majority of the population, but probably a majority of those who vote. Because of the association of the Labour Party with the welfare state and the trade union movement, the alienation of the oppressed working class from the electoral process is nowhere near as extensive as in the United States, where less than half of those eligible to vote actually do so. But in Britain this is offset by a constituency system weighted to the

more prosperous areas particularly in the South East, and therefore to the 'contented majority'. To win the election the political parties have also to tailor their policies to gain the 'contented majority' vote.

There are those on the left who reject the political relevance of the idea of a 'contented majority' and see the real division as between 'the rich and everyone else' (*Socialist Worker* 16 May 1992, 11 July 1992). They are almost as accomplished as the Tory government in distorting statistics to prove their point. They do this to deny that there is a split in the working class in the imperialist countries, with sections of well-paid skilled workers and middle class workers in the 'professions' belonging to the 'contented majority' and sharing its political outlook. The political purpose behind this is to justify their continued support in Britain for the Labour Party.

### The split in the working class

The ruling class cannot retain political power without considerable support from sections of the working class and middle class. After the growing economic crisis of the 1970s the Tories embarked on a strategy to revive British capitalism which risked social unrest as the uprisings of 1981 and 1985, the miners' strike of 1984/5 and the opposition to the poll tax demonstrated. The Tories survived all this not merely because the opposition refused to fight and splintered but because in redistributing wealth from the poor to the rich they also ensured that significant sections of the working class shared in the benefits.

*The Economic Legacy* gathers together the statistical material which conclusively proves this. Most of it is contained in an important paper 'Inflation Policy and the Restructuring of Labour Markets' by Jonathan Michie and Frank Wilkinson. In 1990, average real disposable income from employment was 38.3 per cent higher than in 1978, the last full year of Labour government (p202).

However the rises for those in employment were very unequally distributed. One reason for this was the fact that:

'... pay and conditions of employment in the most disadvantaged labour market segments were subjected to the greatest relative degradation and increasingly detached from legal and social protection, with consequent exposure to greater degrees of exploitation.' (p209)

The clearest impact of Tory economic

# The political economy of contentment - the British experience

and labour market policies, as Table 1 shows, was the widening of wage differentials. Earnings of non manual workers tended to grow more rapidly than those of manual workers; the lower the earnings, the slower was the rate of increase, and the earnings of part-time workers grew less quickly than those of full-time workers. The rate of increase of the highest paid 10 per cent (decile) of non manual workers was more than 3 per cent per year higher than the lowest paid decile of manual workers.

relatively high earnings and in hotels, catering and similar services with low earnings; and earnings at the upper end have grown relatively to those at the lower end since 1979. Average earnings in banking, finance and insurance increased by 10.1 per cent between 1980-1990, in manufacturing by 9.5 per cent, in hotels and catering by 8.1 per cent, and by 8.8 per cent for the economy as a whole.

In addition to this, significant changes were brought about by the

per cent from 1979-1990. This occurred while the relative situation of low paid public sector workers rapidly deteriorated, not only in economic terms but also in relation to working conditions. The average growth in earnings of low paid public sector workers and those most affected by privatisation policies (hospital porters, caretakers, road sweepers, refuse collectors, hospital orderlies, school helpers, cleaners etc) was little more than 8 per cent a year. Whilst average earnings increased by 190 per cent between 1979-1990, those of the low paid most affected by privatisation and government wage policies in the public sector increased by 140 per cent - a 50 percentage point difference. This difference, as the authors point out, allowed public services to be maintained at a lower cost and contributed to the profits of privatisation (p208-217).

On top of all these developments should be added the redistributive effects of Tory taxation and benefits policies. The higher the level of income the greater were the gains from income-tax and national insurance changes (NIC) from 1978-9 to 1990-1. The increase went from £1.42 per week for someone on two thirds average earnings, £15.80 on double average earnings, to £871.91 on 10 times average earnings (See Table 2).

Finally most welfare benefits fell by around 20 per cent in relation to average earnings, so the position of the unemployed and others relying solely on social security benefits has progressively deteriorated relative to the employed (p279). This has meant that while those on average income and above have seen significant rises in their incomes, the number living in poverty has rapidly increased.

The latest household income survey (1992) confirms this overall trend. The number of people living in poverty, at below half average income, reached 12 million in 1988/9 - 22 per cent of the population, a rise of 7 million on 1979. The number will have significantly increased since that time as a result of the second major recession since 1979. The survey also confirms the existence of rapidly growing income disparities. While the average rise in household incomes between 1979-1988/9 was 30 per cent, the poorest 10 per cent of households saw their income fall by 6 per cent, with the next four deciles showing rises from 2 per cent to 20 per cent. This means that those in households with incomes above average have seen their incomes rise rapidly, the rise accelerating with growing incomes (see my article 'Unequal incomes' FRFI 108 for more details).

Subsidies and bribes for better-off workers and the middle class have been a constant feature throughout the period from 1979-1990. Mortgage tax relief, privatisation shares, PEPs, Tessa are additional subsidies helping to sustain the allegiance of those well-paid, skilled workers and middle class workers in the 'professions' who, as a significant part of the 'contented majority', have been the mainstay of Tory election victories.

Table 1

Annual rates of growth of earnings 1979-89

	Men	Manual Women		Men	Non manual Women	
		Full time	Part time		Full time	Part time
Highest decile	10.0	10.2	9.2	11.8	11.5	12.4
Upper quartile	9.7	9.6	9.0	11.2	11.8	10.9
Median	9.3	9.2	8.7	10.9	11.1	10.0
Lower quartile	9.0	9.0	8.4	10.5	10.5	9.5
Lowest decile	8.5	8.8	8.3	9.9	10.1	9.1

New Earnings Survey (1979, 1989)

Three structural changes were responsible for this: jobs lost in non service sectors were concentrated in the middle income range; the increase in employment was concentrated in sectors such as banking, insurance, finance and business services with

Tory government's restructuring of the public sector; changes which continued with privatisation. In the public sector, the earnings of professional and related occupations in education, welfare and health, grew at an average annual rate of around 11







Table 2  
Gains from income-tax and NIC changes 1978-9-1990-1

	Married man, multiples of average earnings				
	2/3	1	2	5	10
Tax & NIC (% of gross earnings)					
1978-9	21.9	27.8	31.4	50.5	66.6
1990-1	21.2	25.5	28.8	35.5	37.8
change (%)	-0.7	-2.3	-2.6	-15.0	-28.7
Real net earnings (per cent rise)	34.7	37.8	38.5	73.8	148.1
Gross earnings (£ a week) in 1990-1	202.53	303.80	607.60	1,519.00	3,038.00
Tax + NIC cut (£)	1.42	6.99	15.80	227.85	871.91

(Christopher Johnson *The Economy under Mrs Thatcher 1979-1990* Penguin Books 1991 p294)

## A parasitic and decaying capitalism

The contributors to *The Economic Legacy* do not explain why the broad consensus for Keynesian state intervention in the British economy to counter the effects of recession and poverty has broken down. In fact the last election saw the 'contented majority' decisively reject even the modest increase in taxation proposed by the Labour Party to finance an equally modest increase in state spending. The key to understanding this end to consensus politics lies in an examination of the relative economic decline of British imperialism in the face of the growing economic power of Germany and Japan.

There is some recognition in *The Economic Legacy* of the imperialist character of Britain in determining the economic priorities of British capitalism. The bloated role played by the City of London, the relatively high burden of military expenditure, short-termism regarding productive investment and the high proportion of investment directed overseas are regarded as a 'peculiarity' of the British economy in 1992 just they were in 1979 (p7). Thatcher is said to have promoted the continued international ambitions of the City at the expense of industry (p40). The pattern of investment away from manufacturing towards finance and distribution is seen as a dominant feature of both US and British capitalism (p85).

Investment in banking, finance and business services increased by 320.3 per cent between 1979-1989 in Britain while that in manufacturing rose by only 12.8 per cent. Service sector employment increased from 13.58m to 15.87m from 1979 to 1990, 1.1m of that increase in the banking, finance and business services sector,

while manufacturing employment fell from 7.1m to 4.7m. Such developments are the characteristic features of imperialism - parasitic and decaying capitalism.

How has it been possible for British capitalism with a rapidly declining industrial base to support an increasing proportion of its working population engaged in unproductive labour? It can only do this if an increasing quantity of surplus value is available to sustain it. This can only be achieved to a limited extent by raising the productivity and intensity of labour of a relatively decreasing proportion of the population engaged in productive labour, primarily in the industrial and manufacturing sectors of the economy. The limited nature of this process had already been indicated by the end of the broad consensus supporting Keynesian state intervention in the economy in the early 1970s. It became clear from that time onwards that it was no longer possible to guarantee the privileged conditions of the 'contented majority' while sustaining adequate living standards for the mass of the working class. At the time the largest number of unproductive workers worked in the state sector\*\*\*. Not long after the attack on the state sector began. By the 1980s it was clear that the privileges of the 'contented majority' could only be sustained by creating greater inequality and driving growing numbers of people into poverty. This explains the rightward shift in British politics.

The crucial factor in sustaining an ever growing unproductive sector of the economy in Britain and guaranteeing the privileged position of the 'contented majority', has been the monopoly profits derived from the rising export of finance and banking capital abroad and, in particular, from the super profits squeezed out of

the oppressed nations. Britain has become more and more reliant on these profits as the industrial sector continued to decline. The Tories were fortunate to have an additional source of monopoly profits in the 1980s from North Sea Oil. They were able for some time to conceal the extent of Britain's economic decline and were a crucial prop for Thatcher's economic and political strategy. Around their peak in 1985 the profits of North Sea Oil were £18.5bn, nearly one third of total gross profits of UK companies in that year. In the same year the overseas earnings from British capital exported abroad were £12.7bn, equivalent in size to 22 per cent of total gross profits and by 1990 they had reached £25.8bn, equivalent to 35.8 per cent of the gross profits in that year.

With the decline in the production and the price of oil, other sources of capital were needed to sustain the British economy. Companies, consumers and later the government rapidly increased their borrowing. The balance of payments went into deficit and the government had to borrow to finance its current expenditure. Interest rates were raised to attract and keep foreign capital in Britain and the British economy entered its second major recession. In 1990 Britain became a debtor nation for the first time in 50 years. Although this was reversed in 1991, the challenge to Britain's international financial position by German and Japanese imperialism will hasten the British economy's long term decline.

The present economic circumstances have forced the government into policies which now hit some of its own supporters. Bankrupt businesses and mortgage repossessions are already reducing the size of the 'contented majority'. If the government stands by its policy of high interest rates and an overvalued pound to reduce inflationary pressures, it will have to 'distribute, yet more unequally a more slowly growing cake' (p217). To retain the allegiance of its supporters among the more privileged sections of the working class and middle classes, the government will be forced to drive millions more into poverty, creating a politically explosive situation.

When Lenin developed his theory of the labour aristocracy he regarded this layer as a privileged and politically influential minority of the working class which through its leadership of the movement betrayed the struggle of the class as a whole. 'Without their leadership of the workers, the bourgeoisie could not remain in power'. The Labour Party was founded to give, and has always given, organised political expression to the interests of this layer\*\*\*\*. It has shifted its policies rapidly rightwards while out of office to retain its allegiance. The organised trade union movement has done the same.

As Britain's economic decline accelerates, the divisions in the working class will widen and the privileged layers of the working class will once again become a small but politically significant minority. The Labour Party and the official trade union movement will continue to organise and represent them. Such a labour movement will not and cannot organise the ever growing oppressed working class. That will be the task of communists. ■

\* See *FRFI* 108 15 July/15 September 1992 p11-12. Copies of this paper can be obtained from Larkin Publications, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX, 75p (incl p&p).

\*\* *The Economic Legacy 1979-1992* Ed Jonathan Michie Academic Press 1992 £9.95 pbk. Page numbers refer to this book.

\*\*\* See Paul Bullock and David Yaffe 'Inflation, the Crisis and the Post-War Boom' in *Revolutionary Communist* 3/4 Larkin Publications 1975, reprinted 1979 £3.50 (incl p&p).

\*\*\*\* See R Clough *Labour: a party fit for imperialism* Larkin Publications £4.95 plus 75p p&p, forthcoming October 1992.

# Further censorship of the Irish struggle

NICKI JAMESON

The broadcasting ban on the IRA and Sinn Fein has been in use for four years now. The latest incident, in which Bernadette McAliskey and members of a studio audience were subtitled during a discussion on political violence, represents a further extension of the already catch-all clause prohibiting any words spoken which 'support or solicit or invite support for such an organisation'. That the extension was made not by the Home Office, but as self-censorship by the BBC and independent production company, Juniper Productions, makes it all the more loathsome.

There are already many examples of both the viciousness of the ban and its absurdity: The Pogues subtitled as they sang in support of the Birmingham 6 (innocent men, remember); a prisoner in the H-blocks talking about the quality of the food on *Panorama*, dubbed because he was the IRA prisoners' official spokesperson on the subject; Sinn Fein candidates in the General Election suddenly unbanned for three weeks as part of the 'democratic process' and silenced again immediately afterwards.

But by far the most frightening aspect of the censorship laws is not that when the north of Ireland is in the news, our screens are filled with dumb, mouthing 'terrorists', dubbed by actors, but that they are not. Nobody ever expected the

BBC or the IBA to fight the restrictions; but they might have been expected to work around them. Instead Sinn Fein, in particular, has, for public purposes, ceased to exist. Where a news item on a killing by security forces, for example, might previously have included a (brief) comment from Sinn Fein, now the SDLP are the only permissible voice of mild criticism. The Republican movement has been rendered invisible as well as silent.

Having 'dealt' with Sinn Fein, the next aim of the government and its compliant media allies is, as *AP/RN* puts it, 'to ban any objective discussion on the reasons for violence in the North'.

Bernadette McAliskey has a long history of association with the Republican movement in Ireland but is not a member of any political party or organisation. She did not advocate the use of violence on the *Nation* programme but she said she understood it. Discussion of armed struggle in South Africa, Palestine and Tamil Eelam featured in the same programme without interference.

So where is the outcry against the widening of the ban? The only voice of dissent has ironically been that of former Tory Northern Ireland minister, Peter Bottomley, who also appeared on the programme and who has since spoken out strongly against the programme makers for putting Bernadette McAliskey's life at risk. Unless this censorship is challenged, anyone who speaks out against British occupation of Ireland will face the same treatment. ■

# UDA banned - business as usual

SARAH BOND

Twenty one years after its formation, the Ulster Defence Association has been banned by the British government. The move follows the trial of British agent and UDA intelligence officer Brian Nelson, which revealed yet further evidence of collusion between the UDA and the British army and RUC. It also follows a marked increase in sectarian murders by the UDA - over 30 in the last year, including February's murder of five Catholics in a betting shop in south Belfast.

But as the Republican movement has made clear, the ban will do nothing to save the lives of Nationalists. On paper, membership of the UDA carries a sentence of ten years - but who is going to enforce this? The RUC who have consistently been shown to aid and abet the UDA's operations? The Ulster Defence Regiment, many of whose members and ex-members are themselves UDA members? Press reports that the UDA knew of the ban before it was announced are just another indication of the close co-operation between official and unofficial Loyalism in the north of Ireland.

Nor is there any reason to suppose that Britain should want to save the lives of Nationalists. On the contrary. Since its formation in 1971 the UDA has been a tool of British policy, many of its operations directed by British Intelligence as the recent revelations make clear. The precise aim of this co-operation has been to terrorise the Nationalist community into submitting to British rule. Past operations include the UDA-led Loyalist workers' strike in 1974

which brought down the Power-sharing executive, and the 1974 bombings in Dublin and Monaghan which caused the highest number of casualties in a single action to date. Evidence of collusion since has been well documented, and well suppressed - most recently by the Stephens Inquiry, which cost £1m, but whose report remains unpublished.

So why is the British government moving against the UDA now? Part of the reason may well be the continuing revelations about collusion. The government may wish to offer the ban as a political gesture to Dublin and the SDLP as part of its peace talks. It clearly chose the timing of the announcement, during an interval in the talks, to prevent any Loyalist outrage disrupting them. It may also regard the UDA as incompatible with a possible settlement involving devolution; in this connection rumours persist about the introduction of selective internment - and the ban could form a prelude to such a step.

Of course such a move would simply see British forces and Loyalist state forces step in where the UDA left off. And the UDA has made it clear it will continue to 'defend its community' whatever happens. So regardless of the motives behind the ban, terror against the Nationalist population will continue. Already the death squads have claimed two more victims, gunning down in their home an elderly Catholic couple whose crime was to have two relatives involved in the Nationalist struggle. And in case there were any doubts, a sign appeared the morning after the ban was announced, in a window of the UDA headquarters in Shankill Road. It said: 'Business as usual'. ■

## IRISH STUDENT BRUTALISED

Eamonn O'Donnell was arrested in June and charged with arson, possession of explosives and conspiracy. Since then he has been held in barbaric conditions: 23 hours-a-day lock-up; denied visits from family and friends; prevented from wearing his own clothes (a remand prisoner's right); short periods of exercise; no association with other remand prisoners; no

access to educational facilities or religious services.

On 2 September at Leeds Magistrates' Court Eamonn was strip-searched by armed members of the Task Force, on 'security grounds' after a visit from his solicitor, despite having been strip-searched prior to leaving Wakefield prison only a short time before.

Pam Robinson

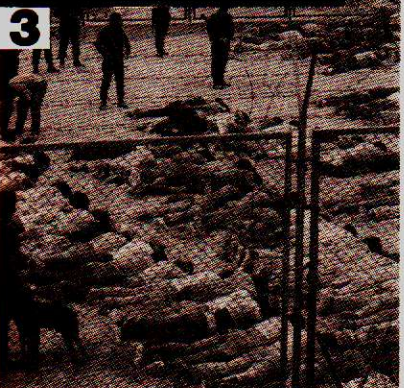


The Communist Party of Peru (PCP), widely known as the Sendero Luminoso or Shining Path, has been subjected to an international avalanche of condemnation and slander. The Peruvian Party of Mariateguist Unity, a component of the United Left (IU) coalition, for example, opposes the Sendero claiming that 'through the use of terror' it tries 'to lead the country towards a Pol Pot type alternative'. In the USA, the left-wing weekly, *The Guardian* charges the Sendero with waging 'war against the country's popular movements'. Meanwhile, according to the British newspaper *The Independent*, the Sendero are 'the most secretive, highly-organised and murderous of all contemporary terrorist groups'. EDDIE ABRAHAMS and TREVOR RAYNE begin an examination of Sendero Luminoso's political programme.

# The revolution of the Sendero



It was reported on 13 September 1992 that Peruvian state forces had arrested Abimael Guzman - Chairman Gonzalo - leader of the Sendero Luminoso, together with a number of his comrades. If these reports are correct, then those arrested face torture and murder by the Fujimori regime. Socialists must mobilise in their defence. The arrests will not halt the struggle of the Peruvian oppressed masses against imperialist and neo-colonial barbarism.



1. Sendero guerrilla; 2. Money-changing in Lima; 3. May 1992: massacre of Sendero prisoners after a 4-day siege

## War Crimes Tribunal on Fujimori's crimes against the Peruvian people

Sunday 27 September, Halkevi Hall, 92-100 Stoke Newington Road, N16  
1pm Press Conference; 2pm Hearing; 6pm-midnight International Music

**W**hile proclaiming itself a Marxist-Leninist organisation and drawing its inspiration from Mao Zedong the Sendero has no familiar international counterpart. This has been enough for them to be dismissed by sectarian and Eurocentric 'British Marxists'. However, a serious socialist study shows the Sendero to be an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movement whose ideological and political standpoint merits discussion and debate. Whatever differences British communists may have with the PCP, it is an indisputable fact that a Sendero victory in Peru will dramatically shift the Latin American and international balance of class forces in favour of the working class and dispossessed.

It is this reality that lies behind the frenzied barrage of slander against the Sendero. They have succeeded in organising a mass revolutionary movement and an effective armed struggle based on those who, in Marx's phrase, 'have nothing to lose but their chains': the absolutely impoverished and destitute Peruvian Indian peasantry and the rural and shantytown working class. Living permanently on the edge of starvation and death they are imbued with profound hatred for and total indifference to the fate and destiny of the wealthy and privileged ruling class and petit bourgeoisie. The Sendero gives organised political expression to this class hatred. Distinctively, while seeking the unity of all oppressed sectors, it refuses to work with or countenance even the tiniest compromise with Social Democratic or populist organisations, viewing them as instruments of the Peruvian state and the imperialist ruling classes.

In contrast to the left, informed bourgeois commentators recognise the significance of the Sendero's achievement:

'For all practical intents, Sendero Luminoso is the first guerrilla military organisation in the hemisphere to acquire a mass base among the urban poor on a relevant scale. Many have tried; the only others that succeeded to some degree were the Sandinista Front in 1979, just before the overthrow of Anastasia Somoza, and the Popular Liberation Forces (a communist organisation) in El Salvador.' Jorge G Castaneda, *International Herald Tribune*, 21 April 1992.

Sue Branford of the BBC's Latin America Service writes in *The Guardian*:

'Its support comes mainly from Andean Indians and poor Peruvians of mixed blood who have since colonial times felt deep resentment towards the ruling class of rich Peruvians of largely European descent.' (14 February 1992)

In *The Independent*, Simon Strong notes that 25 per cent of those interviewed in informal opinion polls 'say they support the insurgents' who:

'... have infiltrated or dominated several of Huancayo's trade unions and become more openly active in the poorest district.' (19 February 1992)

## Peru: a 'democracy' not worth saving

Capitalist development, whether under regimes led by bourgeois nationalists (General Velasco 1968-1975), social-democratic populists (President Garcia 1985-1990) or neoliberals (Fujimori, elected President 1990), has dramatically failed to meet even the minimum needs of the majority of Peruvians. It has produced social conditions worse than those experienced in the time of the Incan empire, where hunger was unknown. For the past 30 years Peru has undergone a consistent deterioration in its economy and living standards.

60 per cent of Peru's 22 million population live in critical poverty with an average income of \$15.5 per month. In rural areas this drops to \$12.2. The income of the richest 2 per cent is 24 times that of two-thirds of the rest of the population. In 1991 just 150,000 Peruvians paid income tax. 86.4 per cent of the population are either under- or unemployed. Infant mortality is 87 per thousand live births. Life expectancy in impoverished rural areas such as Ayacucho is only 46.7 years. In Lima, the Peruvian capital of seven million people, 40 per cent live in shanty towns; up from 20 per cent in 1961. Seven out of ten lack basic services such as water, electricity and sewage. Between 1987 and 1991 real wages dropped by 66 per cent.

In 1986 average calorie intake was approximately 90 per cent of the required level. After Fujimori's IMF-dictated 'reforms' in 1990-91 this dropped to just over 50 per cent. Spending on health and education a pitiful 1 per cent and 1.6 per cent of GNP respectively were further slashed to repay Peru's \$21bn foreign debt. In 1991 the official figures put cholera deaths at 2,540 with 263,761 others afflicted.

International and domestic capitalists continue to drain the country of its resources and wealth. Between 1981-86, as a result of unequal exchange, the purchasing power of Peru's exports was driven down by 26.2 per cent. Its mineral, petroleum, fishmeal and cotton prices are dictated by transnational corporations on the world market. Debt service repayments as a percentage of foreign exchange receipts during the 1980s reached as high as 50 per cent. In 1991 between \$40-60m was paid monthly in servicing this debt, equivalent to 20 per cent of the national budget. During the 1980s Peru suffered a \$600m capital flight. Following the Fujimori coup in April it is estimated that another \$200m was taken out of the country.

The principle holders of Peruvian short-term debt include the Midland Bank, Chase Manhattan, Bank of Tokyo and Credit Lyonnais. During the 1980s the following multinationals operated out of Peru: Nestlé, Philips, Bayer, Reckitts & Coleman, Matsushita, Goodyear, Pirelli, Proc-

ter and Gamble, Nissan, Toyota, Volkswagen and Volvo. Over 40 per cent of foreign investment is made by the US-based Southern Peru Copper Corporation whose President Mr Preble remarked that 'remitting profits is as simple as writing a cheque'.

Such plunder and poverty is sustained by state terror. A 1991 UN report stated that for four successive years, the Peruvian government has had the worst human rights record for any government in the world. The Peru Peace Network, a US-based anti-Sendero organisation, writes that:

'The Peruvian state has engaged in indiscriminate and arbitrary violence... killing thousands of innocent civilians, principally poor peasants... Entire villages have been destroyed...'

*Peru: caught in the crossfire*, p27

Simon Strong in his new book writes that the Peruvian army:

'acts like an occupation rather than a protection force, relying on indiscriminate killing to weed out the enemy from its midst.'

*Shining Path: the world's deadliest revolutionary force*, p142

The January 1992 issue of Amnesty International's magazine states:

'Although thousands of civilians have been reported extra-judicially executed or 'disappeared' in the emergency zones during the past decade, no members of the armed forces are known to have been convicted for their part in these violations.'

During the first 14 months of Fujimori's government 3,761 people were killed and 236 'disappeared' by state forces and death squads. Then in April, Fujimori, after having described human rights organisations as 'useful idiots' and 'legal arms' of the Sendero, staged a coup in alliance with the military. Congress was dissolved, habeas corpus abrogated and a new anti-terrorist law was so broadly defined as to include almost anyone. So-called terrorism cases are now to be decided in secret tribunals where the identities of judges and prosecutors will be concealed. 170 judges were sacked for not undertaking state repression with sufficient enthusiasm. Today 55 per cent of Peru's population lives under martial law and are deprived of rights to free assembly and movement whilst the army can raid their homes without a warrant.

Peruvian democracy, which opponents of Sendero are so eager to defend, has never been other than democracy for a few and barbarism for the majority. To defend this 'democracy's' war against the Sendero is to support the means of imperialist and domestic capitalist plunder. This form of bourgeois democracy has been a feature of Latin America since the mid-1980s. During the 1960s and 1970s brutal military regimes violently crushed the working class and revolutionary move-

ments on the continent. However, the growing social and economic problems exacerbated by the foreign debt burden produced mass immiseration which once again threatened to ignite into popular insurrection. The military regimes therefore inaugurated limited 'democratic openings' and yielded to bourgeois political parties. The latter formed governments and legalised social democracy as a more effective means of forestalling revolution and channelling the masses onto the parliamentary road. Meanwhile they retained in place their military apparatus and death squads. Thus they sought to prolong the privilege of the established ruling classes.

## The failure of left nationalism and social democracy

'Shining Path's advance demonstrated the relative failure of the other left-wing parties to capture the aspirations of the poor.'

*Shining Path*, p39

Despite the intolerable conditions imposed on the Peruvian people, the nationalist and social democratic left has repeatedly failed to challenge the combined power of the local oligarchy and its imperialist allies. Furthermore when in government they have consistently attacked the working class and peasantry.

The Velasco regime's much praised land reform merely transferred the title to land from a handful of large rural landowners to state-run co-ops controlled by the urban bourgeoisie. Only 2.3 per cent of confiscated land went to the peasantry. Thus the division between a mass of impoverished peasants farming tiny plots and huge farms producing for export continued. In 1969 Velasco enacted laws restricting free high-school education. This led to uprisings and riots across the country which were put down by force.

In 1985 Alan Garcia heading the virulently anti-communist APRA (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance) came to power with left-wing and anti-imperialist credentials. He was soon unmasked. On 18/19 June 1986 he ordered the most atrocious prison massacre in modern Latin American history when state troops murdered nearly 300 Sendero prisoners. Under Garcia's government, 'counter-insurgency experts' from Israel, the United States and Britain were invited to supervise the war against the Sendero. In 1988 Garcia adopted austerity measures and devaluation which by 1989 had reduced working class wages to 60 per cent of their previous purchasing power and the informal economy mushroomed.

Garcia's 1985 victory was hailed by the leader of the United Left, a coalition of left social democrats and Trotskyists as 'a popular triumph'. He added that 'the right has been erased



# Revolutionary challenge Sendero Luminoso

from the scene in this country'. The United Left, formed in 1980, has registered significant electoral successes and established itself in municipal government on a narrow social democratic platform. In 1990 it supported the Fujimori presidential campaign and was rewarded with a ministerial position; Gloria Helfer became the first Education Minister under Fujimori. A bourgeois commentator comparing the Sendero and the United Left writes:

'The major difference is that the IU wants to participate in the political system and the Sendero wants to destroy it.'  
Tom Marks in *Shining Path of Peru*, ed DS Palmer, p202

The United Left, and APRA, have ties to a shrinking section of the workers in the mines and public sector but have little support among the peasantry, rural working class and the working class of the shantytowns, where the Sendero have organised. In the context of economic deterioration and intensified social and class polarisation, the IU had two options: to side with the momentum of the revolution or to defend the state under the cloak of reforms; it chose the latter. Even in the aftermath of Fujimori's coup, rather than mobilise with the most oppressed against reaction they pleaded for the restoration of their privileges within the rotten political system as the best way of defeating the Sendero.

## The rise of the Sendero Luminoso

The economic and social crisis of Peru and the political bankruptcy of the nationalist and social democratic organisations facilitated revolutionary organisation amongst the mass movement. One organisation carrying out such work was the Communist Party of Peru under the leadership of Abimael Guzman, more popularly known as Chairman Gonzalo. The PCP was formed in 1970 and traces its origins to the 1964 split in the Peruvian Communist Party between Maoist and pro-Soviet factions. In 1979 it decided to launch the armed struggle and carried out its first military operation on 17 May 1980.

In its programme, the PCP describes itself as a 'Marxist-Leninist-Maoist, principally Maoist organisation':

'The Communist Party of Peru has Communism as its final aim but given that current Peruvian society is exploited and oppressed by imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism and semi-feudality, the revolution undergoes a democratic first stage, a second socialist stage so as to later develop successive cultural revolutions.'

In the classic Marxist conception of People's War the Sendero combine the political and armed struggle under the 'absolute leadership of the party' with the aim of:

'destroying by degrees the old power, principally its armed forces and repressive organs and... the construction of the new power for the proletariat and the people.'

In its daily struggle, Sendero concretises this programme to secure the widest possible unity of the people against Peruvian capitalism and imperialism. The *Financial Times* notes:

'Unusually sophisticated leaflets before last week's armed strike offer a 22-point political programme with broad popular appeal - amid familiar Marxist rhetoric were calls for cuts in taxes, public service tariffs and fares, higher wages and pensions, homes for the homeless, improved health and education services and no privatisation.'  
(28 July 1992)

The rise of the Sendero has been rapid. Within nine months of launching the armed struggle it had liberated vast tracts of land with only three people killed. By 1982 it had carried out 5,350 operations and by 1986 28,691. Today it operates in 21 out of the country's 24 departments, while in 500 municipal districts and provinces the state's police and army have no presence. In many liberated areas, the Sendero have established an alternative state power. Assessing their rise to pre-eminence among Peru's revolutionary organisations, a Rand Corporation study notes:

'Shining Path's ability to operate on a military plane is a function of the strength, scope, and diversity of its popular base. This in turn will be a function of the movement's efforts to politicise, mobilise, and subsequently organise a "peasant-worker alliance"... It is a movement... that clearly understands the value of political work.'  
*Sendero's approach to the cities*, p12

It is characteristic of Sendero that it undertook a decade of the most patient systematic study and political organisation among Ayacucho's impoverished peasantry and rural proletariat before launching the armed struggle. Similar painstaking preparations have been undertaken in the shantytowns. They have established networks of popular organisations which in rural areas are incorporated in the Revolutionary People's Defence Front. Its urban counterpart is the Revolutionary People's Defence Movement which includes organisations for the intelligentsia and professionals.

Noticeably, women play a key role in the movement both in the leadership and the ranks. Gabriela Tarazona-Sevillano, a former criminal affairs prosecutor in Peru writes that:

'Since the movement's start, women have played an important role, quite different from their historic role in Peru... female militants are also often assigned the most ruthless of all terrorist assign-

ments.' *Shining Path of Peru*, pp180-181

Cornerstones of Sendero's political work including education for the peasantry, justice against lawless government forces and cocaine gangs, organised self defence and the welfare provision of liberated areas. According to Simon Strong this has 'won Shining Path considerable popular goodwill'. A lawyer in Tingo Maria complains that Sendero have lost him all his clients as they 'provide (the peasant) with effective justice in the absence of official justice'. In areas controlled by the Sendero they also transfer land to the rural poor.

## The anti-Sendero slander exposed

A key element in the arsenal of slander against the Sendero is that they engage in widespread and systematic drug production and trafficking to secure their funding. This lie is nailed by Simon Strong among others. According to him, the Sendero believe that coca cultivation 'must be eradicated systematically where circumstances permit' and 'excessive consumption must be punished by exemplary penalties' (Simon Strong, *Shining Path*, p114-115). However, where the Sendero has been powerless to stop coca cultivation, it fights to defend the interests of the peasant cultivators against the marauding drug gangs. On pain of death it insists they pay higher prices for the peasants' coca.

Typical left characterisations of the Sendero also portray it as a violently sectarian organisation which refuses to work or unite with popular organisations and the rest of the left. Furthermore, the Sendero are accused of a systematic campaign of assassination of leaders of these organisations and trade unionists. The most notorious example presented is the execution on 15 February this year of Maria Elena Moyano, the Deputy Mayor of the Villa El Salvador shantytown on the outskirts of Lima. The left praised her as a champion of the poor, a grass roots organiser and the personification of a new mass popular movement. Her execution was presented as evidence that the Sendero is an enemy of this working class movement.

Maria Moyano was an integral element of the government's counter-insurgency strategy which besides brute military force includes more sophisticated tactics. To prevent the Sendero organising among the urban poor the Peruvian state is resorting to well-established counter-insurgency tactics. It combines controlled drip-feeding of communities with intelligence gathering and, in the words of General Sir Frank Kitson, requires the state to:

'associate as many prominent members of the population especially those who have been engaged in non-violent action, with the

government. This... is known as co-optation and is described... as drowning the revolution in baby's milk.' *Low Intensity Operations*, pp87-88

In Peru this tactic is executed through the agency of social democratic and left organisations and takes the form of the *People's Cafeterias* and *Glass of Milk* programmes. These programmes are run by over 200 Non-Governmental Organisations and so-called 'Popular Organisations' and are funded by US, Dutch, German, Canadian and Spanish bodies. Their leadership manages budgets of millions of dollars. Between 1980-1989 the US supplied them with \$16m in food and cash. In 1992 they expect to receive \$75m.

In Villa El Salvador, Moyano was in the leadership of such organisations. An avowed opponent of Sendero, she saw 'Popular Organisations' as barricades against revolution:

'This country would have exploded long ago if it had not been for the solidarity work of the Popular Organisations.'

The function of these 'popular organisations' is two-fold. They serve to isolate the revolutionaries and facilitate the collection of intelligence used for targeting them. Secondly, by allowing minimal food supplies to reach a destitute population they aim to reconcile the impoverished masses to capitalism and social democracy. *El Diario*, a newspaper supporting the Sendero notes that:

'The objective is to maintain an enormous, extremely impoverished mass of people as beggars, without a critical spirit, without the will to fight, who think of nothing more than the next plate of food to be "given".'

Moyano was no innocent, independent grass roots activist. She was a member of the United Left. She belonged to the Movement for Socialist Affirmation to which the previously mentioned Gloria Helfer, the first Education Minister in Fujimori's government, also belonged. In this capacity she vigorously fought against the Sendero and openly sided with the military inviting them to 'change their image' and come into shantytowns to 'help in community works'. In this way, she argued, 'we can defeat the Sendero'. Moyano's usefulness in obstructing revolutionary organisation among the urban poor was recognised by the *Financial Times* in 1986. Then it included a special profile on her which focussed upon her establishing the elements of local government in the shantytowns, thereby inserting means of state control over this potentially explosive population.

Despite her so-called 'popularity' only 3,000 people attended her funeral: the population of Villa El Salvador is 300,000. Present were the Minister of Interior, the Vice President of Peru,

ex-President Belaunde Terry, representatives from APRA, the IU and big business, the military and the police. In Peru, the custom of the military is to murder popular leaders, not attend their funerals. Fujimori called her a 'martyr in the struggle against the Sendero'. The bourgeois newspaper *Caretas*, with known links to the military, described her as 'one of the most effective generals of the campaign' against the Sendero.

Those who so loudly denounced the Sendero said nothing of this. Peru is in a state of civil war. There is no middle road. Class polarisation is at its most extreme. No class force, no political organisation can avoid being drawn to one or the other side. Moyano and her social democratic allies have consciously and willingly moved to the side of Peruvian 'democracy' and the armed state.

Those who condemn Sendero for not seeking alliance with the social democratic left conceal the fact that it is this left which is collaborating with the state to destroy the Sendero. The social democratic left has supported the formation of government-funded urban patrols to hunt down the Sendero. Despite indiscriminate government attacks on Peru's trade unions, Pablo Checa, leader of the General Confederation of Peruvian Workers admits that 'We have resisted the Senderistas with our own lives'. He merely criticises the government's 'authoritarian manner' because it leads people to 'saying that democracy is not worth saving'. He even criticises Peru's 'business sector' for not presenting 'any proposals for beating Sendero'.

## Sendero and imperialism's war against the poor

Masquerading under 'the war on drugs', the US has begun its military intervention in Peru. They fear a Vietnam of the Andes. With Sendero's 'influence spreading to the rest of the continent' (*Financial Times* 28.7.92), the USA will go to any lengths to crush revolution in what it regards as its own backyard. The left's hysterical attacks on the Sendero serves to legitimise the US preparations for a bloody war on the poor of the whole continent.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, imperialism and its local allies feel less constrained in the use of barbarism to eliminate popular opposition. The Sendero success in resisting the ruling class and in organising and arming the working class and peasantry in Peru provides the possibility of hope and inspiration across Latin America. Communists internationally must support Sendero's war against imperialism and the Peruvian ruling class.

This does not mean we endorse Sendero's entire programme. Indeed we have fundamental differences with them. Sendero deny the socialist and anti-imperialist achievements of the Cuban revolution which they denounce in uncompromising terms. They thus isolate themselves from a bastion of anti-imperialism and socialism in Latin America and internationally. This could prove costly. Sendero also adopted the position that the Soviet Union was an imperialist state. The cult of personality surrounding Chairman Gonzalo betrays the pressure of a powerful peasant base. In addition, the mystification of Chairman Gonzalo's theoretical contribution into a doctrine of Gonzalo-Thought is counter to Marxism.

These differences must be debated. But they do not disqualify Sendero from their place in the international working class movement. Nor should they blind socialists and communists to the fact that a new wave of revolution will sweep through the poorest and most dispossessed people on the earth. It will appear in forms both new and unrecognisable to the traditions of the past. ■



The following article has been submitted to us by Luis Fernandez. He is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), which has played a leading role in the mass anti-Collor street protests in Brazil over the last month.

## BRAZIL

# Crisis of neo-liberalism

*Since mid-August, Brazil has been rocked by massive street demonstrations demanding the impeachment of the right-wing President Collor de Melo. In September a Parliamentary Investigative Commission concluded that widespread evidence of Collor's involvement in government corruption justified the opening of impeachment proceedings. Today the President's removal seems very probable.*

What lies behind this tragic and melancholic fiasco which has beset the first Brazilian President to be elected by direct popular vote after thirty years of military and authoritarian rule? Is it just an affirmation of the health of the 'new born Brazilian democracy' as claimed by the monopoly media. Or are there more profound and substantial issues involved?

### The historical background

In 1989 Collor was elected President of Brazil with the support of right and centre-right political forces and the backing of powerful business and landowning interests. He received 35 million votes against the 32 million cast for Lula, a left-wing candidate sponsored by the People's Brazil Front – a coalition of the Workers Party (PT), the Communist Party of Brazil and the Brazilian Socialist Party.



Initially Collor was mistrusted by the traditional conservative forces. He was neither supported nor nominated by any of the major Brazilian political parties, and ended up running for President on behalf of a minute and almost fictional party – the Party for National Reconstruction. The centre piece of his programme was the 'fight against corruption'. But he did not offer any substantive proposal for dealing with Brazil's acute social, economic and political problems.

Collor is not, however, an outsider to the Brazilian ruling class. He belongs to a very traditional bourgeois family based in Alagoas which owns a powerful communications network linked to the *O-Globo* telecommunications monopoly group – one of the largest in the world – and has investments in other industrial and agricultural enterprises.

Collor's political career began in ARENA – the military regime's official political facade. In the mid-1980s, when opposition to the military regime mounted, Collor broke away from ARENA. In 1986 he was elected governor of Alagoas. His administration gained much press publicity because of a fierce dispute he had with a rival economic grouping – the sugar plantation owners – about the privileges given them by the previous state government. With the support of *O-Globo* he popularised his image as a courageous and intrepid 'corruption fighter'. This cost him the trust of sections of the

Brazilian ruling class. However in 1989 no candidate of the traditional ruling class parties managed to get through to the second round of the elections. So the ruling class had to rally round Collor against the very real prospect of an electoral triumph for the left. Why were these traditional parties unable to rally popular support. What enabled Collor to make his entry onto the national political stage?

### Historical limitations of the 'democratic' bourgeoisie

The 1989 elections were held four years after the defeat of the military regime and the beginning of a process of democratic transition during which Brazil was governed by the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement and the Party of the Liberal Front. Both these parties advocated a return to a form of bourgeois-democratic government but had no clear socio-economic alternative to the model of dependent capitalist development sponsored by the military regime. It was the failure of this model in the early 1980s – expressed in the foreign debt crisis, massive inflation and unemployment, escalating misery and social unrest – that provided the objective basis for the political defeat of the military. So Brazilian people had high hopes that the transition to a democratic regime would reverse the military's legacy of economic and social disaster. It didn't.

Throughout the transition period the Brazilian industrial monopoly bourgeoisie sustained the same economic model as the military. The social and economic situation deteriorated even further. Inflation reached 1,000 per cent a year, while economic growth rates were negative. Repeated efforts to reverse this deterioration failed. None of them addressed the fundamental problems behind the Brazilian crisis – imperialist domination, especially the foreign debt stranglehold, and the highly concentrated agrarian structure combining traditional and new capitalist export-orientated *latifunda*.

The 1989 elections were thus marked by widespread popular frustration against and discontent with traditional bourgeois parties who dominated the transition period. Thus the elections polarised into a contest between two seemingly 'anti-political

establishment' candidates – Collor on the right and Lula on the left. The ruling class had no choice but to back Collor. He won the Presidency, but his own party did not even muster five per cent of seats in Congress.

### Collor and the new imperialist offensive

Brazil's Presidential election coincided with the collapse of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe and the strategic international alignment of the Soviet Union, via Gorbachev's perestroika with US imperialism. This opened the way for a new international imperialist offensive – expressed in the ideology of neo-liberalism – aiming at the destruction of the basis for national sovereignty for Third World nations. In Latin America this expressed itself in demands for a curtailment of state economic regulation, privatisation of state enterprises and opening up of whole countries to imperialist multi-nationals.

Collor immediately aligned himself with imperialism and set about imposing IMF-approved 'modernisation shock-treatment' on the Brazilian people. Over the last two years many strategic state enterprises have been privatised and restrictions on foreign capital lifted. The stock-market has been opened to foreign capital and multinationals have seized productive resources through shameful debt-conversion schemes. Meanwhile state investments in science, technology and education were drastically cut and inflation-protected wage indexation abolished.

The social and economic consequences of this neo-liberal 'modernisation' orgy were catastrophic. A very violent recession followed with negative growth in 1990 and stagnation in 1991. Inflation has not abated and stands at 30 per cent a month! Unemployment has reached record highs. All social indicators show an abrupt deterioration of living conditions. The thousands of homeless children who live in the streets of Brazil's major cities – and have become easy prey to paramilitary death squads financed by shop-owners – are tragic evidence of this.

### The movement to oust Collor

The brutal aggravation of Brazil's social and economic problems led to



a new wave of popular frustration and discontent, but this time directed against the Collor government. For some time this opposition found no effective expression. The major opposition parties, including Lula's Workers Party, preferred to 'let things run normally' until the next, 1994, Presidential election. Things started to change, however, when the press exposed strong evidence that the 'corruption-fighting' President was himself involved in massive corruption schemes within his own government.

In April a Parliamentary Commission was established to investigate allegations of corruption against Paulo Cesar Farias who was Collor's main advisor and treasurer of his Presidential campaign. The Commission discovered that Farias had a network of co-criminals occupying strategic positions at all levels of government. At this point the bourgeoisie wanted to halt proceedings, incriminating only Farias. But a family feud in the 'Collor dynasty' led to new charges against Collor by his brother, who claimed that Farias was only a front for Collor's corrupt activities. Investigating further, the Commission found that Farias was paying the President's personal expenses from funds obtained illegally. These included massive expenses such as \$50,000 to Collor's wife and \$2.5m to refurbish Collor's private residence in Brasilia.

### Enter the people...

Even with this kind of evidence the government, through its tightly controlled majority in the Parliamentary Commission, could have delayed any direct incrimination of the President. But then on 11 August – National Students Day in Brazil and one day before Collor's birthday – thousands of students took to the streets led by the National Union of University Students and the National Union of Secondary Students demanding the President's impeachment. This sparked off mass demonstrations calling for Collor's dismissal, some with over half a million people. The Brazilian people found the political channel it needed to voice its discontent and put an end to Collor's disastrous neo-liberal policies.

This movement led to fundamental changes in the political situation. The vacillating bourgeois opposition forces now started to campaign vigorously for Collor's impeachment. Right wing forces which had rallied round Collor began to divide and splinter. A large number of them broke with the President and started to call for his impeachment. Thus the overwhelming majority vote against Collor in the Parliamentary Commission.

In the midst of Collor's complete humiliation, two main political moves are being made in Brazil. Those sectors of the ruling class most closely aligned with imperialism are pressing Collor to resign so as to terminate this crisis. They are happy to sacrifice the President in order to save his neo-liberal 'modernisation' programme. It will not be easy to achieve this end. Collor himself insists he will not resign. In addition there are substantial reservations among this sector of the ruling class about the Vice President Itamar Franco who has voiced public criticism of Collor's programme, particularly his privatisation of some strategic enterprises. In opposition to this faction of the ruling class, the left's central aims are to keep the pressure on Collor, proceed with the impeachment process and force an end to Collor's policy of national treason. In the middle, the bourgeois opposition is keeping an essentially erratic and vacillating position as they have no alternative socio-economic position to replace Collor's neo-liberal one imposed by imperialism.

As it was one of the first Third World countries to align itself with the new imperialist offensive, the crisis of neo-liberalism in Brazil offers important lessons to progressive and revolutionary forces throughout the world. In the first place it shows how the logic of neo-liberalism imposed by the West runs counter to the consolidation of democratic regimes in dependent capitalist countries, even in the limited bourgeois-democratic sense. The social, economic and national costs associated with neo-liberal policies tend to very rapidly erode popular support for governments which enact them. This in turn paves the way for these governments to become open dictatorships (Peru) or fall into political paralysis (Brazil).

The Brazilian experience also demonstrates that the implementation of neo-liberal policies intensifies the contradictions between imperialism and the different instruments, institutions and interests of national sovereignty in the dependent capitalist countries. This can express itself in important divisions among the local ruling classes, which in turn can be played upon by the left to politically educate and mobilise broad sectors of the population against the imperialist offensive. Last, but by no means least, the experience of Brazil also demonstrates how the national bourgeoisie in dependent capitalist countries with medium-level capitalist development are incapable of offering or sustaining any alternative to imperialist domination. In sum, against the horrors of neo-liberalism, socialism is the only way out. ■







Friends, relatives and supporters of both the Voice of the Innocent prisoners and the Beechmount Five were on the anti-internment march through west Belfast this August.

# The voice of the INNOCENT

Although there is no official policy of internment in the north of Ireland at present, over the last few years there has been continuous rounding up of local youths who are tortured in Castlereagh Interrogation Centre, forced to sign false confessions and held on remand in Crumlin Road gaol.

While in Belfast on the RCG's annual delegation to support the Anti-Internment demonstration KEN HUGHES and NICKI JAMESON spoke to Molly and Barry McMullan, the mother and brother of Stephen McMullan who has been detained in Crumlin Road for over a year.

## THE ARRESTS

On 6 August 1991 Stephen was on his way to a funeral and the car was stopped. He was asked his name and address, then taken out and told he was wanted on charges. He's been charged with IRA membership, throwing a coffee jar (used to make a petrol bomb), attempted murder and causing grievous bodily harm.

Two days before, they went to Tony Garland's house - he's only 17 - and they took him and put him on the same charges. The day of the coffee jar they had stopped all the wee fellas and questioned them and two of them were lifted: Hugh McLaughlin and Micky Beck. They held them for three days and then they got an extension, then another extension, then they charged them. Hugh McLaughlin had extra charges added again just a couple of weeks ago and now has a total of 42. The others all have multiple charges as well.

They lifted Ciaran McAllister and Danny Pettigrew at the same time as they lifted Stephen but because they were only 16 they let them out and told them that as soon as they turned 17 they would be lifted and two days and three days after their 17th birthday they came and lifted them.

Last year or the year before they tried to go for teenage internment but it was turned down so this is their version of teenage internment.

They didn't tell us they'd arrested Stephen. I was in England. My husband was there on his own and they came and searched the house three days in a row. And they never mentioned that Stevie had been lifted, just said they were there to search the house.

## CASTLEREAGH

Stephen had undergone three days interrogation and he was coming out

and they took him to where he could hear the kids being beaten and screaming and they said, 'If you sign these papers we'll let these kids out,' and Stevie said, 'Do you promise me? Do you promise me?' and they said, 'Yes'. So he said 'I'll sign what ever you want. Let the kids go.' But Stephen didn't know that the kids had already signed away their lives. They'd already broken them and they'd signed for all these murders and explosives.

They connected some of them up to electric wires so they didn't know if they were going to be electrocuted or not. Hughie McLaughlin's mother told me they connected wires to Stephen's private parts and told him he could never have another Irish bastard. And another thing they do is put a cloth over their heads, tip the chair back and tip water on the cloth. Now in Stephen's case they used urine and it damaged his eyes so badly they brought him out to the Royal Hospital. And now Stephen needs glasses. So I left the money for them ten weeks ago and they're ready but he hasn't got them and I've phoned his solicitor to take it up. They have destroyed his eyes because he always had perfect eyesight. They do this prodding in the eyes and there was something pushed up into the back of Stevie's eyes. I don't know what it was because they won't tell you. They won't even tell his solicitor. His solicitor didn't even know he was getting taken out to the Royal Hospital to see an eye specialist.

## CRUMLIN ROAD

For four days in the height of summer they weren't allowed out of their cells to slop out. The bars of the cells are all covered with perspex. Stephen was able to get the perspex off his door. But a couple of the boys couldn't get the perspex off so they put matches or

lighters to it and some of them are now suffering with inhalation of the plastic fumes and have been pretty ill. Stephen was put 'on the boards' (loss of privileges and association) for 42 days for banging the door and 19 days for taking the perspex off. There's three in a cell with a pot each and you can guess what it's like. They put the whole landing on the boards. They were put on the boards for not slopping out, on the boards for banging the doors to get their human rights and on the boards again for taking the perspex off.

The whole gaol is infested with rats and cockroaches. They have to keep all their clothes in paper bags. Their food's kept in a brown paper bag. And the only place to put it is beside the slop bucket. Stephen's lost so much weight he's fading away. When I came back last year and went to see him, I nearly passed out because I walked past the cubicle he was sitting in and he called me and I went back and looked at him. He was like a skeleton.

Remand prisoners are allowed three half hour visits a week. I went up on one visit recently and I arrived at five to nine and didn't get out until twenty to six. They were taking them out to visit one at a time.

You go up to the gaol and you ring the bell and if they're busy or they don't feel like it, you have to stand out on the Crumlin Road. That's a densely Protestant area and somehow everyone knows we're Catholics. Then you get let in. You wait to hand parcels in. There's no shelter. Then you stand another half an hour or more before you get into the waiting area. When you do get in, the place is stinking. The toilet is disgusting. There's no toilet roll; the same towel has been there four or five weeks. Then you go through the searchers and into what we call the well. That's down some steps. If you're disabled,

## VOICE OF THE INNOCENT

Michael Beck - 18  
Anthony Garland - 17  
Hugh McLaughlin - 18  
Ciaran McAllister - 17  
James Morgan - 19  
Danny Pettigrew - 17  
Stephen McMullan - 21

Seven of the innocent Ballymurphy and St James' youths interned 12 months in Crumlin Road gaol.

Voice of the Innocent tel: 0232 232234

## THE BEECHMOUNT FIVE

On 1 May 1991 RUC Sergeant Stephen Gillespie was killed as a result of an IRA gun and rocket attack in the Beechmount area of Belfast.

Since then a number of youths have been arrested and taken to Castlereagh where they were physically and mentally tortured and forced to sign confessions that they were involved in the incident.

The families of Liam Coogan (18), Mark Prior (19), Jim McCabe (19), Kevin Mulholland (17) and Laurence Hillick (17) have formed a campaign to prove the boys innocence. They are determined to secure their release now and not have to wait 15 or more years like the Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6.

Free the Beechmount Five, c/o Margaret Hillick, 3 Shaws Park, Belfast or telephone Bridget Coogan 0232 248957.

how do you get in? It's about 10 feet by 10 feet and you get about a hundred people all standing in it. If you're sitting, you're knee to knee with the people on the opposite chairs. You're not allowed to stand in the hallway.

You're only allowed to take two children to see a remand prisoner at one time. There's men in there with four or five kids. At Christmas the whole family wants to see their Daddy. Every day that a prisoner is in there, it's not only the prisoner, it's his family that are suffering.

Some of Stephen's friends come up to the house and ask how he is; then they walk away; then they come back and say 'Will you tell him we're asking about him.' And they go back

down the steps and come back again and say, 'Ah to hell with it. Ask him to send me a visiting order.' They're actually afraid to visit him because if their names are on the visit they'll be lifted. According to the papers, Stephen is an IRA terrorist so anybody going up to visit him is an IRA terrorist. And I'm scared for them too. If anybody goes up to visit Stephen they have to come to my house or phone to let me know they're safe. My older son got stopped in the street not long after Stephen was lifted and told, 'We'll be coming for you next.' We're even afraid to mention anyone's name in a letter; we just put initials. If you send a photo in, they cut all the men's heads out because they say they can make themselves false identity with it. I think they send them to the Prod Squad and they're setting them up for shooting.

## FORCED INTEGRATION

If they are fighting outside the gaol, how can you expect them to get on inside the gaol? I was on a visit a few weeks back and the word came through that a boy coming down to visit his mother had had a hiding on his way down and was being taken to hospital. There was four Protestants and him coming through and the screws stood back and let them beat him. It happens frequently.

When the two kids, Ciaran McAllister and Danny Pettigrew, were lifted they were put in what is called the basement and one of them was put in with a sex offender who was in there for sexually abusing young fellas. The other was put into a cell with three Protestants.

After the bomb in the gaol no visits were allowed for four weeks and the first time we were allowed up, I was getting out of the taxi and these four women all turned round and looked at me and I said, 'If you feel like it, come on.' But I walked inside and another three girls got a hiding.

## THE VOICE OF THE INNOCENT

All the mothers and fathers got together and had a couple of meetings and elected a committee and have called themselves the Voice of the Innocent. And they've been to conferences in England and the Free State. But we get told it's sub judice and the media's not allowed to highlight it until the trial, until they are actually sentenced. What they are trying to do is keep the rest of the world from seeing that they are actually torturing these kids. They've been in over a year now and no word of a trial. They say maybe next March.

People in the area are supportive. There was a march the other day. There's not a family in this whole area that doesn't have a friend or member of the family in gaol on suspicious circumstances. And it's got worse in the last period. They're going mostly for young kids now. There's a local band that has most of its members in gaol. Kids of nine and ten these days talk about getting lifted when they get to 16 or so as a matter of course. My grandson said it the other day: 'When I get to Stephen's age, will I get lifted?'

The main demand of the campaign is that they release the boys. We don't want them sitting 15 years like the Guildford 4 before they are released. We'd just like to ask any mothers in England who read your paper if they'd like to go through what we're going through. And, secondly, if they are going to hold them on remand in these gaols, at least give them their human rights and dignity.

We want people to realise this is happening and come out and lobby their MPs and the Prison Department. Lobby anybody that you think will do us any good. Because they are just kids and they've been trailed away from their families and locked up and tortured. As the song goes, 'Armoured cars and tanks and guns. Came to take away our sons.'



David Kitson, communist and ex-political prisoner of apartheid, reviews the first in the Counterattack series of books:

## The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution

The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution ed Eddie Abrahams, Larkin Publications, London 1992, £4.50.

When I was in Leningrad, as a guest of the Soviet Communist Party, shortly after my release from gaol in apartheid Pretoria, the local District Committee deputised a young man to smooth my path. The first night he taught me to drink vodka. You add a dash of bitters and knock it back without touching the sides. The next night he asked me for my autograph. When I looked quizzical, he said it was for his nine-year old daughter. She wanted my signature because she had never met a real revolutionary in her whole life. I recount this not to point a finger at myself but at the Soviet Union. It had not been revolutionary for years.

A revolution is a phenomenon which involves a relatively sudden qualitative change. It has a beginning and an end. Marx might have complicated this when he wrote in *The Address to the Communist League* about the revolution in permanence. However, he was writing about an impending bourgeois revolution, in which the working class should take, in his opinion, an indepen-

endent line and continue the revolution for as long as would be needed for the working class to achieve its aims. Then the revolution would be over and the proletariat would proceed to build socialism in Germany.

Thus without being too precise as to when the Bolshevik Revolution had completed its course and the post-revolutionary period had proceeded to develop, there can be no doubt that the phenomenon of the revolution was the most epoch-making event of the twentieth century. Some writers seem to think that because the Soviet Union collapsed more than 70 years later, this meant that there was something defective about the Revolution. On the contrary, the Russian people, with the Bolsheviks in the lead, succeeded in making a socialist revolution in a backward country, and have provided a model from which many can learn. Indeed, the countries which based themselves accurately on the Marxist-Leninist precepts which arose from practice in Russia, have also succeeded in winning their own revolutions in countries which continue on their paths to communism. Also the theory and practice

of Bolshevism can be applied to present-day so-called Marxist organisations which offer anything except progress towards a successful revolution. This has been done comprehensively by the authors of *The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution*.

The beginning and development of socialism in the Soviet Union was enabled because of a change in class power brought about by the Revolution. Was the first socialist state such 'a fragile vessel'? Initially, it wasn't socialist at all. Socialism had to be built against awesome odds. What it had was the tremendous energy and élan of the Soviet people once released from oppression.

First a devastated country was rehabilitated. Then, in the course of little over a decade, during the first Five Year Plans, the economy was built, with tremendous rates of growth, until the GNP of the Soviet Union matched that of the rest of Europe put together. Then the Soviet Union faced the panzer onslaught of the Nazi Blitzkrieg which had humbled France in a matter of weeks. It absorbed the blow, halted the Nazis and ground them to shreds with

Soviet tanks, planes and artillery that were superior to Germany's best, operated by soldiers showing incredible devotion to and sacrifice for their socialist motherland, whose fathers in the First World War had voted with their feet.

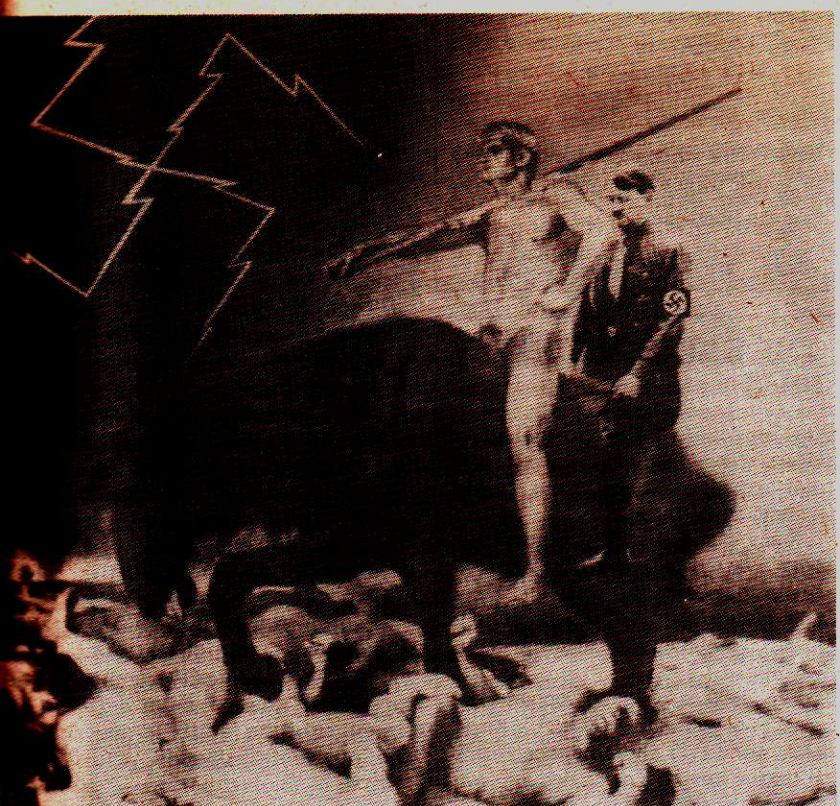
After the Second World War, the economy was rebuilt. Nuclear power was developed with a speed that Western scientists had deemed impossible. The Soviet space programme is unmatched. The BAM railway, 4000km long, was built right through the Pole of Coldness. Not only was a gas pipeline built from Urengoi to Western Europe, but five similar pipelines came to traverse the Soviet Union itself. There has been a flowering of art, culture, science and engineering and technology by a literate people. When the West wanted a really top-notch dancer, chess-player or musician they had to get some Soviet citizens to defect. When he was president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Professor Blackett said that the British had a choice: to learn physics or to learn Russian.

However, a socialist system is a contradictory one. Lenin said that it would be easy to win a revolution in a backward country, but difficult to build socialism in it thereafter, and *vice versa* for an advanced one. He expected mistakes to be made in the Soviet Union that might bring socialism to naught, and that determined communists would have to begin again repeatedly (cf *Notes of a Publicist*). What is remarkable about the erstwhile Soviet Union is that it took more than 70 years for it to eventually collapse.

Capitalists, according to Marx, are helpless victims in the grasp of social forces they do not understand. Perhaps

they understand economic forces better than they did in Marx's day, but the observed fact that world capitalism is in difficulties today shows that change is still brought about by the interplay of such forces. Socialism, however, should not be completely subject to such forces. Its progress should be determined by an understanding of events and by planning. However, it is a contradictory system. When it starts, its economy is entirely pre-socialist. Furthermore the first socialist state was completely surrounded by absolutely hostile capitalist countries all determined to bring about its downfall. As it develops, it becomes less dependent on blindly operating forces. This is not an automatic process. If its leaders make persistent mistakes, forces outside their control come to dominate. How the socialist process was vitiated in the socialist countries which have currently fallen is explored in detail by *The Legacy*.

One day socialism will raise its head again. Already there is the ongoing Cuban example. And in the Guangdong and Fukien, economic growth rates are higher than anywhere else in the world. The Soviet Union is full of well-educated people, well-read in Marxism-Leninism, even if they apply its precepts poorly. In a few years there will be a different story there. Communists need to understand what happened and to avoid the mistakes (if one will permit such a euphemism) of the past. For this *The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution* is essential reading. It even records the measures set up as far back as the Paris Commune to build the dictatorship of the proletariat but which, since, have been largely ignored. We all owe one to Eddie Abrahams and his co-authors. ■



Der Krieg, AIZ vol XII, no 29, 1933

## One man's war against Hitler

John Heartfield: one man's war against Hitler Barbican Art Gallery, London, 13 August-18 October 1992. Organised by the Akademie der Künste zu Berlin.

The exhibition currently showing clearly indicates Heartfield's continuous dedication to peace and socialism, and the fight against war and imperialism.

In 1916 Helmut Herzfelde changed his name to John Heartfield as a protest against German chauvinism. After the war Heartfield joined the Berlin Dada movement many of whom gave their support to the German revolution. Heartfield invented the technique of photomontage: the use of photographs, words and drawings to convey a blistering political satire. Heartfield and his brother Wieland Herzfelde were on the left-wing of Dada, and committed communists.

From the late twenties Heartfield produced photomontages for *Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung* (Workers' Illustrated Paper - AIZ). These brilliant photomontages were political weapons against the corruption and evil of fascism and war. Their importance appreciated as AIZ's circulation increased; by 1933 it stood at 500,000.

In 1933 Heartfield escaped to Prague, where AIZ was continued. He left Prague and lived in Britain until 1950. His death after illness in 1968 in the German Democratic Republic was a great loss to the anti-imperialist and communist movement.

Dale Evans

## Let Malcolm X speak

Malcolm X: Socialism and Black Nationalism.

Kevin Ovenden. Bookmarks 1992, £2.95.

The Socialist Worker's Party has published this book as the latest in a series of attacks on those who put the anti-imperialist and anti-racist struggle at the centre of the class struggle. They do not come to praise Malcolm X but to bury his political ideas and opportunistically cash in on the release of Spike Lee's film *Malcolm X*. No reader of this book would be encouraged to study life and times of Malcolm X or, come to that, the writings of George Jackson, the Black Panthers, WEB Du Bois, or any of the other great fighters against US racism and capitalism this century who are casually dismissed in this book. Sadly, an uncritical reader coming new to the study of socialism would be totally misinformed about the history of the socialist movement in the USA as well. *Malcolm X* by Ovenden is a definite off-putting passion killer. As a potted history of the US working class since the turn of the century it fails completely to inform or inspire.

The real purpose of this book is to deny the existence of privileged layers within the US working class. It is the next step on the path which began with a series of writings and meetings claiming that the working class in the capitalist countries do not benefit from imperialism. In this book they now extend that position to claim that the white working class does not benefit from the racism of the bosses (p73).

Ovenden consistently refers to a model of national capitalism where 'workers have a common experience of exploitation at the hands of the bosses'. Racism, for him, remains on the level of a ruling class confidence trick that binds the proletariat to capitalism: 'Racism is an ideology that has grown up with and supported the develop-

ment of capitalism in the US and elsewhere' (p24). For Ovenden and the SWP, racism does not have a real materialist basis in society. They therefore reject the revolutionary core of Malcolm's position which is that '22 million black people are victims of Americanism'. 'All of us have suffered here in this country, political oppression at the hands of the white man, economic exploitation at the hands of the white man, and social degradation at the hands of the white man.' (*Malcolm X Speaks*, NY 1966 p26,24)

Yet Malcolm was not, ultimately, anti-white. He knew that for those whites with no stake in the system the only way forward is to unite with black people.

'So when the day comes when the whites who are really fed up - I don't mean the jive whites, who pose as liberals and who are not, but those really fed up with what is going on - when they learn how to really establish communication... You'll get some changes. And it will take both, it will take everything that you've got...' (ibid p207)

Ovenden does a great disservice to the cause of socialism by pretending that all workers experience the same exploitation at the hands of the bosses. The long and bitter history of struggle against the double oppression of racism and capitalism has taught the black working class that vast sections of the white workers will defend their privileges at all costs and unite with the ruling class and its state. Events show that trades unions have repeatedly betrayed the principles of worker unity, that both Republican and Democratic Parties are racist to the core and that no gains have been made without mass struggles in the black communities. The facts are that Black workers have the most impoverished living condi-

tions, the poorest wages and conditions, housing and schooling. But with airy indifference to reality the SWP asks:

'Why would the bosses use racism if it led to gains for white workers who are the vast majority of the working class in the Western countries? For the bosses, their whole aim in the class struggle is to concede as little as possible to the working class.' (p73)

This ignores the concrete reality of colonialism, monopoly capitalism and imperialism. It cannot begin to account for racism. These are the real foundations of capitalist production. They give rise to privileged layers within the working class closely identified with the imperialist state because it is the source of their relatively higher standard of living. Such workers have a material interest in the existence of imperialism and with the racist divide it inevitably creates. Lenin identified precisely the process which led to a split in the working class movement and gave rise to opportunism in that movement. See his writings on imperialism.

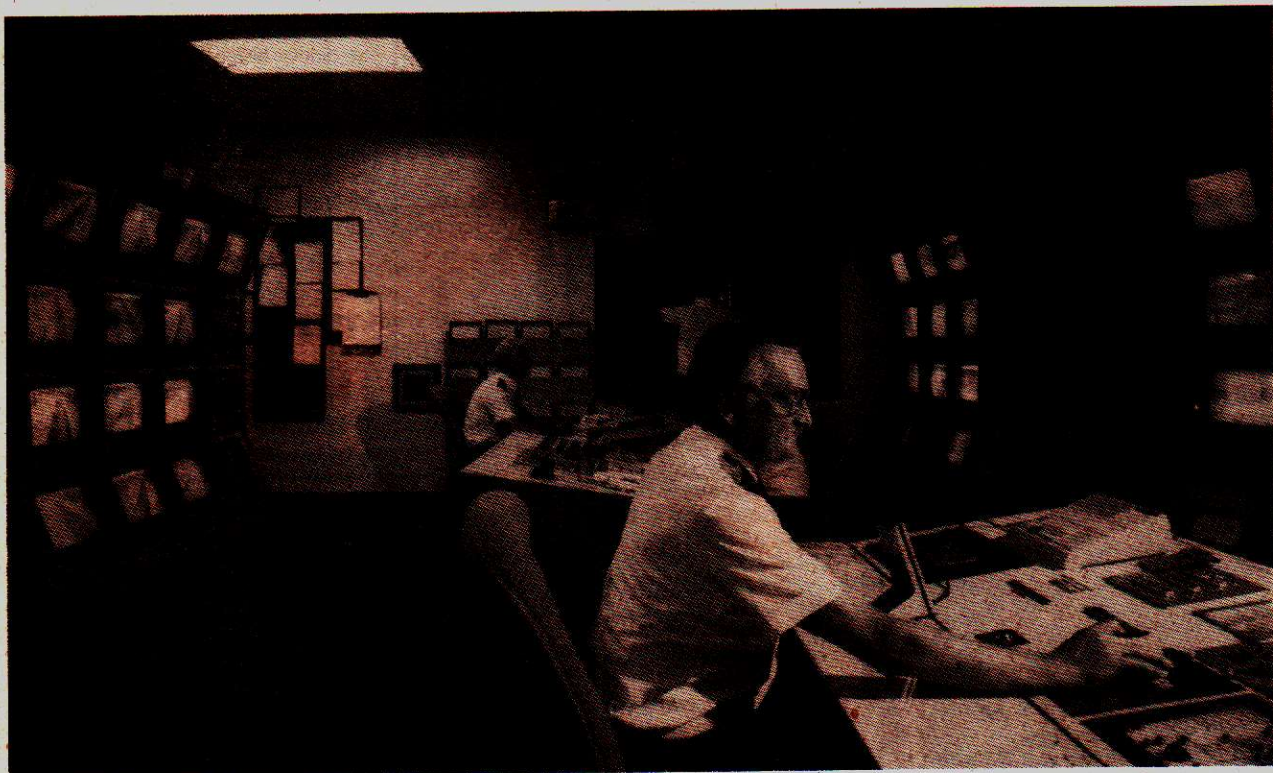
In place of real history the author condemns the black struggle in the USA because it did not conform to the SWP's view that the factory and the trades union is really the only valid form of struggle. Of the black unemployed of the ghetto the SWP says:

'The fact that they were not bound by the discipline of the boss meant that they could be the first to explode into activity - but they lacked the traditions and discipline that capitalism hammers into those it exploits... They were not in the position of employed workers who could bring the capitalist system to its knees by withdrawing their labour and crippling its ability to make profits.' (p58).

This is not history. It is an exhibition of SWP petit bourgeois prejudice. Readers who want to learn about the struggle against imperialism in America should read *Malcolm X Speaks* and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and also George Jackson: *Blood in my Eye* and *Soledad Brother*.

Susan Davidson





POA members on duty in the emergency control room at Frankland Prison, Durham

## Taking on the POA

*The recent announcement that the rebuilt Strangeways prison will be put out to private tender has further fuelled debate on the effects privatisation will have on conditions for Britain's prisoners. GEOFF COGGAN of the National Prisoners' Movement (formerly PROP) has contributed this article to FRFI setting out his views. We hope this will be the beginning of a discussion, and that other prisoners and ex-prisoners will submit articles and letters on the subject.*

Except for anarchists, for whom such institutions are anathema, the Left always has problems with the coercive organs of the state. Never more so than when staff in one of those organs is unionised and part of the trade union movement. What should be the Left response when such a union becomes the target of government – as is the case now with the Prison Officers Association (POA)? Should Kenneth Clarke, fresh from other anti-union battles, be suddenly applauded for his stand on this one?

The question is purposely posed in terms of the Left rather than the Labour Party. The Labour Party leadership has never been sufficiently principled for such considerations to become real problems. Hence the dismal succession of Labour Home Secretaries, who could between them ring up gold, silver and bronze in any contest for the least democratic or accountable holder of that office.

Merlyn Rees, for example, secretly and without reference to Parliament, not only set up but organised, trained and deployed the notorious MUFTI squads (the prison officers' SPG). Or take the man with the liberal reputation, Roy Jenkins, who slyly reopened the infamous Control Units after being forced, by widespread campaigning, to make a statement to the House, suspending them.

Inextricably linked to the POA's role is the question of privatisation, and there has been a predictable knee-jerk reaction to the very suggestion that prisons should be run for profit. I am quite sure they shouldn't, but in this they are no different from hospitals or schools. I can't see why anyone on the Left should make prisons a special case in this context, though I am surprised that some Tories, with their liking for solemn imagery, haven't done so.

At present every prisoner has run the gauntlet of such imagery, with the royal coat of arms adorning the police station, the courts and ultimately the entrance to the jail itself. Such images, like the fancy dress worn by the judges, are supposed to impress and

to intimidate. The renovated Strangeways is apparently to be let out to tender. If it goes private, what can be over the entrance then? Presumably a Royal Warrant By Appointment to Her Majesty the Queen, like the label on a pot of marmalade. So much for solemnity – not that prisoners themselves have ever been impressed by uniforms, wigs and coats-of-arms.

The real issue for prisoners is whether private prisons will offer an improvement in conditions. There is absolutely no doubt that at present they do precisely that. Like opted out schools and hospitals they attract an unfair share of government resources. As showcases for the government's privatisation policy they have to be shown to be better.

Seeing that overall resources remain the same, this can only mean that each new private prison is denuding the rest of the system. It can be very good for the one prisoner in several hundred who is allocated there but it must be at the expense of the rest.

Experience at the Barlinnie Special Unit, Blantyre House and elsewhere suggests that, given a positive emphasis and proper resources, prison officers can be found who behave very differently from those manning Wandsworth, Strangeways or the rest of Barlinnie.

If new prisons are now being provided with built-in codes of conduct and showcase regimes, then it is not the nature of the uniform (POA or Securicor or whatever) that will make the difference, but the new sense of purpose.

Which brings me to the second consideration – the POA. It is as difficult for an ex-prisoner as it is for a serving prisoner to discuss the POA in an objective fashion. Yet it is important to recognise that prison officers themselves are a mixed bag. It is not so much a case of rotten apples in the barrel as of a pretty mouldy barrel in which a few decent ones surface from time to time.

The power base of the union executive rests in the big city prisons and it

is there that prison officers are most obstructive to change and where provocation and brutality remain everyday experiences for prisoners.

Only this can explain the disjointed official statements of the POA leadership with its calls for professional standards, codes of minimum standards and substantial reductions in prison numbers. It is quite impossible to reconcile these with its apparent need to leap to the defence of prison officers whenever they are accused of brutality or unprofessional conduct.

If it meant what it said in its submission to the Woolf Inquiry, or what its spokesmen publicly stated, sitting alongside us in Woolf's open seminars, then the POA would need no prompting to take the lead in stamping out unprofessional conduct. Nor would it attempt the impossible task of justifying POA membership for nurses at special hospitals. They are either nurses or they are screws, and the fact that they opt for POA membership demonstrates quite clearly what they themselves think they are.

There was also something deeply hypocritical in the POA's stance throughout its big 1980/81 industrial dispute. Rather than fight on two fronts, it took on the Home Office while leaning over backwards to avoid disruption to prisoners. The Home Office, of course, was still more hypocritical in its attempts (publicly exposed by the National Prisoners Movement at the time) to maximise the disruption. As most prisoners who were inside at that time will concur, the jails were at their quietest for years.

8,000 prisoners were diverted by the POA's refusal to accept new prisoners into jails which were already overcrowded. The courts were forced to back away from custodial sentences, and in this respect the POA achieved more in four months than the entire prison reform movement has achieved in forty years!

At the end of the dispute Tory Home Secretary William Whitelaw had this to say to Leicestershire

magistrates:

'One of the things the dispute demonstrated was that it is possible for us to survive with a much lower custodial population than before. It is therefore inevitable, and indeed I think it is right, that henceforward we should regard the lower level of population attained during the dispute as a benchmark against which to measure the progress or otherwise which the criminal justice system is making in months to come. I shall continue to be held to account in Parliament for the way in which the criminal justice system develops in the new phase into which it is moving with the end of the dispute. Having been prepared to grant exceptional temporary powers for dealing with the consequences of that dispute, Parliament will be most reluctant to see the prison population return to the high levels of last year when much lower numbers were seen to be consistent with supporting and enforcing the law.'

What became of those fine sentiments? Within four months of the end of the dispute (the same length of time as the dispute itself) the prison population was back to what it had been before – and of course it has gone on rising since, with no complaint by Parliament.

And what of the POA's humanitarian concern at overcrowding? It became immediately obvious that it had served no other purpose than as a tactic to further its own ends. Government, Parliament, courts and prison officers quickly reverted to type.

Parliament (which in reality means the Tory Government as nobody else has had a look in for 13 years) has been perfectly willing to see the prison population rising. In view of its law and order pretensions, it can scarcely do otherwise. It has engineered an economic and social climate in the country which spawns anti-social behaviour. Without reversing its policies it can do nothing to stem this, yet the pretence of tackling crime has to be made, hence the emphasis on prisons despite their proven irrelevance to the crime rate.

As for the POA, it remains an impediment to progress in more senses than one. The prisoner naturally sees its influence as restrictive and selfish, holding back reforms which the Home Office says it wants to introduce. Prison officers are all of these things, and their not very intelligent leadership seems to be adept at upsetting everyone at the same time.

The second sense in which the POA is an impediment to progress, and which most embarrasses the government, is the manner in which its obstructiveness prevents the Home Office presenting the veneer of reform which would disarm liberal critics while keeping the system on track for an ever larger prison population.

We are quite sure that with a wholly docile POA, prisons would, for the moment, be much calmer and less unpleasant places. Numbers would continue to climb but staff would do their utmost to contain a deteriorating situation, rather than exacerbate it. But at the end of the day there can be only two consequences of such compliance; first, given a huge building program, a growing prison population kept reasonably quiet under just tolerable conditions; second a decline in these conditions and widespread demoralisation as the population outstretches resources until the eventual riots would make Strangeways seem like nothing more than high spirits. The consequences are not alternatives but phases in a predictable scenario.

A privatised prison system which sidelines the POA would only alter this scenario to the extent that it adds its own sinister pressures for growth. We would not have, as we do now, a POA calling for a reduction of 10,000

in prison numbers. Instead we will see a significant lobby of vested interests – security companies, building contractors, electronic surveillance manufacturers – campaigning politically for law-and-order policies which would maximise prison numbers, and doing so to a largely receptive Tory party and media.

Bearing in mind that we already have a prison population far in excess of anywhere else in Europe, and that all the needed changes are in precisely the opposite direction, the dangers for future generations of prisoners can scarcely be exaggerated.

Is this really what prisoners supporting privatisation want for the future? Admittedly, if I were in Wandsworth now, a move to a new privatised jail would be a luxury. Not only would a transfer bring with it a package of reforms which are elsewhere only talked and argued about, it would also give me the satisfaction of, in effect, thumbing my nose at the prison officers who have been responsible for so much of the misery around me. The temptation to openly support such changes might be irresistible.

Speaking with the greater detachment of an ex-prisoner, it is easier to look for the drawbacks and to wonder what might be the consequences of privatisation for prisoners in the future. Will it lead to more of them than there would otherwise have been? Will it eventually choke over growing gaps between resources and even greater law and order pressures? I am sure the answer to both questions is Yes.

If the POA is destroyed it will have only itself to blame, having alienated, by its opportunist tactics and lack of consistent humanitarian principles, any trade union allies, and spurned the hand repeatedly offered to it by much of the prison reform movement. Unless it quickly takes on board, and does something about, the issues discussed earlier – unprofessional conduct and special hospital membership – it will deserve its defeat.

Unfortunately, prisoners may then find there is after all something worse than the POA – and that is no POA.

### POWs' birthdays

Vincent Donnelly 274064, HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS – 22 September

Harry Duggan 338637, HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 5TZ – 31 October

Roy Walsh 119083, HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS – 1 November

Sean Kinsella 758661, HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX – 5 November

Paul Norney 863532, HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Braxside, Durham, DH1 5YD – 11 November

### In Memoriam

*Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* remembers IRA volunteer, Ray McLochlainn who died on 9 September 1985. He spent 10 years in British gaols from 1974 to 1984. Throughout his life, inside and outside prison, he fought as a Republican, a socialist and an internationalist. He will always be remembered.

Jim Reilly, Luton Sinn Fein and Home Counties Organiser for Sinn Fein (Britain) devoted his life to the fight to free Ireland from British rule. He died on 26 September 1980. We salute his dedication and courage.



# Origins of counter-revolution

Peter Jordan, a political prisoner, responds to some of the points made in Eddie Abrahams' article 'The Origins of Gorbachev's Counter-Revolution', *FRFI* 108. *FRFI* welcomes serious criticism and discussion such as this for publication.

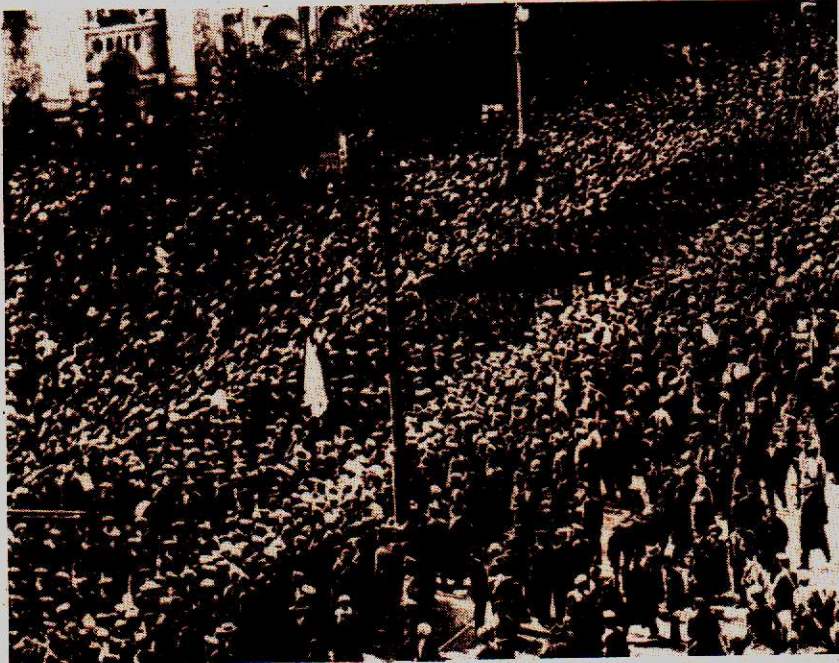
Dear Comrades,  
I haven't read the two books mentioned in Eddie Abrahams' article 'The Origins of Gorbachev's Counter-revolution', but I've found the extracts and comments to be easily the most accurate attempt at an analysis of the political evolution which has taken place in the (ex-) USSR, and in essence I agree with the 'Stalinist', as opposed to the 'Trotskyist' analysis of the history of the USSR.

So although I agree with the main thrust of Eddie Abrahams' article, I feel there are a few points which should be challenged.

Firstly, in my experience it is not true that 'most Maoists uncritically defend Stalin's record' - on the contrary it was the Maoist tendency which made a serious Marxist-Leninist analysis of Stalin, pointing out his mistakes as well as his achievements, instead of the bourgeois blanket condemnation of Khrushchev and his successors. It is true that there are different ideas as to what his mistakes and successes were - but there was at least a truly critical assessment.

Secondly, the phrases 'the Stalin period', or 'during Stalin's leadership', are frequently used, implying the whole period 1924-1953, when in fact a specific and more limited period should have been referred to. This has resulted in quite inaccurate conclusions or suggestions in several instances.

For example: 'From a Marxist point of view a decisive feature of the Stalin period was not only the CPSU's failure to uproot bourgeois restorationist trends but also the latter's rise to prominence within the Party and society.' This implies a continuous degeneration of the Party and the whole state apparatus from 1924 onwards, whereas in fact there were several very distinct and different periods during which the various



counter-revolutionary trends were identified and opposed.

In fact the article immediately follows the above quote by stating, correcting, that: 'The roots of this process must be traced to the international isolation of the Russian Revolution. The Civil War, imperialist intervention and defeat of the post-1918 European revolutions decimated and exhausted the Soviet working class', and 'the Bolshevik Party, with its most advanced cadre dead, was flooded with self-seeking careerists, ex-Mensheviks and bourgeois hacks'. This is mainly true, and correctly shows that the roots of the problem arose from the very early days of the Revolution - long before Lenin died and Stalin became the leader of the Party.

But all contemporary evidence shows that Lenin and the Politbureau and the Central Committee were fully aware of the dangers and took steps to purge the Party of bad elements. In

September 1923 the Politbureau set up a special commission precisely to do this and in December 1923 Stalin was able to report - 'You know that two years ago we had not less than 700,000 members; you know that several thousand members have dropped out or have been kicked out of the Party. The Party membership has improved, its quality has risen... in short the Party has grown more mature.' And despite the huge problems faced by the USSR, both internationally and internally, the Party under Stalin's leadership regularly tackled the problem of maintaining the revolutionary integrity of the Party.

So the next quote from the article is misleading and only partially correct: 'However, both during and after the period of Stalin's leadership, the dictatorship of the proletariat failed to suppress counter-revolution.' The whole history of the period from the founding of the USSR up to the time of the outbreak of the Second World War shows the Party suppressing many strands of counter-revolutionary elements. Yes, mistakes were made, and many innocent people suffered, and not all of the counter-revolutionary elements were discov-

ered or properly identified. But the continued existence and rapid consolidation and growth of the USSR during the Stalinist period shows that the roots of socialism were strengthened, and that, as far as humanly possible, under the period of Stalin's leadership the dictatorship of the proletariat did suppress counter-revolution.

The third and last point I wish to make, is that although Eddie correctly shows that it was the Civil War and imperialist intervention which led to 'the Bolshevik Party, with its most advanced cadre dead, being flooded with careerists etc', quite amazingly no mention is made in the entire article of the massive destruction and slaughter of the Second World War, when once again the most advanced and dedicated Bolsheviks were wiped out in their defence of socialism. This, equally with the loss of cadres mentioned by Eddie from the early days of the USSR, was the cause of huge internal problems immediately after the end of the war in 1945. Anyone who has lived, as I did, during such a period, knows how rotten elements crept their way into civilian/administrative positions far from the military zones, and usurped the positions of the millions of Bolshevik comrades who died fighting fascism.

It was this new, post-Second World War corruption which was not adequately dealt with and rooted out, and which eventually became the force which led through Khrushchev to Gorbachev and Yeltsin and to the present capitalist-oriented chaos.

For a Marxist analysis of the inter-war period, especially the historical process in the USSR, more attention should be given to the writings and speeches of the man Trotskyists sneer at and, in their intellectual arrogance, dismiss as non-Marxist because he is able to give a Marxist analysis in terms which reflect reality, which relate to real human beings. And for a start, I suggest reading Stalin's 'Report to the 18th Congress of the CPSU (B) on the work of the Central Committee', made in March 1939, a few months before the start of the Second World War.

I hope that the debate on 'Stalin and Stalinism', excellently led off by Eddie Abrahams' article, will continue, because in my opinion a correct understanding of that period of history is one of the most important tasks for Marxist-Leninists - to sweep away the years of lies and distortions by the bourgeois propagandists and their intellectual apologists and hacks, and by some 'revolutionary theoreticians'.

Pete Jordan

## The road of quicksand

■ Which Road? Jack Conrad, November Publications 1991. Jack Conrad is a leading member of The Leninist.

Which Road? is a comprehensive overview of *The British Road to Socialism (BRS)*. It consists of over 120 pages on the 1978 version and nearly 30 pages on the Communist Party of Britain's November 1989 variation. In addition, we are treated to 30 pages on the (thankfully extinct) *Marxism Today* crew's truly bizarre *Manifesto for New Times* and, as icing on the cake - the Leninists certainly have stamina - 30 pages on the reformist platform of the Militant Tendency or, rather, the Militant Tendencies. So, definitely a chiller rather than a thriller. In many places it reads more like a Leninist internal document (maybe it once was) rather than a work meant to attract a more general interest. Some of the tedium comes from the fact that, precisely because the *BRS* is so blatantly and comprehensively revisionist, there is no problem in agreeing with large chunks of the fairly elementary points which the Leninist makes against it.

There are, however, many points of criticism of Conrad's sometimes simplistic positions which we can make. Was the Berlin Wall really 'obscene' when one considers the front line position of the GDR and the enormous funding pumped in, via projects such as the inaptly named Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, by the CIA to encourage imperialist subversion? Here, though, I want to concentrate on two aspects which are most relevant to *FRFI* readers: the definition of the British

working class and the nature of the Labour Party.

Conrad argues that:

'A "bourgeoisified" layer of the working class develops thanks to the crumbs from the imperialists' table. It enjoys what is essentially a petty bourgeois lifestyle, indeed to a degree it merges with the petty bourgeoisie. Politically this enables capital to put the labour bureaucracy on the payroll and turn it into an agent of the bosses within the working class movement.' (p35)

This is the typical argument of the British left which seeks to contain the political impact of imperialism to a tiny layer of the 'labour bureaucracy'. The great mass of the working class is homogenous, undivided and untainted by any material interest in the profits of imperialist super-exploitation of oppressed nations.

Conrad takes the classic Trotskyist perspective that 'the Labour Party should be defined first and foremost as a bourgeois workers' party' and furthermore claims Lenin as his authority for so doing (p57). Lenin enacted this formulation before the party had ever been exposed before the masses as enjoying governmental power, and when it did have a significant working class base in contrast to the predominantly petty-bourgeois membership which it has today. The Trotskyists, and Conrad, use an abstracted quote from Lenin to uphold the bourgeois workers' party maxim. Why? Because the formulation always leaves its proponents with a bridge back to social democracy. ■

Ted Talbot

## Unity - no hidden agendas

The RCG welcomes any real prospect of unity amongst communists in Britain. We will be participating in the forthcoming 'Conference on Democratic Centralism' organised by the *Open Polemic* journal, not least because of the possibility of a clear and open discussion. Two questions arise: what type of communism? and what type of unity?

The New Communist Party's efforts to stitch together 'a communist united front' out of remnants from the old Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) have been a model of a type of 'communism' and a method of finding 'unity' that the RCG wholeheartedly rejects.

Formally speaking the NCP's ideological framework includes much common ground:

1. The Marxist critique of capitalism and the theory of the general crisis of capitalism is still valid; that the class struggle is a reality and cannot be resolved without the triumph of socialism and the development to a communist society. Socialism cannot replace capitalism without a revolution, and the work of building socialism cannot begin until the working class has achieved state power.

2. The working class has to be equipped with a vanguard party, a Marxist-Leninist party, in order to play its leading role...

3. The question of communist unity has an international as well as national dimension...

4. We need to answer the question: 'Is Socialism relevant?'

5. The struggle for peace has to be given conscious priority in our work and campaigning. We can readily identify the anti-imperialist nature of that struggle and the growing dangers of war arising from the sharpening inter-imperialist rivalries.

So if we generally agree, why aren't the RCG and NCP deep in talks about united action? The NCP has participated in special conferences with the CPB, Straight Left, but not invited the RCG. We asked to go. They refused. And it was very hard to get any reason from them.

Finally, an RCG comrade caught up with NCP General Secretary Eric Trevett in Liverpool. Why do you exclude the RCG from your talks on 'communist unity'? Because 'the RCG wants to destroy the Labour Party!'. Quite right comrade, we do.

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The RCG's Great Marx March on 23 August through the London of Marx, Engels and Lenin culminated in an oration at Marx's graveside, re-affirming our adherence to the communist tradition, and the singing of the Internationale. The event raised £800 towards our Counterattack Publications Drive. Thanks go to all those who took part and helped make the day such a success.

## Socialism and the environment

The Sunday Observer (26 July) reported that up to 18.5 million people in Britain are at risk due to air pollution substantially accountable to car exhausts. Such an article lends an air of urgency to a reading of Maxine Williams' article on the 'Rio Earth Summit' (FRFI 108). In my opinion, the article is a serious contribution to a Marxist position on the environment.

In particular, Williams emphasises what many 'Green' and indeed 'left' environmental analyses either refer to only by implication or, more usually, ignore completely, the role of imperialism in degrading the planet.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the figures which she provides:

'The world's largest 500 companies now control 75% of world trade, 80% of foreign investment and 30% of world gross domestic product. These companies produce 50% of greenhouse gases in the six largest industrial sectors which account for 80% of the total problem.' (p9)

Furthermore, Williams illustrates the consequences of this control:

'... The better-off sections of the richer nations have a lifestyle of a grotesquely destructive character. It is

absolutely clear that if they whole of the world's population lived in such style, the earth would last for only a few more generations' (p8)

Marxists have always argued that the superior position of the imperialist countries in the global economy meant that any aspirations which the imperialised sector had to 'catch up' would be purely illusory. The imperialists determine the parameters of the world economy. But, as Williams points out, there is now a new block on the development of the imperialised nations: even if they could enormously enhance the level of their productive forces, the resultant pollution would destroy the planet. In addition, finite resources would run out quickly. I have heard it said, only partly in jest, that if everyone in China had a refrigerator we would all be dead. (Think about it!)

Such an analysis consigns to irrelevance the simple notion of socialism as relying on a 'superabundance' of productive forces. In other words, when consumer goods are freely available then people will use them only as necessary and cease to covet them as an alienated expression of their humanity. This has always been a reductionist and fantasist argument and Williams' arguments blow it out of the water. If 'superabundance' could be provided under any system of social organisation then it would

## Information on murals?

A chairde,  
Please allow me to use your columns to ask for information for a project I am working on at the minute. I would like to ask your readers if they could help me to gather information on wall murals throughout the world. I am interested in the location of murals, what the murals are about, why they were painted, and a photo of the mural if possible. I am interested in all types of murals. Readers can contact me at the address below - go raibh maith agaibh.

Is mise,  
LEO MORGAN  
D-wing, H-block 6  
Long Kesh, Lisburn, Ireland

## Communist ideas

I would like to say that I was personally very impressed with *The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution*. It was so refreshing to read a book that puts forward communist ideas at a time when the amount of dross written about the state of the world - and the tragic fate of the former socialist countries in particular - is so enormous and seemingly overwhelming. I think your highlighting of Che's defence of socialist planning as a social, political and ideological process against those who say it as a technical 'economic' one is particularly important in drawing lessons from recent events. Congratulations!  
COLIN THORNE  
Edinburgh

be terminal for the planet. Far better to argue for, as Norman Geras advises (*New Left Review* 150), the aim of communism as being the fulfilment of 'reasonable needs'. Everyone with a decent and dignified standard of living: yes. Everyone with a standard of living equivalent to 'the better-off sections of the richer nations'? No.

Whilst socialist development does require an adequate level of productive forces it should not be narrowly focused on competing with capitalism in the realm of consumer goods. This is to trivialise the whole socialist project. What is necessary is a society in which people can realise their own essential humanity.

Unfortunately the societies of socialist construction did identify socialism very strongly within the parameters of productive forces theory. This brings me to an elaboration which I think Williams' article requires when she says 'only socialism can save the planet'. Certainly, in the abstract, I agree with this, but it is necessary to explain the historical record of the erstwhile countries of socialist construction. This record would probably be the first line of attack on a Marxist position on the environment and we should attempt to pre-empt it.

What is the record? Quite bluntly, it is absolutely atrocious. Everyone knows about Chernobyl, but rather less well known is that in Autumn 1953 the

Soviet Union experienced a nuclear waste explosion in the Urals which contaminated an area 'no less than fifteen hundred square kilometres' to a level of 'millions or tens of millions of curies' (Zhores A Medvedev, *Nuclear Disaster in the Urals* p73.) The disaster was kept secret by the Soviets until revealed by Dr Medvedev in the mid-1970s. The CIA kept the incident secret also for fear of casting doubts on the Western nuclear programme.

The Urals incident is only the most extreme example of a pronounced characteristic of Soviet, and indeed former Eastern bloc development: an overwhelming concentration on short-term economic growth with no consequence paid to long-term environmental consequences. The *Soviet Encyclopaedia* (Shaw and Price, Cassell, 1990) presents a litany of poisoned lakes and rivers, chemical contamination, massive air pollution near industrial plants, destruction of virgin lands etc covering vast areas of the former USSR. In short, a general disregard for any environmental consequences resulting from industrial activity are a legacy of the process of attempted socialist construction.

For socialism to be taken seriously as a solution to the environmental crisis requires that we honestly examine our own past.

TED TALBOT  
Nottingham



elected a leader who will be as treacherous and reactionary as Kinnock.

The trades union movement has lost all credibility among the working class by failing to protect them from the ravages of the Tory onslaught of the past thirteen years. They too have suffered the consequences of abdicating responsibility for the main task for which they were created, the protection of working people's living standards.

Both bodies were placed to defend the Health Service, but refused to confront the Tories. They had a duty to maintain, or even improve, the educational standards of the youth but cowardice was more comfortable. The working class and their

children were left defenceless as their whole way of life was dismantled and all their hopes and aspirations were sacrificed on the altar of an ideology with an insatiable appetite for profit.

The end result of this abdication of principle can be seen all about us. Mass unemployment, hundreds of thousands homeless, the gaols filling up with the unfortunates who were ejected from mental hospitals to take their place alongside the ever-growing army of cardboard city dwellers. The old neglected and their savings (if they have any) being plundered. The sick being taxed with massive prescription charges. The wealthy being able to jump the queue for operations. The total destruction of employment rights won over

one hundred years of struggle. The misuse of power which has resulted in England being found guilty over eighty times by human rights bodies. The support and co-operation they have afforded the Tories for a campaign of savagery in Ireland, the hijacking of the United Nations under whose flag of convenience Iraq was bombed back into the 19th century. It is true that the defection of the USSR President which brought about the collapse of the socialist block was a bitter blow, but it does not excuse the sell-out of the working class in this country.

In September 1989, FRFI posed the question as to what would happen if the socialist community were to disappear, and provided a frightening scenario with which I totally agree. The writing is on the wall. The imperialist hijackers and muggers are on the march and the bad, dark old days are back again when people were subjected to all kinds of abuses without recourse to anybody who would speak up on their behalf. In days gone by, at least men dreamed of days when they would have such institutions. Now that the dream has turned sour, to whom do people turn?

## RCG DAYSCHOOLS

### NOTTINGHAM

Saturday 24 October  
International Community Centre,  
61B Mansfield Road, Nottingham  
Register 10.30am

Morning session:

#### Labour: A party fit for imperialism

Speaker: Robert Clough  
author of book

Afternoon session:

#### Soviet Union: The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution

Speaker: Eddie Abrahams,  
editor of book

There will be plenty of time for discussion.  
Admission: waged £2, unwaged 50p

Midlands regional dayschool organised by the RCG

### LONDON

#### DAYSCHOOL AND BOOK LAUNCH

#### LABOUR: A PARTY FIT FOR IMPERIALISM

Millman Street Community Centre,  
Millman Street, London WC1  
(Nearest tube: Russell Square.  
Buses: 30, 45, 62, 68)

Sunday 18 October

10am-5.30pm

Entrance: Waged £3/Unwaged £1.50

Lunch: £2/£1

Robert Clough, author of the RCG's new book, *Labour: a party fit for imperialism*, will speak at the day-school. There will be two sessions: the first on Labour's imperialist history and the second on Labour as an anti-working class party.

### DUNDEE

#### COMMUNIST FORUM

#### LABOUR: A PARTY FIT FOR IMPERIALISM

Speaker: Robert Clough  
2pm Saturday 7 November  
Conference Room, Wellgate Library,  
Dundee  
Admission: waged £1, unwaged 50p

### MANCHESTER

#### LABOUR: A PARTY FIT FOR IMPERIALISM

Saturday 15 November

10am-5pm

The Working Class Library, The Crescent, Salford, Manchester  
(venue to be confirmed)  
Admission: £4/£2 (includes light refreshments)

For details of any of the above meetings call 071 837 1688

## FRFI's message of hope

In renewing my subscription to your excellent paper I wish to thank you and wish you every success for the future. In all the chaos and apathy into which the left in this country has been stampeded, the solitary voice bearing a message of hope for the future of socialism, without which there is no future for mankind, is FRFI. At a time when technology has displaced millions of people, there was never a greater need for socialism, and yet we find the forces who should be meeting the challenge caving in and aligning themselves with the class enemy. At a time of greatest need the working class has been abandoned by the trades unions. The Labour Party, traditionally a treacherous body, could have taken advantage of the situation and opted for socialism, but the opportunity was spurned in favour of pandering to the middle classes of suburbia. Any hopes of them learning a lesson from their fourth successive defeat were dashed when they

Once you threatened your employers with your union official, now he threatens you with your union official. As you predicted in 1989, they will, like wild beasts, divide up the world's resources including the labour of billions and even the dream men dreamed will no longer be a comfort to them because such dreams will not be tolerated a second time round. In other lands people may still be subjected to harsher treatment by the forces of imperialism, but the results will still be the same for many here. Unemployment, poverty, homelessness, ignorance, poor health care and a greater degree of apathy and hopelessness.

How long the dangerous solitary voice of FRFI will be tolerated in this new order I do not know, but while it is, keep up the good work and inform, educate and agitate and maybe after enough suffering, enough treachery, enough sell-outs, if the people decide to assert their rights once again, maybe they will turn to the RCG who have never abdicated their principles or sold anybody out.  
M. MURTAGH  
Surrey



# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!



Residents of Santo Domingo protest: their homes were bulldozed to make way for the \$40m lighthouse built to celebrate the Columbus anniversary

## THE LEGACY OF COLUMBUS

# Letters of fire and blood

**Capital, Marx wrote, comes into the world 'dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.' The history of its accumulation, of the expropriation of the vast majority of the world's population to fill the coffers of the few, 'is written in the annals of mankind in letters of fire and blood.' The five hundred years that have passed since Christopher Columbus' so-called 'discovery' of the Americas provide a chronicle of that bloody history, in a continent on whose plunder and degradation the wealth of Europe was built. CAT WIENER examines the real legacy of Columbus.**

### The race for the Indies

From the beginning Columbus' venture was driven by the competitive needs of a nascent European capitalism. In 1492 Moorish Granada finally fell to the combined armies of Castile and Aragon. To consolidate their absolute rule, monarchs Ferdinand and Isabel formed an alliance with the feudal church and nobility, creating Spain as a theocratic, homogeneous modern nation state, and thereby ending centuries of religious tolerance. In 1492 Spain banned all Jews from the country. The resulting exodus of Jewish capital exacerbated the financial crisis caused by diminishing returns on Spain's main export, wool. Spain urgently needed hard currency to fight new wars of conquest in Naples.

At that time the most important international trade routes were overland to the East through the Mediterranean. The domination over the Eastern Mediterranean by the Ottoman Empire after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 ushered in an age of European exploration and seafaring as merchants and princes sought alternative routes to the spices and riches of the Indies. Portugal sent its ships south round the African coast, each time venturing a little further; trading stations set up along the way brought in ivory, pepper, gold dust and black slaves – the first outposts of European colonialism.

It was in this context, in the early 1480s, that Columbus dreamt up the scheme that was to be his obsession – to reach the shores of Japan and China, the fabled wealth of the Khans spoken of by Marco Polo two centuries earlier, by travelling west across the unknown ocean. While, contrary to popular folklore, no educated person in Europe believed any more that the earth was flat, the distances involved were known to be vast, and no ship of the time could have carried supplies for so long a voyage. But Columbus' calculations reduced the distance by about a quar-



Indians of Hispaniola tortured and hanged 'in honour of Christ our Saviour'

ter, and the Spanish court, desperate to beat Portugal in the race to the Indies, was finally persuaded to back him. With the riches he would find, Columbus promised he would raise an army to re-capture Jerusalem for Christendom. On 3 August, 1492, Columbus' three ships weighed anchor and sailed down the river Tinto. Three months later, on 12 October, they set foot on what they believed was Japan, but was in fact the islands of Cuba and Haiti. The long reign of imperialist domination in the Americas was dawning.

### Gold, glass beads and genocide

Columbus immediately claimed all the lands and the peoples he encountered in the name of the kingdoms of God and of Spain. However, the glass beads, hawk bells and other cheap trinkets which they offered the hospitable Arawak Indians of Haiti and Cuba failed to yield the gold the invaders craved. So, over a number of years in which Columbus made several journeys between Hispaniola (Haiti) and Spain, the following system was set up: every three months, every Indian had to bring in a hawk's bell filled with gold dust. The chiefs had to bring in ten times that amount. In other provinces, twenty-five pounds of spun cotton took the place of gold. When an Indian had brought in his or her tribute to a Spanish army

post, they received a copper token to hang around their necks. Anyone caught without a token had their hands cut off.

There were no goldfields in that part of the Americas: once the Indians had handed in whatever gold ornaments they possessed, they had to work all day in the streams, washing gold dust from the pebbles. Those who attempted to flee were shot, or torn to pieces by Spanish hunting dogs. Prisoners were hanged – in groups of 13 'in memory of Our Redeemer and His twelve Apostles' – with green wood burning at their feet, and sticks across their tongues so that they could not cry out. Chiefs and nobles were burned on grids. The Spaniards raided local villages, raping Indian women and boys, stealing food and taking whatever slaves they pleased to send back to Spain: the majority of these died on the journey, from cold, disease, or at their own hands.

By 1496, when there was clearly not a grain of gold left, and the slave trade was not proving profitable, the expropriation of land known as the *encomiendas* began. The Spanish carved out estates for themselves, and the Indians living on them became their property, forced to work the land or be hired out as labour gangs all over the islands. This system was to be used throughout Latin America in the centuries which followed. The sole voice raised in protest was that of Bartolomé de la Casas, the Jesuit priest who accompanied the first expedition; he wrote that the Spanish treated the Indians 'not as beasts, for beasts are treated properly at times, but like the excrement in a public square'.

At first the Arawaks resisted the colonisation of their land, but they could not withstand the guns of the Spanish. And so, en masse, they began to kill themselves with cassava poison. By 1515 10,000 Arawak Indians remained in Haiti and Cuba out of a population of perhaps a million. Twenty-five years later, the entire na-

tion had been wiped out, by brutality, disease, and suicide. In 1502, the Spanish began to import slaves from Africa to work the land.

### After Columbus: how the West was built

Columbus' ventures destroyed a nation, but yielded little in the way of the gold, pearls and spices he had promised. However, he had set the scene for those who would come after him: the Spanish and Portuguese, British and French began to sweep across the Atlantic: wealth flooded back into Europe.

From 1519 onwards, the Spanish penetrated deeper into the mainland, conquering the Incas, Aztecs and Mayan people in a trail of murder and terror. Those Indians who were not massacred were decimated by smallpox, typhus, leprosy, plague and other diseases the conquerors brought with them. De la Casas estimated in 1560 that 40 million Indians had been killed by their contact with the Spanish. In Guatemala, Pedro de Alvarado and his men 'killed so many Indians that it made a river of blood'. With torture and with terror they captured the gold and jewels of Mexico and Peru; in Bolivia eight thousand Indians died working the rich silver veins of the Cerro Rico, of hunger, cold, exhaustion and disease. Later in would be tin, shipped directly to be refined in Liverpool.

Although the amount of wealth flooding into Spain and Portugal was immense, they were not the direct beneficiaries. Spain used its new-found wealth to pay its debts to German, Genoese, Flemish and, later British bankers. 'Money in circulation kept multiplying and it was necessary to stimulate the movement of capitalism in the hour of birth... gold, silver, sugar: the colonial economy supplying rather than consuming was built in terms of – and at the service of – the European market... resources flowed out so that emergent European nations could accumulate them.' (Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America*) The metals and other resources, cheap iron from Venezuela, copper from Chile, minerals, phosphates, guano, not only stimulated Europe's economic development – they made it possible.

The mining was supplemented by the vast plantations of sugar and cotton to which millions of Africans were brought as slaves to work in the most brutal of conditions. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Caribbean was bringing into Britain capital



Haitian sugar cutter close to starvation

The 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyage offered the left in Britain a unique opportunity to use a renewed interest in Latin America and concern over issues such as the destruction of the environment, the effects of the foreign debt in the Third World, and support for Cuba to mobilise a dynamic, anti-imperialist movement here in Britain.

But the Democratic Left-led 'Five Hundred Years of Resistance Campaign' sank like a lead balloon under the dead weight of British social democracy. It managed to offer up some token *mea culpas* around the country in the form of cultural festivals and celebrations of ethnic diversity, but nothing, inevitably, in the way of challenge to British imperialism. Their rallies were essentially celebrations of the New Latin American Left who make up the São Paulo forum, an alliance of progressive Latin American movements formed to create 'a progressive initiative in response to the neo-liberal offensive in the Americas'. It is, essentially a vehicle for social democratic trends within the Latin American movement. Victor Amaya of the FMLN, writing in the Five Hundred Years bulletin, describes it as concretely rejecting state socialism as a viable alternative to the neo-liberal policies pursued by US imperialism in Latin America, and speaks of revolutionary politics as 'history'. While on paper the forum supports the Cuban revolution, and the Cuban Communist Party attended its third meeting, in practice it seeks to offer an alternative model, one of capitulation to capitalism. Small wonder then, that the British social democratic left, having refused to offer more than token support to revolutionary trends in Latin America throughout the British and US imperialist onslaught of the eighties, now greedily harvest the reformist fruits of that betrayal.

equivalent to ten per cent of Britain's entire income. It was the slave and sugar trades which enabled Bristol to become the second city of England in the 17th century, and fuelled the Industrial Revolution.

### 'Every Mexican child is born owing \$1,000 to a northern bank' (Carlos Fuentes)

Today Latin America is in pawn to international capital, with a foreign debt of \$423bn in 1990. 14,000 children die every year in Latin America of hunger and curable diseases. Multinational companies have polluted the lakes, turned land into desert, criss-crossed the mountains with slag heaps and open, disused mines, in their fever to capture the minerals, the petroleum, the coal, aided and abetted by the assortment of military dictatorships and right-wing stooges they prop up. US imperialism treats it as its warehouse and factory. In Brazil, where millions of landless peasants are forced towards the *favelas* and shanty-towns of the major cities, an area of land the size of India is said to lie uncultivated by its owners as 'a financial investment'. And still the multinational companies extort every penny of profit they can wring from that devastated continent.

The heirs of Columbus live on: they are the US companies in Guatemala that every fifteen days line up their women workers – paid a dollar a day for piece work – and beat their stomachs to see if they are pregnant, and fire them if they are. They are those who forcibly sterilise the women of the Amazon – their predecessors threw Indian children into the ocean, crying 'Boil in hell, child of the devil'. They are the IMF and World Bank exacting their pound of flesh. In short, the heir of Columbus' enterprise is imperialism, which today bestrides Latin America like a Colossus. ■