

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

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Labour's victory in the Monmouth byelection almost certainly means that the General Election will be put off until early next year. Deep divisions over Europe, the poll tax, and the National Health Service have so undermined the credibility of the Tory Party that the Labour Party is now being seen as an 'acceptable' alternative government. Unless the Tories can engineer a low inflation, low interest rate, upturn in the British economy in the months before the General Election, it becomes increasingly likely that a Labour government will be returned to power.

Inevitably the prospect of a General Election raises the question of how socialists should relate to the Labour Party. Out of power, Kinnock has moulded the party to serve the prejudices and needs of those who determine the outcome of elections in Britain - the privileged layers of the working class and middle classes. In doing this, the Labour Party has consistently undermined all attempts of the working class to fight back against successive Thatcher governments and it has consciously demobilised any forces in and out of its ranks prepared to speak out for the more oppressed sections of the working class. Throughout the carnage of the Gulf War the Labour Party, backed by the TUC, demonstrated its pro-imperialist, militaristic credentials as it stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Tories defending the interests of British imperialism. In our view, as we have consistently argued from the 1979 election onwards, the vast majority of the working class has nothing to gain by voting for this bourgeois, pro-imperialist party.

This has not, however, been the view of British socialist organisations. While many of them have consistently attacked the Labour Party throughout the last 12 years, attacks which always increase in the run up to general elections, inevitably they call on their members and the working class to vote Labour. Labour is, in their view, a party of the working class. As the Labour Party and its trade union allies have shifted to the right, as they have vied with the Tories to demonstrate their loyalty to British imperialism, the British left has had to work overtime to justify their continuing orientation towards the official Labour movement. A recent pamphlet *A Dream Betrayed* by Duncan Blackie of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) is no exception.

The SWP see themselves replacing the now moribund Communist Party as the alternative to the Labour Party in Britain. Much of their political writing in the last few years has been directed against the politics of *Marxism Today*. They have been concerned to show that the working class organised in the Labour Party and official trade union movement has not fundamentally changed under Thatcher, and it will, once its confidence has returned, become a revolutionary agent of social and political change in Britain. It is from this social layer that they recruit members to their own party.

A working class party?

Although past Labour governments have never been a threat to the interests of bankers and business leaders, the SWP argues, in the pamphlet, that Labour 'still has a special role to play in appealing to the aspirations of millions of workers'. Voting Labour is 'associated with basic class consciousness.'



'so untypical, and so un-British'

Neil Kinnock, commenting on the Orgreave mass picket, Miners' Strike, 1984-5

Who wants Labour?

It is the special relationship between Labour and the trade union leaders which gives Labour an organic base in the working class and makes the party of special interest to socialists. Yet, we are also told that this is an 'absolute obstacle to the party ever becoming socialist'. This would appear to disprove the assertion that voting Labour can be associated with class consciousness and suggests that socialists should orientate their politics to a very different, less privileged layer, of the class if they wish to build a socialist movement. Not so! The SWP believes that a general radicalisation, as the working class starts to fight again, could lead a new generation of left-wing activists to the Labour Party as the way to win change on a larger scale. Presumably the SWP is concerned to be in a position to recruit them.

There is so much confusion here that it is necessary to establish what the Labour Party actually is and who it represents. The SWP selectively quote Lenin, and this can at least serve as a mutually agreed starting point:

'... most of the Labour Party's members are workingmen. However, whether or not a party is really a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon a membership of workers, but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we really have before us a political party of the proletariat. Regarded from this, the only correct point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and reactionaries of the worst kind at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers...' (Lenin CW Vol 31 pp257-8)

The Labour Party is a bourgeois party. Today, as the SWP correctly informs us, not even the composition of the party matches Lenin's description as there are few 'workingmen' to be found in it. The average Labour Party member has a family income of £18,500 a year, while 15 per cent get more than £30,000. Only 22 per cent describe themselves as 'working class' compared with 56 per cent as 'salaried professionals'.

So what are the origins of this bourgeois labour party? Here the SWP makes a fundamental break with Lenin. For the SWP the Labour Party 'originated in a maturing of working class organisation, but also in a partial defeat'. In effect great stress is made of the court decision on the Taff Vale rail strike in 1901 - which eventually threatened to make all trade unionism illegal - and which formed the backdrop for the formation of the Labour Party. This explains why the Party was formed at the time but not its political character. That can only be explained by reference to the fact that Britain is an imperialist nation and this, more than anything else, determined the character of the British Labour Party.

Imperialism and the split in socialism

The SWP seldom refer to the fact that Britain is an imperialist nation in their publications. Long ago the SWP broke with Leninism over the question of imperialism. They have always been concerned to deny that the domination of the world by a small number of imperialist countries allows a handful of imperialist nations to obtain high monopoly profits out of the brutal exploitation of oppressed peoples worldwide. Out of these super-profits imperialism is able to create and sustain a small privileged and influential layer of the working class in the imperialist countries whose conditions of life isolate it from the conditions of the broad mass of the working class. This privileged layer has a material interest in the continuation of imperialism, for it is the source of its economic and political privileges. Finally these workers constitute the social base of opportunism and reformism in the working class movement. That is, politically, this current represents the interests of the ruling class in the working class movement.

With this understanding we can explain the origin of the Labour Party. It is an understanding that was not something unique to Lenin but was part of the tradition of politics developed by Marx and Engels.

In the third quarter of the 19th century (1850-75) British capitalism with the markets of the world under its domination and its vast colonial possessions, rapidly expanded and was able to relax the extreme pressure upon the working class which

had always been present in the 1830s and 1840s. Wages rose considerably - estimates say by as much as a third - and conditions improved especially for the skilled workers and craftsman: a labour aristocracy which more and more assumed the leadership of the working class. These privileged workers turned aside from Chartism to build up their 'New Model' trade unions and their Cooperative Societies. The character of the organised British working class movement totally changed. It was now composed of a privileged stratum who looked to their own minority interests and no longer represented the interests of the vast majority of the working class. They rejected socialism as utopian and identified their interests with the growing prosperity of British capitalism. Politically they identified with the bourgeois Liberal Party. In a letter to Kautsky on 12 September 1882 Engels explained the political consequences of this development when he wrote:

'You ask me what the English workers think about colonial policy. Well exactly the same as they think about politics in general. There is no workers party here, there are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies.'

In the last quarter of the 19th century Britain's monopoly power was being challenged by American, German and French capitalism. The economic base of the narrow petit bourgeois trade unionism and liberalism among the British workers was being undermined. The previously tolerable conditions of life gave way to extreme want as the cost of living rose and real wages fell. The class struggle intensified and this period saw the emergence and development of socialist organisations. The unskilled workers, encouraged and aided by the socialists, including Eleanor Marx, were organised in a wave of militant new unionism which swept Britain at the end of the 19th century. Engels, commenting on this development in 1892, said that it was the reason why 'there will be socialism again in England'.

Engels died a few years later. His revolutionary optimism eventually proved unjustified.

The English working class had definitely made great strides forward and the new unions won major victories against the old unions and the employers. But in the end the leaders of the new unions were not able to resist the opportunism of the old union structure with its army of paid and bought-off officials. Opportunism eventually triumphed. This is the period in which the Labour Party was born. Imperialism was to have a much longer lease of life than most revolutionaries expected.

The significance of Taff Vale for the British working class movement was that it convinced the leaders of the trade unions that they could no longer rely on the Liberal Party to defend their economic and political privileges in a situation of growing inter-imperialist rivalry and class conflict. They would need their own political party - not to defend the interests of the mass of the working class but those of the narrow privileged layer they, themselves, were part of and represented.

Thus the Labour Party was formed. The ruling class was forced, albeit reluctantly, to admit this party into state and government institutions. As a small minority, the ruling class in a developed capitalist country could not remain in power without an alliance with a politically influential section of the working class. It had little choice but to accept this new party, which in exchange for the economic and political privileges available to its chosen constituency, would defend the interests of the ruling class through its control of the working class movement.

A party born to imperialism

The Labour Party gives organised political expression to the interests of the privileged layers of the working class. The composition of those layers has changed over time with changes in the development of the capitalist production. However, the material basis of those privileges continues to rest on British imperialist exploitation of the oppressed nations. That is why the Labour Party is and always has been a bourgeois, racist pro-imperialist party. It is that which explains the record of all Labour governments, its loyal service to British imperialism, its betrayal of working class struggles, details of which are contained, but are not understood or ex-

plained, in the SWP pamphlet.

The SWP, by denying the essential character of imperialism, is forced to fall back on the existence of a trade union bureaucracy and its mediating role between bosses and workers to explain the character of the Labour Party. Why do such reactionary bureaucrats always seem to lead the trade unions and Labour Party? We never seem to be told. But then that is not the purpose of the exercise. The SWP's position always allows for workers from below - the rank-and-file - to pressurise the leaders of the trade unions and Labour Party to act in the interests of the working class. This argument is used to justify the continual concessions the SWP makes to retain its credibility in Labour Party circles. It is used to justify its backsliding on the Gulf War and the compromises it made with the CND-led Committee to Stop War in the Gulf. It will be used to justify its call for a vote for the Labour Party when the General Election takes place.

For our part we remain with Marx, Engels and Lenin and their understanding of imperialism as the material basis for the existence of bourgeois labour parties. Politically that has quite different consequences. 'That unless a determined and relentless struggle is waged all along the line against these parties or groups or trends, etc... there can be no question of a struggle against imperialism, or of Marxism, or of a socialist labour movement.' (CW Vol 23 p118)

CHOOSE THE RCG

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NHS: two-tiered service

ROBERT CLOUGH

The 600 redundancies at Guy's Hospital herald the start of the major assault on the NHS which is the consequence of the introduction of the 'internal market'. This market will create an ever-widening gap in the level of services open to the middle class, and those that will be available to the working class. The Tory White Paper spelled the separation of District Health Authorities from the hospital units they previously managed, so that the former would 'purchase' services in a market system from the 'provider' hospitals. 57 hospitals have 'opted out' of direct Health Authority control and formed the so-called NHS trusts; of the other 280 major units, at least a further 100 will opt out next year. 'Opted out' hospitals have greater freedoms to market their services, and will act little different from private hospitals. At the same time, a number of larger GP practices, the GP fund-



holders, have been given their own budget to enable them to buy into this market.

The aim of all this is quite simple: it is to cut the amount of money that is spent on the NHS. To maintain a static level of service, spending has to rise by 2 per cent per annum because of the increasing demands made by Britain's ageing population. It is a burden that the ruling class is no longer prepared to tolerate. However, it also wants to limit any political backlash following on from such cuts. Hence the

division of the NHS into hundreds of competing units serves a number of purposes. Firstly, it fragments the potential union or community opposition, a point that is often overlooked. Secondly, it creates a layer of administrations whose fortunes depend on the success of the reforms: the government will therefore find people eager and willing to cut services in order to promote their own interests. Thirdly, it will allow the most expensive hospitals to be priced out of the market so that they can

gradually be run down until closure. Fourthly, it opens up the NHS to private healthcare in order to ensure a higher level of service to the middle class.

These changes will hit London severely. One out of the nine main teaching hospitals will have to close. Guy's will be closing down its least 'cost effective' specialties - mainly psychiatric services, where level of provision in the capital is already appalling. Other hospitals are announcing cuts too - Westminster and Charing Cross among them. Health Authorities on the outskirts of London are directing their referrals more and more to the lower-cost hospitals in the stock-broker belt. The Kings' Fund, a health research institute, estimates that this changing pattern of referral will cut funds to the central London hospitals - those hospitals serving the inner-city areas - by between 10 and 20 per cent.

Other steps to promote a two-tier system are more conscious. Christie Hospital in Manchester offered preferential treatment to Health Authorities which stum-

ped up £20,000 to open an extra ward. Alder Hey hospital in Liverpool has offered its purchasers a guarantee that if they pay an extra £7,500 their referrals will be treated for heart surgery within 12 months, at a time when their waiting lists are 18 months. Watford General has offered its GP fundholders a maximum waiting list time of 13 weeks for surgery: its average is 20 weeks. The Queen Elizabeth hospital in Welwyn Garden City is offering such fundholders priority treatment for their cataract patients. And so the list goes on. This means a second-rate service for the mass of working class people.

OECD figures show that of 24 developed countries, including all those in the EC, only Greece spent a smaller proportion of its GNP on health than Britain. Between 1985 and 1989 that proportion declined from 6.0 to 5.8 per cent. In reducing that proportion still further, it will be the poor and oppressed who will suffer the most. The Government has made every attempt to minimise the impact of the 'internal market' for this year. Given what has happened in the first few weeks, the effect of a year of its operation will be to undermine the NHS completely. ■

NEWS NOTES

Tweedledum and Tweedledee

The Tories' string of local election defeats came to head in May. They lost 85 seats on 2 May, then they lost to Labour in the Monmouth by-election on 16 May. The Tories have not won any of the 14 by-elections held since February 1989.

Labour's electoral success is the result of wooing a substantial slice of the middle class vote that has gone the way of the Tories in the last decade. Labour 'managing capitalism better' programme is pulling in the votes in the same way the Liberal Democrats have benefited from the disaffected Tory vote.

Meanwhile, the working class has to look on as Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee squabble over whose public spending policy is the most cost effective. In response to the Tories' refusal to spend money on the NHS until the country can afford it Kinnock is offering to increase public expenditure by £2 billion in anticipation of a 2.5 per cent annual growth rate. In other words, when the country can afford it.

Labour condemns the Council Tax but won't pledge to abolish it. Kinnock's talks on wage restraint with union leaders have familiar ring. Major insists that demands for higher wage rise price workers out of jobs.

For the millions of working class people who have been pushed further into poverty over the last decade the battle words at the ballot box mean just one thing. Whoever wins it's more of the same. ■

Spot the difference

The Council Tax is the Tories' latest wheeze at looking after their own. The seven-band property tax based on bills for two adults with a 25 per cent rebate for single adults exempts the poor from paying but sets the ceiling on property values at £160,000.

Homes will be banded according to how the market value of property relates to the national average and householders taxed accordingly. With the top band set at £160,000 the wealthy are set to gain. For those with low incomes living in cities with high property prices, for example London, the new system will leave them worse off as the value of their property will not necessarily reflect their income.

The Government claim that the rich would pay 2.5 times as much as the less well off disguises the wage differential between a company director earning £60,000 + per year and typist earning £6,000 per year.

Like the Poll Tax, the Council Tax will reflect the level of government grant received by councils. Poor areas will be discriminated against. Miserable government grants in many inner city areas mean the tax will increase in proportion to council spending. The Tories will not allow extra spending to be offset by higher taxes against those whose property lies in the top bands. As with the Poll Tax, the poor will pay for the poor. ■

Unemployment on the increase

BOB SHEPHERD

Unemployment figures released in April showed the biggest monthly rise for 20 years. With May's figures confirming the upward spiral, unemployment will reach 2½ million this year.

The British Chamber of Commerce's quarterly survey shows Britain's economy still in deep recession. 77% of firms surveyed predicted a fall in orders in the coming period, with only 4% working at full capacity.

Ford, Britain's leading car manufacturer, announced its first pre-tax losses for 20 years in May, just a month after it had announced 1,000 redundancies at its Halewood plant this year. Rolls Royce has declared it will make 6,000 redundancies this year, as the recession chips away at Britain's declining manufacturing base.

The depth of Britain's economic crisis is highlighted in the Chamber of Commerce survey reports: service industries are following manufacturing into serious decline, the South East and London being amongst the worst affected. The financial services union BIFU reports over 10,000 jobs lost in the financial sector over the past year, with 50,000 jobs threatened by further cutbacks.

Just how little the Tory government is concerned about unemployment and how much it is concerned to preserve profits was admitted by Chancellor Lamont, who thinks that growing unemployment is a price 'well worth paying' for beating inflation. He should immediately pay up, along with the managements at Rolls Royce (who imposed a new contract on all employees to avoid a pay rise) and Marks & Spencer (who, despite increased profits, sacked hundreds).

Growing sections of the working class now feel the effects of Thatcher's economic miracle. The Tory Party's local election losses reflect that reality. ■

Child sex abuse and 'family life'

During the Orkney child abuse case, the media focused its attention and blame primarily on the role played by the social services. Below, a Liverpool social worker responds to some of their criticisms.

The recent publicity over nine children removed from their families in Orkney because of the alleged sexual abuse has highlighted once more the difficulties in providing any effective protection for children in similar situations.

The scale of the problem cannot be under-estimated. Perhaps one in ten children suffer some kind of sexual abuse; one in 200 are raped. The offenders are overwhelmingly male, and almost always close relatives.

Proving abuse is almost always extremely difficult. The child is almost always the only source of information. Yet they are also almost always reluctant to talk about it. Their abuser often obtains their silence by a

combination of bribes and threats, or the sophisticated cultivation of a sense of guilt. The child is made to feel responsible for the consequences of disclosure: the family's shame, its possible break-up. Sometimes the child may rationalise his or her silence through a desire to save a younger sibling from a similar fate. To this may be added the acute psychological trauma of being raped by someone you trust and depend upon, compounded by the fear of never being believed.

Such difficulties were evident in the Castle Hill case. Castle Hill was a special school in Shropshire for boys with special learning difficulties. For a period of five years, the proprietor raped and assaulted the pupils on an almost daily basis: at his trial, 39 victims testified. Yet teachers were unaware of this, the boys intimidated into silence even with their families. Over a period of 12 months, three boys summoned up the

courage to speak about it, but were disbelieved by the police. The proprietor got 12 years, but the boys he assaulted face a lifetime of psychological trauma.

This puts some context to the Orkney case. The starting point was the discovery of sexual abuse in a family of 15 - 8 of the children were discovered to have been assaulted by their father, subsequently jailed. He alleged the involvement of other families, and one of his abused children gave a corroborating account. After further investigations involving lay assessors on the child care panel, the SSPC and the police, place of safety orders were obtained for the nine children, and they were removed from their families.

Client confidentiality means that the facts of the case can never be made public, so it is impossible to comment on the merits of the social workers' case. However, in dismissing it, Sheriff Kelby decided to take no witnesses - neither the profes-

sionals, or the children, or the families. He did however condemn the children's panel for not bringing children or parents to one or other of two hearings in early March. Given the presence of 50 reporters (including an Australian TV crew) outside these hearings, and the willingness of the parents and their reverend supporters to speak to the media, safeguarding the anonymity of the children seems to have been made an impossibility. The Sheriff returned the verdict the tabloids had been clamouring for, and the children were removed from care.

Meanwhile, how much damage is being done to the chances of other children being able to escape these appalling circumstances? The ruling class is determined to drive sexual abuse underground, as it makes a mockery of the notion of 'family life'. Maybe there were mistakes in Orkney, maybe there weren't. One thing is certain: no one was ever going to find out. ■

Racist murders in Greenwich

VIRMAN MAN

Two black youths have been killed in racist attacks this year in Thamesmead, Greenwich. Whilst waiting for a bus on 21 February, 15-year-old Rolan Adams was set upon by a gang of about 15 white thugs and stabbed to death. His younger brother Nathan was also attacked. On 11 May Orville Bertram Blair, 25, was killed after being repeatedly stabbed by a white assailant.

For weeks the police denied that Rolan's murder was racist. Eight out of nine youths arrested have now been released on bail, charged only with violent disorder. Nobody has been arrested for the attack on Nathan. The police now deny that Orville's murder

was racist, and claim that he was a burglar killed in revenge.

Greenwich has the second highest incidence of racist attacks in London, and since the beginning of the year the number of attacks per month has doubled. The Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks has recorded 110 attacks to date this year, 11 allegedly carried out by police officers.

RCG comrades joined a demonstration on 27 April to commemorate the death of Rolan Adams. Over 1,000 people, the majority of them black, marched from Thamesmead to the headquarters of the fascist British National Party in Wellington. The march was a clear signal to Bexley Council that if they continue to allow the BNP to stay in the area, then black peo-

ple will reclaim the streets for themselves. The BNP is planning a 'rights for whites' march in Thamesmead on 25 May. So far the police have taken no position about whether or not this march can take place. In the absence of any action being taken by the authorities, black people are preparing for self-defence of their community. ■

Dewsbury 82 Campaign

■ The Dewsbury 82 Defence Campaign formally disbanded on 9 January 1991.

The Campaign was set up to offer political and financial support to those arrested on the Kirkees Black Workers Group anti-fascist demonstration in Dewsbury in June 1989. It mobilised in the black community for a na-

tional demonstration during the trial, to expose the racism of the media and police in the case.

However, on 3 January 1991, 14 Asian youths out of the 21 main defendants were found guilty and jailed, with sentences of 9 months to 3 years. The Campaign states, 'these are exemplary sentences designed to stop black youths from fighting back.' Families and friends have formed a solidarity group.

The Campaign extends its thanks to all organisations, groups and individuals who supported it, and states: 'We acknowledge that they have done so not for any personal rewards, but in the overall interests of the defendants; and because of their strong commitments against all forms of racism and injustice'. ■

Imperialism confident

The Soviet people are confronting an unprecedented economic and political crisis. In the first quarter of 1991 production dropped by 6-10 per cent and the budget deficit stood at 31.1bn roubles – larger than the 26.7bn planned for the whole year! In April, massive workers' strikes, demanding improved conditions and the resignation of President Gorbachev, warned that the working class will not passively shoulder the burden of this crisis. Meanwhile national republics are striving for 'independence' amidst a resurgence of bloody national clashes and fierce political battles between Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the 'conservatives'.

EDDIE ABRAHAMS analyses the crisis.

The social, economic and political conditions of the overwhelming majority of Soviet people are deteriorating sharply. In the process, and with the aid of the state apparatus, a tiny minority of intellectuals, party, state and economic functionaries are organising to defend and enlarge their existing privileges by establishing themselves as a new capitalist ruling class.

Despite its size and the fear it inspires among reactionaries, the working class is not an independent and determining actor in the drama. Those who are, are fundamentally anti-working class and divided into three main trends: the 'radicals' temporarily grouped around Yeltsin, the so-called 'conservatives' of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the forces supporting Gorbachev.

Perestroika and glasnost were launched by Gorbachev in 1985 as a response to the social and economic crisis facing the Soviet Union. Restructuring and democracy were to revive a stagnant economy and society. However, in the absence of an independent working class political force, bourgeois counter-revolution has seized the initiative.

PERESTROIKA

Perestroika has set the foundations for the restoration of capitalism in the USSR with all the main trends supporting the transition to a market economy. They differ only on the speed, fearing that too rapid a pace will result in uncontrollable working class upheavals.

On 2 April, in the latest manifestation of perestroika, food prices went up by an average of 60%. One litre of milk rose from 36 to 50 kopeks. A kilo of beef climbed from 2 to 7 roubles. A 20 kopek loaf now costs 60 kopeks. Overnight, Soviet working class living standards dropped. This was the first step in a wider 'anti-crisis' programme designed to ensure a gradual transition to a market economy.

Prime Minister Pavlov predicted that even on this plan the Soviet people should prepare for 18 million unemployed and a 20% drop in production. The more 'radical' 'Shatalin' programme would have entailed 30 million unemployed and a 30% drop in production. It was rejected last year for fear of the working class response.

Nevertheless the accumulated legal and economic measures of perestroika have already set the basis for the development of a new privileged class. Over the past four years, the number of people with an income greater than 250 roubles a month has grown fourfold. 3.1 million people in co-operatives and private business – 2.3% of the workforce – earn 500 roubles a month, while 500,000 earn 3000 roubles a month. The average wage remains at 240 roubles a month. 71 million people, a quarter of the Soviet population, earn less than 100 roubles a month and two million are already unemployed.

A new bourgeoisie is emerg-



The market can provide no solution for striking Ukrainian miners

ing – amidst the most blatant corruption and robbery. A Soviet social scientist, Leonid Razikhovskii, argues that the economy is today dominated by a 'lumpen-bourgeois ethic' and that it is: 'a unique, historically unprecedented monster – a completely mafia-ized economy'.

An alliance of corrupt party officials, factory managers and racketeers in the co-operative and growing private sector are ruthlessly plundering the state, illicitly transferring vast resources and funds to the private sector and the black market. Thus while state shops run desperately short, the black market has everything – but at a price beyond the reach of workers.

A Lithuanian government minister stated that:

'...co-operatives and joint enterprises are often oriented not towards the production of consumer goods but towards their redistribution: from the state into their own pockets. If we are to call things by their real names it is speculation on a very large scale.'

GLASNOST

Glasnost has benefited the same class which is prospering with perestroika – the so-called 'radicals'. They are the privileged intelligentsia – professionals and intellectuals – the 'co-operators' and new entrepreneurs, concentrated in Moscow, Leningrad and the large cities. Glasnost has enabled them to dominate much of the Soviet media, cultural and public political life. Under the pretext of openness and democratic renewal it has allowed them to politically organise and extend their influence.

Virulently anti-socialist and anti-Marxist, they worship everything capitalist and imperialist. They regard egalitarianism as a 'perversity' and enthusiastically support calls for the rapid introduction of a market economy. They have a virulent hatred for the working class which they fear could bar their selfish ambition. A 'radical' newspaper recently wrote:

'Market reforms begin to be threatened not so much by the machinations of the nomenklatura as by the workers' movement which is gaining momentum spontaneously, and by the radicalisation of the population's sentiments due to price hikes.'

On the margins of this 'radical' camp, glasnost has spawned and given 'freedom' to even more pernicious forces of anti-semitic, proto-fascist Russian chauvinists, monarchists and religious fundamentalists.

GLASNOST AND THE REPUBLICS

In many national republics the 'radicals' and sections of the party apparatus have coalesced into reactionary pro-capitalist blocs. Eager to integrate into the world capitalist market they are engaged in a struggle for 'independence' from the USSR.

This is leading to a tragic division and weakening of the working class and the suppression of national democratic rights. The Georgian government which

calls for 'independence' from the Soviet Union, is violently crushing the long established Ossetian autonomous region and the democratic demands of the Mskhetian Turks. In Azerbaijan, the minority Armenian community is subject to bloody pogroms orchestrated by Azerbaijani 'democratic forces', whilst Armenian 'democratic forces' do the same to the Azeri minority in Armenia.

In the Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, bourgeois nationalist governments have succeeded in whipping up national hostility against the substantial Russian working class, while in massive Russia, Yeltsin, who spouts democratic slogans in his fight against Gorbachev, is himself striving to stifle the democratic rights and aspirations of Russia's own 16 autonomous republics, five autonomous regions and 10 national districts.

FOREIGN POLICY

The Soviet leadership's foreign policy of accommodating imperialism has revealed the extent to which it has moved into the camp of counter-revolution. Its full support for the imperialist destruction of Iraq was but the latest and clearest example.

Since the end of the War the Soviet Foreign Minister visited Israel to prepare for the re-establishment of diplomatic re-

lations. But meetings with the PLO were indefinitely postponed. In the clash between North Korea and the US who are seeking to close down Soviet-built nuclear reactors, the Soviet Union is siding with the US. Examples can be multiplied.

THE OPPOSITION

The main organised political opposition to the Soviet Government and the 'radicals' comes from the 'conservatives'. They vocally demand the retention of a united Soviet state and frequently speak out against 'concessions to imperialism'. They do not however constitute a working class opposition. They want to retain the Union only because their own power and privilege rests on the gigantic Union-wide economic and military institutions. Whilst willing to see the introduction of the market, they do not, unlike the 'radicals', want Russia to be subordinated to US or European capital. The conservatives have in any event proved themselves too weak, socially isolated and spineless to decisively influence the direction of events.

THE SOVIET WORKING CLASS

The imperialists can now rest at ease. The Soviet Union has ceased to represent a threat. Nevertheless they continue to deny credit, financial and technological aid. International capital will comply only when it is sure that private property has been re-established on an unchallenged basis, only when it is confident that its investments will not be endangered by the threat of political and social upheaval and instability.

The corrupt and bureaucratic methods of the CPSU have driven millions of workers to oppose socialism. The working class has been divided, weakened and tainted with nationalism and chauvinism. It nevertheless

remains a potential power capable of disrupting the plans of imperialism and its allies in the USSR. Within the CPSU and outside it, in the factories and mines, there are significant if small groupings of socialists and communists who are working hard to politically organise the working class against the tide of reaction. They confront huge problems of ideological confusion, demoralisation and disillusionment, but they nevertheless have fertile ground on which to work.

The overwhelming majority of workers oppose the restoration of capitalism. Hatred for private business and co-operatives is widespread. Working class protests demand: 'No to free growth of prices!' 'No to the speculators who rob the working people!' 'Shut down all those who gouge the people and steal bread from their mouths!'

A workers' leader summed up working class sentiment:

'The programmes of transition to the market that have been adopted contain within them the danger of violation of the workers' interests. Exploiting the confusion, the administrative-command apparatus is attempting not only to hold onto the reigns of management, but to become in fact the owners of the means of production, creating concerns, associations and joint stock companies. As for us, we are left the role of hired labour, the draught force of the economy. We cannot and simply do not have the right to allow that.'

If organised socialists succeed in giving political expression to these sentiments and can combine them with an anti-imperialist and internationalist outlook, counter-revolution will not have everything its own way. ■

Yugoslavia: state of turmoil

DALE EVANS

On 15 May Serbia blocked Stipe Mesic (a Croat) from becoming President of Yugoslavia. Under the revolving system of presidents from the different republics, the presidency of Mesic should have been a formality. This major constitutional crisis is the latest stage in the collapse of Yugoslavia as a unified state, and the rise of backward nationalism in the different republics.

The crisis of Yugoslavia has been mainly engineered by aggressive Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević. In 1987 Milošević organised a putsch within the Serbian League of Communists. To gain mass support he raised the reactionary standard of nationalism. The Serbian autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina saw mass demonstrations by Serbs demanding their complete subjugation to Serbia. In Kosovo where 1.8 million ethnic Albanians live, and only 200,000 Serbs and Montenegrins, two uprisings by the Albanians against Serbian control were brutally crushed, leaving over 60 Albanians dead, and the whole of Kosovo living under martial law. Milošević also tried to undermine the legitimate governments of Bosnia and Montenegro with mass demonstrations. Both these republics border Serbia and have



Serbian Chetniks - monarchists founded in the 1940s - at a recent rally

substantial Serbian minorities living in them. Eventually Kosovo and Vojvodina lost their autonomous status, coming under direct Serbian control.

The annexation of the autonomous provinces and the campaign of political destabilisation carried out by the Serbian leadership was seen by both the leaders and populace of the northern republics of Slovenia and Croatia as the Serbian quest for a 'Greater Serbia' and the complete Serbian domination of Yugoslavia. In elections during 1990 nationalist governments came to power in both Slovenia and Croatia. The Communists, although receiving up to 20% of the vote, failed to stem the nationalist tide.

Croatia is the second largest republic in Yugoslavia, with 4½ million Croats and 600,000

control. But there have been several shooting incidents. In the worst, Serbian nationalists ambushed a Croatia police bus, killing 12. The army, which is dominated by a Serbian officer corps has dismally failed to stop the fighting, acting unconstitutionally by not defending the territorial integrity of Croatia. It is allowing the Serbian nationalists to build up the crisis to further undermine Tudjman's CDU government.

Tudjman and Milošević are the main adversaries in the quagmire of Yugoslav politics. Milošević's programme of Serbian domination depends on army support. The constant manufacture of political crises, the Croatian issue and the blocking of Yugoslavia are attempts by Milošević to provoke the army into supporting Serbian aims. Although the army has not remained neutral in Croatia and has issued statements showing greater impatience with the politicians, it has so far refused to back Milošević's demands.

If Milošević fails to get army backing, he may soon run out of issues with which to fan the flames of nationalism. The riots in March in the Serbian capital Belgrade against his leadership, the increasing poverty of the working class and the collapse of the Serbian economy, indicate that new forces may arise to extinguish the flames of Serbian chauvinism. ■

This year the Croat-Serb conflict has escalated dramatically. Armed Serbs now control several towns. The Yugoslav army has provided them with weapons and blocked the Croatian military police from retaking

control. But there have been several shooting incidents. In the worst, Serbian nationalists ambushed a Croatia police bus, killing 12. The army, which is dominated by a Serbian officer corps has dismally failed to stop the fighting, acting unconstitutionally by not defending the territorial integrity of Croatia. It is allowing the Serbian nationalists to build up the crisis to further undermine Tudjman's CDU government.

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A letter from Germany

A time of farewell in the East of Germany. After we parted with our country last year and many of us with our jobs since, today the deathblow was dealt to two trademarks of the GDR: the national airline Interflug and the Trabant, not so long ago cheered as the 'freedom car' that had carried poor Easterners to the West where they were to find 'real cars'...

Both Trabant and Interflug were declared inefficient and therefore not worth preserving, like so many other things in the ex-GDR, be it factories or hospitals, clubs or libraries, schools or theatres. Step by step the wise advisors from the West are creating a desert they claim has always been here.

What is happening bears little resemblance to the 'social market economy' in the western part of Germany. It is rather early capitalism in the classical sense.

Of course, hardly anyone believed that unification would bring 'freedom and wealth' to the East overnight - but probably equally few expected it to be quite as terrible as it is turning out now. Just one everyday example: in June public transport fares for East Berliners will increase by 900 per cent. For comparison's sake: since I am unemployed, my income is half what it was before unification.

Sure, a few have already made it - found jobs in the West or declared themselves managers of still functioning GDR enterprises (believe it or not, a few have survived), with the respective wages, fancy cars and nouveau riche attitude.

Others eagerly agreed on hire purchase contracts, enjoyed their new furniture, videos and cars for a while - because why should

foreigners in the East (still less than 0.5 per cent of the population), who increasingly find themselves the target of violent assaults. Some have been living here a long time; some were called in as 'guest workers'; and some have left their countries recently, in search of political asylum or a better life.

Twenty per cent of refugees get sent to the 'five new provinces' (as the former-GDR is officially called). They get put up in former secret police and army barracks and are housed and fed and entitled to a (very small) allowance. Asylum applications take up to two years to sort out; only five per cent are granted and in the meantime refugees are not allowed to work.

Violent xenophobia resulted in the first death last month. Mozambiquan Jorge Gomondai died after being thrown off a tram in Dresden. Gangs of skinheads and other extremists attacked foreigners' hostels in Leipzig, Berlin and other towns. There have been several attempts by rightists to storm border crossing points to Poland. Polish and Vietnamese citizens get attacked, robbed and beaten up in the streets.

You can't explain this phenomenon in a few words. Not only foreigners get assaulted, robbed, raped and killed on East German streets these days. In Berlin crime is 20 per cent up on last year. A culture of violence is establishing itself that is new, at least in the East.

A study of young right-wing extremists shows that nearly all of them are unemployed or didn't find an apprenticeship. No job satisfaction, a lot of spare time and deep frustration about their lot.



Neo-Nazis in the bright new Germany display their hatred of all foreigners

they lose their jobs? After all, they never collaborated with the Stasi or party but had only been working hard for their company for a long time. Except they didn't expect their entire company to break down within weeks, no matter whether they produced vital things like bread and milk (they come from the West now) or things that have only now become luxuries for GDR-citizens: books, art, movies, plays.

And then there are those who lost their jobs as early as a year ago, shortly after the 'revolution': clerks, artists, party workers, policemen, coaches and manual workers, among them tens of thousands of single parents, mostly women. They were deprived of childcare facilities: 'You can look after your kid yourself now and this kindergarten is closing down anyway', and their unemployment benefit has now run out.

But still, most of these people have one advantage: they are white and German. Unlike the

The worst illustration of their activities I've seen so far is a leaflet that some Berliners found in their letterboxes last month. It reads:

'We pay DM50 for every dead Pole (no matter in what condition). For well-preserved specimens: DM60. For more than 10: 80 per piece.

Open every day. To be delivered in airtight plastic bags.

May we kindly inform you that Poles of every age are fair game and no protected species.

We wish you success in your new occupation and hope to welcome you soon as suppliers of our branches.

Yours sincerely
Heinrich Himmler AG
Berlin

Any comment necessary? While society provides young people with no satisfying activities nor prospect of a less uncertain future, this extremism cannot be expected to disappear.

Claudia, Berlin

BROOKE INITIATIVE

Talking about talks



Republican people have always been excluded from discussions about their future

SÉAN O MAOLDHOMNAIGH

Peter Brooke, the Secretary of State for the north of Ireland, has wheeled out a familiar and previously battered 'vehicle for change' in Ireland, the 'good old British solution'. The search for the elusive solution to the 'Irish problem' is trundling through its latest manifestation in Belfast at this very moment. Dressed up with a new name, glossed over with sufficient media hype, the illusion has laboured through a difficult 15-month birth to arrive at its present crisis. A question as basic as 'whose

house to meet at' proved almost insurmountable, giving a clear indication that a short unproductive life will be the most anyone should expect from the 'Brooke initiative'. The complicated miasma that appears as Irish politics has some fundamentally simple foundations that go a long way to explaining why these current talks are heading for the same diplomatic cul-de-sac as any attempts by Mr Brooke's predecessors. The partition of Ireland in Britain's interests, and its continued division to maintain those interests, is the root cause of the conflict. The talks are nothing more than a thinly-veiled

charade attempting to avoid the issues in question ie Britain's historical role in Ireland and a denial of the right to self-determination for the Irish.

The blatant hypocrisy of Peter Brooke on the talks is sufficient in itself to expose the reasons behind the facade. He has the audacity to talk of the violence of the Republican Movement as an obstacle to progress while ignoring the spiralling increase in loyalist sectarian attacks and state-sponsored violence. The Six County statelet has sectarian violence against the Catholic minority as the cornerstone of its existence. It exists to maintain the privilege of loyalism and the interests of Britain. The loyalists see the involvement of Dublin and the SDLP as the thin end of the nationalist wedge, a threat to loyalist status in the Six Counties. Hence their violent reaction before the talks. But the reality is that British strategy is aimed at shoring up the sectarian statelet on which this privilege is based. The difference between the Unionists and the British lies in means not ends. Britain believes that by involving the SDLP and Dublin, 'constitutional nationalism' will be strengthened and the revolutionary Republican challenge to the sectarian statelet marginalised.

The same stumbling block, a failure to deal with the inherent contradictions of the statelet, has led to the downfall of all attempts at a solution to the conflict. To predict a short fruitless existence to the process is understandable when we examine

Irish trials

SARAH RICCA

The Republican Movement was dealt a serious blow when, on 10 May, former Sinn Fein Publicity Director Danny Morrison was sentenced to eight years in prison. In January 1990, the RUC raided a house in West Belfast where one of their informers, Sandy Lynch, was agreeing to spill the beans on his police handlers. At the trial of those arrested the RUC claimed that an IRA court martial was taking place, with Morrison present to pass the death sentence on Lynch. Justice Brian Hutton - acting as both judge and jury in the Diplock court - was not convinced and acquitted Morrison of conspiring to murder and of membership of the IRA. But he decided that Morrison's decision to remain silent during police questioning 'gives rise to strong inferences against him'. He admitted Lynch was 'liable to lie on oath', but still found Morrison and nine others guilty of 'false imprisonment'.

Gerry McGeough reports on his and Gerry Hanratty's trial in Germany, the 'longest running continuous trial involving Irish Republicans': 'In March the German prosecutor, Dr Peter Maree, announced nine new prosecution witnesses... their introduction obliges the defence to consider asking for a break so that the new evidence might be investigated. Effectively meaning the end of this trial, and a new one begun from day one.

'Maree's attitude can be seen in his reference to the Irish people as "Paddies", boasting of having acquired the term from an acquaintance in the British military.

'Just before Easter they moved me to Düsseldorf jail... since then all my rights have been withdrawn and I am now in 23-hour solitary lock-up. A

prison move is destabilising at the best of times, but to be shifted in the middle of a trial is totally scandalous.'

Donna Maguire, Sean Hick and Paul Hughes, acquitted in a Dutch court of charges including the murder of two Australian tourists, are now facing extradition to Germany. Their lawyers say there is even less evidence against them in Germany than there was in Holland - but they could be on remand for years. The Dutch government is meanwhile appealing against their acquittal.

The Maguire Seven hearing at the Court of Appeal has revealed another scandalous cover-up by the government scientists, whose evidence was the sole basis of the convictions. A document written just two months before the Maguires were refused leave to appeal has surfaced which reveals that tests used to prove the handling of explosives could have been contaminated at the government labs.

Following a five and a half month ordeal, Siobhan McKane has had PTA charges against her dropped. In Brixton prison she was strip-searched regularly and accompanied during her exercise by a dog handler. Of the nine people arrested in north London last November, only William McKane remains in custody awaiting trial.

DESSIE ELLIS CAMPAIGN

No more British injustice!
Organising meeting - all welcome
Tuesday, 28 May 7.30pm
Roger Casement Irish Centre,
St John's Way, Archway,
London N19

FRIENDS OF JOE DOHERTY

No to extradition!
Picket of US Embassy
Monday 17 June, 5.30-7pm
Grosvenor Square, London

the list of previous failures.

William Whitelaw's power-sharing executive ambled along for months in early 1974 before collapsing as an abysmal failure. Merlyn Rees with a Labour Party effort along the same lines petered out around 1976 with more fuss than progress. Humphreys Atkins managed to get Mr Paisley and the SDLP to attend a conference at Stormont in the early eighties. History records the attendance and little more. James Prior's 'rolling devolution' rolled to an early stop as he stayed there, this time the SDLP refusing to get involved.

The Anglo-Irish agreement has its roots back in Douglas Hurd's term of office. Despite Tom King managing to get some signatures on paper, it has never grown beyond that, not to mention flowered into anything progressive. Unionist objections to the agreement has meant that its suspension was a necessary prerequisite to the present talks getting underway.

With all parties fearful of the repercussions if they are seen to be deliberate detractors, everyone is treading carefully. They have not even approached the negotiating table yet and the air is murky with suspicion and mistrust; even John Major is dragged into the fray. If the turmoil about choice of venue in recent weeks is an indication of things to come, the prospects are pretty dismal.

The SDLP wants to extend the comfortable niche they've been granted. The Unionists, while proving more intransigent than the SDLP, may be reluctant to be seen scuttling the process yet again. Dublin toes the line of offering its claim to the Six Counties on a plate and the British government creates the illusion that it is trying to solve Ireland's 'running sore', polishing the myth of protecting the democratic process. Regardless of how long they manage to sustain the appearance of progress the inevitable results of undemocratic and deliberately sectarian procedures will eventually overwhelm them. The delays and petty arguments are seen as 'mere hiccup in history' by Peter Brooke. The elaborate failures to date suggest symptoms of a far greater ailment that cannot be doctored and tinkered with much longer. ■

British terror

PAM ROBINSON

This year the following innocent Irish people have been murdered by loyalist death squads. Saturday 5 January, Magherlin Jervais Lynch was murdered by a UVF death squad whilst alone in his parents' home. Sunday 24 February, North Belfast Peter Tasney was shot dead and his three year-old niece received a head injury in an attack at his home by loyalist death squad members.

Sunday 3 March, Cappagh, Co. Tyrone Dwayne O'Donnell, John Quinn, Tommy Armstrong and Malcolm Nugent were murdered by loyalist gunmen in the car park of Boyle's bar, after the loyalists had unsuccessfully tried a forced entry to the bar. Monday 4 March, Belfast Malcolm Leneghan, a taxi driver, was killed by gunmen after answering a bogus call-out.

Friday 29 March, Drumbeg, North Armagh Eileen Duffy, Catriona Rennie, and Brian Friz-

zell were murdered by loyalist gunmen whilst they were working in a mobile shop.

Friday 29 April, North Belfast Samuel Bell, a taxi driver, was murdered by loyalist gunmen when he answered a bogus call-out.

Thursday 25 April, North Belfast Gerard Chapman (15) was held for four hours by the RUC before being released without charge. The detention followed an incident when he had been badly beaten by members of a British army foot patrol.

Friday 26 April, Maghaberry Prison Pauline Quinn, a republican remand prisoner, returning from compassionate parole was forcibly strip-searched by eight warders including an internal examination. During the ordeal her sanitary protection was forcibly removed and she received an injury to her arm as she struggled in protest at the treatment. After the ordeal she had to be prescribed medication for the distress she was in. ■

On 18 May the ANC announced that it had suspended its talks with the apartheid regime. The decision followed an ultimatum from the ANC that the regime should intervene to stop township violence. On 5 April the ANC issued an Open Letter to the regime demanding the banning of all weapons, including 'traditional' Inkatha weaponry carried at public assemblies, the disbanding of the CCB (the regime's death squads), the phasing out of hostels and the resignations of two of de Klerk's foremost Ministers - Adriaan Vlok and Magnus Malan.

The deadline, set for 9 May, passed by with only gestures from the regime and was overshadowed by a further escalation of township violence. The ANC extended the deadline for a week, and was then faced with a choice of backing down or carrying out its threat to suspend talks. Against a background of limpet-mine explosions in Johannesburg, which the ANC leadership condemned, and the hunger strike in the prisons, they were clearly under pressure to take action. They announced a general strike, alongside a threat to escalate the campaign unless the regime took 'decisive action' against the violence. 'Ad hoc' meetings between de Klerk and Nelson Mandela may, however, continue.

THE PATTERN OF VIOLENCE

It is now clear that the ANC leadership has been considerably weakened by its negotiations position. One unnamed ANC executive member was recently quoted in the *Financial Times* (7 May 1991): '90% of our supporters think we have sold out'. The ANC rank and file's disenchantment was reflected at the December conference, where the leadership was instructed to cease secret talks with the regime and seek united action with other liberation forces.

A major factor in the disillusionment of ANC support in the townships was the suspension of the armed struggle in August 1990, which coincided with the spread of the

Thatcher visits South Africa

There's no shame in Maggie's Pride

Margaret Thatcher, erstwhile British PM, now like 'a piece of shattered glass' who has to answer her own phone calls, discovered her real constituency amongst the white minority in South Africa. Thankful for her fulsome support over the years, the regime feted her at a state banquet and the white farmers named a nectarine after her.

Thatcher has been looking for a new role ever since she was unceremoniously kicked out of Number 10. With her memoirs and business affairs in the hands of her son Mark, the best outlet for her energies may well prove to be PR for apartheid fruit ('The grocer's daughter from Grantham says - YES!'). Perhaps it is, after all, in her blood.

Thatcher's visit did at least confirm her fundamental racism. Her remarks about being an unrepentant 'minority of one' were calculated to appeal to white racist laager mentality. She had praise for virtues of South African farming: 'one of the most wholesome kinds of life imaginable, and most satisfying and also very healthy'; it would have been 'a tragedy if we had upset that very excellent arrangement you have'. South African farms are amongst the worst features of apartheid - there is no protection for black farmworkers and many of their work conditions are akin to slavery. Indeed it is an arrangement that Thatcher would not like upset - she fought savagely against sanctions while in office.

As we go to press Thatcher is due in Johannesburg. We await with bated breath her comments on the virtues of life as a migrant labourer, advice to the unemployed youth, and admiration for cardboard shack housing. Surely a police casspir will be named after her: 'Maggie's Pride'. ■

South Africa at the crossroads

South Africa is once again at the crossroads of reform or revolution. The period of 'talks about talks' between the regime and the African National Congress (ANC), initiated in February 1990 has ground to a halt in the face of the slaughter in the townships which is sponsored by the regime. The ANC-negotiated deadline for the release of political prisoners passed with at least a thousand still in prison. As we go to press hundreds are on hunger strike, with five already hospitalised. Growing disillusion with the negotiation strategy has forced the ANC leadership to review their relationship to other liberation forces which are opposed to negotiations. On 14/15 April the Executive Committees of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the ANC met in Harare to discuss the formation of a broad united front - the Patriotic Front. The meeting was a watershed for opposition to the apartheid regime. CAROL BRICKLEY examines the issues which lie behind the headlines.



Clarence Makwetu president of the PAC with Nelson Mandela of the ANC in Harare. Behind them is PAC Foreign Secretary Gora Ebrahim.

violence to the townships around Johannesburg where the ANC draws considerable support. Despite two meetings between Mandela and Inkatha-chief Buthelezi resulting in joint calls to end the violence, the violence became a bloodbath in April and May, threatening civil war.

The ANC has been unable to deal with violent attacks on its supporters, substituting calls on the regime to take action for a real defence of the community.

PAC Foreign Secretary, Gora Ebrahim, speaking to *FRFI*, has no doubts that the escalation of violence is part of the regime's strategy:

'Before 2 February 1990, de Klerk's political constituency was the white community. The Nationalist Party is now putting itself forward as no longer an exclusively white party, but able to co-opt some elements from the oppressed. In a recent issue of the *Washington Post*, de Klerk's brother said that the National Party is working towards the establishment of an alliance between the Nationalist Party, Inkatha, the Tricameral Parliament parties, certain bantustan leaders and a section of the ANC.

'The pattern of violence fits very well with this scenario. There is growing evidence that the regime is directly involved in the violence... the regime is seeking to create a climate of violence so severe that people will see their top priority as security and the only force able to provide security as the regime...

'De Klerk recognises the growing support in the country and internationally for an elected Constituent Assembly. His priority has to be to enlarge support for his party, and he is trying to co-opt support through the issue of violence.'

An Inkatha attack on Soweto residents on 28 April left 10 people dead. For the first time, television showed the police standing by as armed

Inkatha supporters carried on their butchery. On 5 May a senior member of Inkatha threatened to unleash 100,000 Inkatha fighters on the townships. Yet not once in the last year has the regime criticised Inkatha or the role of the police. While the slaughter was going on in Johannesburg, de Klerk reaffirmed confidence in his Ministers and advised Dr Christiaan Barnard (about to leave South Africa for exile) that the violence was all

'De Klerk's priority has to be to enlarge support for his party, and he is trying to co-opt support through the issue of violence'

'tribal'. Few can now doubt that the violence suits de Klerk's purpose very well.

PROPOSALS ON VIOLENCE

Gora Ebrahim reported that the issue of violence was discussed at the ANC/PAC Harare meeting in April which agreed to set up the Patriotic Front:

'We have reached a situation where our people believe security has broken down. There are two aspects to the violence: state-sponsored violence and internal conflict. We tried to deal with these squarely when we met with the ANC and drew up a common strategy:

- the disbanding of CCB formations, Buffalo Battalion 32, Kovoet etc. We did not call on the regime to preserve peace, we demanded the verifiable disbanding of these formations;
- initiatives to create a democratic culture among the oppressed;
- that the liberation movements

should identify all those people in their own organisations who do not show any political tolerance to other political tendencies and either politicise them or isolate them. This is a matter of priority. It will assist in minimising conflict. Those who are being or can be used by the regime will be isolated.

- end hegemonic claims in residential areas, townships and educational institutions. No organisation should claim no-go areas.

- the immediate democratisation of all civic bodies, particularly in townships. We must bring in all political tendencies.

- agreement to work towards the establishment of community-based civil defence units. Discussions are taking place to ensure that they are community-based. Leadership will have to come from the ANC and PAC. These units must be disciplined bodies able to carry out their responsibilities but also accountable for their actions.

This kind of action will help mobilisation, minimise conflict and most importantly it will isolate those elements being used by the regime to fan violence.'

This agreement is, however, arguably far removed from the ANC's current strategy which is to force the regime to act. On past form, the regime will act only to undermine the ANC and bolster its hoped-for ally - Buthelezi. By now it should be clear that the ANC leadership cannot rely on de Klerk as 'a man of integrity'.

DE KLERK'S DILEMMA

FW de Klerk has been winning the propaganda war internationally, arguing that the regime is committed to the end of apartheid. The British government (as usual) was quick to promote de Klerk's new image and has been at the forefront of pushing for the lifting of sanctions in the EEC. But whilst de Klerk's recent visit to Europe was successful, the USA has

proved reluctant as yet to lift its much more damaging package of sanctions.

Although the regime is convinced that sanctions will be lifted in the near future, the economic crisis in South Africa will prove more stubborn. The violence in the townships may be useful for de Klerk's purpose in the short term, but in the longer term it is a powerful disincentive to new investment. There is some urgency for the regime to either completely undermine the ANC or at least come to a deal with any section of its leadership ready to compromise.

The framework for a so-called 'peaceful settlement' is the retention of the material privileges of the white minority, while ameliorating only the worst aspects of black oppression. De Klerk is well aware that unless a black aspirant middle class can be recruited to his side, stability will be a pipedream. Investment will only be attracted by the prospect of superprofits and this will require the continued oppression of the majority of black South Africans as a reserve army of labour.

According to the South African Institute of Race Relations, every day 1000 young people enter the workforce, and of these 875 will find no work. 20 million people have no electricity; 80% in rural dwellings have no clean water; and 84% in rural areas live below the poverty line. Last year the economy contracted by 1% with no better prospects for 1991. While black unemployment soars, the black labour force grows by 3% every year. The regime's nightmare is that the youth, quite rightly, will have no vested interest in the survival of capitalism or a so-called 'peaceful solution'. The lifting of sanctions will not be enough - the co-option of a section of the oppressed is an urgent necessity for de Klerk.

THE PATRIOTIC FRONT

It is essential now that the liberation movements oppose the regime with a united front founded on the interests of the black majority. The meeting between the PAC and ANC Executives in Harare marked a watershed for the liberation struggle. Moves towards the front began after the PAC Congress and the ANC Consultative Conference in December last year. The Patriotic Front will unite organisations around the demand for a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of one person one vote on a common voters' roll. Other organisations, including AZAPO and Inkatha, are being invited to join.

The Harare meeting agreed that the first meeting of the Patriotic Front will take place in August in Cape Town. The organisations also agreed a common position on violence and on the demand for sanctions to be continued.

The formation of the Front is seen as a triumph for PAC strategy. In the period following the unbanning of liberation organisations in February 1990, when the ANC was going it alone with 'talks about talks', commentators predicted that the PAC would be left behind in the race to determine the shape of a future democratic South Africa. Holding to its position of no negotiations with the regime, the PAC has steadily gained credibility and support, while the ANC leadership has been weakened by the negotiations process.

Rank-and-file ANC members and supporters, including the prisoners now on hunger strike, have demonstrated their view that de Klerk's 'peaceful solution' is a fraud. Every promise the regime made in exchange for real concessions by the ANC has been broken: the exiles have not been free to return - some have been arrested at the airport; the prisoners have not been freed unconditionally. It is only the unity of the oppressed against the regime and its imperialist backers which can bring peace to the townships, free the political prisoners and ensure the safe return of the exiles. Ultimately it will be the only means of securing a democratic liberated South Africa.

Justice for the SASOL strikers

FRANCIS SQUIRE

In April and May City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, supported by the RCG, responded to a call for solidarity from the Zamdela SASOL Strike Support Committee in South Africa with pickets of the South African Embassy and SASOL's London offices.

The Support Committee was set up to support 1300 striking workers from the South African Chemical Workers Union (SACWU) who were sacked in 1987 by SASOL, the huge government-sponsored coal, oil and gas corporation. The Committee consists of local branches of ANC, PAC, AZAPO, NACTU and COSATU as well as the community at large.

On 1 October 1987 2,000 workers went on strike following a ballot to demand a wage increase and improved allowances and holidays. The first strike meeting was attacked by the police; strikers were beaten and arrested, and union files were confiscated. Vigilantes attacked strikers' families.

The company secured a court order to evict strikers from company-owned houses, and 1300 workers were sacked, 450 left homeless.

The strikers have continued to campaign for reinstatement and the regime's brutality continues. In April 1991 22 more families were made homeless, and another 38 are under threat of eviction. The long and bitter dispute has left families without homes, money to pay for education for their children, and without sustenance - some have died from malnutrition.

In 1989 the Industrial Court's only black judicial officer ruled that the dispute was legitimate and that all sacked workers should be reinstated with six months back-pay. The Pretoria Supreme Court quickly overruled the decision and refused leave to appeal.

Today, three and a half years after dismissal, 867 workers are still fighting for reinstatement. The Support Committee is organising a consumer boycott in the country and has called for international solidarity with their struggle. ■

Campaigning with City AA

CAT WIENER

City AA's April-May MONTH OF ACTION highlighted the call for an elected Constituent Assembly as the only means of achieving democracy in South Africa. We called for the unconditional release of all political prisoners and return of the exiles. The month included both the deadline for the release of political prisoners on 30 April, and the ANC deadline for an end to the violence in the townships on 9 May.

The regular weekend pickets of the South African Embassy were enhanced by a special picket on 30 April to mark the failure of the de Klerk regime to release the prisoners, and 'No Rights! No Flights!' pickets of the state-owned South African Airways at Oxford Circus. These met with tremendous response from passers-by, many of them black, who stopped to sign our petition and postcards demanding the release of political prisoners.

When de Klerk visited London begging for funds on 23 April,



brazenly telling Major that he knew of only 200 political prisoners, he was hounded from venue to venue by City AA and RCG activists with placards protesting the truth.

On 29 April, a City AA delegation, accompanied by PAC representative, Comrade Mngaza, handed in 42,000 petitions to 10 Downing Street calling for an elected Constituent Assembly; the

release of all political prisoners; an end to repressive laws, and the maintenance and strengthening of sanctions.

Other activities included a picket of the SASOL offices in London, in solidarity with the SASOL strikers, and of the Institute of International Affairs where UNITA's Savimbi was speaking. City AA meetings during the month of action were ad-

ressed by Joe Thloloe, ex-political prisoner and deputy editor of the *Sowetan*, Jerry Mosala of AZAPO, and the Namibian Acting High Commissioner.

The culmination of the month of action was a week-long picket of the South African embassy from 6-10 May, in solidarity with the Uppington 14's appeal against their conviction, under the common purpose doctrine, and the death sentence.

But City AA's activities will not stop there. Unlike the AAM, who are planning a 'post-apartheid' conference for June, City AA is stepping up its solidarity with the liberation struggle in South Africa, recognising that there can be no respite until the mass of the people achieve liberation.

City AA's next major rally will commemorate Soweto Day, outside the South African Embassy, 2pm Saturday 15 June. Bring flowers, banners, friends.

Every weekend City AA pickets the South African Embassy on Friday 6-7pm and from 12 noon Saturday-6pm Sunday. Phone 071-837 6050 for details. ■

Winnie Mandela: trial by media

JANE CARTER

Winnie Mandela was convicted of kidnapping and as an accessory to assault on 15 May. She is now appealing against conviction and the savage six year sentence. But the affair was far from the straightforward question that most commentators tried to convey. There was not only the issue of her guilt: by the time of her trial so many of her opponents had hitched their own prejudices to the 'Get Winnie' bandwagon, a fair hearing was scarcely a possibility.

First news of the 'scandal' of Winnie Mandela's involvement in the kidnapping and assault of four youths in her house emerged two years ago. A section of the self-appointed Mass Democratic Movement leadership issued a statement calling on the community to 'isolate' Winnie.

This was the signal to journalists, not least David Beresford of *The Guardian*, to set about unearthing the background to the murder of Stompie Sepei and

the alleged assault of four youths. Winnie had enough enemies to ensure that the journalists would get a hearing. The 'Mother of the Nation' was now a sitting duck.

The South African police are not noted for investigating the murder of black people in the townships. In general they do nothing. Members of the regime's own death squad, the OCB, some of whom were undoubtedly responsible for the murder of Griffiths and Victoria Mxenge, Joe Quabi, David Webster, to name but four, are currently negotiating their severance pay with the regime, free from the attentions of either the police or Beresford et al.

Long before her trial, free from any possibility of contempt of court, the hacks had found Winnie Mandela guilty several times over. Beresford described her as 'an albatross round the neck of the ANC'. John Carlin in *The Independent* had a less crude, but just as complete prejudice:

'All fire and bombast, her political image has rested on appealing to the most facile,



most crude instincts of the adolescents who provide the ANC with so much of its energy but so little of its thought.'

It is virtually impossible to understand what generates so much malicious self-righteousness. Certainly Beresford and Carlin are hired to comment on a situation beyond their understanding. Neither has ever lived in a ghetto like Soweto, or been banished from their home or seen their partner imprisoned indefinitely. What is unforgivable is their promotion of the

idea, only sustainable for privileged Western males, that justice is even-handed. Being black means you're guilty. Being black, uppity and a woman means you are extra guilty - you have deviated from your proper place.

Winnie Mandela long ago ceased to be the beautiful, loyal victim that Beresford et al could admire. In 1976 she stood with the youth in Soweto who energetically challenged the regime and gave birth to a decade of struggle. 'Crude'? 'Facile'? 'Un-thinking'? Only if your privileges are at risk. ■

East Timor: bloody victim of imperialism

CHRIS JAMES

The forcible annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, ignored by the West for so long, has recently become the cause of some tension in the United Nations.

Portugal, former 'owner' of the island, has begun championing East Timor's right to self-determination. It is not surprising that this right has received little backing from the imperialists. But next year will see Portugal take its turn in the EC's rotating presidency. If it continues supporting East Timor, the UN may find itself unable to ignore the issue any longer.

Situated just north of Australia and west of Java/Papua New Guinea, the tragedy of East Timor is yet another example of imperialist butchery and hypocrisy. Having gained independence from Portugal in 1975, East Timor was given less than six months of freedom before Indonesia - backed to the hilt with Western arms and aid - launched a full-scale invasion. This invasion, designed to keep imperialist interests in the area secure, has resulted in the deaths of an estimated 200,000 people out of a population of 700,000. Those who survived live in a state of fear. Suppression of any opposition real or imagined is normal. Detention without trial, torture

and disappearances are commonplace. East Timor is a terrorised island.

The impending independence of East Timor was announced in April 1974. Almost immediately the country came under the influence of Fretilin - Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor. Advocating a programme of social development leading gradually to complete economic independence, Fretilin was a threat to imperialism. Fearing the creation of an 'Asian Cuba' in such a strategically important area, imperialism backed an attempted right-wing coup in August 1975. When this failed, finding a more extreme solution became

imperative. The following months saw Indonesian attacks on the border of East Timor escalate. Finally on 1 December 1975, Indonesia invaded. Only hours before this flagrant disregard of the so-called international laws of conduct, Indonesian President Suharto had been visited by the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger.

Atrocities committed by the Indonesian occupiers against the people of East Timor have led to the passing of over ten condemnatory resolutions in the UN. Yet this humanitarian cover for imperialist barbarism has failed to enforce even one of these resolutions. Indeed it is incapable of doing so. Not only is

East Timor too valuable in terms of its own natural resources to be lost from the fold - the Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, recently said East Timor's off-shore oil-wealth alone could be worth 'zillions' - East Timor has also become vital to the maintenance of President Suharto's reactionary empire. In recent years opposition to President Suharto's blood-stained regime has swelled. Independence for East Timor, one island amongst approximately 12,000 could initiate a domino effect. Any such fragmentation would have serious repercussions for imperialism and its domination of that part of the world. ■

Nepal

The Himalayan kingdom of Nepal (population 19 million) which last year witnessed a mass movement for democracy, went to the polls in May. To the surprise of bourgeois commentators, the communists of the Unified Marxist-Leninists did very well and won the majority of seats in the capital Katmandu. Dependent on imperialism, Nepal's per capita GNP is only \$160; only 1 per cent of GNP is spent on health and only 34 per cent of the population has access to safe water. Poverty drives many families to offer their sons to the infamous Gurkha battalions of the British army. As Madan Bhandari who defeated the interim Prime Minister said, the communist vote was 'a vote for democracy, for independence and the alleviation of poverty.'

South Korea

The police murder of student Kang Kyung-Dae during a demonstration on 26 April in the capital Seoul triggered three weeks of the biggest demonstrations seen in South Korea since the removal of President Chun Doo Hwan in 1987. Chun was replaced by military colleague Roh Tae Woo who is today seen as continuing the violent repressive techniques and corruption of his predecessor. The South Korean 'economic miracle' - displayed as an example of capitalist progress - is based on a handful of monopolies who have the authority and power to direct the police against their workers, imprisoning them, or organising strike breaking squads. The government spends 12 times as much on its military force as on health as well as keeping a four million strong 'paramilitary corps' for internal security. With more than 25 per cent of export earnings going to service debts, the living standards of the population continue to deteriorate.

El Salvador

The FMLN was dealt a heavy blow in April when senior military Commander Jesus Rojas was killed in a military ambush inside El Salvador. Commander Rojas was a member of the communist Forces for Popular Liberation, one of the five organisations constituting the FMLN. A Nicaraguan by birth, he went to El Salvador to study, but left in 1974 to join the revolutionary movement. He was a member of the FMLN's Political Commission and part of the team involved in FMLN negotiations with the government.

Angola and Mozambique

The 'peace' deal between UNITA and the MPLA imposed on the dos Santos government on 1 May was a victory only for imperialism. The US and South Africa, in particular, have backed the UNITA bandits to the hilt in their 16-year campaign of terror and destabilisation against the people of Angola - a war that is estimated to have cost Angola 60 per cent of its external trade earnings. Today the embattled Angolan economy is in a state of collapse. The previously socialist MPLA has been forced to introduce a market economy in exchange for the ceasefire process. Warmonger Jonas Savimbi will set up his offices in Angola and contest multi-party elections in 1992. The vast oil and agricultural resources of Angola will once more be opened up to the multinationals' plunder. Meanwhile, UNITA atrocities continue.

Impoverished Mozambique, also ravaged by imperialist-backed war, and almost entirely dependent on foreign aid, is likely to be forced to go the same way, as Frelimo sits down in Rome with the MNR in May to attempt to negotiate a new ceasefire.

WORLD FAMINE

who are the real culprits?

Once again the issue of world hunger and famine is frontpage news. In Africa 27 million are in immediate peril. In cyclone-torn Bangladesh hundreds of thousands could face death by starvation or disease. MAXINE WILLIAMS argues that the usual lies or half-truths are being churned out in the West to conceal the real causes of this tragedy. Sleazy Nicholas Fairbairn, echoing the mass chorus of Home Counties gin soakers, says 'They breed too much'. This comes ill from those whose dogs consume more than most people from poor nations. It comes ill from those in the imperialist nations - one quarter of the world's population - who gobble up half its food and three quarters of its resources.

But other voices are more dangerous. In the rosy glow of the Gulf War an old refrain is growing louder. It says that aid must be tied to forcible 'democratisation' of underdeveloped nations. Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, recently said aid should only go to those moving towards 'pluralism, public accountability and respect for the rule of law, human rights and market principles'. (A test which, aside from market principles, Britain would fail).

The blame for continuing famine lies, according to this view, with the poor nations themselves. This not only conceals the real causes of famine. It is the harbinger of a new era in which the great-grandchildren of the Victorian colonialists disguise their imperialist ambitions in the doublespeak of 'aid and development'. It explains why Oxfam is being witchhunted for the sin of telling the truth about world poverty.

The debate about aid and development is designed to ensure that most people rarely glimpse the grim truth. Instead they hear the Tories justify existing aid and Labour argue for slightly more. The real choice is not between

more or less aid; more 'aid' of the existing kind will not solve the problem. The real choice is between justice and injustice in international relations. For it is in the injustices rooted in imperialist relations that the causes of famine lie. To obscure this a number of myths are circulated.

THE MYTHS

'Disasters - climate change, cyclones, are responsible'

In general, people in industrialised countries hear about famine only when there is a 'disaster'. But sudden 'disasters' are the exception. The reality is that year in year out, the poor countries face the continuous disaster of hunger and poverty. Today:

- ☆ 4 billion people live in poverty, one billion of them in absolute poverty
- ☆ 1.75 billion have no safe drinking water
- ☆ 100 million are completely homeless
- ☆ 800 million go hungry every day
- ☆ 150 million children under five are malnourished
- ☆ 14 million children die each year before their fifth birthday
- ☆ 900 million adults are illiterate

☆ the average income of those in poor nations is 6% of the income of people in imperialist countries.

Sudden catastrophes also happen. In Bangladesh, where over 60% of the population lives in permanent absolute poverty, there is no margin for dealing with any extra disaster. Many die unnecessarily in the aftermath of events such as the recent cyclone.

'The population of the poor is growing too fast' - the Fairbairn myth

This argument was once advanced by the ruling class of the capitalist countries about their own working classes. Their poverty was blamed on excessive fertility. Today the same argument has shifted to the poor nations. The world population stands at over 5 billion, of which four fifths live in underdeveloped nations. Their numbers are growing at a faster rate than those of the industrialised countries. But famine and hunger are not caused by population pressure. China, the most populous of countries, feeds its people. As Susan George said in her excellent book *How the Other Half Dies* (Penguin, 1986):

'... the density of the population simply does not correlate with actual food supply: famine exists both in Bolivia with 5 inhabitants per square kilometre and in India with 172 - but there is no famine in Holland where there are 326 ... Up to now, the press has not been clamouring for birth control for the Dutch ...'

There are good reasons for the poor to have large families. Children provide additional labour and some possibility of security in old age. Moreover, if many children die, then the tendency will be to have more in order for some to survive.

Farming in most oppressed nations could sustain the existing population and more. However the capitalist-imposed land holding system prevents this. Most of the food of poor nations is produced by small-scale subsistence agriculture on a tiny proportion of available land. The majority of the best land, large amounts of it controlled by multinationals, is devoted to cash crops for export. In South America, 17% of landowners own 90% of land. In Asia, 20% control 60% of land. In Africa, 75% of people have access to only 4% of land. It is in those figures of stark injustice, rather than family size, that the truth lies. Not too many people, but too little justice.

'The rich countries supply a lot of aid but it is misused'

This argument has led to the growth of a new term 'compassion fatigue'. This bizarre concept implies that the rich countries have strained might and main to give assistance but it has gone into a bottomless pit. Nothing could be further from the truth. In 1962 Britain gave 0.52% of its GNP as aid. That has steadily fallen to its current 0.31%. The

richest nation on earth, the USA, gives less than 0.2%.

But the quantity of aid is only part of the story. What is this aid? What is it for? In 1989 the West gave \$47bn in aid. \$10bn came straight back to Western banks in repayments. More than 60% of European aid is tied aid that must be spent on manufactured products from Europe. It is not aid, it is merely a means of subsidising the profits of Western agribusiness and corporations.

The current issue of the *Ecologist* magazine accuses the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of being a 'famine machine', a front for multinationals, dam builders and agrochemical firms. The FAO encourages large-scale hi-tech agriculture, usually cash crops, at the expense of subsistence farmers. One of its earlier plans was to turn Sudan, now starving, into the 'breadbasket of the Middle East'. Tractors and ploughs were sold to the Sudanese, smallholdings broken up for arable land and the local population encouraged to move elsewhere. The results were devastating.

Food aid tells a similar story. Vast amounts of food are stockpiled by Europe and the USA, or farmers are paid not to grow food, in order to maintain artificially high prices. Large subsidies are paid to protect European farmers from competition whilst subsidised surpluses are unloaded onto the world market, depressing prices and forcing Third World producers out of their markets.

Only a minor proportion of US and European food aid goes for emergency famine relief. Most is unloaded onto poor countries, often with dire results. Local agricultural producers cannot compete and the country comes to rely increasingly on food imports. Food aid is usually a disguised method of creating markets. Thus cereal food aid to sub-Saharan Africa rose from 114,000 tons in 1974 to 503,000 in 1984. At the same time cereal imports rose from 1.36m tons to 4.84m.

Many poor nations are dependent on primary commodities which they sell on the world market. The prices of these commodities have now reached their lowest level since the 1930s. The world bankers however insist that the answer to indebtedness is still greater exports from the poor nations. More land is given over to cash crops and even less to subsistence agriculture. Large farmers receive subsidies such as irrigation. The poor are driven off the land to swell urban poverty. A minority in the poor nations get richer, the poor get poorer.

WHO IS AIDING WHOM?

It is not only that the imperialist nations



AFRICA
The Sahel Region

give aid with one hand and take most of it back with the other. The fact is that the poor countries vastly subsidise the rich. The foreign debts of the underdeveloped countries now amount to \$1.3 trillion. The annual payments that must make are a staggering \$200 billion per year to the Western banks and governments. The conditions imposed on the most indebted nations by the IMF - devaluation, huge cuts in state spending - hit the poor directly. They eat less, their children die. Debt equals death for the poor.

Often there is an unholy alliance between the imperialists and their local henchmen. For example, Zaire's President Mobutu has a personal fortune of \$5bn. The national debt of Zaire happens to be \$5bn. Whilst the average Zairean has an annual income of \$140 the world's bankers have continued to support Mobutu with loans for projects like a second runway for Kisangani airport (five flights a day) - \$36m. Or \$110m for a TV and domestic satellite complex. The president of the TV company was Philippe Giscard d'Estaing, cousin of the then President of France who twice sent French troops to Zaire to protect the predatory Mobutu regime. The imperialists staunchly support those national bourgeois leaders who

WEA

In the 45 years since the end of statistics do not record British engaged in at least 92 separate lines Britain's weapons galore.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s only the USA among the major capitalist nations spent more as a proportion of its Gross National Product (GNP) on defence than Britain. The Ministry of Defence is British industry's biggest customer: approximately 1 in 10 of the manufacturing workforce are employed in the weapons industry. Of the top 20 British industrial companies 11 are involved in arms production or supplies. While during the 1980s Britain became a net importer of manufactured goods, it remained a net exporter of weapons. In 1990 Britain's biggest arms company, British Aerospace, made 65% of its sales abroad; over 50% of these exports went to Third World countries with 41% destined for the Middle East. 38 British firms are known to have sold arms technology to Iraq.

How many of the 20m-plus people slain in wars and 'counter-insurgency operations' since 1945 were killed by British troops and British-made weapons we shall never know. But we can see in the entire structure of the British economy, in the arming of murderous regimes around the globe and in the near-constant war fought by British forces against oppressed peoples, that Britain is an imperial nation dominated by monopoly capital for which the 'maximum and universal development of militarism' (Lenin) is its life-blood.

IN THE SERVICE OF MULTINATIONAL CAPITAL

'In 1914 I helped to make Mexico a safer place for the US oil companies. I helped to turn Haiti and Cuba into patrimony of the National City Bank in order to make a profit. In 1900 and 1912 I helped to prepare the ground in Nicaragua for the international bankers Brown Brothers. In 1916 I made way in the Dominican Republic for US interests. In 1903 I did all I could to make the US fruit companies at home in Honduras.'

In *Capital* Volume III, Marx explained how 'other conditions being equal the rate of profit ... falls and rises inversely to the price of raw materials. This shows, among other things, how important the low price of raw materials is for industrial countries ... It follows furthermore that foreign trade influences the rate of profit, regardless of its influence on wages ...'



help to loot their people.

If you add up the tied aid, the interest repayments and the profits made by multinationals using cheap labour, (and not forgetting vast lucrative arms sales) what do you get? It is estimated that in 1989 the net flow from the poor to the imperialist nations was over \$32bn and that is certainly an underestimate. Ingeniously the West has managed to contract 'compassion fatigue' when it is the recipient of the compassion. Imperialism is engaged in the cannibalisation of the poor - nowhere more so than in Africa.

THE SAHEL

'The Sahel is now the world's largest laboratory for the study of development alternatives - and development alchemy. The aid bureaucracy is entrenched: the district officers of the colonial period have been succeeded by Northern development experts and Western educated Southerners... In effect, Sahelian governments of all political ideologies have mortgaged their sovereignty and become dependent on aid and its trappings.' (*Minority Rights Group Report on the Sahel*)

The inhabitants of the Sahel are the

poorest of the poor. They have the lowest national income per head, life expectancy ten years less than other poor countries, the lowest enrolment in primary school, the lowest levels of industry and meagre natural resources.

In 1990 aid accounted for 90% of external financial flows. By the early 1980s they were getting over twice as much aid per head as other low-income African countries. That has clearly not resulted in anything approaching self-sufficiency - the average income in Sudan for instance is 25% lower today than it was in 1984 when 200,000 people died of starvation. Aid has given Western banks and governments greater power in the region. Some of the aid programmes such as larger-scale irrigation schemes have not worked well and have benefited richer farmers only. Irrigation continued to receive a large share of aid investment, relying on costly British pumps partly financed by British aid. Other programmes have contributed to environmental degradation or have benefited a privileged minority of urban dwellers. This is not to decry the efforts of some of the non-governmental agencies who have listened to the poor and worked with them.

Britain, France and Italy have tied at

least 50% of their development aid in the Sahel to the purchase of their own manufactured goods and services; the subsidised vehicle, plant and spare-part manufacturers in Europe have reaped the benefits.

Climate changes causing droughts have worsened the situation. Sudan has also suffered from a rise in world oil prices coupled with the collapse of price of its agricultural commodities. As a result its debt is now \$11bn. In the Sahel, annual repayments eat up 35% of aid receipts.

Meanwhile Western arms traders compete to sell their weapons in the region. Sudan spends \$15 per head on arms, whilst it spends only \$7 on health and education.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

Aid will only be useful when it ceases to be an adjunct to imperialist multinationals and a sustainer of their local henchmen. The situation of the poor nations is now getting worse. Individual charitable efforts by people in the West are not the answer. That humanitarian impulse needs to take the form of a serious challenge to the rapacious imperialist powers who are despoiling the world, killing its people and destroying the future of humanity. ■

ARMS & OIL

WEAPONS GALORE

During the Second World War there has been just one single year when official military personnel killed on active service overseas. British forces have been involved in 14 overseas military interventions since 1945. TREVOR RAYNE examines

Lenin analysed the emergence of monopoly capital, especially the oil companies and arms producers, over the last quarter of the 19th century and first decades of this century. He saw how capital overaccumulated within national boundaries driving down the rate of profit; how capital combined into monopolies and extended overseas in search of labour and markets to restore profitability. In the midst of the First World War as capital clashed in rival bids to assert their global domination Lenin observed, 'Monopolies have stimulated the seizure of the most important sources of raw materials... the more capitalism is developed the more strongly the shortage of raw materials is felt, the more intense the competition and hunt for sources of raw materials throughout the whole world, the more desperate the struggle for the acquisition of colonies'. Thus the division and redivision of the world has been fought out between a handful of rich nations. The cost: over 100m killed in wars this century, many times more killed by the robbery of their land and homes.

Today, transnational corporations control about half of the world's industrial production and over half its trade. 15 transnationals control the marketing of 20 key food, fuel and raw material commodities; six account for more than half the world's oil trade. The bowl of cereal and cup of tea, the materials in our clothing and vehicles, the fuel in their tanks and in central heating, the equipment we work with and the furnishings about us are taken from the Third World by the transnationals.

Third World nations producing raw materials receive on average 15% of the revenue raised from sales of their produce: the rest is shared out among the transnationals, their bankers, insurers, shipping agents, retailers, etc. Oil extraction costs can be less than a seventh of the retail price. When petrol prices were pushed up more than 50% last Autumn the extra profits were divided up between the transnationals and the producer countries. This is a price imperialism is prepared to pay to ensure that compliant monarchs and governments stay in their place. Should they be threatened by popular revolt, or should they rebel or 'overstep the mark', armed might is at hand to en-

force the status quo. Britain alone has intervened militarily in the Middle East on 26 separate occasions since 1945.

General Schwarzkopf has served US corporate interests in a career of postings throughout the Middle East, South East Asia and Grenada. British forces are currently stationed in over 30 countries. In the past year they have added Colombia, Peru and the Philippines to their postings. They remain in the Gulf. The Middle East and the Gulf contain 66.3% of known oil reserves.

GUNS FOR OIL

'Whoever controls oil will control the world, for he will rule the seas with heavy oil, the air with refined oil, and the land with petrol and light oil. In addition, he will economically control his fellow-men because of the fantastic wealth he can win from oil.' Henry Berenger, merchant to the French government circa 1918.

Oil and guns have interlocked for a hundred years. In 1873 the Russian Tsar allowed foreign interests to prospect for oil in the Caucasus. Two sons of Alfred Nobel, inventor of dynamite, were given concessions and joined by Rothschilds. Marcus Samuel, from London's East End, traded Russian oil and in 1897 formed Shell Trading and Transport Company. To compete in the Far East with US Standard Oil, Shell merged with Royal Dutch. In 1906 Shell lobbied the Royal Navy to switch from coal power to oil. Winston Churchill, appointed First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911, distrusted Shell and its Dutch, hence possibly German, affiliation. With the Royal Navy's conversion to oil the British government bought a 51% stake in the Anglo-Persian Company (later BP) three months before the outbreak of World War I. At its end Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon boasted: 'The allies floated to victory on a wave of oil'.

With the Ottoman Empire collapsed, Britain and France carved out chunks of the Middle East for themselves. After much wrangling between Britain, France and the USA, Britain got control of all of Iraq in 1923 - at the expense of the Kurdish demand for statehood. Central to the disputes was Mosul in the Kurdish territory where oil reserves were suspected. A concession was granted to the Iraq Petroleum Company, controlled by BP. Kurdish people

rebelled and Churchill, now Secretary of State for Oil and War, initiated a strategy of 'air control' in the Middle East, replacing ground troops with bomber aircraft which delivered 'collective punishments', including gas, on Kurdish villages.

During the 1920s and 1930s the RAF grew, at first in response to French aircraft development and then to combat German militarisation. In 1940 Britain was the largest aircraft producer in the world. The navy, airforce and increasingly the army, with the growing role of tanks, depended on oil-based fuels. Control of oil reserves dictated much of the strategy through which inter-imperialist rivalry was conducted before and during World War II (the North Africa campaign, Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, the Far East war).

Since 1945 20 million people have died in wars and conflicts

The transnationals and the weapons producers collaborate with military high command to direct imperialism's geo-political strategy. To produce today's jet engines, submarines, aerospace technology etc, large quantities of fuel and raw materials are needed. Over half of all direct US investment in developing countries in the past 20 years has been in oil extraction, mining and material processing. In the 1970s the US Lockheed Corporation, producers of Polarix and Trident missiles, joined Shell and Standard Oil of Indiana in developing equipment to extract strategic raw materials from the ocean bed. The arms and oil companies are interwoven in the heart of finance capital: Shell is bound through interlocking share ownership, directorships and banks with Lockheed, Rolls Royce and Hawker-Siddeley.

In the recent period BP's directors include a former Commander-in-Chief of UK Land Forces, the chairman of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, a trustee of the Police Foundation, directors of Rolls Royce, Hawker-Siddeley, ICL, PowerGen, National Westminster Bank, Standard Chartered, P and O etc. They are part of the military-industrial complex in Britain. Together BP and Shell operate some 2,250 subsidiaries in over 70 countries.

THE SAUDI DEAL AND THE ARMS BONANZA

In 1965 Britain was facing a balance of payments crisis and with the steady



withdrawal of British forces from East of Suez, the sale of arms to 'reliable' local regimes was considered a lucrative means of controlling Middle Eastern oil. Increased world oil consumption was filling Arab coffers.

Between 1951 and 1971 40 aerospace projects were cancelled in Britain, including Blue Streak missiles and the TSR2 supersonic bomber. British aerospace exports fell by 50% over 1958-64 while imports from the USA soared. The Plowden Report 1965 foresaw a world market for aircraft and missiles worth £15 billion over the next decade. Labour Defence Secretary Denis Healey established the Defence Sales Organisation to promote arms sales. Healey explained: 'While the government attaches the highest importance to making progress in the field of arms control and disarmament, we must also take what practical steps we can to ensure that this country does not fail to secure its rightful share of this valuable commercial market'.

Britain and Saudi Arabia had collaborated since 1962 in suppressing a Nasserite revolt against monarchism in North Yemen. In 1965 the British Labour government in the form of John Stonehouse MP, Parliamentary Secretary to Ministry of Aviation Roy Jenkins, announced the biggest export deal Britain had ever achieved - £120m worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia. Victory over bids from Lockheed, Northrop and the French Dassault company had been achieved with bribes - standard practice in the arms business. The deal was tied to the proposed British purchase of \$725m worth of F-111s from the USA - the \$120m was intended to offset this enormous cost. Despite professed Labour Party policy of not selling arms that could be used in Vietnam, the Saudi deal also included equipment sales to the USA. Between 1964 and 1967, British exports of bombs, grenades, mines, guided weapons etc to the USA increased six-fold. Also in 1965, when US engagement in Vietnam was accelerating, Healey sent the SAS into Indonesia to assist in the mass murder of the largest communist movement in Asia outside of China and the Soviet Union. At least 700,000 people were killed and 200,000 taken prisoner. Indonesia is a major Far East oil producer.

Arms purchases by Middle East governments exploded after the Yom Kippur War in 1973. An October 1973 Arab Conference condemned the USA for giving Israel means 'to challenge the legitimate right of others' - ie weapons.

Arab oil producers cut back supplies and oil prices rose ten-fold; their income rose from \$7.2 billion in 1972 to \$57 billion in 1977. By 1980 OPEC funds had reached \$350 billion. In that same year the Third World countries spent \$60 billion on arms and defence, about half of the weapons being bought by Middle Eastern countries. Between 1973 and 1987, of the major Third World arms purchasers six of them were in the Middle East. Britain spends approximately 5% of its GNP on the military each year, the USA 7% and the Soviet Union over 8%. UN figures for 1986 show Israel spending 19.2% of its GNP on the armed forces, Iraq 32%, Jordan 13.8%, Iran 20%, Syria 14.7%, Oman 27.6%, Saudi Arabia 22.7%.

In 1984 Iraq spent \$33.3 billion on arms imports. Estimates put Iraqi arms purchases between 1980 and 1990 at \$80-100 billion. That compares with Britain's arms expenditure of \$69.5 billion over the same period with a GNP eight times that of Iraq. In the 1970s the Shah of Iran had been the big arms buyer. In some years Iran consumed close to half of all US arms exports. Iran's total defence expenditure for 1975-76 was \$10.4 billion or nearly a third of its GNP. This was a sum greater than Britain's military expenditure for the year, which had more than five times Iran's GNP. Over 1973-83 US arms sales to Saudi Arabia were worth \$35 billion, to Iran \$14 billion and to Israel \$11 billion - the latter receiving many of the supplies gratis.

Over the coming year the US intends to export \$33 billion worth of weapons, two thirds going to the Middle East. Asia and the Pacific Rim are targeted as promising new future markets. Indonesia is already one of Britain's biggest arms buyers outside of the Middle East.

This macabre game results in death for hundreds of thousands of poor people. Arms provided to Israel bring orders from Iran; Iran's armory warrants sales to Iraq; Iraq's military strength requires Saudi counter-strength and so on and on. The blend of weapons is adjusted as rival suppliers claim assorted victories and each new generation of weapons calls forth further rounds of orders and counter-orders. Thus the trade in death and destruction is by far the most valuable trade in the world, and its proprietors, the Grand Masters of War, unconstrained by any shred of morality or conscience, seated behind desks in New York, Washington, London, Paris and Bonn, serve only the Golden Calf of Profit. ■

INTERVIEW WITH A PALESTINIAN REVOLUTIONARY

In March and April ALI JIDDAH, a Palestinian revolutionary, visited Britain for a speaking tour. RCG comrades first met him when he gave an inspiring talk to City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. Hours before he left for home EDDIE ABRAHAMS and DAVID REED interviewed comrade Ali for FRFI.

On his return to Palestine Ali Jiddah has been subjected to systematic Zionist harassment, and is now due in court where he faces very serious charges. Having been attacked and beaten by Zionist soldiers he was charged with attacking them with the aim of stealing their weapons! Comrade Ali, only recently released from 17 years in Israeli prisons, now once again could be imprisoned. Send your protests immediately to: • Yitzhak Shamir, Prime Ministers Office, PO Box 187, Jerusalem, FAX 972 2 358491; • Roni Milo, Minister of Police, PO Box 2001, Jerusalem 91020 Fax 972 2 82769.

'The Intifada will not end'



My name is Ali Mohammed Jiddah. I was born in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1950. My father came from Chad. He was with a group of Muslim Africans on a pilgrimage to Mecca. They visited Jerusalem on their way back, then stayed in Palestine and married Palestinians. Thus we have two generations of Palestinians of African origin.

I left school in 1967, the year of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. I was then 17 and my whole life was changed. I could not continue my education: my ambitions and aspirations were totally destroyed. The Israeli troops humiliated us and beat us. My personal and national dignity was lost. It was then that I began to discuss this new situation with other young Palestinians who had the same experience. From that time I became politically active and joined the revolutionary movement.

In 1968 hostility between Palestinians and Israelis was at its peak. I was involved in an action known as the 'night of the bombs'. A group of comrades exploded bombs simultaneously in different parts of West Jerusalem in response to Israeli bombings of Palestinian civilians in Jordan. A month later, when I turned 18, I was arrested and sentenced to 20 years. I served 17 and was released in 1985 in an exchange of prisoners with the Israelis. Since then I have worked as a journalist on the Palestinian side.

What are the prospects for the Intifada after the Gulf War?

The Intifada will not end until we see our freedom and independence. From the beginning of the conflict, as Palestinians inside the Occupied Territories, we said that regardless of the result, our Intifada would go on. For us the Intifada is not just a political issue. It has become part of our daily life, our way of thinking, our way of functioning. It is a social issue. Inside Palestinian society we are building the infrastructure of our new society.

Thus despite the fact that Iraq was brutally defeated, the Intifada has not stopped. In fact it is escalating.

I have no illusions in what Bush, Baker or John Major are saying. They can sell their goods to Arafat or to others but not to most of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. We know what they mean when they talk of a new world order or stability in the Middle East. I don't believe that anything can change in the region until the overall balance of forces changes to the detriment of the Israelis.

John Major's and Bush's statements about 'solving the Palestinian question' have to do with the bill they have to pay to those Arab countries who were part of the imperialist coalition. These countries are saying that now is the time to pay the bill. At the same time the Israelis are saying it is time to pay their bill too for their 'restraint'. In this context any settlement would be totally contradictory to the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

One of the benefits of the Intifada is that we have realised that we do not have to depend on external forces. On the contrary if we are really interested in getting rid of the occupation, we have to depend mainly on our own efforts. The only chance for us as Palestinians is to go on with the Intifada and escalate it. Only with such an escalation can we force more and more Israelis to say 'We can't stand this any more'. So long as the majority of Israelis think that the continuation of the occupation is a profitable project they will not move. But once they realise that it is worthless and they begin to see that they are losing more, they will begin to see things differently.

Has there been any demoralisation among the Palestinian people following the demonstration of overwhelming imperialist military superiority?

I can't see any demoralisation among the people. I can say we were really depressed as a result of war. From the beginning we knew that Saddam would never be able to defeat the im-

perialists. But we were also convinced he would give them a hard time.

One cannot deny that the outcome of the Gulf War has created new difficulties for us as Palestinians. But for us it is not the end of the world. What is really important is that we have to be determined to go on with our struggle. Either we achieve freedom and independence or the whole area will remain in enormous turmoil. Such a process will not be easy. We will have to pay a very high price and make a lot of sacrifices, but the struggle will go on.

Can you comment on the character of Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein?

On this issue there is a great deal of misunderstanding of the Palestinian position. We were strong and open supporters of Iraq, but not because we are adherents of Saddam Hussein. We do not approve of what he is doing to the Kurds and to the progressive forces inside Iraq itself. Being an occupied people ourselves we cannot approve occupying another country by force. We know what it is to be denied self-determination. We cannot approve of what is happening to the Kurds today.

Our support for Iraq came from our deep knowledge that this war had nothing to do with democratic rights, human rights - all this is the hypocrisy of the imperialists. The war was a war of the six big oil companies. It aimed to establish the fact that in this world there are superiors and inferiors. The Americans and British were saying - we the imperialists are the superiors and you, the poor nations, are the inferiors and never try to

change this. Otherwise you will suffer the same destiny that we gave to Iraq.

As Palestinians we have an interest in fighting the imperialists everywhere. And Iraq, at that moment, wasn't only representing itself. It was representing the Third World in general against imperialism. This is the view of the majority of our people.

Nevertheless when we called on our people to support Iraq we did not cheat them. We said to them, 'Don't forget that we have our own contradictions with the Iraqi regime. Today he is playing such a progressive role in fighting the imperialists, but tomorrow he will turn back against his own progressive groups inside Iraq and against us, revolutionary groups inside the Palestinian arena'.

Furthermore we must remember that this was the first time in the history of the Arab nation that an Arab leader, an Arab country has said no to the Americans and no to the Israelis. For the first time also someone came and made a linkage between the Palestinian issue and the Gulf conflict. Regardless of Saddam's own interests in using the Palestinian issue, we could not turn our backs on him or Iraq.

I ask those who are now denouncing us - what have you offered us? You have offered us nothing. On the contrary for three years we fought peacefully and what was the result - more shootings, more killings and more efforts to deny our basic national and human rights.

What effect has the collapse of the socialist bloc had on the Palestinian revolution?

Today there can be no talk of a socialist bloc. Especially after the Soviet Union's betrayal of the international revolution. This was expressed most clearly in its position on the Gulf War. I think if the Soviet Union had not given the US the OK, they would have hesitated a lot before attacking Iraq.

As revolutionaries, we are today passing through very difficult and crucial moments. We must of course now review our strategy, not socialist theory. Socialist theory is very pure. The problem is not with the theory, but with the people who were practising socialism and who had disfigured socialist theory. I am not, however, pessimistic. I am an optimist about the future. I think we are now passing through a very healthy process. The masses will find out from their own experience that the hell of socialism is far better than the paradise of the capitalist system.

With the outcome of the Gulf War and this fantastic theory of the 'new world order', what we really need to do as revolutionaries is to sit down and seriously review all our policies and tactics. We must also try to create a new forum in which all revolutionary forces can discuss and participate.

Can we pass on to the issue of Muslim fundamentalism...

The media here and in Israel exaggerate the strength of the fundamentalists in Palestine. It is part of their propaganda campaign against the Intifada. They are saying to public opinion - if you support the Intifada you are supporting backward, reactionary fundamentalism.

Fundamentalism exists for a number of reasons. During my time in prison I became aware that if you are desperate and if politically and ideologically you are not aware, then the only alternative is fundamentalism - to become crazy with religion. Today Hamas is growing stronger because more and more people in Palestine are becoming desperate. But it is important to see that along with Hamas the left is also growing stronger. In Palestine two main factions are growing - the Hamas and the left wing of the PLO.

I am not afraid of Hamas. Their role in the building of the infrastructure of Palestinian society is zero. They do not work among the popular committees and among the masses. They have nothing to do with these structures which form the basis on which the Intifada is built. At the moment however, our main argument with Hamas is that they are acting outside the unified leadership of the uprising. They act individually. This helps undermine the unity of the masses.

The only thing they do is develop slogans which are really attractive for those desperate people. To deal with this political challenge we are demanding a speedy convocation of the PNC to re-discuss the whole PLO strategy. Because if the PLO continues with its current policy of giving more and more concessions and not getting anything in exchange the more Palestinians will become desperate and will turn to Hamas.

However, today we say to Hamas - you are looking for an Islamic state. That's fine. But today we are in the same boat. The main issue for us now is to get rid of the occupation. And tomorrow after the occupation it is not you or me who will decide what kind of a system of society we want. We will have to go back to the masses.

Is there the likelihood that the Intifada will turn to or consider the question of revolutionary violence?

As a human being I can say that our patience is limited. For three years we have conducted the Intifada by peaceful means. But I warn the Israelis that we Palestinians cannot go on playing the role of Jesus Christ all the time. The point will come when we will conclude that the Israelis don't understand our language. So we will have to change this language, meaning that the Palestinians will become more violent. And you can see it now: the stabbings. These are today being carried out by individuals. But tomorrow it will change and become part of the mass struggle.

You never choose your struggle or your methods voluntarily. You have to take into consideration how the other side is responding. If it is responding to your peaceful means, it would be stupid to adopt militant ways. But all the time if you are acting peacefully and the other side is not responding you have to change your policy. Violence will be on the agenda for the Palestinians.

This seems to be the process for all liberation movements.

Yes, yes, it's a very normal and very scientific process. The more you oppress me the more I should think how to get rid of this oppression. And it is our right as Palestinians to use all forms of struggle to get rid of the occupation. This position is justified even in the UN Charter!

What about international solidarity in the struggle against imperialism?

We have to convince the working class that what is happening in Palestine, that what is happening in Azania is the same issue for them. Anti-imperialism is the unifying factor throughout the world. The one who is oppressing you over here is the one who is oppressing us in Palestine, is the one who is oppressing our people in South Africa. They are the same. And the Gulf War has proved this formula. It is a scientific formula: that we have the same fight, we have the same struggle and at the same time we have the common enemy: our enemies are the same... ■

The history of a struggle for Kurdistan

IRAQ – IRAN

TURKEY

The Kurdish struggle for statehood has been crippled not only by imperialism and its regional allies, but by the remnants of feudalism and an emergent capitalist class dependent on the colonial powers. Problems of territorial fragmentation have been compounded by landowning chieftains seeking to channel Kurdish demands for democracy and independence into narrow local aspirations. Repeated Kurdish uprisings throughout the twentieth century have been weakened by failures to raise the struggle to a national level and to combine this with popular democratic reforms mobilising the poor peasantry and the Kurdish urban working class. This key component of the PKK's programme in North West Kurdistan (Turkey) has been absent in South West Kurdistan (Iraq) and East Kurdistan (Iran). Consequently, imperialism and colonialism have been able to divide Kurdish struggles and maintain their own power at the expense of the majority of the Kurdish people. TREVOR RAYNE looks at the history of the Kurdish people in occupied territory in Iraq and Iran.

Between the two world wars, the newly formed Turkish and Iraqi states and Iran expanded capitalism and its need for markets and supplies of labour at the expense of Kurdish peasants, landholding élites, language and culture. Rebellions were provoked and brutally put down. The world's first aerial bombardment of civilians was conducted by the RAF in 1922 in South West Kurdistan and repeated over a decade.

MAHABAD REPUBLIC

British and Soviet troops occupied Iran in 1941. Under the protective presence of the Red Army the Azerbaijanis and Kurds formed their own Republics in January 1946. The Kurdish Mahabad Republic was restricted in territory by nearby US and British troops. Its leadership combined local landholders and urban intelligentsia who had formed the Kurdish Democratic Party (Iran) in 1945. The Republic failed to implement radical land reforms. With British and US backing the Shah's forces crushed the two Republics in December 1946. At the time US imperialism had a nuclear monopoly: it had threatened to drop an atomic bomb on the Soviet Union in March 1946 if it intervened in Iran. Another nuclear threat followed in November 1946.

MULLAH MUSTAFA BARZANI

Barzani, born in South West Kurdistan, was a landowner, chieftain and religious figure. Driven across the Iran-Iraq border by RAF bombers following a Kurdish uprising in 1943, he joined the Mahabad Republic and then sheltered for eleven years in the Soviet Union. When General Qasim overthrew King Faisal of Iraq in 1958, Barzani returned to assert his authority. Qasim sought to use him against the communists and other Kurdish elements. Barzani mobilised Kurdish landowners' opposition to taxes and land reforms to promote Kurdish autonomy within Iraq. A series of clashes, ceasefires and changes of Iraqi government followed until the Baathist military putsch of 1968 which installed Saddam Hussein as Vice President. War quickly resumed combined with a programme of Arabisation which combined population expulsions with civilian massacres.

In March 1970 Barzani, then President of the KDP (Iraq), and the Baath-



Kurdish peshmergas in combat with Iranian forces

ists signed an agreement granting the Kurds a degree of autonomy, language rights and five Kurdish ministers (all sponsored by the KDP (Iraq)) in the Iraqi government. A referendum was to be held on Kirkuk's future in the arrangements. Such autonomy could only be a compromise between the Kurdish and Iraqi ruling classes. Iraqi capital could not tolerate this concession and the process of Arabisation continued, with the expulsion of Kurdish workers from the oil fields and attacks on Kurdish villages. From 1972 onwards the Kurds under Barzani's leadership fought the Baathist regime.

To counter the Iraqi army Barzani turned to the Shah for weapons. In a cynical move the Shah and the CIA agreed to 'play the Kurdish card' in order to 'sap the resources' of Iraq. The CIA and Shah had no intention of allowing a Kurdish victory. When the Baathists recognised that they could not sustain what was effectively a proxy war with Iran they signed the Algiers Treaty in March 1975 with the Shah leaving Barzani's forces cut off from supplies. In fifteen years of war, over 110,000 people had been killed or wounded and 900,000 Kurds displaced from their homes. Commenting on the CIA's treatment of the Kurds, US Secretary of State Kissinger remarked, 'Covert action should not be confused with missionary work'.

EAST KURDISTAN

After the fall of the Mahabad Republic, there was not a single Kurdish school in Iran. Kurdish was banned

yet the Shah's forces made Kurdish language broadcasts to Turkey and Iraq. SAVAK, the secret police, founded in 1957 and trained by the British SAS, tortured and imprisoned people for being in possession of Kurdish literature. Four SAS were captured and killed by Fedayeen guerrillas in 1972.

The KDP (Iran) led anti-Shah protests in Kurdish towns which contributed to the Shah's downfall in 1979. While the KDP (Iraq) and Jalab Talabani's Kurdistan Patriotic Union (PUK) competed for Khomeini's support (the PUK was formed after Barzani's defeat in 1975), the KDP (Iran) was refused Kurdish autonomy by Tehran. Clashes between Khomeini's Revolutionary Guards and Kurdish guerrillas followed.

Throughout most of the Iran-Iraq war the KDP (Iran) served Iraq's interests and the KDP (Iraq) served as a cat's paw for Iran, tying down thousands of Iraqi troops. In 1983 the PUK, being isolated, attempted an accord with Saddam Hussein but this proved short-lived. After Kurdish rebels had taken Halabja in March 1988, Saddam commenced his 'final solution' to the Kurdish question. In response the KDP (Iraq) and the PUK formed a United Kurdish Front.

The lessons for the Kurdish people are obvious: the strategy of autonomy within the colonial regimes is a route to collaboration between Kurdish feudal and bourgeois elements with the colonial ruling classes which leaves the more powerful colonial states intact. It is a lesson as old the British Empire itself: divide and rule. ■

BILL BOLLOTEN examines the history of the Kurdish people in Turkish-occupied Kurdistan.

A majority of the Kurdish people today live in North Kurdistan – a region which has been a colony of Turkey since 1923. The 12-15 million Kurds living there constitute more than half of the total population of Kurdistan. They also form some 20 per cent of the population of Turkey itself.

Predominantly rural and economically undeveloped, North Kurdistan is rich in a variety of minerals. It contains over 90 per cent of Turkey's hydrocarbons and 70 per cent of all its energy resources.

The defeat and collapse of the old Ottoman Empire, following the First World War, provided the opportunity for the victorious British, French and US imperialist powers to carve up the Middle East. Firstly by the Treaty of Sevres (1920) and finally by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), the national territory of the Kurdish people was partitioned between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. The Kurds became citizens of Turkey at the stroke of a pen.

The abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate, and the establishment of the Turkish state led by Kemal Ataturk, signalled the crushing of all expressions of a separate Kurdish identity. A chauvinist, racist nationalism was officially encouraged, while a concerted attempt was made to literally exterminate all forms of Kurdish culture, folklore, literature and tradition. The Kurdish language was completely forbidden. A law was passed which penalised every spoken Kurdish word with a fine of 5 Kurus (cents).

When Kurds resisted and fought the Kemalist dictatorship in a series of uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s, hundreds of thousands of their number were forcibly deported. Kurdish villages were razed. Hundreds of Kurdish leaders were beheaded.

It remains a crime today for Kurds publicly to speak, write, publish or sing in the Kurdish language. Kurdish school children are forced to talk and read Turkish, even though this is a completely foreign language to them.

Regardless of who has controlled the Turkish state, the racism and repression of Kurds has continued. Millions of Kurds now also live in the cities of western Anatolia – Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara. They form a very significant section of the urban working class. These Kurdish workers have struggled alongside Turkish workers. They have supported their popular organisations and their fight for democracy. This unity has posed a real threat to the survival of capitalism in Turkey.

Significantly, the three military coups d'état of 1960, 1971 and 1980 have shared the common motive to 'put down separatist movements' – ie Kurdish nationalism.

The September 1980 coup which brought General Evren to power unleashed systematic terror in Kurdistan. Cities, towns and villages were placed under martial law. Thousands of Kurds, including many Kurdish communists and democrats, were arrested. All were interrogated and tortured – many to their deaths. The repression was targeted in particular at the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Leading members and activists of the PKK were murdered in detention. Women members of the PKK were severely tortured. Many were repeatedly raped in military prisons. Many became crippled or paralysed as a result of the torture they suffered.

More than 5,000 Kurdish defendants (mostly PKK supporters) were brought before military courts in a series of mass trials. The Kurdish prisoners were denied adequate legal representation. Indeed lawyers in the trials were themselves arrested and tortured.

Today, 450,000 Turkish troops occupy Kurdistan. The daily harassment, the deportations and the destruction of Kurdish villages has greatly strengthened the breadth of popular support for the PKK, who have waged an armed struggle since 1984.

The Kurdish Intifada or 'Serhildan', which exploded in March 1990, saw open and mass support for the PKK on the streets of Kurdish towns and cities. Mass demonstrations, carrying the flags of the PKK and National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK), took place in Cizre, Nusaybin, Mardin and Sirnak. Solidarity rallies, general strikes, and school boycotts were organised in many other towns. These developments represented a merging of the armed insurrection of the PKK Peshmerga with mass popular resistance. Kurdish women and school children have played a major role in the struggles.

More than 30 Kurds died and 200 were injured when Turkish forces opened fire on the demonstrations in Nusaybin, Cizre and Batman.

The Kurdish provinces remain under a state of emergency. In April 1990 the Turkish government enacted Decree 413 which empowered Governors in these provinces to depopulate whole areas of Kurdistan. Many civilians have been murdered. The prisons are bursting with those arrested.

In August 1990 the Turkish government took the unprecedented step of openly and officially abrogating the European Human Rights Convention which it is a signatory to.

This official declaration that the Turkish government would not recognise the human rights of Kurds was neither condemned nor challenged by the British and US governments.

The Turgut Özal government is confident of continued imperialist support in recognition of the 'valuable role' it played during the Gulf War. There has understandably then been not even mild criticism of the disgraceful actions of the Turkish government towards the Kurdish refugees fleeing genocide in Iraq. Desperate and starving Kurds, many of whom were sick and elderly, who came down from the mountains seeking food and medicine, were harassed and beaten by Turkish soldiers. Some refugees have been shot dead, many others have been robbed and have seen aid consignments looted. ■

NORTH LONDON FRFI SOCIAL EVENT

Sunday 9 June 7.30-10.30pm
The Old Farmhouse Pub
Kentish Town Road, London NW5

Azarian, Irish and Turkish music, poetry and song to commemorate the Soweto uprising 1976.

RCG DAYSCHOOLS

Imperialism and revolution
in the the Middle East, Palestine
and Kurdistan

LONDON

Sunday 30 June 10am-5pm
Millman Community Centre, Millman
Street WC1 (Russell Square tube).

MANCHESTER

Sunday 7 July 10am-5pm
The Working Class Library,
The Crescent, Salford.



Defend Cuba

Following the collapse of the socialist bloc Cuba remains one of the few bastions of socialism. Since the imperialist destruction of Iraq, the US is again turning its predatory attention on Cuba. We reprint below a few of the important themes President Fidel Castro addressed in his speech on the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Bay of Pigs, delivered in Havana on 19 April 1991.

During over 30 years of US blockade Cuba received vital assistance from the Soviet Union. Fidel Castro assessed the consequences of the enormous problems confronting socialism in the Soviet Union today.

Our country hopes very much that the Soviet Union will overcome its present difficulties; our country hopes very, very much that the Soviet Union's present economic situation will improve, that the situation in the USSR will be stabilised. We don't have any prescriptions for this, nor is it our place to propose prescriptions; that is a matter for the Soviets themselves.

It is clear and logical – all our compatriots understand this – that any success achieved by the Soviet Union or any improvements in the Soviet economy would be a positive factor for us, and I believe for the whole world. In contrast, the worsening of the USSR's economic problems is bad for the world and also for us, the aggravation of the ethnic problems within the Soviet Union – the worsening of in-

We have to be prepared to defeat the imperialists in regard to material difficulties, whatever they may be; but we must also be prepared to teach them a lesson militarily

ternal conflicts, of social conflicts of any kind, a strike in one place or another. And it's not our affair, it's an internal matter for the Soviets and they are the ones who will have to judge. But it is very clear and objective that if steel production is paralysed, our possibilities of receiving any amount of steel are much less; if

obstacles come up in other industrial areas and branches of great importance, all this inevitably translates into problems for us.

If the Soviet Union disintegrates, if the Soviet Union divides up into numerous republics, that is not our affair. But the disappearance of the Soviet Union as a great power would be a tragedy and would bring very negative consequences for the whole world, especially for us and for the entire Third World.

Today many people in the world, especially in the Third World, are realising how important the existence of the Soviet Union was for them and how the mere existence of that country checked the United States' zeal for domination, the thirst for world domination. And it was an effective check on imperialist aggression. It didn't stop that trend; acts of aggression did not cease to exist in those years, but many countries in difficult circumstances received arms to defend themselves.

The Vietnamese received many

arms from the Soviet Union, we received many arms from the Soviet Union, and during the Bay of Pigs invasion, whose anniversary we commemorate today, there were Soviet arms on the battlefield. Many countries received that benefit when faced with US aggressions and threats. Scores of countries in today's world realise how endangered the world would be if it were under US control, and they are beginning to understand more than ever the historic importance of the Soviet Union, all the benefits which it brought to the Third World and all of humanity.'

Unlike the socialist parties in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Castro refuses to accept that capitalism has anything to offer humanity.

'As I was telling you, today we are a symbol and the whole world is watching what goes on in Cuba, what the Cubans will be capable of. All of the people who still have some hope for the world, who still have progressive ideas, who dream about social justice, national dignity and independence; all of the people who dream of a better world, who detest, in one way or another, with all their heart, a world ruled by the US empire and by the reactionary and fascist ideas which capitalism has engendered in this state of its development; all those who know a bit of history, all those who have truly humane and noble ideas, concepts and values, hope that there will be resistance in the world and hope that socialism's ideas will be saved.

Those tens of millions who live in slums, those tens of million of homeless children – in Latin America, to give an example – those tens of millions or hundreds of millions who are sick without medicines or medical care, without schools, those who die unnecessarily from preventable diseases, those 800,000 children who die in Latin America every year and who wouldn't die if those countries had adequate health care systems, the exploited peoples, women who are discriminated against and forced to turn to prostitution, the millions of teenagers and adults forced to beg, the unemployed, the beggars, the humiliated, what is that world going to offer them? That world championed by the United States, which is responsible – along with the rest of the developed capitalist world – for the

Third World's wretched poverty. What capitalism has brought is hunger and misery for four billion human beings, as I was saying recently.

How much hope is there that these people will some day have medical care, housing, drinking water, or even a minimally dignified life, a minimum of security? What hope is there?

'Wouldn't it be a blow to them if the United States were able to succeed with its idea of wiping out this symbol which Cuba is today, of wiping out this model of staunchness which is Cuba? So it's not just a matter of our own interests, of our being swept away by that cruel system which our country knew so well.

'Yesterday I was calculating with some people how many teachers there were in Cuba in 1959. There were only 17,000 elementary school-teachers and the total number of teachers and professors was around 20,000.

I was recalling that under capitalism, creating a post for a teacher or a doctor was an almost impossible goal, and today the country has about 300,000 professors and teachers on different levels. And I tell you that the capitalism we had thirty-some years ago here in Cuba, as cruel as it was, was not worse than the capitalism in which billions of people in the world

The reason the problems aren't greater at this moment is not by chance. It is because of the enormous efforts the country has made so that our population will not be lacking the most essential things

live today, because what is happening over there is worse than what happened in the past in Cuba, and it is getting steadily worse.

Now they are being offered neoliberalism, after being demanded to pay the foreign debt down to the last cent, to privatise everything, to turn everything over to the transnationals, to turn over all their riches to the developed capitalist countries, as a remedy for the poverty brought on by capitalism itself – first in the form of colonialism, then as neocolonialism and imperialism and ultimately as a consequence of centuries of capitalist domination.'

Cuba remains a living example of the superiority of socialism over capitalism.

'There's no country in the world where the people participate in shaping their fate as much as in ours. No other regime is as democratic as a socialist regime, which can't exist without the people, without the active participation of the people and without being defended by the people. Can there be a more democratic system than that one for which the men and women of the people are willing to shed their blood? Who is there to defend this Revolution against the imperialist monster but the people – the armed people, the workers, the *campesinos* and the students?

'How could the Revolution exist in Cuba without the armed participation of the people? Because in addition to our democratic and electoral mechanisms, we have an armed people. Let them arm the people elsewhere, let the imperialists give them that little prescription – instead of privatising the parks – let them give weapons to the workers, *campesinos*, students and we'll see how long that good-for-nothing capitalism existing in so many Third World countries lasts.' ■

'Our doctors cannot be bought'

'We are going to become exporters of health, of years of life and of well-being to humanity.' (Fidel Castro, speaking at the Health for All Fair, Havana, May 1991)

At the time of the Revolution, Cuba had 6,000 doctors – 3,000 of whom emigrated to Miami after the overthrow of Batista. Today, there are more than 40,000 doctors in Cuba. Where before there were no scientific research institutions, today Cuba boasts more than a hundred such institutions. At Cuba's recent Health for All medical fair in Havana, leading European pharmaceutical firms such as Siemens and Pasteur-Merieux were attempting to set up co-operative structures with Havana over research into vaccines. All Cuban children under 14 have been inoculated against meningococcus B, and this new vaccine is now being exported to Latin America and the Soviet Union. The Cuban health service is recognised as a world leader in spheres such as optical surgery, mechanical and artificial organs and is making breakthroughs in the treatment and prevention of heart disease. This health care is freely available to the Cuban people. In addition, Cuba sends thousands of medical staff out to countries such as Iraq, Brazil, Nicaragua and the Soviet Union.

Today, the export of biotechnological and pharmaceutical products represents a core part of Cuba's strategy for gaining the hard currency it requires to overcome the 'special period' of economic hardship imposed on it by the collapse of the

socialist bloc, in conjunction with the 30-year US blockade. Dr Ramón Crespo Almeida, General Secretary of the Health Workers Union of Cuba and member of the Secretariat of the Central Organisation of the Workers of Cuba, told *FRFI* how he sees the role of health care in Cuba during this special period.

As you know, the US blockade on our country has existed for more than 30 years. However, recently the situation has become much more complex. On the one hand we have the blockade, and on the other we are losing commercial contacts and connections which historically the Cuban revolution has had with the socialist countries. As a result of these special times our priorities are to guarantee food, health care and education for our people.

What are the major difficulties? We don't have the hard currency that can be exchanged for the products that we need. We need hard currency to achieve economic independence. So one of our main priorities is to achieve economic independence. We are strengthening our tourist, pharmaceutical and biotechnological industries, and other methods which will supply us with what we need for survival. So the elementary programme guarantees that we can provide for the people. Beyond that, everything we produce which is surplus to requirement we export, and

we avoid importing anything that is no longer a necessity.

For more than 30 years we have not received so much as one aspirin from the United States. We have had all along to develop our own medical potential, and we have exported many products throughout the world. As far as public health in Cuba is concerned, absolutely no one is ignored, because the health of our people is an absolute priority in Cuba. We already have the capacity to develop for ourselves and to export medical products. We are actually sending medical teams out to the Soviet Union.

I'm not trying to pretend that the situation doesn't affect the provision of public health care in any way, because obviously there are things we need to acquire through the capitalist market, but health care and primary materials have absolute priority on the money that we do have. The investment which we have made in public health is part of the politics of our Party and of our Revolution.

We have made medical breakthroughs that are literally fantastic. We have discovered a treatment that lowers cholesterol, and there is a real possibility that we are going to discover a cure for arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), which is a disease that affects the wealthy countries of Europe. We have discovered a

vaccine that is recognised internationally against meningitis, which is a dreadful disease which kills many people, particularly small children. We have great confidence that this kind of biotechnological and pharmaceutical development will play a substantial part in creating economic independence.

Our doctors are educated and trained in order to serve our people and our revolution. We now have more than 1,000 doctors serving on international missions.

In Cuba, doctors may not be millionaires, but they carry out their revolutionary duty throughout the world and within Cuba, never thinking that they are not paid the kind of money that doctors can earn in other countries. They do it as part of their revolutionary duty in the country and their internationalist duty elsewhere. We believe that a doctor who is capable of putting money before the wellbeing of another human being, is profoundly betraying the most noble principles of our profession.

One of the most beautiful aspects of our Revolution is that it has created men and women who cannot be bought off with money. Our doctors, our professionals, cannot be bought easily. We prefer a thousand times over to live in a country like Cuba than to sell our principles, our dignity and the joy of being Cubans and socialists. ■

A class apart?

The defence of privilege

Do British workers benefit from the oppression and exploitation of the Third World? The fact that the majority of the British working class supported the massacre of the Iraqi people during the Gulf War has presented the left with a big problem. For them, the British working class is supposed to be the leading force for social change, yet here it was supporting the jingoism peddled by the tabloid press. ROBERT CLOUGH analyses one of the left's explanations.

There was no mass action against the war; the demonstrations that did take place were relatively small and overwhelmingly middle class. By the end of the war they rarely extended beyond the left organisations themselves with little representation from the trade unions. The only consistent working class support came from the Turkish and Kurdish workers and their organisations. Labour leaders such as Kinnock and Kaufman, often more militarist than the Tories themselves, were not challenged in any significant way.

Communists have no difficulties explaining this. Imperialism has split the world into a handful of oppressor and a mass of oppressed nations. Through the superprofits extracted from the oppressed nations the ruling classes of the oppressor nations have been able to buy off a stratum of 'their' working class. As Lenin wrote:

'Opportunism, or reformism, inevitably had to grow into a phenomenon of world-wide importance, socialist imperialism or social chauvinism, because imperialism brought to the fore a handful of very rich, advanced nations, engaged in plundering the whole world, and thereby enabled the bourgeoisie of those countries, out of the monopolist superprofits (imperialism is monopoly capitalism), to bribe the upper strata of the working class.'

Lenin is quite clear: the 'exploitation of colonies by a handful of "Great Powers" increasingly transforms the "civilised" world into a parasite on the bodies of hundreds of millions in the uncivilised nations' so that 'a privileged upper strata of the proletariat in the imperialist countries lives partly at the expense of hundreds of millions in the uncivilised world'. The result is:

'It has been shown in practice that working class activists who follow the bourgeois trend are better defenders of the bourgeoisie than the bourgeoisie themselves. Without their leadership of the workers, the bourgeoisie could not remain in power.'

In the 70 years since Lenin wrote these words, the fundamentals have not changed. Colonialism has given way to neo-colonialism, so that the form of the plunder has changed. But its extent is vastly greater, so that the layer of the working class it corrupts has enlarged to the point where in Britain it forms a very substantial minority of the working class.

TURNING THEORY ON ITS HEAD

On the basis of Lenin's analysis it is not difficult to answer the question: 'Do British workers benefit from the oppression and exploitation of the Third World?' Yes, in a very material sense a layer of the British working class does benefit. Using Lenin it is also not hard to see why there was no mass opposition to the Gulf War and why the Labour and trade union leaders remained supine to their imperialist masters.

The British left, however, has a big problem with Lenin's analysis. The SWP, which recently proclaimed itself the successor to the now defunct CPGB*, went to some lengths in an article 'A Class Apart?' by Gareth Jenkins in *Socialist Worker Review* (April 1991), to explain why the Brit-

ish working class does not benefit in any way from imperialism and to offer an alternative explanation for the failure to build a strong anti-war movement. Jenkins first of all sets up a straw man:

'A common view of British workers is that they are flag-waving, jingoist *Sun* readers who tag along behind Tory propaganda about nationalism. According to this view, they have no sympathy for workers in other parts of the world, and will back their own rulers in various imperialist adventures. At the root of this is a material difference.'

According to this 'common view', the 'material difference' is created by imperialism - its devastation of the South and the piling up of wealth in the North. Therefore:

'... workers in the North have benefited from imperialism - at the expense of the masses in the South. Nowhere, it is said, is this clearer than in Britain, where workers have at best a narrow trade union mentality and at worst reactionary racist attitudes. They have been thoroughly corrupted and bought off by imperialism.'

Jenkins has set up this caricature of the Leninist position in order to attempt to demolish it. He goes on:

'The argument about British workers being pro-imperialist assumes that the real divisions in the world run less between the classes within each country and more between rich and poor countries.'

But this is not Lenin's position. Lenin did not argue that the whole of the British working class was pro-imperialist. He demonstrated how imperialism led not only to a split between oppressed and oppressor nations, but also to a split in the working class in the imperialist nations.

Jenkins has to acknowledge an 'enormous and growing discrepancy' between the living standards of the working class in the oppressed nations and that in the imperialist nations. But, rejecting Lenin, he argues: 'it does not follow' that 'the workers and peasants of the South have been robbed to pay the workers of the North'. Instead, he argues the better conditions of the 'Northern' working class are a result of its much higher productivity. To sustain this higher productivity, capitalists have to pay what are essentially higher costs of reproduction of labour power - wages - for better food and accommodation. He goes on:

'Wages also have to cover "luxuries" like cars, washing machines and refrigerators. Workers in the US need cars to travel long distances to work. Women workers use microwaves, freezers and so on to substitute for unpaid work they would previously have done in the house.'

Yet what section of the working class is he talking about? The mass of black and Hispanic workers in the US does not live in these conditions, nor do the 10 million working class people living in poverty in Britain. Jenkins does not stop there:

'Paradoxically, the high levels of productivity that accompany high wages mean that workers in the

North suffer greater and not less exploitation than their brothers and sisters in the Third World. From the point of view of capital, they produce a lot more profit in less time than miserably paid, low productivity workers in the South.' (our emphasis)

This is the nub of Jenkins' argument. Workers in the North may be better off, but, in reality, they 'suffer' more exploitation. But this is bogus. Exploitation is a scientific term expressing the rate at which the working class produces surplus value or profit. *Suffering* describes something quite different - living conditions. *Suffering* is the black South African worker walking to work many miles more than a privileged white US worker expects to drive. *Suffering* is starving in the bantustans, the barrios, the favellas. By definition, those who have microwaves and freezers do not suffer starvation. *Suffering* is brutal repression in Turkey, South Africa, South Korea.

LENIN'S 'FAULTY' THEORY

Jenkins promotes the idea of *suffering* owners of cars, freezers and microwaves to establish that there is no split in the working class, and that such *sufferers* are indeed agents of social change. He concedes that Lenin argued that the superprofits from colonial exploitation enabled imperialism to buy off the top layer of the working class, and not the whole of it. 'However', he warns:

'... Lenin's theory was faulty. For one thing, his understanding of imperialism had certain defects which have become clearer over time. Capital does not (if it ever did) flow to the colonies, but rather between the advanced countries.'

But this is nonsense. Over the past five years, in terms of debt repayment alone, there has been a net outflow of \$140 billion from the oppressed nations as they attempt to repay their debt of \$1300 billion. What is that debt other than a product of capital flow to the colonies, a flow which has reaped huge superprofits to the extent of bleeding the oppressed nations dry?

Imperialist countries, in particular Britain, are entirely parasitic, to use Lenin's scientific phrase. British imperialism has survived the last ten years through: the monopoly profits of North Sea oil; the superprofits from its investments and loans abroad, a significant proportion in the oppressed nations, and through unequal exchange as more and more primary products from the oppressed nations are needed to pay for a smaller amount of industrial products from the imperialist countries. These factors have enabled British capital to increase the living standards of much of the British working class over the past ten years, at a time when manufacturing output has changed very little, and at a time when the number of workers employed in manufacturing industry has fallen so dramatically that they now number less than five million for the first time since records began. In other words, it is a deceit to explain that increasing affluence alone by the increasing productivity of the British working class and to totally ignore the plunder of the rest of the world.

Jenkins argues that the capital flows between the advanced capitalist countries explain why capitalism survived the formal dismantling of the European empires, and so covers up the contribution that has continually been made at every stage by the former colonies to the survival of the imperialist world. There is a logic to this: to deny imperialism is to deny the split in the working class, and leads remorselessly to the SWP's view that it is the privileged stratum that is the key agent of social change in the world today.

THE IDEALIST ALTERNATIVE

If there is no materialist basis to reformism as identified by Lenin, then Jenkins is forced to argue that 'reformism has much deeper roots than Lenin imagined':

'The continued strength of reformism has to be located not in the robbery of the Third World but in the day-to-day experience of the working class. They see the need for change, but lack the confidence to take action themselves.' (our emphasis)

So, the 'deeper roots' of reformism lie not in any material conditions, but are a mere question of psychology! This is idealism not Marxism. The fact is that the majority of British workers have seen their standard of living improve over the last ten years by voting Tory three times, while a third of the working class has been driven into deeper poverty. Jenkins refuses to acknowledge this split in the working class.

When, in the next sentence, he writes: 'Imperialism has allowed capitalism to expand massively - it has also given capital room to do a deal', we have to ask: a deal with whom? Certainly not with the poorest third of the working class. 'Doing a deal' implies buying off - but buying off whom? Jenkins does not and

cannot say.

So, if as Jenkins argues, the British working class sees 'the need for change' but 'lacks the confidence', who or what is responsible for the failure to oppose the Gulf War?

'It was Labour, not pro-imperialist working class feeling, which sabotaged this potential.'

But what is Labour other than the organised expression of this pro-imperialist sentiment? What was the alternative?

'The job of building the anti-war movement rested with those with confidence in the working class's ability to challenge imperialism.'

Jenkins says that the movement against the Gulf War showed 'more potential among ordinary working class people than among other sections of the population', and offers statistics showing 47 per cent opposition to the war amongst unskilled workers compared to 39 per cent among the upper classes and professionals. Small though the difference is, it is significant. But are these unskilled workers the same as the highly-productive, highly-paid, car-owning, suffering, microwaving Northern workers Jenkins was talking about? No, they are not. Amongst the unskilled are a high proportion of black and women workers, and many who will be counted among Britain's 10 million poor.

And did the SWP, which presumably possesses the 'confidence' that the working class 'lacks', address itself to this section of the working class in order to build the anti-war movement? No, it did not. What the SWP *did* was to rush into an alliance with middle-class liberals in the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, politically entirely wedded to the left Labourites. This alliance was not at all interested in winning the potential support of Britain's 'ordinary working class' - the unskilled; it was solely concerned to keep opposition to the War well within the framework of Labour's pro-imperialist perspective. When anti-imperialists proposed the demand 'Troops Out of the Gulf' the SWP were as quick as any of the reformists they denounce to squash the proposal. Why? Could it be that the SWP, like its CPGB predecessors, was more anxious to keep its alliance with the squeamish Labour left, than to mobilise the potential of unskilled and unemployed workers and their families?

Jenkins concludes:

'The argument about British workers' pro-imperialist sentiments ... is a failure to challenge Labour and a failure to argue the need for a revolutionary alternative.'

When the Labourite CND leadership attempted to rid itself of its unwelcome left allies - in particular the SWP - it took the SWP only 24 hours to accept 14 of the 15 CND conditions for membership of the Committee. What revolutionary alternative was the SWP arguing in the Committee? That British troops should get out of the Gulf? Certainly not. That Kurdish and Palestinian liberation should be at the top of the agenda? Out of the question.

The SWP, in common with the rest of the left, has made a political choice: it has decided that the agent for social change in Britain today is the privileged layer of the working class that has been bought off by the superprofits of imperialism. To justify that choice, it has had to reject Lenin's analysis of the split in the working class as 'faulty' and promote the idea that those who possess cars, freezers and microwaves are the true 'sufferers' in modern capitalist society. In practice, this allows an unconditional and open-ended alliance with the left of the Labour Party, which means co-operating with that left wing to prevent any challenge to Labour as a whole. In reality, it is Jenkins' privileged 'sufferers' that are the major political obstacle to any progressive development here in Britain, and unless communists understand that they will achieve nothing.



A class apart?

* Paul Foot in *New Statesman* 3 May 1991

Probably the last Long Lartin Prisoners' Conference

On 19 March prisoners at Long Lartin staged their third conference on prison reform, this time examining the question of prisoners' families and, by extension, the relationship of the prison system with the wider working class community. JOHN BOWDEN reports on the conference.

After last year's conference at the prison and the embarrassment caused to the Home Office by media interviews given by two of the Birmingham 6, the minister for prisons decided that on this occasion television and radio would be banned from the conference and a more thorough security check made on the list of invited delegates.

As a result, Farida Anderson, who last year campaigned successfully against the threatened deportation of her husband Andy, and who went on to form the support group, Partners Of Prisoners, was excluded from the conference on the grounds that she was once herself a prisoner and therefore represented a 'security risk'.

Lorna Reid and David Reed from FRFI were also banned from the conference because they wrote for, in the words of the governor, 'a subversive newspaper'; the article on the last conference with its radical analysis of the event was in fact the true reason why FRFI was banned from this third conference.

In spite of the paranoia of the Home Office and their attempt to sanitise the event, a reasonably good number of independent and community-based organisations were allowed to attend the conference and Geoff Coggan of the National Prisoners' Movement (formerly PROP), though banned from earlier conferences, was allowed to attend and speak from the platform. Also present were representatives from the Dutch prisoners' support groups. Statutory bodies such as the Probation Service and DSS were also represented and the Home Office sent along one observer who kept a conspicuously low profile throughout the day and made absolutely no contribution to the debate.

The diverse composition of the delegates was reflected from the start with sharp differences in opinion and perspective. The middle class professionals sought to depoliticise the dis-

ussion and impose their patronising opinions about the predicament of prisoners' families. The voice of the prisoners at the conference was, however, the most heard and they seized the opportunity time and again to accuse the Home Office of trampling all over the rights of prisoners and their families, supporting their accusations with hard facts and direct knowledge.

They rejected out of hand the substitution of humanitarian gestures for tangible rights and the genuine empowerment of prisoners and their families. While the academics and professionals talked of improving the image of the prison system ('improved training' for screws supervising prison visiting areas, some basic amenities for women visitors with children, etc) the prisoners spoke of change as a process of struggle and conflict to establish a balance of power that would prevent the ar-

bitrary abuse of prisoners' rights and the hassles endured by their families when struggling to maintain contact.

Though the prisoners and their supporters adopted a clearly abolitionist position on the prison system - arguing it was inherently brutal and corrupt and therefore completely beyond reform - they did formulate a set of recommendations for change and argued in favour of any humanisation of visiting facilities and points of contact with families. Much scepticism was expressed, however, about the will or inclination of the Home Office to take such recommendations for progressive change on board and rearrange a list of priorities that has never included the humane treatment of prisoners and their families. The Woolf Report came in for considerable criticism because of its total dependence on the good will of the Home Office to accept and implement its proposals.

Extract from the opening Speech by John Bowden to the 3rd Long Lartin Prisoners' Conference.

Prisons ostensibly exist to serve the community and whatever is inflicted on prisoners is done so in the name of that community. Yet, in terms of prisoners' families we see the prison system operating in a hostile and malevolent manner, carefully regulating all contact that the families and community have with the prisoner and, in places like Wandsworth and Winson Green, behaving in a way deliberately designed to discourage even very limited contact between prisoners and their families on the outside.

Community-based organisations involved with prisoners' families need, therefore, to create a balance between their humanitarian role and one geared far more towards serving the working class community as centres of social and political organisation - they must provide not just a welfare-orientated service, but exist

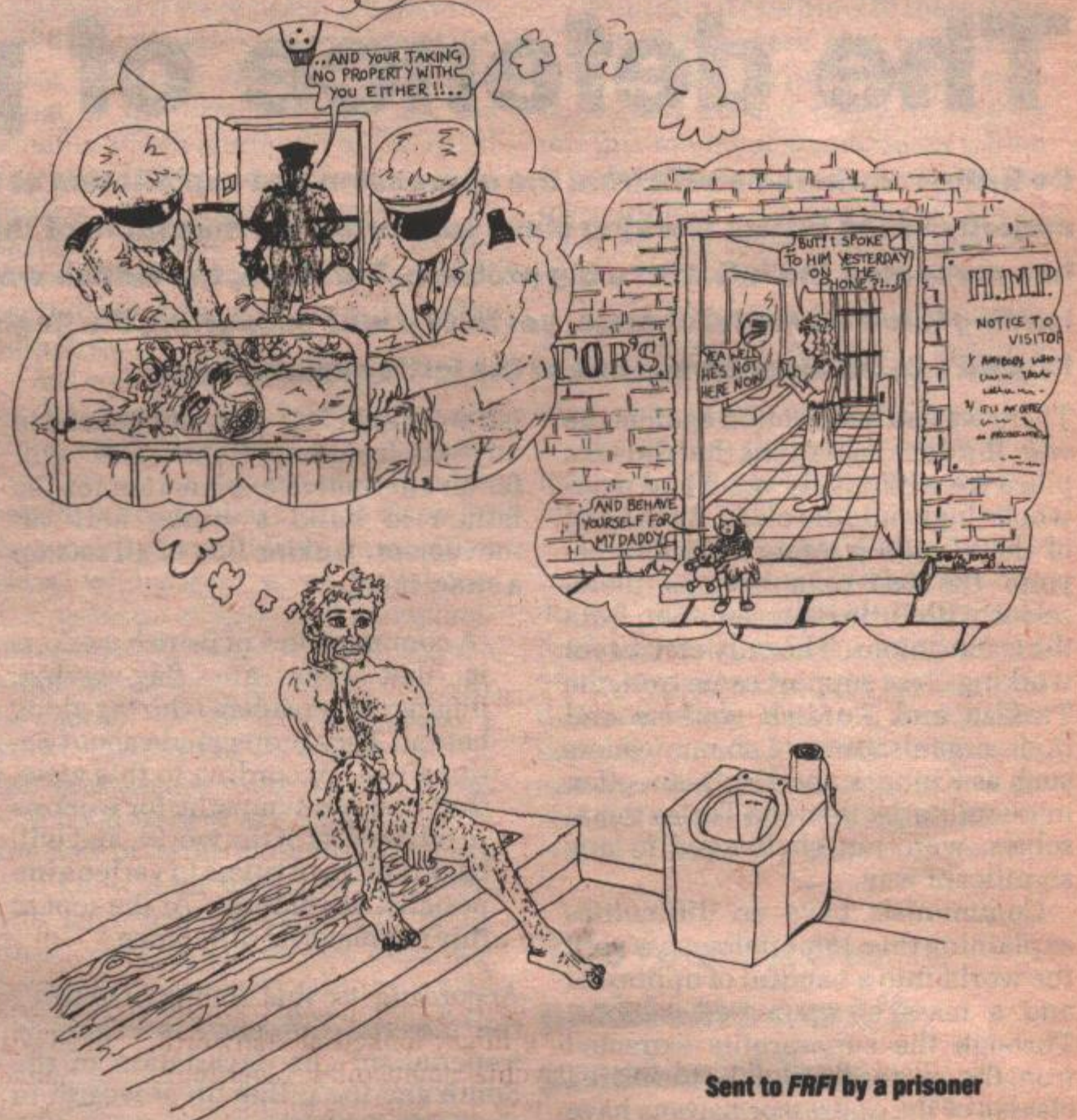
also as levers for the empowerment of prisoners' families and as instruments of social and political pressure.

We and our families know what the source of our oppression is, we know just how little we count for in the eyes of the prison authorities and we know how little priority is given to sustaining contact between prisoners and their families. So, please let's not naively imagine that change in this area will come about as a result of anything other than organised pressure on the part of prisoners' families and their supporters.

Let's therefore view this conference today as a small attempt at creating unity, a unity of purpose and direction, as well as a collective belief in the empowerment of a people who so desperately need empowering before their rights can be to any reasonable degree respected and accommodated. ■

'IN THE INTERESTS OF GOOD ORDER AND DISCIPLINE...'

The reality behind the rhetoric



Sent to FRFI by a prisoner

This third conference at Long Lartin was clearly resented by prison staff and both prisoners and outside delegates were confronted by a hostile attitude when entering and leaving the conference area. One of the conference organisers, Paul Ross, was prevented from getting to the conference until after it had started because the security department decided his cell warranted a 35 minute search.

As a crisis of management continues to permeate the entire prison system and the capacity to cope with overcrowding and prisoner resistance is in serious question, the future of 'liberal' experiments like Long Lartin must be seriously under review and along with it the opportunity of prisoners to organise and stage public forums of protest. We are doubtful that a fourth conference will be allowed to take place here and anticipate an overall 'tightening-up' of the prison within the next few months.

Greetings

FRFI sends solidarity greetings to the 16 men currently beginning their trial at Winchester Crown Court on charges of riot following the protest against conditions and brutality which took place in Dartmoor prison on 7 April 1990.

Prisoners' birthdays

Patrick Magee B75881, HMP Leicester, Welford Road, Leicester LE2 7AJ 29 May
Paul Holmes 119034, HMP Full Sutton, York YO4 1PS 22 June
Peter Sherry B75880, HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5NX 30 June

Letter to Ann Richards, Governor of Texas

In the seven years I have been imprisoned by the state of Texas, I have experienced several cases of physical mistreatment. The most serious happened on 18 May 1987 when, handcuffed and in leg-irons, I was taken to the floor of the shower in Mountain View Unit Wing 2 Administrative Segregation Building, then brutalised on the floor by two male guards who pressed my body and face against the floor while inflicting numerous lacerations all over my body. I was handcuffed all the time, with the cuffs 'double-twisted' (to inflict pain). I posed no threat to the guards and offered no resistance.

I was returned to my cell which had been stripped of all its furnishings and didn't even have a mattress. Then taken back again, with cuffs double or triple-twisted, to the shower floor, where I remained for at least another hour until the unit doctor ordered I was taken to a hospital. I was wrapped in a blanket, still handcuffed and legcuffed and taken to an ambulance. The attendant refused to load me into his ambulance (else I could be asphyxiated and he charged with murder) and the guards had to unwrap me, put me on a stretcher and load me into the ambulance.

I was not taken to hospital but to a

solitary cell in the Gatesville Reception Unit. I received no medical attention whatsoever although it was clear I needed it badly. I was returned to Mount View five days later and my body still showed bruises all over.

I have received so far more than 300 disciplinary charges, easily a Mount View record, which for more than three and a half years kept me, not only in solitary (where I have spent virtually all my time here) but on a punitive status, denied any recreation or out-of-cell time, at times for six weeks in a row.

The one and only reason is my political militancy and ideas which I will not recant now or ever in favour of the ideals of demokkracy so well represented by the state you head. And the treatment continues to date.

Under the provisions of the UN Declaration on the 'Protection of all persons from being subjected to torture' (GA Resolution 3452), which the United States has signed, I request from you that these unlawful and inhumane practices be stopped and that the perpetrators be dismissed from employment and criminally prosecuted.

Ana Lucia Gelabert
Gatesville Penitentiary, Texas

Fahad Miyhi- 15 years a prisoner of the British state

For over 15 years Fahad Miyhi has been a captive of the British state and endured its institutionalised violence almost completely alone and unsupported. Convicted at the Old Bailey in 1978 of a gun attack on a coach carrying EI Al staff in Central London, he was given four life sentences at the age of 19. Fahad, whose entire family was murdered by Israeli forces in Jerusalem during the 1967 Six Day War could expect absolutely no mercy or justice from one of Zionism's closest allies.

Fahad did not succumb to the prison system and fought constantly to retain his integrity. He forged a deep bond of solidarity with other prisoners thrown into struggle within the system and joined protests organised to highlight the oppression of all prisoners. In 1983 Fahad was one of a group of prisoners who staged a rooftop protest at Albany on the Isle of Wight and was as a consequence savagely punished, spending over 14 months in total solitary confinement at Durham's notorious punishment block.

Abuse and maltreatment of prisoners is a war of attrition waged for no other purpose than to destroy the resistance and will. The abuse of medical power is an important thread in the fabric of oppression. Fahad is presently being denied proper medical treatment for three separate com-

plaints: a serious skin disorder, a stomach ulcer and continuing cartilage trouble after a badly-carried-out operation.

The powerlessness and weakness of prisoners stems from their total isolation and separation from the working class community beyond the prison. Behind prison walls brutality and injustice are allowed free rein and encounter no opposition or interference from anyone but the imprisoned themselves.

Fahad Miyhi suffers in prison because he fought for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. As a 'terrorist prisoner' he is placed in the highest possible security category, 'Cat A Plus' and all his contact with people outside prison, whether via letters or visits, is strictly restricted and controlled. As a consequence, after 15 years in prison,

Fahad receives no visits and hardly any letters.

The treatment of political prisoners like Fahad provides a revealing insight into the true nature and character of the British state and has definite implications for those on the left who tread a carefully balanced line in these times of a progressively more authoritarian state between what is considered 'legitimate' protest and what is deemed 'subversive' and unlawful.

Without the support of comrades on the outside, oppression and inhumanity against prisoners like Fahad will continue unabated.

One struggle! One fight!
John Bowden

Fahad Miyhi (B21636) is at Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 5TZ. Please send him letters and cards of support.

■ Inside psychiatric hospitals

The level of brutality and abuse of human rights in many of Britain's psychiatric hospitals is a scandal. Earlier this year three Channel 4 programmes exposed that scandal to the public eye.

Scottish Eye uncovered widespread use of the state benefits of longterm patients in psychiatric hospitals to buy basic equipment - beds, wardrobes and crucial medical aids, such as standing frames. A former charge-nurse told of three residents who contributed £1,000 out of benefits to buy a bathhoist. Many patients have to buy their own beds and in one hospital patients paid for a special relaxation room with music therapy.

A 'two-tier' provision has emerged, depending on the degree of disability of the residents. Those with a mobility allowance are entitled to more money. A secret TV camera in Botleys Park hospital showed two wards: one, where patients received mobility allowances, had carpets, comfortable chairs and coverings on the tables. The ward without this allowance had no carpet, unsuitable chairs and bare tables.

The Black Bag followed the nightmare of Randolph Ince, a 30 year old black man who has spent eight years in psychiatric hospitals and was given such high doses of psychotic drugs that he grew breasts and produced milk. In 1985 at Tooting Bec hospital, South London, Randolph was prescribed three times the recommended maximum doses of chlorpromazine and haloperidol. The more common name for chlorpromazine is largactyl - the 'liquid cosh'. The longterm effects of the drugs have left Randolph with chronic liver damage, anaemia and epilepsy.

Randolph was receiving treatment for schizophrenia. Afro-Caribbeans aged 16 to 29 are 16



A pathologist reported no injuries when Sean Walton was found dead in 1988

times more likely to be diagnosed schizophrenic than their white contemporaries. Allegations of overdosing with drugs and greater use of electric shock treatment on black psychiatric patients are to be examined by the CRE.

The third documentary, *Cutting Edge*, looked at Ashworth psychiatric hospital, Liverpool, where over the last 10 years, more than 600 complaints of brutality have been lodged by patients against staff. Male nurses run the female wards and watch the women undress and bathe. Patients are punished for demanding basic rights and given the 'cross on the wall' treatment: the 'nurse' draws a cross on the wall and tells the patient to stare at it. If he or she moves, they are slapped and punched. Hospital policy states that seclusion should not be used as a punishment and only for short periods but patients spend six weeks and more in strip cells. 'It does things to the mind: it's torture,' said Paul, an ex-patient.

- Gillian Darnell was sexually assaulted by a male 'nurse'. No ruling has ever been made against him and he still works at Ashworth.

- Sean Walton was sent to Ashworth at 15 years old. On 30 March 1988 patients witnessed staff beating Sean around the head with a snooker cue. He was punched in the face and thrown in a seclusion cell. All night patients heard him screaming. In the morning after 15 minutes banging there was silence. Sean was dead.

Most of the staff at Ashworth belong to the Prison Officers' Association (POA) - 'nurses' is definitely a misnomer. Dr David Pilgrim, who tried to reform the hospital was blocked at every stage and forced to leave in 1986. He detailed the large NF membership among hospital staff, openly wearing badges and fascist insignia. Two solicitors told of the hundreds of statements and injuries they've seen. Despite this, no staff have been prosecuted.

Alexa Byrne

■ Ireland vs the multinationals

GUESTS OF THE NATION: People of Ireland versus the Multinationals, Robert Allen & Tom Jones, Earthscan 1990, £7.99 pbk

What appears at first to be just another environmentally friendly book in fact turns out to be a very clear exposé of the reasons behind the multinationals' interest in the green fields of Ireland.

The book comes to grips very fast with the politicisation process which the local communities thrust into battle with the multinationals have to go through. Their initial concern for their own health and future and for that of the environment leads to the realisation that to challenge the powers that be and their lust for profits would involve massive sacrifices by ordinary Irish people.

Concentrating mainly on the extremely dangerous chemical industry that Ireland has attracted, the authors lay bare the fundamental reasons why the country has in recent years become a haven for foreign capital. 'With a rate of profit of nearly 31 per cent, clearly the cost of investment can be recuperated in a very short time, one to two years.' The average rate of profit on US capital investment in Europe is only 11.9 per cent. What better reason could a profit-hungry transnational need?

The authors rightly consider Ireland nothing more than 'just another peripheral economy',

and outline a litany of reasons for this categorisation. First on their list, and of major political importance, comes the question of partition, when they describe Ireland as a country 'with the majority of one province still a British colony under military occupation'. For anyone wanting to understand the rest of the reasons the importance of Britain's role in dividing the nation cannot be overemphasised. A massive public debt, an economy dominated by foreign capital, a colluding local state and political establishment, the existence of political dynasties, an array of repressive legislation second to none with a police and judiciary well practised in implementing it, major religious influence and a technocratic and secretive state élite - a list well rooted in Britain's traditional imperialist interest in Ireland.

The role played by the bourgeoisie is also catalogued early on. 'If it enhanced the profits and power of the local business people, it did so only by creating an affluent and assertive industrial proletariat, and if it enhanced the wealth, privilege and prestige of the local bourgeoisie, it did so only by making a vassal of it.' This is a quote about Gulf Oil's role in Bantry Bay, a company whose profits in 1973

would easily have covered Ireland's balance of payments.

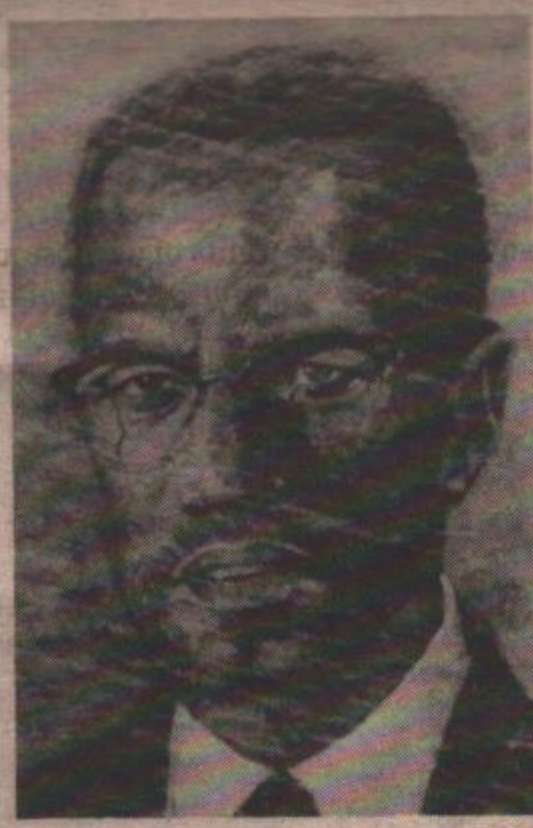
The class basis of Ireland's subordination is well entrenched. It is coupled with the complete impotence of any political opposition, as the authors show when referring to plans for a toxic waste dump: '... all local TDs, whatever their party, were forced to oppose the plan to ensure their own political survival.' A subservient trade union movement that goes out its way to come down on the side of capital and a sieve-like legal system with neither the political will or muscle to back it up complete the conditions of a country ripe for exploitation.

However, the authors conclude that in Ireland today the particular field of multinational exploitation is faced with more determined, experienced and politically aware groups of people who are increasingly prepared to be sucked in by the slick manoeuvring and disgraceful conduct of foreign capital. Our hope, like that of the authors, must be that these new forces, these movements thrown up by the contradictions of capitalist investment in Ireland will grow to challenge the stale, corrupt politics inherent in the Irish state.

Séan O Maoldhomnaigh

■ Malcolm X talks to the youth

MALCOLM X TALKS TO YOUNG PEOPLE, Pathfinder Press, 1991, £5.45



tremism in the defence of liberty is no vice, moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue'. Malcolm X goes on to point out the hypocrisy being practised by the 'Big Names' in the Civil Rights' Movement. 'If the leaders of the nonviolent movement can go into the white community and teach nonviolence, good. I'd go along with that. But as long as I see them teaching nonviolence only in the Black community, then I can't go along with that.'

Speaking at the time of US interventions both in Vietnam and the Congo, the voice of Malcolm X becomes an eloquent defender of the oppressed. Describing the barbarity of US action in the Congo, he says, '... the American planes... dropping American bombs on Black people, Black babies, Black children, destroying them completely - which is nothing but mass murder - goes absolutely unnoticed... it's the most criminal operation that has ever been carried on by a so-called civilized government since history was recorded!' Since then, we have seen again and again US 'civilisation' in Grenada, Panama, Mozambique etc and most recently, we have seen it in the devastation of the Middle East. When Malcolm X talks of the 'oppressed masses of people all over the world today crying out for action against the common oppressor' he speaks as much for today as he spoke for 1965.

Sharp, direct and thoroughly anti-imperialist, this book is well worth reading. For young people in particular, it provides a glimpse into a level of politicised atmosphere which simply does not exist today. When Mal-

colm X appeals to young people with the words, 'you're living a time of extremism, a time of revolution, a time when there's got to be a change,' the stark difference in political climate between that which exists now and that which must have existed then, becomes very clear. However, equally clear is the fact that these words will again become significant. In the years to come taking as our lead the youth of Palestine, Kurdistan, Azan, South Africa, young people are going to have to take a stand. Malcolm X puts it, 'a better world has to be built'.

Chris Jarrett

■ Peasant poetry

THE PEASANT POETS OF SOLENTINAME Bilingual edition translated by Peter Wright, Katabasis, 1991, £5.95

In 1976 the poet/priest Ernesto Cardenal set up a poetry workshop in the island community of Solentiname on Lake Nicaragua. Ten years previously Cardenal had arrived on the island and, inspired by his understanding of 'liberation theology', started working with the local people. He found them living amid natural scenery of resplendent tropical beauty, yet totally unsupported by transport, medical facilities or schools. These peasant men and women just survived on a meagre living wrung out of the arid land and the lake. In their own words, 'all we got was just enough to keep us in poverty'.



Cardenal led the struggle to build a school, a library and a museum. Many of the people, the *campesinos*, became involved in crafts, such as pottery, wood-carving, sculpture and painting. Their delicate and

detailed pictures of life in Solentiname may well be familiar to readers of *FRFI* because they are now widely reproduced in postcard form and provide a source of income to the community.

Yet it was not for ten years that Cardenal, encouraged by the Costa Rican poet Marya Jimenez, introduced the possibility of writing poetry to the people. They responded with vigour, and this anthology contains a selection of their writings in Spanish with English translation.

The unifying form of these poems is their 'exteriorist' mode. They are observations and memories that are directly related to experience. There is little introspection or imaginative flourish. The unifying theme of these poems is life as it is lived in Solentiname.

To these peasant concerns are added the desire for justice, the wrongfulness of the landlords and the military. These political concerns became practical action on 13 October 1977 when a Solentiname contingent took part in a Sandinista assault on the National Guard barracks in San Carlos. Three of the poets were killed, two after torture, and others went into exile in Costa Rica. The poets continued writing just as they do today

after the electoral setback of the Sandinistas in February 1990.

The writers are fully aware of the subversive nature of their poems. It is not just that they write in praise of the revolution, of Fidel Castro and of the Sandinistas. It is also that they are aware of who they are, they are the risen peasant people, they are the future.

Walk in Dread of Poets, Tyrant
Walk in dread of poets, tyrant.
For not your Sherman tanks,
nor your jet planes,
nor your commando battalion,
nor your security forces,
nor your whore Nicolasa,
nor your forty thousand marines,
nor your rangers with their crack training -
none of these -
no, not even your God -
can save you from history's firing-squad.

This anthology will give enormous pleasure to many readers of *FRFI*. Even those who do not usually read poetry should give it a try.

Poetry is born in a frangipani flower
where red butterflies suck the nectar
Poetry is what a pair of lovers say to each other.
Poetry is more delicate than the moon's reflection in the lake
A perfect poem is like the Revolution.

Juan Agudelo (aged 7)

Susan Davidson

FRFI EQUIPMENT FUND

Many thanks to all our supporters and readers who donated to the FRFI Flood Fund. We raised the £2,000 needed to refurbish our badly damaged office and replace equipment lost in the flood.

Now that we have moved back permanently to our office we are introducing more new technology to assist in the production of *FRFI*. We want to buy another word processor and printer to continue producing *FRFI* to its high political and technical standard.

Dig deep in your pockets and support the only revolutionary, anti-imperialist newspaper in Britain.

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THE MIDDLE EAST

Imperialism's new world order

Defending their war against Iraq, Bush, Major and lap-dog Kinnock are never tired of proclaiming the 'West's' democratic and progressive purpose. EDDIE ABRAHAMS argues that, translated into the lives of the majority of Iraqi, Palestinian and Kurdish people, this purpose has meant more poverty, more oppression, and more death.

The Gulf War was waged to stop Iraq from ever again challenging imperialist interests. It was an integral element of US strategy as expressed in a National Security Review report on 'Third World Threats':

'In cases where the US confronts much weaker enemies, our challenge will be not simply to defeat them, but to defeat them decisively and rapidly.'

Oppressed nations who dare resist imperialist plunder will suffer Iraq's fate, a fate vividly described in a UN report:

'The recent conflict has wrought near apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanised and mechanised society. Now most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has for some time to come, been relegated to a preindustrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology.'

The report then outlines the consequences. Approximately 90 per cent of industrial workers are inactive. The 109,876 US and British air sorties dropped 88,500 tons of bombs and destroyed factories, power plants, oil-refineries, water-related pumps and chemical factories, communications systems, railways, roads and bridges.

As a result hunger, disease, unemployment and lack of shelter are now features in what was among the Third World's more developed countries. Iraq imports 70 per cent of its food. With virtually no foreign exchange and the continued enforcement of most sanctions it cannot obtain enough food. Prices have risen nearly 1000 per cent and there are serious shortages of sugar, rice, tea, vegetable oil, powdered milk and other

essentials. Livestock farming has been devastated by sanctions and the destruction of the sole laboratory producing vaccines against cattle disease.

The report predicts massive health problems as:

'... Iraqi rivers are heavily polluted by raw sewage, and water levels are unusually low. All sewage treatment and pumping plants have been brought to a standstill by the lack of power supply and the lack of spare parts. Pools of sewage lie in the streets and villages. Health hazards will build in the weeks to come.'

The post-war UN ceasefire resolution accepted by Iraq on 6 April was but the judicial expression, on an international level, of the essentially colonial character of the much trumpeted 'new world order'. By means of this resolution, which only Cuba voted against, Iraq's subjugation by and dependence on imperialism was affirmed. Described as the most punitive since the Versailles Treaty, the UN, for the first time, imposed border demarcations and extended Kuwait's borders seven miles into Iraq. This now allows the emirate to steal more of Iraq's oil from its Rumallah fields.

To ensure that Iraq never again presents a military threat to imperialism, it is now compelled to hand over for destruction all its chemical and biological weapons, all its ballistic missiles with a range beyond 90 miles and all materials for building nuclear weapons. The Security Council also banned all sales of conventional weapons to Iraq. Meanwhile, of course, the major imperialist powers continue to arm themselves to the hilt with even more deadly and sophisticated weapons. And they continue to supply such weapons to their clients in Israel and other reliable ruling classes. But then the Gulf War was but the first of a new round of essentially colonial wars.

IMPERIALISM USES THE IRAQI RULING CLASS

On the anvil of imperialism's predatory and reactionary designs in the Middle East the Kurdish people and Shiites in southern Iraq are being forced to pay a deadly price. During the war Bush urged 'the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands', authorised CIA aid to 'rebel factions inside Iraq' and organised the 'Voice of Free Iraq Radio'.

A multitude of liberals, professorial socialists and media hacks who had supported the war were subsequently 'outraged' and 'horrified' that the US and British forces watched passively as Saddam Hussein turned with deadly effect against mass uprisings in Kurdistan and southern Iraq. Hussein's Republican Guards wreaked revenge killing tens of thousands in the south and forcing millions to flee for their lives into the Kurdish mountains on Turkish and Iranian borders.

But of course imperialism had its own agenda unrelated to the sentimental and hopeless proposals from liberal and 'socialist' warmongers. Whilst destroying Iraq's capacity to challenge imperialism, its ruling class was needed to deal with internal and Kurdish democratic forces. An independent Kurdish government in Iraqi-occupied Kurdistan could support uprisings in Turkish, Iranian and Syrian-occupied Kurdistan and as a result gravely destabilise a region critical to imperialism.

Imperialism therefore intervened only after the Kurdish national uprising had been crushed and hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees were facing death by cold, starvation and disease in the mountains. However, not one iota of humanitarian sentiment animated this intervention. It was a cynically calculated political move made necessary first and foremost by the flood of refugees into Turkish-occupied Kurdistan

which was seriously undermining political stability in Turkey.

Despite impressions, John Major was not the humane and wise father of the 'safe havens' concept. Turkish President Özal eager to find ways of keeping Kurdish refugees out of Turkish-occupied Kurdistan was the first to suggest the plan. John Major, with the acumen inherited from the British ruling class's long colonial history, recognised more rapidly than the US their potential political benefits.

With millions of Kurdish refugees reduced to total destitution imperialist 'safe havens', food, medical and other aid have appeared like god-sends to avert massive tragedy. With this programme Bush and Major are cultivating pro-imperialist sentiment among sections of the Kurdish population. These schemes are also designed to strengthen the position of the bourgeois Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq. Both oppose Kurdish independence and are presently engaged in negotiations with Saddam Hussein for 'autonomy'.

The imperialists hope that such trends buttressed by safe havens and aid will act as an effective counterweight to revolutionary developments in other parts of Kurdistan and to Kurdish organisations like the PKK who fight for the independence and unity of the whole of Kurdistan. Additionally, they expect a somewhat strengthened Kurdish bourgeois force within Iraq to act as a dampener on future Iraqi ruling class ambitions.

PALESTINE IN THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

The Palestinian people who dared defy imperialism and support Iraq are paying the price twice over. There is no press-inspired campaign for the Palestinians. Unlike the Kurds, sympathy for Palestinians will not at the moment serve any imperialist purpose. Yet since the Gulf War Zionism has accelerated its genocidal policy of driving all Palestinians out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The five week curfew, imposed on the Occupied Territories during the War, allowed Zionist employers to replace Palestinians with newly arrived Soviet immigrants. So unemployment has soared to nearly 50 per cent. Combined with a cessation of remit-

tances, the severe disruption of agriculture during the curfew and the new Zionist taxes, poverty has increased enormously.

Forced into poverty, Palestinians are also losing more and more land. Since 9 March, Zionist authorities have been confiscating land at the rate of 300 acres a day and existing settlements are being expanded. Reports indicate that 8,000 new units are being constructed on just five settlements and more building is underway in many of the other 150.

The prospect now confronting Palestinians was put sharply by one villager:

'First the Israelis steal our land, then they prevent us from leaving the village to find alternative work in Israel. What is left for us except to live like dogs and die like dogs in the land of our ancestors? The Israelis hope we will be forced to leave, our answer is that we will die here.'

In this context, US Secretary of State James Baker's Middle East 'peace shuttle' is actually designed to strengthen Israel. He is attempting to persuade Syria and other Arab nations to recognise Israel and to settle for Palestinian 'autonomy' within an Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Simultaneously the US and Israel have categorically rejected the minimum Palestinian demand for an independent state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip and have also rejected PLO participation in any 'peace conference'. It is hardly surprising therefore that the left wing of the PLO has refused to meet Baker on his visits.

Those who supported the imperialist war - the Labour Party, the media hacks, revolutionaries turned professors - are not ignorant of these processes. They simply do not care about the oppression of the Arab and Kurdish peoples. And when imperialism, the provider of their privilege and status is challenged, they throw out of the window all morality and human decency to join the shrill tirade of warmongers. As the Palestinian, Iraqi and Kurdish people continue in the most difficult conditions to fight for freedom, let us at least work to expose these liberals and 'socialists' for what they are - shame-faced imperialists! ■

The British left and the fight for Kurdistan

From the outset of the Gulf crisis, August 1990, the RCG fought alone among British left organisations for the twin slogans 'Victory to the Palestinian Revolution' and 'Self-Determination for Kurdistan'. How surprising then to find that when the Kurds became front-page news these same left organisations like the RCP 'have always backed Kurdish self-determination' (*Living Marxism* May 1991). The RCP opposed the RCG on every occasion that we raised the slogan 'Self-determination for Kurdistan' in the Hands Off the Middle East Committee.

For the British left, phrases like 'the right to self-determination' are handy for their credibility. In reality, they treat the oppressed with chauvinist contempt.

The SWP in *Socialist Worker Review* carries an interview with a Kurdish Communist Movement member: 'The PKK adopts a bourgeois nationalist strategy... the PKK has no base in the working class centres in Turkish Kurdistan. Its bases are in the small towns and villages, among the petit-bourgeoisie'. The SWP know that the PKK lead the working class and peasantry in North West Kurdistan. They know that supporters of the PKK lead the Kurdish working class commu-

nity here in Britain, and that they brought their community out to demonstrate against imperialism's war in the Middle East, yet they print this smear. Why? Because they believe that they know better than the Kurds.

'If Kurds looked back through their recent history, they would see that they have been strong when the working class in the surrounding countries has been strong, not when imperialism or regional dictators were winning wars... In Turkey, the Kurdish movement shares a common fate with the Turkish working class.' (SWP)

If the SWP were less blinded by arrogance and more able to distinguish fact from Trotskyist fiction they would know that it is precisely the Kurdish struggle that has been in the vanguard of the struggles of the working classes of Turkey, Iran and Iraq, and that Kurdish advances create possibilities for socialists throughout the region. The Kurdish people should no more wait upon the Turkish movement to determine the direction and pace of their struggle than the Irish struggle should wait for the blessing of the English working class and its leadership.

Trevor Rayne