

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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COLIN CHALMERS



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A united fight against oppression

While Europe remembered the defeat of fascism on the 50th Anniversary of VE Day, amid fanfares for peace and freedom and promises of 'Never Again', fascism and racism are at their strongest since 1945.

- On VE Day itself, a black man, Brian Douglas, was arrested in south London. He was struck with a long-handled baton, taken to the police station and locked up for 15 hours. He was visited by a police doctor four times and belatedly admitted to hospital where he died of a fractured skull.
- Germany has over 70,000 fascist supporters and attacks on immigrants are routine;
- In the USA the resurgent right wing murdered 165 people in the Oklahoma bombing; the right-wing Republican Congress is sharpening its attacks on black people and the poor;
- In France the fascist Front National won 15% of the Presidential election vote and celebrated with the cold-blooded, public murder of a Moroccan man by right-wing skinheads;
- Across Europe the right-wing is organising for 'ethnic cleansing' as EU states impose stricter immigration controls.

In Britain, while politicians and Royals bask in the reflected glory of a 1945 VE Day which 'united the nation', the state is arming itself to the teeth to deal with any opposition. In Britain the extreme right wing is marginalised only because the British state is happy to do the job.

Immigration controls

- The Tory government is set to introduce a new round of immigration checks, supported by all Parliamentary parties. Black people are prevented from joining their partners and families to live in Britain; they are denied entry as asylum seekers and detained in conditions worse than prisons before deportation. In the Autumn the government will try to introduce new checks before immigrants can get health care, housing, benefits or education.
- In April a report, commissioned in the wake of last year's riot, severely criticised the running of Campsfield detention centre - used for immigrants and asylum seekers - by the security company Group Four.
- Within weeks of the publication of this report Group Four announced plans for its own riot squad at Campsfield, to be trained in 'control and restraint techniques' equipped with shields and batons. The Home Office played Pontius Pilate: it was none of its business: Labour's Jack Straw complained that Group Four did not have the benefit of police training and disciplinary regulations.
- In practice police training and discipline means carte blanche for the murder and torture of black people:
- Joy Gardner was murdered in July 1993 by Scotland Yard's

Aliens Deportation Gang (see news).

- Only weeks before, an immigrant from Ghana was bound and gagged at Gatwick airport as police and immigration officers went ahead with his deportation wilfully ignoring the permission for him to stay.
- Almost a year later in May 1994, after a ban on the use of gags, Nigerian asylum seeker Elizabeth Blanchard was taken



Police are armed to the teeth

to hospital after being bound and gagged by immigration officers.

- Such is the terror of immigration raids that two black people died in 1994, falling from tower blocks as they tried to escape dawn raids.

Arming the police

As politicians scramble for middle-class law-and-order votes in the prelude to a general election, the police have renewed their lobbies for more coercive legislation and increased powers, including arms. The Labour Party and the Tories are ready to grovellingly oblige: Boot Camps for the young; higher levels of imprisonment; increased public order powers; restrictions of defendants' rights - the end of the right to silence; defence disclosure of evidence; forcible DNA tests and proposals for ID cards.

The recent Police Federation attempt to introduce routine arming for the police failed, but in reality armed squads already roam our cities: in London there are 12 Armed Response units on the loose carrying Heckler and Koch sub-machine guns and Smith and Wesson revolvers. Target areas are inner cities where black people live. Police have been given long batons and permission to test CS gas sprays.

- In 1994 an unarmed man with a criminal record for burglary was trapped in a stolen car by armed police in South London. Police said they were defending themselves; independent witnesses say that the man was shot in cold blood.
- In March 1995 Cleveland police finally admitted liability for killing Oliver Pryce, using a neck-lock. Oliver Pryce was a mentally ill black man. It took

police five years to admit their responsibility - no action was or will be taken against the officers responsible.

- In April 1995 a burglar was shot dead in Tyneside by armed police in a stake-out. The burglar was completely unarmed; no shots were fired except the ones that killed him.

Fascism and racism have been used in Europe to divide and crush the working class in defence of capitalist wealth. Black and working class people have never had any respite from the brutality of the state and its agents - official or unofficial. In Britain, black people have always been seen as a challenge to the capitalist order and so the state has fashioned its instruments of repression against them. Systematic violence and lying, done with a brutality and calculated cynicism most people could hardly contemplate. Whenever the working class has fought to defend itself, similar repression has been used, devastatingly during the 1984-85 miners' strike.

These mechanisms of repression are now being turned against all manifestations of opposition to an increasingly oppressive, decaying, corrupted and hopeless life in capitalist Britain.

Increasingly young people who oppose the Criminal Justice Act, who campaign against the roads programme and pollution, who fight cruelty to animals, are the targets for harassment and surveillance. Without any doubt that repression will grow.

These movements have every interest in uniting with and supporting black people fighting against racism and the working class fighting to defend itself against capitalist attack.

Fifty years after the defeat of fascism in Europe, as the racist British state and its allies once again arm themselves to defeat working class opposition, a movement to fight them is a necessity. The Labour Party and its diaspora of left groups will not fight; the middle classes, black and white will desert any movement which really challenges the British state - they always have. There is common ground for all of us who are committed to change to act together. Let's do it.

COMMUNIST FORUMS

A series of public discussions of communist politics introduced by Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!

A world to win: the fight against environmental destruction and capitalism

London: Sunday 11 June, 2pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube).

£1/50p
Speaker: Maxine Williams. Creche available on application.

Manchester: Wednesday 14 June, 7.15pm, Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.

Tel: 0171 837 1688 for details

News

Lawrence family fights for justice

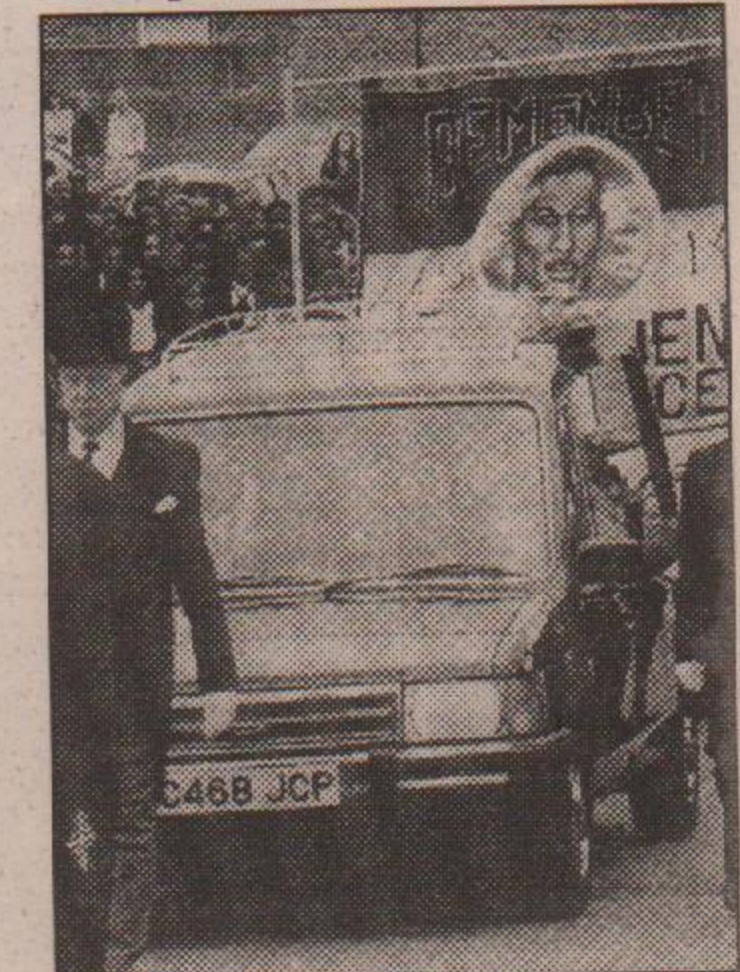
FRANCIS SQUIRE

'I feel that British justice is only for one race and it's not for everyone', said Doreen Lawrence, mother of racist murder victim Stephen Lawrence.

On 22 April 1993, Stephen Lawrence, an 18-year-old student and a friend were waiting at a bus stop in Eltham, south-east London, when they were savagely attacked by a gang of white youths hurling racist abuse. The friend managed to escape but Stephen was stabbed to death. In July 1993, two youths who had been charged with Stephen's murder were released after the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) claimed there was insufficient evidence against them.

Five months later, the inquest was stopped after the coroner was told of new evidence that might reveal the identity of Stephen's killers. Nevertheless, in the face of what the Lawrence family and their supporters considered overwhelming evidence, in April 1994 the CPS announced that no case would be brought to court.

On the anniversary of Stephen's murder, the Lawrence family announced that they would undertake a private prosecution against the people they believe to be the murderers. Neil Acourt, 19, Luke Knight, 18, David Norris, 18 and a fourth youth who cannot be named for legal reasons have been charged with unlawful killing. Private prosecutions are extremely rare in Britain; in fact no such case has been successful since 1865. The law does not grant people who pursue private prosecution the automatic right to see police evidence. The Lawrence family face financial ruin if the case fails as no funding is available for private prosecutions. However, they believe the risk will prove worthwhile if other victims of racist violence are encouraged to fight for justice.



Funeral march for Stephen Lawrence

In a recent interview, Doreen Lawrence said 'We want justice for Stephen, not because he was black, but because he was a person. If the police had caught Stephen's killers I wouldn't have to do this... it just seems a just a name on a piece of paper now... that is the way society reacts where there is the murder of a black person.'

Stephen is buried in Jamaica, his parents' homeland. Doreen Lawrence said 'we decided we didn't want to have his body buried in this country because we felt his murderers would eventually come and desecrate his grave'.

The Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign is raising funds to cover legal costs. Donations to Stephen Lawrence Appeal Fund, Natwest Bank, P O Box 3202, 54 Brixton Road, London SW9 8EB.

Joy Gardner

Killers on trial

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The brutality and callous contempt with which the British state, its courts and police treat black and working class people has been starkly revealed in the trial of three police officers from Scotland Yard's Alien Deportation Group charged with the manslaughter of Joy Gardner, which opened in May.

Early on 28 July 1993, Detective Sergeant Linda Evans and PCs Colin Whitby and John Burrell smashed their way into Joy Gardner's home in north London with instructions to arrest and deport her to Jamaica. They treated her with a brutality black people are accustomed to from the British police.

John Bevan, QC prosecution describes how in the attack 'Mrs Gardner went down face first.

The restraint belts were then wrapped around her waist, thighs and ankles. Sticking plaster was wound round her head and a second reel used to finish the job.' After binding her, PC Whitby wound 13 feet of elastic adhesive bandage around Joy



Mrs Joy Gardner

Gardner's head to gag her. By this time, she was unconscious. She never recovered. Four days later, on 1 August 1993, she was dead. John Bevan told the court

that a post mortem examination found she had 'suffered extensive and ultimately fatal brain damage due to asphyxiation as a result of the obstruction of her mouth by a gag.' In the police officers' defence, the Old Bailey was told that mouth gags are used on numerous occasions in deportation cases, against Metropolitan Police lawyers' advice.

At the time of her murder, Joy Gardner was engaged in appeal against her deportation order. She had arrived in Britain legally in 1987. Her mother and sister were already British citizens. Joy Gardner was married to a British citizen and had a son born here. But when she split from her husband the Home Office refused to grant her the right to remain, and set in motion the process that killed her. As her murderers attempt to cover up for their actions, what is revealed once again is the vicious racism of the British immigration system and utter disregard for the lives of black people.

DNA testing - a new means to imprison the innocent

CAROL BRICKLEY

On 2 May police mounted their biggest operation yet against burglars. In raids employing 5,000 officers, nearly 1,000 people were arrested in dawn raids across Wales and southern England. The sinister result of the raids was that, for the first time, everyone charged or cautioned was subject to DNA testing using new powers under the 1994 Criminal Justice Act.

The police perceived this mass testing as a quick route to building up the new national DNA

database in Birmingham. They hope to have the DNA records of five million people stored in the database by the end of the century. Alongside calls for ID cards, some would like compulsory DNA testing of the whole population. This is just the start.

Until the Criminal Justice Act was enacted, the saliva samples used for DNA testing counted as intimate samples which could only be carried out under strict conditions. No such conditions circumscribe DNA testing; if you are charged with a recordable crime or cautioned, a saliva test can be taken. Even minor charges where no forensic evidence is involved can now result in a record of your DNA being stored. Cautioning, which is intended for minor first offences, used not to lead to a criminal record - now you will be on the DNA database.

Police and some scientific experts claim that DNA testing evidence is so accurate that it can pick out a culprit from millions of samples. So far, certainty has scarcely been challenged, but in the UK DNA testing is viewed with considerably more scepticism with regard to both its accuracy and its uses in 'solving' crime.

But we need look no further than the reputation of forensic science in Britain to realise the dangers of such certainty. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s forensic experts gave evidence that Irish people were certainly guilty because of or that infallible test for explosives, etc. But the tests were liable. They could be corrupted just as much as any other evidence. DNA testing will prove to be just the next means of imprisoning the innocent without fuss.

Dollar/Yen crisis

Moving towards breakdown

DAVID YAFFE

On 16 May the United States announced record \$5.9bn punitive trade sanctions against Japanese luxury car exports into the US. The sanctions will double the price of all luxury Japanese cars exported to the US, ensuring that none could be sold. They will be put into effect on 28 June unless Japan opens up its own market to US cars and spare parts, permitting 500 more US-owned retail outlets in Japan and by buying 20 per cent more US car parts. The threatened sanctions come after 18 months of talks broke down.

Japan has filed a formal complaint against the US with the World Trade Organisation and 'reserves the right to take countermeasures'. The European Union has called the sanctions a 'violation of trading rules' and a threat to the new world trading order. Retaliation by Japan could start a full scale trade war. Whether one side or the other backs down this time round, the US has fired the opening shots in the growing economic conflict between the two largest economic powers.

The decline of the dollar

The changing economic balance of power between the US, Japan and Germany is mirrored by the continuous decline of the dollar and the relentless rise of the Japanese Yen and the Deutschmark (DM). Since 1985 the dollar has declined by three quarters against the Yen and nearly two-thirds against the DM. Al-

ready this year the Yen has risen 22 per cent and the DM 13 per cent against the dollar. Under these conditions the dollar can no longer sustain its role as the world's reserve currency and 'international measure of value'.

This is a very serious source of tension between the major capitalist powers. Most world trade, 60 per cent of the world's foreign currency reserves (80 per cent in 1976) and 40 per cent of international bonds are in dollars.

It is estimated that the Japanese have lost between \$350bn and \$500bn through foreign exchange losses on their investments abroad as a result of the falling dollar and rising Yen since the mid-1980s. Japanese leading institutional investors are now reluctant to invest their capital in foreign currency, and especially dollar-denominated assets. In 1994 some \$64bn (85 per cent) of the \$75bn Japanese companies invested in foreign assets were in Euro-Yen bonds with no currency risk.

The rise of the Yen has forced the first car plant closure in Japan since the Second World War: Nissan's Zama plant which built 11.2m vehicles over 30 years, some 20 per cent of Nissan's total production over that period. Attempts to bypass the rising Yen by shifting production to cheaper overseas plants had proved insufficient and output had to be cut at home. This process is being repeated in much of Japanese manufacturing industry. Last year for the first time the number of people working in service industries outnumbered those in manufacturing. In March the

closure of the 106-year old Sorachi pit in Utashinai leaves only three coalmines remaining in Japan compared with 600 25 years ago.

More generally, the rising Yen has reduced the competitiveness of Japanese exports and this has been an important fac-



tor in the stagnant economic growth of the Japanese economy and its 3.4 per cent decline (on an annualised basis) in the final quarter of 1994.

Finally, although of less immediate impact, the rising DM is not only reducing economic growth in Germany and but is reinforcing divisions among the member countries in the European Union.

Why has the dollar fallen?

Most explanations for the rapid decline of the dollar since the 1980s point to Reagan's massive armaments build-up against the USSR and the tax-cutting consumer-led booms of the 1980s.

The resulting trade and budget deficits required huge international borrowing to sustain them. The current account went into deficit and in the mid-1980s the US became a debtor nation - in overall debt to the rest of the world*. By 1993 its net liabilities were nearly

programme only reinforced and accelerated trends already underway. Fundamental to the decline of the dollar is the relative decline of the economic power of the US as measured by the growth of capital accumulation: a decline which is compounded by the slowdown in the growth of capital accumulation worldwide.

In the US private capital accumulation fell from 19.7 per cent of GDP in 1979 to 13.4 per cent in 1994. In the four major European countries - Germany, France, the UK and Italy - it declined from around 25 per cent of GDP to 18.9 per cent in the same period. Contrast this with Japan where capital accumulation actually rose in the same period reaching a peak of 35.3 per cent in 1992 and declining to around 33 per cent in 1994 - but, significantly, below the post-war peak of 38.7 per cent in 1972.***

It is this disparity between the rate of accumulation of capital in Japan and the US which lies behind the huge trade deficit of the US and the large trade surplus of Japan and which has produced the increasing trade tensions between them. It is what underlies the decline of the dollar relative to the Yen.

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Breakdown of the international monetary system
The stability of US capitalism since the early 1980s has depended on huge amounts of money borrowed from abroad, much of it in recent years provided by Japanese financial institutions. In return Japan has

had easy access to US markets as a base for its worldwide expansion of exports. The fall of the dollar has now brought this unwritten agreement to an end. There is now a fundamental incompatibility of interests between US and Japanese capitalism.

The US refuses to raise interest rates and cut back its trade deficit to sustain the level of the dollar, because of the impact it would have domestically in cutting the living standards of much of the US middle class. Japan, in turn, is no longer prepared to underwrite US debt and the huge exchange losses entailed while its own economy is stagnating. Hence the impasse.

The consequences are serious as many have pointed out. A fundamental shift in the international balance of economic power has led to a flight out of dollars, the world's reserve currency since the Second World War. Nothing exists to replace it. Neither Japan nor Germany are in a position to take over the US' global role.

The world experienced two barbaric wars and fascism in seeing the transfer from sterling to the dollar as the base of the international monetary system. Now that the first shots in the coming trade war have been fired, it is becoming ever clearer that the international monetary system is once again moving towards breakdown.

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Oklahoma bombing - homegrown US fascism

MAXINE WILLIAMS

When the Federal Building was bombed in Oklahoma on 19 April, the US and British press immediately assumed it was the work of Islamic fundamentalists. It soon became clear however that homegrown US forces had carried out the bombing, killing 165 people and injuring hundreds more. 19 of those killed were children in a nursery in the building. Home-grown US fascist forces are part of the network of militias, neo-Nazis and racists which is well-organised and growing stronger in the US today.

These organisations are extremely well-armed, and in the week beginning 15 May, another of their supporters was found to have successfully got hold of phials of bubonic plague. It would be a mistake to think of them as lunatics. They are the extreme of a rapidly growing right in the USA, a right which is expressed 'respectably' by Republican Speaker Newt Gingrich with his fierce hatred of the poor. The Gingrichs of the US establishment help to create the sea in which the Aryan Nation



and the murderers of abortion doctors swim.

The recession which has hit upper working class and middle class living standards has also fuelled fierce international trade rivalries and given rise to greater nationalist and racist trends in the USA. These are expressed as you would expect them to be in a society as violent as the USA. Local militias opposed to gun controls and with anti-Semitic, racist and fascist programmes are recruiting thousands.

The FBI and central government claim that they will deal with the militias is unlikely to be fulfilled. There is mutual sympathy and many links between the police/army and such bodies.

The right is never, in any capitalist society, dealt with as severely as the left. Indeed, the new powers to deal with domestic subversion that the FBI will be given as a result of Oklahoma are more likely to be turned against the left and progressive protest movements.

Nolan Inquiry

Cleaning stables with a toothbrush

MAXINE WILLIAMS

The Nolan Committee's rather mild proposals to curb the most overtly corrupt activities of MPs have already come under fierce attack from MPs and Lord Nolan was even accosted in the street by Alan Duncan, an enraged Tory MP. Duncan warned Nolan: 'You are about to obliterate the professional classes' representation in the House of Commons. It is a very, very dangerous game'. Hell hath no fury like an MP attacked in the wallet region.

What has poor old Establishment figure Nolan done to bring this deluge down upon his head? Merely proposed that MPs should be forced to disclose the consultancies and other earners with which they top up their £32,000 per year salaries. The basic salary is just pocket money for these chaps - thousands more can be earned by asking questions, making amendments and generally looking after various commercial interests. Such consultancies earn MPs a total of £2-3 million a year. That is quite aside from their other jobs, directorships, advisory roles, free trips, jobs for their spouses, expenses (£360 a day on foreign

trips) etc, etc. It's a miracle they ever find time to visit the House of Commons or their constituencies at all.

Former minister Archie Hamilton warned that middle class people would no longer become MPs 'if they are being told they have got to do this on a salary of £32,000 a year.' These are the same MPs who speak weightily about the burden of welfare benefits payments, who have agreed cuts in Unemployment Benefit and payments to the disabled. A single person on benefits gets around £2,250 per annum and if they earn more than £5 per week lose equivalent amounts of benefit. If it's good enough for them, why not means-testing for MPs? These are the same MPs who think that the unemployed should be forced to take the most low-paid jobs and see nothing wrong with wages of £2.50 per hour. These are the same MPs who while decreeing nurses a wage rise of 1% gave themselves a nice fat wage increase.

Despite the ferocity of the reaction to Nolan's recommendations, his proposals amount to clearing out the Augean stables with a toothbrush. It is not merely that most MPs are a bunch of corrupt, careerist, greedy swine who get paid for

asking questions or fixing things for British Gas or some other body. It is more that business sets the whole agenda for Parliament and even then lobbies tirelessly to get its particular interests put in prime place. Every quango, every advisory body is stuffed with their paid agents. Every level of the political process is bought up by them and MPs come fairly cheap.

So while it is nice to see MPs squirming a bit, they won't squirm for long and even Nolan's proposals will be watered down. The wealthy will always find ways of corrupting public life. It would however be very nice to see a serious attempt to curb it. This would require that MPs should receive only or preferably less than the average wage. (If that keeps the professional middle classes out, then... hooray!). They should be forced on pain of expulsion and prosecution to declare outside interests and should lose their salary in proportion to their outside earnings.

There would be no shortage of people who would agree to such terms. After all, half the population is on benefits. The chances of such a thing happening are of course slightly less than those of a gang of Tory MPs machine-gunning Lord Nolan to death.

Jose Marti - apostle of Cuban independence

CAT WIENER

Jose Marti, Cuba's national hero, poet, philosopher and politician, died fighting Spanish colonialism one hundred years ago. Born in 1853, he was only 16 when he was sentenced to six years' hard labour for anti-government activities, and 26 when exiled to Spain. By this time, Cuba's ten-year struggle for independence from Spain was over. The revolutionary movement was divided and bitter, riven with suspicion of traitors and spies. Jose Marti was, over the next fifteen years, to play a leading role in rebuilding that shattered movement.

He arrived in New York in 1880 and began working amongst the Cuban exile population to mobilise support for Cuban independence, and against annexation to the United States, a solution proposed by some middle-class Cubans and enthusiastically supported by the US.

The war had bankrupted Spanish sugar interests in Cuba. Spanish owners had sold out to North American interests. By 1890 the American Sugar Refining Company completely dominated the Cuban industry. In 1891, the *Detroit Free Press* wrote, 'Cuba would make one of the finest states in the Union, and if American wealth, enterprise and genius once invaded the superb island, it would be-

come a veritable hive of industry in addition to being one of the most fertile gardens in the world.'

Marti's initial enthusiasm for the American Dream soon turned sour: 'Our America should know the truth about the US,' he wrote. 'In the US, the causes of unity, instead of coalescing, have become dispersed; humanity's problems, instead of being solved, have been increased... democracy... has been corrupted and undermined and has given birth to menacing poverty and hatred.'

Though suspicious about the class struggle within the US itself, Marti was in no doubt that the Cuban liberation struggle must be founded on the Cuban working class, for 'truth is best revealed to the poor and those who suffer'. A crucial failure of the Ten Year War, he argued, had been a tendency by some leaders to rely too heavily on the support of rich Cuban emigres, and to look down on black Cubans. Throughout his life Marti was to argue vociferously against racism. In his first speech in New York, in 1880, he won delighted applause from the black and white Cuban tobacco workers

when he stated: 'There is no danger of war between the races in Cuba. Man means more than white man, mulatto or black man. The souls of white men and negroes have risen together from the battlefield where they fought and died for Cuba.'

Marti dedicated his life to rebuilding a revolutionary movement for Cuban independence. In 1892, he founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party, a broad-based and democratic movement uniting black and white. He travelled widely, promoting unity between Latin American nations in the face of dominating US imperialism,

the 'colossus of the North'. 'I have lived inside the monster,' he wrote, 'and know its entrails'. In 1895, an invasion of Cuba was launched by Gomez, Maceo and Marti. Marti wrote to a Mexican friend on 19 May: 'Every day I am in danger of giving my life for my country and for my duty. My duty is to stop the United States in time from reaching out over the West Indies and swooping down, with its great power, on our American lands.' He never finished the letter, for the Spanish attacked. Marti was shot from ambush and killed.



For three years after his death, the Cuban liberation army fought an occupying force five times its size, driving the Spanish to the westernmost reaches of the island. The Spanish desperately established concentration camps into which they herded entire villages - thousands died of malnutrition, malaria and dysentery. But in 1898, the US declared war on Spain and joined combat in the last two months of a war already won by the Cubans. It stepped in to take possession of Cuba and, en route, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. The Spanish army in Santiago surrendered to the United States, not to the victorious Cubans.

In 1889 Marti had written, 'Once the United States is in Cuba, who will get her out?' He was not a socialist, accusing Karl Marx of going 'too fast' - an accusation he was later to level at Carlos Balino, a member of Marti's own Cuban Revolutionary Party and founder of the Cuban Communist Party. Nevertheless, when Marx died in 1883, Marti paid tribute to 'the titanic force behind the anger of European workers... who saw deep into the reason for human miseries, and into men's destinies', who 'studied the ways of setting the world on new foundations and awoke those who were asleep, and taught them to pull down the broken supports [of society].'

It took the socialist Cuban revolution of 1959 to finally destroy US control, topple the institution of racism against which Marti had battled all his life, and to bring about the equality and social justice in Cuba of which he had dreamed.

US aims to tighten blockade

In April, there were seven bills aimed at tightening the illegal US blockade before Congress.

The most damaging, introduced by new Republican head of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, Jessie Helms, aims at strengthening international sanctions against Cuba by cutting off preferential trade rights to any country that buys sugar from Cuba and reships it to the US. It also demands compensation to US citizens for property expropriated during the revolution. Other bills include opposition to the admission of Cuba to the IMF and World Bank till it holds 'free and fair internationally supervised elections', and a demand that the US government aid any future 'transitional government'.

The Cuban government has made it clear that these measures will not defeat Cuba - it will not, in Castro's words, fall like ripe fruit into the lap of the US. But, if passed, the measures will mean increased hardship for the Cuban people and in-

crease the onslaught on the socialist foundations of the revolution itself, as Cuba is forced to continue to seek sources of hard currency to combat the effects of the crisis.

The angry response of the Canadian government and European Union, while welcome, must be understood. What these countries oppose is the infringement of their right to trade profitably with Cuba, not the blockade itself. In practice, they welcome the lack of US competition in Cuba, and use their business links in Cuba to press for 'political and economic reform' - that is, the wholesale reintroduction of the market.

Our campaign cannot be based on these forces, who have no interest in the welfare of the Cuban people but only profits. We must step up political opposition against the blockade itself - through campaigns like the Container for Cuba appeal, a boycott of US products, and making the national demonstration in October a success. ■



Cubans taking part in the May Day Rally protest against the Helms-Burton Bill

Rock around the blockade



Rock around the Blockade, FRFI's material aid and brigade to Cuba campaign, has raised £1,000 in the last three months. Special thanks

are due to Sam Masters of Communist Action, who raised £175 running a marathon, Ken and Hannah, who raised £190 in sponsorship for a tandem marathon, and Rene Waller for her generous donation. Other activities have included a fundraising dinner, petitioning at shopping centres, colleges and workplaces, and selling our new 'Rage against the US blockade' badge, available from FRFI for 50p.

● The next planning meeting in London is on Saturday 27 May, 3pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. Whether you are planning to come on the brigade or just want to get involved in activities, don't miss it. If you'd like to come on the brigade but haven't got £600 - then come to the meeting to discuss fundraising ideas. We are also showing the award-winning Cuban film, *Strawberry & Chocolate*, on Wednesday 7 June, Father Redcap Pub, 319 Camberwell Green, SE5. Doors open 6.45pm. Entrance by donation. A fundraising benefit is planned for July, and a sponsored bike-ride for September.

● A successful initial planning meeting was held in Manchester in early May. A sponsored Manchester-Blackpool bike ride is planned for 9 July - contact Rock around



the Blockade, c/o FRFI, Dept 4, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1WH for sponsorship forms and details of how to get involved.

● Two FRFI supporters in Dundee planning to come on the brigade joined Dundee's May Day march under a banner of Che Guevara to begin building political, financial and material support for Dundee's solidarity initiatives, which include working with the STUC Medical Aid for Cuba. They will be organising Club Cubana discos, raffles, car boot sales, stalls and material aid collections. A Sierra Stravaig is planned around the highest mountains in Britain - just as the Cuban revolution began in the highest mountains on the island! Planning and information meeting: Thursday 15 June, 7.30pm, Kandahar House, Dundee, where a video of 'Inside Castro's Cuba' will be shown. Entrance £1/50p.

Rock around the Blockade is raising funds to buy a sound system for a Cuban youth centre. We need to raise £4,000. We are organising a work brigade from 21 December-4 January to take the aid over, work with young Cubans, and gain first-hand knowledge of the Cuban revolution. The overall cost will be about £600. For further details, write to Rock around the Blockade, c/o FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX or tel: 0171 837 1688. ■

Cuba Solidarity Campaign AGM The fight for active solidarity

At the 1995 Cuba Solidarity Campaign (CSC) AGM held in April, RCG comrades fought alongside local CSC groups to ensure progress on major issues, in particular to secure a national demonstration in October's Week of Action, and to inject some sense of urgency into solidarity work with Cuba.

Throughout the day, local groups and individual members consistently voted for motions aimed at activities and in support of local group autonomy; the executive and their trade union block vote consistently voted against.

A motion by vice-chair Tim Young, aimed at circumscribing local group autonomy, was successfully amended to demand executive support for local group activities. When Chair Ken Gill, having said he would take no more speakers, attempted to state his own opposition to the amendment he was shouted down by delegates for abusing his position.

Support for the demonstration was won in spite of leading members of the executive such as Jude Woodward arguing that it would put too much pressure on the national office and be a show of weakness. The South London CSC proposer retorted that if Castro, who had set out in the *Granma* with only 32 supporters - most of whom were killed almost immediately - had worried about numbers, where would the Cuban Revolu-

tion be? Given banner headlines in *Cuba Si* following the World Solidarity Conference in Havana - 'Demonstrations in 1,000 cities', should that now be amended to '999 cities'? The motion was carried.

Local groups should now form an Ad-hoc Committee to organise for the demonstration, maintain pressure on the executive and ensure the march is a success. It cannot be left to the national executive - within a week, executive member and MSF rep Martin Hoare had told Birmingham CSC not to support the national demonstration. He had used his seven MSF votes to oppose it and argued 'we don't have to do what the AGM decides.'

The biggest political battle was over the 1995 Proposals for Campaigning which state: 'Our task as a solidarity movement remains to build the broadest possible alliance of forces to defend Cuba's national sovereignty. We do not ask that this solidarity is predicated in any way on support for the present government in Cuba, its policies, its economic system or the Cuban Communist Party.' On what, then, should Cuba solidarity be based? But for Cuba's socialist policies and economic system it would not today so urgently need the CSC's support. Absolutely, we must build 'a broad

alliance'. But on whose terms? Is the trade union movement really so right-wing as to be frightened off by any open espousal of a socialist system that has delivered an infant mortality rate lower than parts of Britain and a health service that even the *Daily Mirror* admires? Certainly UNISON, hav-

under pressure, espoused the Container for Cuba material aid appeal, they have used their energies to go through the campaign leaflet with a toothcomb to remove any reference to Cuban socialism.

A Liverpool delegate proposed a delete-all amendment, replacing it with support for the Cuban government and the achievements of the revolution. The amendment was defeated, due in part to an abstention by the large Communist League contingent.

The RCG also argued to defend democracy within the movement, challenging a bureaucratic ruling from the chair preventing new members from voting, in the opening minutes of the AGM. While the issue may have appeared minor, the executive cannot be permitted to impose constitutional amendments on the organisation by diktat. In spite of Ken Gill's deliberate misrepresentation of the grounds of the challenge, a referral back was won.

Some argue that such challenges are petty, or threaten the 'unity' of the movement. But those committed to an active defence of Cuba showed throughout the day they were not prepared to sit back and see democracy undermined, local autonomy threatened and activity and initiative stifled. ■



The Container for Cuba material aid campaign promotes the active solidarity local groups want

ing failed miserably to defend our health service against closures and cuts, could learn from the Cuban example. Are hordes of liberals who would gladly give their all for Cuba, but for the dreaded 's' word, hammering at the gates? The CSC executive seem to think so. Having,

THE 1929 CRASH

'Liquidate labour, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers, liquidate real estate,' attributed to Andrew Mellon circa 1930, reputedly the richest man in the world.

The years 1929 to 1933 saw the most devastating economic crisis in capitalist history.

Millions of lives were pushed to the edge of an abyss, many were driven over. Through the ruins marched the forces that led to World War Two. TREVOR RAYNE examines the Great Crash of 1929, prelude to the Depression.

During the first nine months of 1987 Japanese investors poured \$15 billion into US share markets. On 19 October \$500 billion was wiped off Wall Street. The Chicago futures exchange fell 36 per cent in 2 days. Tokyo's Nikkei Dow share market plummeted 49 per cent in 1990. On 16 September 1992 the \$1 trillion a day currency market tore sterling out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism. This year the Mexican peso needed a \$50 billion rescue. Barings' fall gave a glimpse of the \$23 trillion derivatives casino into which banks and multinationals cast fortunes. This is speculative capital, parasitical and explosive; echoes of the Great Crash of 1929. Coming events cast their shadows before them.

The 1929 Encyclopaedia Britannica's entry for Capitalism reads, 'It is certain, however, that though there must always be some tidal movement of rise and fall, the former violence of these rhythms is now much abated [owing] to the better adjustment altogether of world forces of supply and demand.' US President Coolidge's 1928 state of the Union message regarded 'the present with satisfaction and the future with optimism.' German Social Democrat Hilferding told his party's 1927 congress, 'we are in the period of capitalism which in the main has overcome ... the blind laws of the market, and we are coming to a capitalist organisation of economy ... to organised economy.'

Illusions in a steadily advancing capitalism were shared by all political leaders, trade unionists, Labour reformists, economists and business leaders. But not by Marxists. Henryk Grossman's *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalist System*, 1929, showed why crisis was inevitable and the Crash imminent.

Superficially the years preceding 1929 showed capitalism had recovered from the First World War and the threat of Bolshevism. The League of Nations index based on 1925-29 averages for industrial raw materials, industrial goods and world trade all showed increases from 92 to 111 for the year 1929. US industrial production rose from 95 to 109, Germany's 87 to 109 and Britain's 99 to 112.

Closer inspection reveals inter-imperialist rivalries fought out in the First World War unresolved. There was a serious trade imbalance between the major capitalist powers: the USA running a huge surplus with Europe (today Japan runs a surplus with the USA). Profitable investment opportunities were drying up with an over-production of capital that drove down the rate of profit and intensified the competition for world markets and resources. Excess capital had to be exported or deployed on the stock exchange to avoid a collapse of profits (today capital is desperate for deployment in China, India and the former socialist countries). Britain no longer dominated the world economy and the USA was yet to play this role. Today, growing rivalry between the USA, Japan and Europe reproduces the unstable setting in which credit-fuelled speculation can burst, send-



Unemployed workers queuing for soup in Paris during the slump

ing financial meltdown throughout the capitalist world.

Speculate to accumulate

To encourage trade, particularly with Europe, the US Federal Reserve central bank cut interest rates in 1927. US banks and their customers channelled funds into the stock market. Wall Street share dealing volumes rose 60 per cent from 1927 to 1928 driving up prices, attracting more funds. During 1929 Standard Oil of New Jersey pumped a daily average of \$69 million into the market. Loans from non-banking sources used to speculate began to exceed those of banks. Money flowed across the Atlantic as Europeans joined in.



A 1929 yuppie after the crash

With speculation it is not the asset itself, its usefulness, nor its return, but its price and the prospect that the price will rise that matters. Prices soared. The average price of Wall Street's leading industrial stock stood at 106 in May 1924, 245 at the end of 1927 and 449 on the last day of August 1929. Profits of 500 per cent plus were recorded, not for producing anything, not for satisfying some want or having some clever thought, but for being there - in the market. A blind, reckless rush to join in consumed people's savings and drained money from company investment plans. Each feast of profits betokened more feasts to come. Capitalism had

prized open the secret of limitless gain.

Great ingenuity was turned to this marvellous game to enable even more fortunes to be piled high. Deposit mechanisms (downpayments known as margins and leverage) promised multiple gains from minimum outlays. Splendidly misnamed investment trusts were devised to swallow up ever greater sums in pursuit of entirely the same number of shares.

The key to the unrelenting rise in share prices was the expansion in credit. The volume of brokers' loans to speculators rose from \$1 billion in the early 1920s to \$6 billion in 1928. Money could be borrowed from the Federal Reserve at 5 per cent and lent to speculators for 12 per cent. Instant effortless profit!

Wipeout

'Don't part with your illusions; when they are gone you may still exist, but you have ceased to live', a Mark Twain quote from the *Wall Street Journal* 11 September 1929.

Bouts of anxiety swept the markets but those who warned of a fall were denounced as wreckers. Others who sensed the game could not last chose ultimate rather than immediate collapse and took profits while they could.

Signs of doom could be seen in the doubling of stocks of primary products between 1923 and 1929, resulting in an agricultural crisis in the colonies. US industrial output fell during the summer of 1929. At some stage the economy of growing stocks of unsold goods and falling output would reflect onto the stock market.

Infinite expansion of credit is not possible. At some point the loan has to be paid back or credit will dry up. The surge in credit and share prices are competing claims on the real wealth produced. When output falls and goods cannot be sold, some claims will be written off, some loans will not be repaid. Then credit is withdrawn from the market, share prices fall and the stampede to sell begins. Debt levels supporting the share prices are many times higher than can be serviced by the returns from the investment itself. Holding on to shares during a price fall means

less and less chance of servicing the debt; bankruptcy looms.

On 21 October 1929 share prices fell. Some Jeremiah had warned that a day of reckoning was on hand. Some people listened. Countering such heresy the eminent economist Professor Irving Fisher suggested that the markets were yet to show the beneficial effects of prohibition which would make workers 'more productive and dependable'. Thus reassured rapid trading drove the index of leading industrial shares down from 415 to 384. (On 8 July 1932 it closed at 58.)

On 24 October 1929 triple the normal amount of shares changed hands. Prices went into perpendicular fall. Fear and panic gripped.

'Outside the Exchange on Broad Street a weird roar could be heard. A crowd gathered. Police Commissioner Grover Whalen... dispatched a special police detail to Wall Street to ensure the peace... A workman appeared atop one of the high buildings to accomplish some repairs, and the multitude assumed he was a would-be suicide and waited impatiently for him to jump' (Galbraith). Among the crowds was Winston Churchill, though on this occasion there is no record of him having anything to say. People looked on in helpless horror as paper fortunes vanished.

Day after day, week after week shares went mercilessly downwards. Stock that once sold at \$20 could be had for 50 cents. Meetings of bankers and statesmen to initiate 'organised support' achieved nothing. Every time a government spokesperson made a reassuring statement the market promptly fell. With all else failing John D. Rockefeller made his first public pronouncement in decades, 'Believing that the fundamental conditions of this country are sound ... my son and I have for some days been purchasing sound common stocks'.

'On La Salle Street in Chicago a boy exploded a firecracker. Like wildfire the rumour spread that gangsters whose margin accounts had been closed were shooting up the street. Several squads of police arrived to make them take their losses like honest men. In New York the body of a commission merchant was fished out of the Hudson. The pockets contained \$9.40 in change and some margin calls.' (Galbraith)

The US suicide rate had been rising for years but now it had a different class of suicide. Hotel booking clerks enquired whether guests wanted rooms for sleeping or for jumping. Two men jumped hand-in-hand from the Ritz. Word that someone had 'got caught' in the market brought creditors down like locusts. Naturally, the financial consequences of an illustrious death had to be considered before deciding to announce it.

Where once was the bonhomie of easy abundance now were narrow eyes of suspicion. Embezzlers and fraudsters were unmasked in the highest places and biggest banks: the former wizards of high finance were now crooks and charlatans. The economists and business people were clueless.

Banks across the USA raced to get their money out of Wall Street. As assets evaporated businesses were unable to meet loan repayments. The banks lost heavily, many closed. Between 1929 and 1933 the number of US banks fell from 25,000 to 18,000. Savings disappeared, a world of furs and jewels was lost. At his 1933 Presidential inauguration, Franklin Roosevelt announced that 'the

money changers have fled from the high seats in the temple of our civilisation'. Thus the Crash was blamed on unscrupulous speculators, an aberration from the presumably honest business of capitalism. Across the Atlantic another scapegoat was invented - the Jew.

The Depression

The financial crisis pulled credit out of companies and production and consumption slumped. By 1933 US industrial output fell to almost half its 1929 level. Thirteen million people were unemployed, 25 per cent of the work force. Farm incomes halved and food stocks were destroyed as people went hungry, too poor to buy them.

Scrambling for money, US banks recalled loans from Europe. World trade fell by 65 per cent. Primary commodity prices collapsed and in 1937 a producer received a third of their 1927 income. By 1932 the capitalist world had 30-50 million unemployed. In May 1931 the Kreditanstalt bank in Vienna was declared insolvent. The financial system of central Europe rocked; banks fell like rows of dominoes. In August 1932 Germany's unemployment rate was 44 per cent with a further 26 per cent on part-time work. Fearing communist revolution the Deutsche Bank and the Dresdner Bank swung behind Hitler. In 1922 the National Socialist Party had fewer than 200 members; in 1928 it had six members in the Reichstag. In 1932 it polled 13 million votes and elected 230 members. For Europe as a whole in June 1932 industry was working at 35-40 per cent of capacity.



Nightmare on Wall Street, 1987

Britain had 3 million unemployed, under 25 per cent of the work force. Worried about a financial crisis in Britain, bankers insisted that the Labour government run a balanced budget and slash wages. The government split, with Ramsay MacDonald joining a National Government including Liberals and Conservatives. It imposed an emergency budget with severe spending and wage cuts. This provoked the threat of a mutiny in the Navy at Invergordon. Further shaken investors took gold out of the country. On 2 September 1931 the National Government, formed to preserve the Gold Standard and save the pound, took sterling off the Gold Standard and the pound sank 30 per cent. Almost all other capitalist countries left the Gold Standard. Exchange rate competition followed as part of a fierce protectionism in which each ruling class tried to unload its losses onto the other. The talk of peace and stability that preceded 1929 gave way to the language of war.

With the planned economy making it almost immune to the international capitalist crisis, the Soviet economy nearly doubled in size during 1927-33.

Reference: JK Galbraith, *The Great Crash 1929*

The film *Bandit Queen* tells the story of Phoolam Devi, a member of one of the lowest castes (the Mallah). She was sold by her father into marriage at the age of 11 – the price was a battered old bicycle. Her husband violently abused and raped her. In defiance she left him and was subsequently beaten, paraded naked through the village and gang raped by upper caste men because of her defiance. In response to the murder of her lover she eventually formed her own gang and exacted a terrible revenge on her oppressors, including the massacre of 22 upper caste Thakurs – a predominant caste of village landlords well known for their brutality.

By 1983 Devi was a folk hero for the lower castes and Dalits (Untouchables), and in spite of illness and despair from years on the run she was able to negotiate her own surrender to the authorities in Madhya Pradesh in front of 100,000 supporters. This is the story which is told with brutal realism in this film. As the film director, Shekhar Kapur said, Phoolam Devi's story is not that different from that of other lower caste women 'except that she tried to shoot her way out of a centuries-old caste trap that seeks to put women like her in a social cage with other lowly animals.'

Devi was subsequently imprisoned with 55 murder and robbery charges against her. She was never put on trial – her popularity would have prevented it. Under the surrender deal she should have been released in 1991, but the government of Uttar Pradesh, at the time dominated by the high-caste right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), delayed her release by ordering her extradition from Madhya Pradesh. At the November 1993 regional elections the BJP was defeated in Uttar Pradesh by a socialist coalition of the Samajwadi (Socialist) Janata Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) brought to power by the support of the lower castes. In February 1994 the new regime ordered Devi's release from Tihar gaol in New Delhi and six months later the film of her story was made.

A dangerous example

The danger that *Bandit Queen* represents for the ruling elite in India is not personified by Phoolam Devi herself. She has opposed the film – since her release she has married a wealthy Thakur businessman and has her own political ambitions. What is dangerous is the example of her defiance at a time when the lower castes and Dalits throughout India are testing their strength against the corrupt political elite which rules the country.

All levels of government and its vast corrupt bureaucratic elite have been in the hands of the upper castes continually since Independence in 1947. In 1991 when the current Prime Minister Rao took over on behalf of the Congress Party after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, India had just enough foreign currency to pay for 20 day's worth of imported food and fuel. The International Monetary Fund prescription was familiar: harsh austerity for the masses and a package of economic reforms to benefit capital. Rao duly introduced reforms aimed at modernising India's bureaucracy-ridden economy, by removing barriers to foreign investment.

The principal beneficiaries have been the multinationals which, free of government control, are busily buying up local industries. Between November 1994 and February 1995, these deals pushed up the Bombay stock exchange 50 per cent in value. Their target is the new market created by the rapidly growing middle class who number about 200 million and who regard 'better products' as their birthright. Miss World and Miss Universe (both Indian) currently promote Pepsi and Coke. Ford, Kellogg's, McDonald's, Mercedes-Benz, Levi's,



Bihar – March 1995: militant Dalit women train to fight corruption in state elections

BANDIT QUEENS

The September showing at various film festivals of *Bandit Queen* caused outrage in India, both from the censors and from the subject of the film herself, Phoolam Devi. Since then, the film has been on general release in Britain and other countries, but has not been released in India. The state censors and Devi herself have argued that it should not be shown because of the sexually explicit depiction of rape in the film. But the real underlying fear was expressed by a wealthy upper caste woman who walked out of a private viewing of the film in Delhi: 'This film unduly glorifies the lower castes. It could incite them to more violence'. What is at the issue is the increasing threat to India's political elite and burgeoning middle class from the newly organised poor – in particular the women.

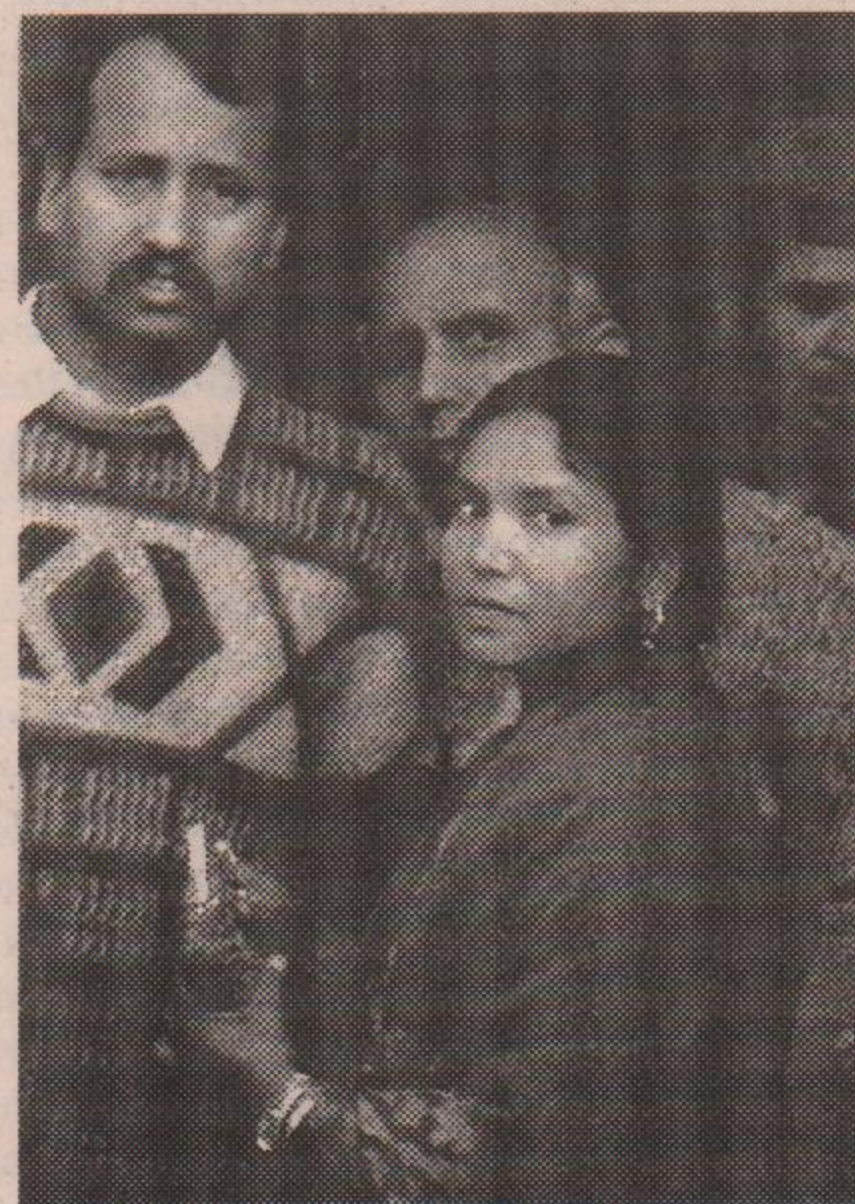
Honda and Budweiser are all setting up shop. By the year 2000 Japan expects to be India's biggest foreign investor.

In stark contrast the conditions of the poor have deteriorated – the outbreak of plague last year in Gujarat was just one indication. Major cities like Bombay are cess pits bursting at the seams with disease and pollution, with no sanitation or services for the majority of inhabitants who arrive in their millions from the countryside in search of work, only to be trapped in the stinking filth which surrounds small pockets of extreme wealth.

Conditions in rural areas are even worse and the blight of the caste system more savage. Although untouchability customs were banned decades ago, the caste system still operates to ensure that the lower castes and Dalits remain illiterate and destitute. An estimated 80 per cent of India's 750 million Hindus are lower caste and 70 per cent of the population lives in rural areas. According to Unicef, two out of three of India's children are malnourished, only 50% attend school and child labour is rife. 223 million people live below the poverty line. One young man from Madhya Pradesh described his plight: 'We worked for the landlord 12 hours a day, my father and I, and sometimes my brothers, and we were paid two-and-a-half kilos of un-

husked rice a day for the whole family...If I had tried to leave and been caught, they would have beaten me and perhaps killed me, and if I did escape they would have beaten the rest of my family.'

What India's poor do have, however, is the vote.



Phoolam Devi on the day of her release

Fighting back

In the face of corruption and in the teeth of 'reforms' which have benefited only the elite and the middle class, the poor have exercised their

vote in a series of regional elections to oust the ruling Congress Party. The first state to fall was India's most populous, Uttar Pradesh, in November 1993. Others have followed so that the Congress Party faces electoral disaster in the next general election which has to be called by May 1996. One senior civil servant has commented: 'There's nothing to be hoped for from the present political system. It's too corrupt and decay has gone too far. The only hope is renovation at the grassroots.'

During 1994 the grassroots made their presence felt. Although India's first constitution reserved only 22.5 per cent of government jobs and university places for Dalits and lower castes, and stipulated a maximum of 50 per cent for the future, some southern states dramatically increased quotas to more than 70 per cent under political pressure. In the north, promises to improve the prospects of lower castes and Dalits were opposed by high-caste violence, rioting and rape in lower caste areas.

In a sharp echo of *Bandit Queen*, in Uttar Pradesh early in 1994 a gang of men stripped a 50-year-old lower-caste woman and paraded her through a village for an hour because her son was caught picking peas on the land of a wealthy farmer. Commenting on the violent backlash, a University of New Delhi academic explained: 'The spurt of violence is

mainly to shatter the newly acquired confidence of the oppressed.'

But this confidence will be very hard to shatter as all political parties now recognise that support from the lower castes and Dalits will be essential in the coming general election. Over the last year state after state has rejected Congress Party control. In the most recent regional elections in March Congress lost control of Maharashtra state, whose capital is Bombay, for the first time since 1947 and as a result the Bombay stock exchange suffered its worst single-day losses. Following this, a meeting of Congress representatives in New Delhi ended in a brawl when Rao's supporters clashed with opponents demanding that Gandhi's widow Sonia take control and save the party before the general election.

Grassroots opposition

While the corrupt Congress Party now looks set to be defeated, the alternatives come from both a resurgent left and from the hard-line Hindu fundamentalist right who are reviving after a loss of popularity following the demolition of Babri Mosque in December 1992. Both Maharashtra and Gujarat states fell to the right-wing Hindu BJP which relies traditionally on the support of high caste Hindus, in alliance with Shiv Sena, another fundamentalist party whose leader admires Hitler.

Their programme has two planks: anti-Muslim racism and the defence of national capital. Their first act on taking power was to announce plans to drive out thousands of illegal Muslim immigrants from Bombay and to ban Muslim congregations spilling onto streets during Friday prayers. Both parties have promised to act against multinational takeovers, but foreign capital can afford to be more phlegmatic than the oppressed Muslim community: 'Once in power, politicians tend to become more pragmatic', said the managing partner of Andersen Consulting in Bombay on the day after the election.

In contrast, the BSP-SP coalition which defeated the BJP and Congress Parties to take power in Uttar Pradesh, and which freed Phoolam Devi from gaol, stands on a platform opposed to the caste system and religious bigotry. As a result it won the support of Muslims as well as the lower castes.

In Andhra Pradesh, where the Congress Party was ousted in November elections, a campaign against alcohol sparked off powerful community organisation, and it is in this development that the hopes of the oppressed are expressed. A small group of women in Pudukolashmi village, meeting as part of a literacy campaign, began to discuss their common problems – including drunken husbands. They saved their money to buy-up all the alcohol in the village, then poured it over the liquor store and burned it down. Women in other villages followed suit with such success that the two main parties contesting the November elections had to adopt an alcohol ban as part of their programmes. The alcohol ban is now in force.

200,000 women are now organised in 6,000 groups. They have five objectives: education, immunisation, no alcohol, no under-age marriages, savings of 1 rupee a day to fund local credit unions to prevent loan sharks and rich landlords controlling the poor. As a result of this organisation among the oppressed, family planning and health have improved. In Bihar province lower caste women armed themselves to organise against corruption in the state elections in March.

All over the India the oppressed are beginning to fight back. With such a potential force acting in the interests of the majority, a film like *Bandit Queen* could prove to be the spark which lights a revolution against ruling class barbarity. That is why it has been banned.

Carol Brickley

We only want the Earth

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! has produced this pull-out feature because we recognise the importance of the struggles for social and environmental justice that are taking place in many parts of Britain. People are protesting against the endless encroachments of the car; against the methods and effects of intensive agriculture; the criminalisation of youth culture and protest itself. Through this supplement we support and give a voice to those struggles. We identify the enemies of this movement and answer their slurs.

There are many potential and real currents of opposition in Britain today – from those fighting roads, to those



fighting racist attacks, to those living in poverty as yet with no political voice. They know that

none of the existing political institutions or parties expresses their interests or wants to radically alter British society. If all these streams came together a powerful force could be created which would begin to change the political landscape. It will not be easy to build such a movement and our present rulers will try to suppress it. Their vicious response to protests such as Greenpeace's successful anti-nuclear activities and the adoption of the Criminal Justice Act shows what they will do.

But all over the world the poor and oppressed, those fighting for a better world, build their own organisations often in the face of violent suppression. The terrible suffering being caused by capitalism and its potentially disastrous destruction of the earth makes such a movement not an optional extra but a vital necessity.

Profits or the Planet

At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, a US delegate commented that 'environment protection has replaced communism as the great threat to capitalism'. Recently a spate of publications have sought to respond to this 'threat'. Dubbed the 'new contrarians', the authors argue that environmental concerns and capitalism need not conflict. Their arguments will be trotted out wherever a particular issue stirs wide sections of society, as the environmental question has begun to do. The basic tenet is always the same, whether the issue is the environment, poverty, housing, racism, attacks on democratic rights: don't worry, the system can accommodate your concerns, capitalism can be reformed. Such arguments are a danger to the progressive movement.

Probably the most significant and certainly the most widely publicised of these new publications is Richard D North's *Life on a Modern Planet: A manifesto for progress*. North with his green credibility – a former editor of a pioneering green magazine *Vole* and former environment correspondent for *The Independent* – is a suitable agent for pro-capitalist propaganda. It is not surprising that the multinational ICI paid him an undisclosed sum for writing the book.

North does not dispute that humanity faces serious environmental problems: 'Even when one strips out the hype, atmospheric change remains a serious threat'. On action against global warming, he accepts that '...we need to start soon if we want to see our actions produce an effect within, say, two or three generations'.

What he and his fellow contrarians dispute is the necessary connection between these problems and the activities of big business. North believes that it is 'the strongly-resourced, widely-experienced multinational that [stands] a chance of doing things well'. In particular, North argues that the third world needs 'capitalism and the vigour of the market' to feed its growing poor population.

Dirty business

There's a bit of a problem here: these multinationals are actually the ones most responsible for the damage already done to the environment. For example, the world's largest 500 companies produce 50% of the world's greenhouse gases. Capitalist development in the IMF's miracle economies of the third world is only wreaking more havoc. Brazil spews into Rio's beautiful Guanabara Bay 470 tonnes of raw sewage, 5,500 tonnes of rubbish, 70 tonnes of industrial effluents and nine tonnes of oil every day. More people have access to a television than to clean drinking water. Taiwan has three factories per square kilometre and 15 times more cars per square kilometre than the USA. The cancer rate has doubled in the last 30 years. Asthma amongst children has leapt four-fold in the last ten.

So can capitalist enterprises clean up their act? No. There is an inherent trend for capitalism to increase the devastation which it unleashes upon the environment. As its enterprises compete for the mass market, they constantly seek to increase the rate at which they can produce cheap commodities. This requires enormously productive labour processes, which suck in vast amounts of energy and raw materials and spew out waste. So in the post-war period, plastics have replaced leather in the US shoe industry, using only about a quarter of the

amount of labour but ten times as much capital (machinery, raw materials etc) and 30 times as much energy. The growth of great monopolies whose operations span the globe and have the pick of its resources only increases this trend. The great productive capacity of capitalism holds an ever-increasing capacity for destruction.

What is more, at every stage of their operations these giants seek to cut costs to increase profitability. They will not saddle themselves with extra costs of meeting environmental standards if it can be at all avoided. That is not to say that they are not capable of adapting to public pressure, when they can afford to. But they will make as small a concession as is necessary to diffuse public concerns and, in times of recession such

corporations.

North says higher taxes and tougher legislation should protect resources and prevent pollution. What government has the political will to carry through a serious programme aimed at curtailing these engines of the capitalist economy? Tony Blair's (or anyone else's) Labour? In the US the grain producer Cargill, whose offices in India have recently been attacked by Indian farmers, is the single biggest contributor to the balance of payments. Is Bill Clinton going to bite the hand that feeds his electorate?

Capitalism or socialism

Matt Ridley (nephew of Tory grandee Nicholas Ridley), another contrarian, was praised by *The Daily Telegraph* for exposing the fact that 'many green arguments are just old socialist ones dressed up in new clothes'. Ridley is right. Even North's proposals are impossible without interfering with the production of profit. It is clear that the sort of decisions that have to be made cannot be left to greedy men in corporate boardrooms. It is clear that production must be planned and controlled according to need and what is ecologically sustainable. A social system is required that prizes the supply of clean water above televisions. Capitalism will not and can not do this.



as these, even minor concessions will be resisted tooth and nail. So countries still relying heavily on the oil and coal industry, such as the US and Japan, bitterly opposed even the token restrictions on fossil fuel emissions recently discussed at the Berlin summit on global warming. And, if necessary, these mighty corporations can always keep happy their privileged domestic market by shifting environmentally hazardous operations or products to other, usually third world, countries.

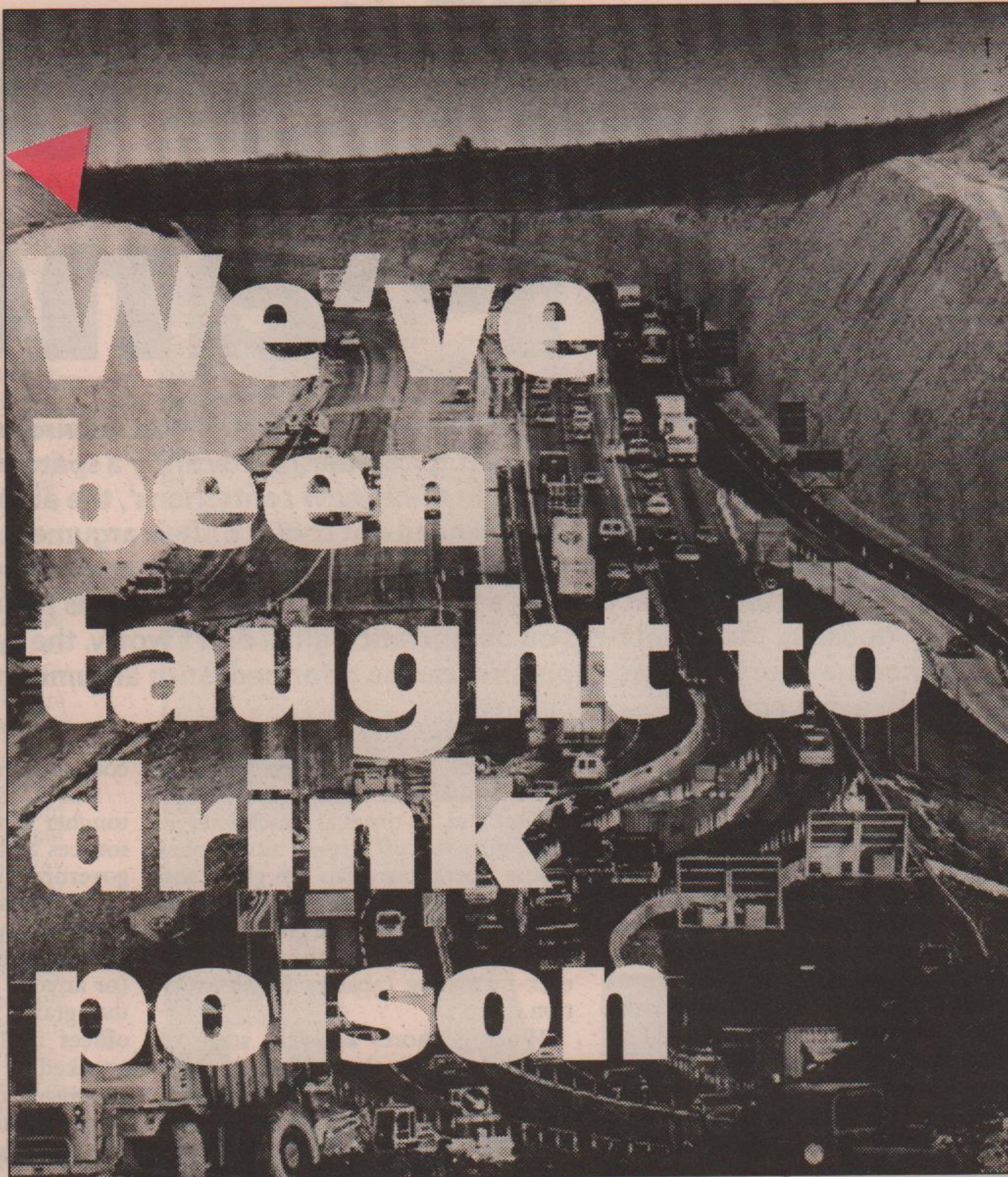
Notwithstanding this, North says capitalism can be taught to behave itself. 'One should not expect industry to be green', he says, 'only to be good citizens' (p266). We can expect nothing of the sort. The sort of companies responsible for the state of the planet are not accountable citizens. They run the show. North says 'the public can trust the regulators who advise politicians about how to control... chemicals'. The reality is that the regulatory bodies are stuffed full of business placemen. Of the 26 members of the recently established watchdog 'Business and the Environment' 24 are from big business. If business cannot get its own people in on the act, it bribes those who are. In 1993, 12 out of 17 members of the government's Food Advisory Committee admitted receiving cash payments from food

We are not without examples of possibilities for recuperating the environment damaged by capitalist greed. Take Vietnam which, after defeating the US, faced appalling environmental devastation caused by the US' use of Agent Orange. The Vietnamese Communist Party addressed this problem with a programme which included every school-child planting one tree a year. A sustained governmental programme has reclaimed vast areas of land devastated by US bombing. Together with such environmental programmes, socialism also brought Vietnam, one of the poorest countries in the world, universal free education and health-care. That is real human development. But unfortunately, as a recent John Pilger documentary showed, with capitalism now 'developing' Vietnam the first things to go have been the environment, education and healthcare.

Socialism has the potential to salvage the environment because it puts people not profits first. It would dispossess the corporations that have done all the damage and place power in the hands of the poor who, as author Paul Harrison puts it, 'tread lightest upon the earth'. In other words, it would give humanity a chance to seriously address the problems North acknowledges, but cannot answer.

Sarah Bond

We only want the Earth



We've been taught to drink poison

Recent months have seen a rash of media articles extolling apparent moves by the government to halt the so-called 'great car economy'. Transport Secretary Brian Mawhinney has taken a greener approach than his predecessors', sang *The Observer*, while *The Guardian* in a recent editorial ('U-turns on the road to salvation') announced that the suspension of a number of road schemes was 'a prime example of the Thatcherite revolution going into reverse.'

These views have been echoed in some parts of the anti-roads movement who have proclaimed delight that the government has 'lost the arguments' and 'seen sense' at last.

Meanwhile, in the Stanworth Valley in Lancashire a massive police/bailiff operation has violently evicted the remaining anti-M65 protesters protecting acres of trees that have now been felled. As nitrogen dioxide and ozone levels have again soared to dangerous levels in the recent hot weather, risking the health of millions of people, one wonders precisely what kind of U-turn has taken place.

Fourteen lanes becomes twelve lanes

Under mounting public pressure certain highly unpopular and high profile road schemes have been dropped or cut back. The plans to expand a section of the M25 to 14 lanes have been shelved, although the DoT is pressing ahead to expand other sections to ten and 12 lanes. The M11 Link Road, M77, M65 and other schemes which have been opposed by popular direct action are, of course, underway and those protesting against them are being criminalised.

It may look good on TV for Mawhinney to threaten to penalise drivers of 'dirty vehicles', but the reality is that the car's hegemony is unchallenged. The recent resumption in growth in car sales has been lauded by Ministers as a 'green shoot of economic recovery'. Car ownership and use, which increased by 33 per cent between 1983 and 1993, continues to rise inexorably. Emissions from vehicle exhausts have increased by 73 per cent since 1981. More than 19 million British people are exposed to deadly levels of pollutants. Asthma has become an epidemic amongst children.

Perhaps someone can put the following to Mawhinney or Gummer next time they are on Question Time.

Why was the report on road accidents involving children suppressed?

The 'green' Mr Mawhinney personally vetoed a DoT report showing that children of poor families and non-white ethnic groups were more likely to be killed and injured by traffic. Transport Consultant John Whitelegg commented, 'Those children who stubbornly hang on to the street as a vital part of their social life...are punished by death and injury for their temerity in resisting the complete domination of the car.'

Why are road protesters being criminalised?

The government spends £500,000 per month subsidising security for road building sites. It has also been a bonanza for private investigators who have been paid to spy on and infiltrate campaigns. Despite the failure to force Twyford Down protesters to pay millions of pounds in compensation for disrupting work, the same tactic is now being used against M11 campaigners.

Why aren't we told the truth about vehicle pollution?

The British government routinely lies to the public about air quality. We are told air quality is 'good' even when pollution massively exceeds World Health Organisation standards. Pollution monitoring sites are placed away from heavy traffic in defiance of EC law. The government sets no air quality standard for nitrogen dioxide and has sabotaged EC moves to formulate one. There is no standard for the carcinogenic particulates emitted mainly by diesel engines, which kill an estimated 10,000 people every year in Britain. The government also has no plans to issue a standard for benzene, another known carcinogen, until the year 2000.

Why are there no restrictions on vehicles when pollution is very bad?

As nitrogen dioxide and ozone smog blanketed Britain in early May, Dr John Moore-Gillon, chairman of the British Lung Foundation, commented that 'Britain may run out of fresh air in many parts of the country. Five million lung disease sufferers could be affected by this cocktail cloud of pollution.'

Even the minimal measures proposed by Friends of the Earth (closing some roads, lowering speed limits etc) to deal with this crisis have been ignored. Instead, the government's laughable free pollution helpline tells people whose

health is affected by the appalling air quality that they 'may feel uncomfortable', and should 'talk to their doctor'. Children are expected not to play outside, and joggers to stop jogging. But the right to drive is the one human right you can guarantee the system will respect.

Profits first

Car manufacture and consumption is central to the world capitalist economy. This global industry dominated by transnational corporations reflects a world divided - pockets of affluence and privilege for a minority, grinding poverty, hunger and destitution for the majority. 25 per cent of the world's population drive 90 per cent of the world's cars and consume 70 per cent of the fossil fuel used to power them. Transport policy in the UK, and most of the world, is geared to the profit-making activities of these corporations.

The car-making multinationals are rapidly creating new markets in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Their reach is already extended in the Third World, where they are responsible for 90 per cent of the vehicles produced. Wielding enormous economic and political power, the multinationals have exported car-based transport systems throughout the Third World, increasing dependence on oil and petroleum imports which further push up punishing levels of foreign debt. In Haiti, only one in every 200 people owns a car, yet at least a third of imports are fuel and transport equipment.

Between 1972 and 1985 only one per cent of World Bank funding for urban transport in the Third World went to pedestrian facilities, with almost 80 per cent directed to road vehicle schemes. Non-motorised forms of travel, such as bicycles, receive almost no subsidy. The transport systems built serve the needs of wealthy local elites. Structural adjustment programmes forced on these countries by the World Bank have in

hell of Los Angeles is the only possible model of modernisation; a vertiginous superhighway that scorns public transport, practises velocity as a form of violence, and drives people out. We've been taught to drink poison, and we'll pay any price as long as it comes in a shiny bottle.'

Global warming

The multinationals of the motor industry have historically opposed any legislation or measures that may restrict their freedom to make money. Moves for improved fuel efficiency, control over exhaust emissions, lead in petrol and vehicle speeds have all been vigorously fought. The big three of the auto industry, General Motors, Ford and Chrysler, paid lobbyists and lawyers more than \$1.8 million to fight clean air legislation between 1981 and 1988.

In the UK, the road lobby similarly opposes any attempt to oppose any road scheme. John Gummer's recent launch of Air Quality: Meeting the Challenge was warmly welcomed by the AA and the British Road Federation for giving local councils no statutory powers to do anything about serious vehicle emissions.

It came as no surprise to hear that the car multinationals and the oil-producing states engaged hundreds of lobbyists at the recent disastrous UN Conference on Climate Change in Berlin in a successful attempt to prevent any meaningful agreement on cutting carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, the major cause of global warming.

Representatives of the Alliance of Small Island States, whose survival threatened by a rise in sea levels the global warming will produce, called for a 20 per cent reduction in CO₂ levels by the year 2005 - a level that scientists agree is a minimum requirement for the industrialised world who produce 60 per cent of CO₂ emissions.

As direct action protests against road building and in defence of the environ-



ment have grown rapidly and successfully, ministers have donned the 'green' attire. Gummer posed as defender of the environment in a recent comment: 'Sustainable development is exactly the right phrase: you need to have growth and prosperity if you are going to sustain the environment.'

Continents of hunger and pollution

The worst effects of pollution are experienced by people living in the huge cities of the South - Seoul, Bombay, Bangkok, Manila, Calcutta, Cairo, Lagos, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Mexico City etc. Every child born in Santiago de Chile breathes the equivalent of seven cigarettes daily, and one in every four children suffers from some form of bronchitis. 60 per cent of the residents of Calcutta have pollution-related respiratory disorders.

The writer Eduardo Galeano has described how the imperialist system has imposed a 'dictatorship of the automobile' on the South, where cars have the freedom to 'vomit lead from their exhaust pipes' and in the name of free enterprise the air is made unbreathable.

'The giants that make cars and gasoline - businesses nearly as juicy as arms and drugs - have convinced us that the motor is the only possible prolongation of the human body... We Latin Americans have swallowed the pill that the

ment have grown rapidly and successfully, ministers have donned the 'green' attire. Gummer posed as defender of the environment in a recent comment: 'Sustainable development is exactly the right phrase: you need to have growth and prosperity if you are going to sustain the environment.'

The sustainable development Gummer is talking about is the sustainable development of capitalism - a system based on the right to pollute and waste which creates affluence for a few.

Movements that seek to defend the environment from the forces of institutionalised greed will of necessity have challenge not just the primacy of the car as a means of transport, but also the multinationals whose lust for profit is the root cause of the crisis facing humanity.

Bill Hughes

■ In the London Borough of Greenwich where one in four boys has asthma, residents are challenging the council in High Court. During the heat wave at the beginning of May, when pollution levels exceeded safety limits, the council refused to use their power to restrict traffic by closing roads in order to protect public health.

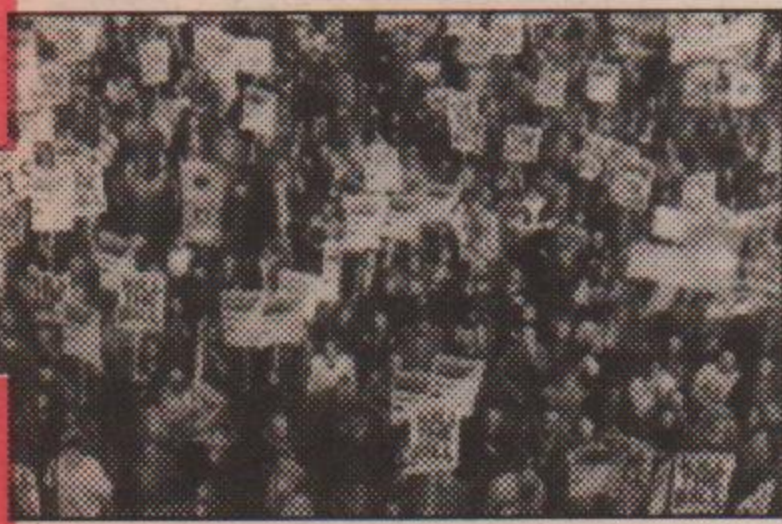
Communists and the fight for the future

Does communism have anything to offer the anti-CJA, anti-roads movement?

Colin Chalmers,

a communist actively involved in the anti-CJA group

Justice?, looks at a movement fighting for all our futures.



COLIN CHALMERS



COLIN CHALMERS

As reported in FRFI 124, a huge force of police and security guards attacked the Pollok Free State camp in Glasgow on 22 March to clear the way for the M77. Fearful of a repeat of the St Valentine's Day action, local school students were locked in with police at the gates to prevent the youth joining in.

Surprise of the year is that drunken Tory ex-minister Alan Stewart is to face breach of the peace charges at Paisley Sheriff Court.

FRFI/RCG supporters and activists in the Dundee Alliance against the Act paid a solidarity visit to Pollok Free State after the attack on the camp and learned first-hand of the brutality of police and security guards. The protesters called for solidarity actions and on 6 April the Dundee Alliance occupied a walkway over a busy dual carriageway flying banners in support of the M77 protest.

On 15 May, M77 protesters took the battle against vehicle pollution right into the heart of Glasgow. At morning rush hour, they handcuffed themselves across Hope St, the most polluted street in Europe due to the build-up of exhaust fumes from the masses of deregulated buses. Arrests were made but the campaigners have promised 'a summer of defiance and fun'.

Michael Taylor

Critical Mass

On the last Friday in April, 500 cyclists gathered at Waterloo Bridge to mark a year of Critical Mass – the anti-car, pro-bicycle, pro-public transport, pro-clean air campaign that, once a month, literally reclaims the streets of London.

The bikes poured onto Waterloo roundabout, cycling slowly round and round till no cars could get on, then progressed, in a colourful, musical, joyful procession around central London to Trafalgar Square. Passers-by, seeing the banners – 'Car free zone' and 'Let London breathe' – cheered and waved but some drivers frothed at the mouth and screamed abuse. One driver at Hyde Park Corner deliberately knocked a cyclist off his bike before speeding off.

Critical Mass takes place the last Friday of every month. Next rally: Friday 26 May, meet 5.45 near the Bullring, Waterloo.

No M65 Siege of Stanworth Woods

Arriving in a huge convoy of vehicles, special climbing teams, Group 4 security guards and over 300 police immediately sealed off several acres of ancient woodland. Besieged in the centre, 80 feet above in an aerial village of 40 tree houses linked via five kilometres of roped walkways were the No M65 anti-road campaigners. Back on the ground, powers now available to the police under the CJA were used to turn away the gathering crowds of spectators and supporters. Nobody was allowed to witness what happened.

The siege of Stanworth Woods lasted seven days and involved 62 arrests. Violent tactics were used by the police

and bailiffs. Rope walkways were cut down with protesters still on them, trees were hacked down before all the protesters were evicted. One woman was struck on the head with an industrial saw. Those arrested were only granted bail on condition that they did not return to the wood. The belongings they left there have now been trashed along with the woods.

Jack Straw, Labour MP for Blackburn, said 'I offer my full support to the way in which the police have handled their operation to clear the wood.' He and the Labour Party also fully backed and campaigned for this destructive road development.

Billy Cookson

Mayday 1994 saw the first national demonstration against the Criminal Justice Bill – over 20,000 people marching and partying their way through London. What was most significant about this march was that the people who had turned up to defend our democratic rights were not the unions, not the Labour Party, not the left. It was people involved in the dance scene, travellers, squatters and supposedly 'apolitical' young people who said 'enough is enough'. A movement was in the making.

After a second demonstration in July the Daily Star wrote 'they made a nauseating sight. For three hours the dregs of Britain – scroungers, anarchists, and shaven-headed troublemakers – rampaged through London... The sooner the new law comes into force the better'.

Yes, the dregs were on the move – and making links between oppressive laws, racism, intolerance and wider attacks on some of the most oppressed sections of society. As a leaflet put out by travellers in Bristol at the time put it:

'Late last year a family with their baby in Gloucestershire were attacked with CS Gas while local onlookers cheered the attackers on. Last month people in Manchester were shot at by gunmen. Several ended up in hospital. One woman nearly lost her baby. The reality of the Criminal Justice Bill is here already.'

A movement under attack

In October the police attacked an anti-CJA march as it approached Hyde Park. Their intention was clear – to see if physical intimidation would frighten and split this new and politically inexperienced movement.

The ruling class did, after all, have a lot to be scared of. As *The Independent* said: 'A rainbow coalition has been created that none of the main parties can call its own. Once united, it is likely to have a political impact that outlasts controversy over this particular Bill... Tony Blair's new Labour Party, fearful of straying from the centre of British politics, is at best ambivalent, at worst openly hostile, to this social phenomenon'.

The answer to police intimidation came soon enough. The day after the Bill became law five protesters scaled the roof of Parliament and stayed there for over five hours; six days later the forcible eviction of the 52-day-old anti-CJA squat in Brighton's old Court-house saw protesters take to the roof again. On 18 November there were illegal demonstrations throughout Scotland in defiance of the new Act, including a march of 4,000 in Glasgow (the SWP-run 'Coalition against the CJA', true to form, held its own legal march). On 20 November Michael Howard's house was occupied by 250 protesters; and the anti-CJA movement got a weekly newsletter when the SchNEWS started publishing that week.

Then on the morning of 28 November 200 bailiffs, 400 security guards and 700 police started evicting 500 anti-M11 protesters from Claremont Road in East London. The eviction took four days and cost £2m.

Movement of the people

The movement that has grown up around opposition to road-building, the Criminal Justice Act and other issues draws support from a wide variety of people. It is a real movement – and because it is real it is complex and con-

tradictory. What is unarguable is its progressive content.

Against a political background where the traditional left has failed to build any real opposition to attacks on our rights and our environment, this movement has made a stand for what it believes in – a way of life that sustains the planet, a society based on the needs of people not profit, decent housing for all, justice and equality. This movement has shown a degree of self-reliance and militancy that has not been seen in Britain since the miners' strike; it has its closest parallels today with the struggles of peoples in the third world fighting against the unending attacks on their ways of life and environment.

As Jeremy Seabrook wrote about the anti-M11 protest, 'The people in Leytonstone understand these connections. They aren't just another pressure group, but represent a growing movement of dissent and hope in the desolate social landscape of contemporary Britain'.

It would have been impossible for a serious movement to come into existence in Britain today that saw itself as a socialist one. The left (with honourable exceptions such as Militant's support for the anti-M77 campaign in Glasgow) is seen as opportunist and sectarian, unable to participate democratically in a wider movement. The Labour Party

The communist tradition... goes back 150 years, has encompassed the struggles of millions of people, usually in the poorest countries, and has won significant victories against imperialism.

supports free market economics, private health and education and couldn't even oppose the CJA – and it calls itself, in its new Clause 4, a 'socialist' party. What a handful of communists have been saying for years about the narrowness of the British left is simple common sense to a movement that has seen how they operate at first hand.

The SWP-dominated 'Coalition against the CJA', for example, operates almost entirely outside the network of groups and activities that everyone else realises is the movement against the CJA. It has no democratic structure and its concern with legality weakens the protest movement. The frequency with which the left end up chanting the meaningless slogan 'Major! Major! Major! Out! Out! Out!' (Do you want Blair as Prime Minister?) has led many to shout back 'Slogan! Slogan! Slogan! Shout! Shout! Shout!' in response to this inanity.

Is it therefore surprising that most of the people who put their lives and freedom at risk on the nets above Claremont Road do not call themselves socialist? Is it surprising when politics is defined as what MPs do to us that some of those most active in organising this movement argue that what they are doing is not even politics at all?

But for communists this is not the point. What people do, not what they say, is the measure of any movement and this movement has fought against oppression and ecological madness with enormous courage and organisational ability. Increasingly, however, the movement faces its next big challenge – to transform its energy into sustainable, democratic organisations that involve thousands more people.

Communists and organisation

Communists and Marxists do not provide blueprints for how to organise protests. We take part in struggle alongside others, arguing against elitism and for democratic forms of organisation. We point out the need for the movement to defend itself and its members against attack, whether that means physical self-defence, prisoner support or opposing those within the movement who would divide it for their own narrow political ends. We argue that the movement has to grow, building alliances with others who are fighting back against capitalism and imperialism. Finally, we argue that only by overthrowing capitalism and imperialism can we build a sustainable society free from oppression.

Practically, this means that communists support the unity of the movement and its independence, particularly from the dead hand of the Labour Party. It means communists learning from the movement; Marxism is not a strong force in Britain today and has much to learn from present struggles. It means encouraging links with other struggles throughout the world – against ecomadness, against the growth of racism and fascism – and learning important lessons from past struggles. Most crucially, it means working in ways that encourage the involvement of our natural allies – working class youth, black people, single parents, the one in three people living in poverty – because it is only by uniting with these people that our movement will be able to win.

The communist tradition is a very different one to that of the British left. It goes back 150 years, has encompassed the struggles of millions of people, usually in the poorest countries, and has won significant victories against imperialism. Its message of solidarity between ordinary people is universally hated and feared by the rich and powerful.

Socialist Cuba, for instance, is like a squat on the world stage. The imperialists hate it – they want Cuba back under their control and they will do anything to evict the current occupants. What they hate most about Cuba is that multinational companies don't make super-profits there like they do in Latin America – instead, a country that is blockaded by the United States is able to provide free health care and a better literacy level than the United States itself.

How do the Cuban people manage to do this, you might ask? Well, how do people turn run-down buildings into thriving community squats? How are the 'dregs of Britain' able to organise creches and cafes, hold up motorways and build villages in the sky? The position of Cuba and the position of the anti-CJA, anti-roads movement isn't that different – both are sustained by poor people trying to build a better way of living through cooperation. And both are attacked by those who fear any alternative to the 'free market'.

Communism is the common sense of the oppressed. Only in a world as divided and corrupt as ours could it seem 'madness' to suggest that the 'free market' is not the only way to run society, that we can live in a way that does not mean poverty, starvation, genocide and war. Communists and those active in the anti-CJA and anti-roads movement share that 'madness'. With a bit of luck, and a bit of listening on both sides, it could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

'People accept a lot, but they're starting not to'

Os the current anti-CJA and anti-roads movement growing into a real challenge to the people who are currently destroying the planet? And do communists have anything to offer this movement? In a discussion between communists and activists within this movement, Colin, Kate, Maxine, Millie, Paul and Warren met in the Brighton squat run by Justice? – the anti-CJA group that publishes the *SchNEWS* – to look at some of the issues.

Colin: It was a year ago today, on May Day 1994, that the first big march against the Criminal Justice Bill took place. How do people think things have developed?

Warren: I came back from Spain at that time and the country was buzzing for the first time since the miners' strike. After the miners' strike everyone's heads seemed to go down, and now people were doing things again. But the left were missing and because of that all the demos were carnivals. There was real imagination around. I went to the Twyford Down mass trespass and that was excellent.

Kate: I was abroad last year as well, and when I came back it was like a whole new country. People were really alive, they had a real purpose. That was just at the time we squatted the Courthouse in Brighton. The best thing Michael Howard's done is pulled a lot of people together – raves, that's a whole culture, football fans, he's backing the lot. The live exports issue has brought the most unlikely people into the protesting world and I think they'll move on to other issues afterwards. People are waking up.

Warren: We're learning from other struggles. At the Courthouse, we had Women Against Pit Closures coming down to talk to us and their talk was the best thing I ever heard there. I think they convinced a lot of people that we should barricade and stop the bailiffs. Up till then, a lot of people were saying we should just walk out and go to another squat – then these women from a mining village came along and said, 'It's your space, you defend it.'

Maxine: It was good that you were able to contact those women, because, by and large, the whole experience of the miners' strike – villages occupied, the police being compared with the army in Ireland – just seems forgotten.

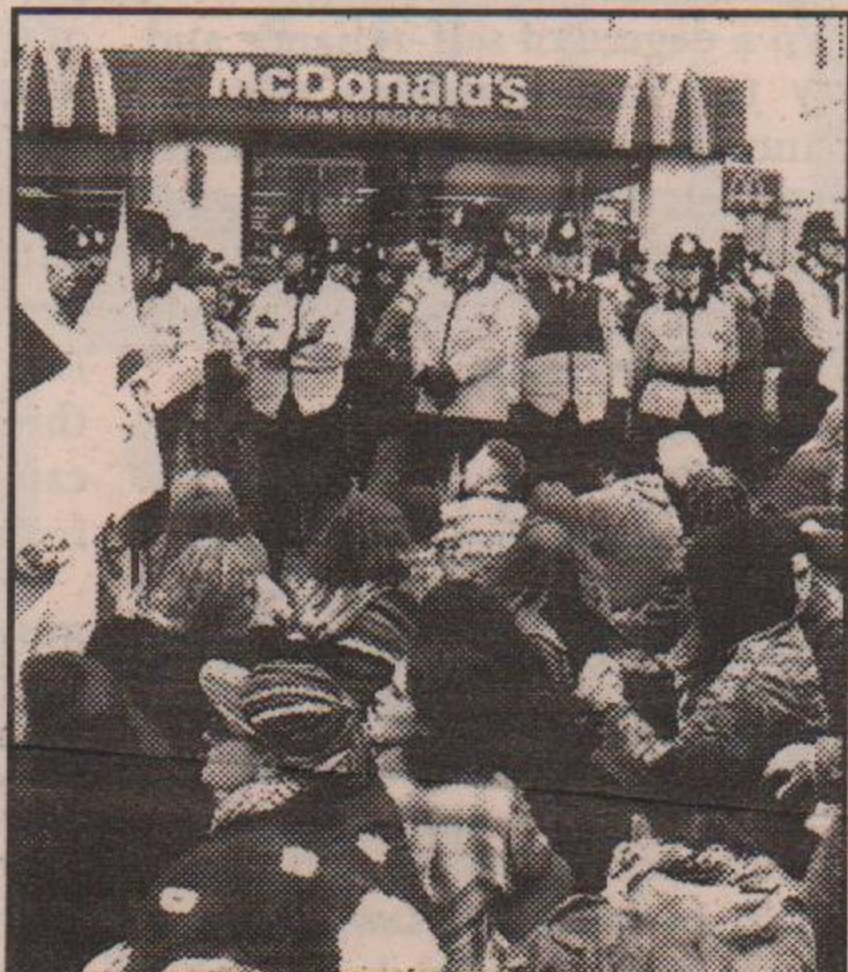
Warren: It's up to us with the *SchNEWS* to look back at what's happened before and what we're doing in context. The miners' strike was a big marking point in

the way public order went in this country, but a lot of people involved in Justice? don't know anything about that history. A lot of them are 17, 18 – it's up to us to get the information out to everyone.

Paul: I think it works best in places like the M11 where links were built with working class communities because that road affected them. I'm a bit wary of the notion that you've got to go and recruit people.

Kate: I don't think it's a question of recruiting.

Warren: I don't think walking round estates showing bits of paper at people works. There's got to be something going off, like at Shoreham where you take the



SchNEWS down and everyone's queuing up for it. They're more open because they're directly affected.

Maxine: There was a report out recently that showed that road pollution affects working class areas ten times more than other areas. So there's a natural constituency for the roads issue to be raised.

Colin: There's a very wide range of people involved in the anti-roads, anti-CJA movement. Do people think that's a good thing or can it lead to problems?

Warren: There were massive differences in Justice? before the eviction from the Courthouse. As soon as the eviction happened, and we were all on the roof together, all those things dropped, and it's much more relaxed now. Petty differences get forgotten when you're in struggle.

Colin: I remember these big arguments about 'spikeys' and 'fluffies' and I couldn't understand what they were about.

Kate: It was put about by people in the movement that you were either spiky or fluffy and it seemed a bizarre thing to do, split your own movement like that.

Paul: There are people who believe in non-violence and people who came from an anarchist-type background attacked that, and I think it backfired and created this huge artificial division. Freedom Network gets painted as very fluffy, but they don't actually have that different a

viewpoint. They'll support self-defence as much as anyone else.

Colin: Maybe there aren't such big divisions about violence as are made out, but are there big divisions about the Labour Party? Do you think there are still people who see Labour as worth voting for?

Kate: Most people I know are just pissed off with it all. They know that Labour's no better than the Tories. Labour didn't oppose the Criminal Justice Bill. With Labour and the Tories both moving so far to the right there's a huge gap on the left.

Colin: And that's in a society where a third of children are brought up in poverty and the poorer sections of the working class have no political voice. There's an enormous political vacuum for a movement of the dispossessed in this country – is that what we're seeing the beginnings of?

Millie: Most people these days, especially young people, are apolitical, they see politics as having no bearing on their lives, and what they want to do. With things like Shoreham, Brightlingsea, Pollok, politics becomes relevant to people.

Warren: People I know who went to Claremont Road really changed. Struggle changes people's minds. I had a big argument the other day about the 'conscious revolution' in your head, and to me that's a load of hippy bollocks – you have to be involved in things, involved in struggles like those women at Shoreham, to see the way things are. No one can tell you 'the police are really bad, they were hitting everyone'. You've got to see it and actually feel the power of what's going on.

Kate: The power when those bailiffs came round the bend into Claremont Road. It was amazing. Everyone was shouting and screaming, there was a real energy there.

Colin: I think what's happening with the anti-road protests and the squats has much more in common with working class organisation in the rest of the world than the parades and sloganeering of the British left over the past 20 years or so. If you look at the way the anti-M11 protesters organised, it's very similar to the way people organise in the Philippines against 'beautification' or the way the poor in India or Thailand organise against 'development' that destroys people's lives.

Maxine: There's just been a John Pilger programme on TV about Vietnam. The Vietnamese were a people who fought against major powers in the world, vastly superior to them in arms and money, and they won – and now they're being forced to accept the market economy. The free healthcare and education they fought for aren't free anymore. Struggles come and go and you need to organise politically so lessons get remembered. I come from a tradition where organisation has always been the key. Communists have always seen organisation as the way you express the tradition and lessons of past struggle.

Paul: That kind of thinking about organisation is obsolete. Hierarchical models of organisation where there's a belief that you need to subsume yourself to the cause, be disciplined, be the vanguard, all that tradition of democratic centralism is totally corrupt and useless.

Maxine: I didn't say any of that. **Paul:** One of the things that's good about what we're doing is that we're inventing new political forms that are relevant to our times, not bowed down by the past.

Maxine: I'm not talking about the past. I'm talking about the creation of the future. There's no blueprint for the future and no serious communist would say there is. Anyone who says you have to organise the way the Bolsheviks did in Russia in 1917 is round the bend. We don't live in Russia in 1917, we live now. What is going on here is fantastic – the question is, can it mould a new force that wins against a formidable enemy?

Colin: Millions of people have died in struggles against capitalism and imperial-

The articles in this pull-out will be discussed at the next Revolutionary Communist Group Forums:

A world to win: the fight against environmental destruction and capitalism

London: Sunday 11 June, 2pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube). £1/50p
Speaker: Maxine Williams.
Creche available on application.

Manchester: Wednesday 14 June, 7.15pm, Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.

FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX
Tel: 0171 837 1688 for details

ism throughout the world, and the lessons they learned need to be remembered. For me, that's what organisation is all about – it's nothing to do with hierarchies and leaders, it's about learning lessons so that when a policeman hits you over the head, the next time people know what to expect and how to deal with it.

Millie: The trouble with a lot of organisations is that they become inaccessible both to themselves and to other people. We've had those problems ourselves, but somehow things happen. Anyone can say, 'I'm pissed off with this, perhaps we should change something.' The potential is there for everyone to have a voice.

Warren: We are organised, we get the *SchNEWS* out every week, we do political organisation, it's just we don't have a membership and we don't say, 'That's the leader over there, talk to him.' We know we still have to get together to organise.

Millie: Since the miners' strike, a lot of people haven't had a voice, and now a lot of people are starting to find one again. People accept a lot, but they're starting not to.



Reclaim the streets

Camden High St in North London was traffic-free on Sunday 14 May after hundreds of people took over the road for a street party. A children's play area, chairs and tables, street performers, bands and two cars sacrificed in mock collision illustrated how city space could be used.

Banners proclaimed 'Beneath the tarmac, the grass', 'Car free zone', 'Free the city, kill the car' and 'Reclaim the streets'. The police had no choice but to cordon off the entire road and adjoining side streets. After most people had left the police attacked protesters and bystanders. There were at least eight arrests and two people were hospitalised, one with broken ribs. They are appealing for witnesses and support. Contact the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group on 0181 802 9804.

Hannah Caller

Some groups and publications

Alarm UK 13 Stockwell Road, London SW9 9AU. 0171 737 6641 (phone or fax). National alliance against road-building.

Earth First Dept 29, 1 Newton Street, Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1HW. Collection of autonomous direct action eco-groups.

Football Fans against the CJA 352 Southwyck House, Moorlands Estate, Brixton, London SW9 8TT. 0171 737 4845, e-mail: football@agoc.demon.co.uk.

Freedom Network 372 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London SW9 8PT. 0171 738 6721, fax 0171 737 4320, e-mail: freedomnet@gn.apc.org. Network of anti-CJA groups.

Friends, Families and Travellers Support Group 7 Benedict St, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9NE. 01458 832371 (phone or fax).

Justice? c/o On the Fiddle, PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX. 01273 685913 (phone or fax), e-mail: Justice?@intermedia.co.uk. Anti-CJA group that publishes the anti-CJA newsletter *Weekly SchNEWS* (send donations or stamps).

Legal Defence and Monitoring Group BM Box Haven, London WC1N 3XX. 0181 802 9804. Monitors police actions.

Road Alert! PO Box 5544, Newbury, Berkshire RC14 5FB. 01635 521770, fax 01635 521660, e-mail: roadalert@gn.apc.org. A central networking point for anti-road protests; produces *Road Alert!*

Small World 1a Waterlow Rd, London N19 5NJ. 0171 272 5255. Video makers to the movement. Produce *Undercurrents*, an alternative news video.

Squall c/o 2 St Paul's Road, London N1 2QN. e-mail: squall@intermedia.co.uk. *Squall* is an excellent quarterly magazine (£1.30, post free).

United Systems c/o 19 Thirleby Rd, Burnt Oak, Middx HA8 0HF. 0181 959 7525 (phone or fax). Pro-active network for those involved in free festivals and the dance scene.

Support Cuba - Rock around the Blockade with FRFI

'If we want to save humanity from self-destruction, there must be a better distribution of the planet's available wealth and technology... A just economic order must be applied. We must pay our ecological debt, not the foreign debt. Hunger must disappear, not humankind.' Cuban President Fidel Castro, at the Rio Summit 1992

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Life on civvy street after the war

To whip up a primitive nationalist jingoism, Britain's relatively minor military role in the Second World War was exaggerated as school-boy comic accounts became official media history. This was run together with the media writing out of history the Soviet Union's decisive role in the defeat of Nazism. Today the Soviet war effort is described as one of 'cruelty and cowardice' (*The Observer*) and of 'rapine terror' (*The Daily Telegraph*). Soviet commemoration of their sacrifices has become a 'sickening' 'cult of blood' (*The Observer*). The liberation of Berlin by Soviet forces is redefined as a 'conquest', with 'real liberation' (*Sunday Telegraph*) coming only with the arrival of the British and US armies.

These blatant falsehoods are necessary to disguise the British ruling class' own failure to fight Nazism and its own reactionary and anti-democratic war aims. The British working class endured years of privation during the war. Their homes were destroyed and their sons and daughters killed or maimed on the battlefields of Europe, Africa and Asia. Committed to defeating fascism, the working class readily accepted countless sacrifices. For the working class the war was a progressive one in which an alliance with the socialist Soviet Union would guarantee the triumph of democracy and liberty.

However, Britain's war effort, led and controlled by the ruling class through the war-time alliance of the Tory and Labour parties, was guided by entirely different considerations. The British government did not have any democratic war aims. Neither was it particularly interested in defeating Hitler.

In defence of the colonies

The British capitalist class went to war for one reason only - to defend its colonial empire from German ambitions. Britain's First Sea Lord, Admiral Chatfield put the point precisely: 'We have got most of the world already, or the best parts of it, and we only want to keep what we have got and prevent others taking it away from us.'

The British war effort did not aim to liberate, but to ensure that the hundreds of millions in India, in Pakistan, in Malaya, in Kenya, in Uganda, in West Africa, and in all other parts of its empire would remain slaves to British imperialism.

The British ruling class had nothing but admiration for Hitler. In 1935 Winston Churchill wrote that Hitler could be 'regarded as [one of those] great figures whose lives have enriched the story of mankind.' Hitler was seen as a bulwark and a potential ally against Soviet Communism. So long as Hitler concentrated on conquering the socialist East, Churchill and the British ruling class had no problem with fascism, with genocide, with dictatorship.

The British government's VE Day celebrations were a massive insult to the millions of people, throughout the world, who gave their lives fighting fascism. With the calculated jingoism of the Hyde Park spectacle and all the preceding commentary, the British ruling class tried desperately to clothe itself in the glory of past military achievement. It hoped no doubt to divert public attention, even for a moment, from government corruption, from the decaying economy, the collapsing NHS, the mounting poverty and the disintegration of social life in capitalist Britain.

VE Day - the great deception

In 1940 ruling class circles debated the possibility of conceding some colonies to Germany in exchange for peace. Neville Chamberlain quotes Churchill as saying 'if we could get out of this jam by giving up Malta and Gibraltar and some African colonies, he would jump at it.' Churchill's driving passion was anti-communism. Peace with Germany would not only secure the British Empire but enable Hitler to concentrate on destroying the Soviet Union. Despite the hype, the British military played only a minor role in defeating fascism. Britain was incapable of mounting any serious resistance to Hitler. With British imperialism already in decline, it hadn't the economic means to defend its empire. In 1940 British steel-making capacity was 18 million tons a year. Germany was producing 212 million tons. In the same year British arms production was only half the German level, despite the fact that the German economy was not yet mobilised for war. Churchill admitted 'We have no continental army which can defeat the German military power', adding that Britain was therefore unable to match 'the immense armies of Germany in any theatre where their main power can be brought to bear.'

On going to war, British imperialism appealed to the working class and its colonial subjects to fight for 'democracy' against 'fascism'. But not a single colony was promised the democratic right to self-determination and independence. Quite the contrary. Throughout the war Churchill repeatedly and publicly rejected demands for Indian independence. In 1945, as 'victory' and 'democracy' were being celebrated in Britain, in South East Asia British armed forces moved to restore colonial control against communist-led national liberation forces which had led the fight against Japan and were on the verge of winning national independence.

In September 1945, 20,000 British troops entered Saigon and re-armed the defeated Japanese forces to hold Vietnam until the return of the French colonialists. A similar exercise was repeated in Indonesia. To 'keep Malaya British' the Malayan people were subjected to one of the most savage wars prosecuted by British forces overseas. In Greece, in Iran and the Middle East, British forces collaborated with the US to ensure the subjugation of these areas to US and British imperialism. For two decades after, British governments, Labour and Tory, spent millions and killed hundreds of thousands in wars to suppress national liberation movements.

Britain's determination to hold on to its colonies was reinforced by its bankrupt state at the end of the war. It had run up a massive £3,650million debt, some 40 per cent of GNP and to finance itself had to dispose of £1,000 million of overseas assets. The colonies, in particular Malaya, West Africa and the Middle East, were to be milked of all the wealth possible to sustain bankrupt Britain. In these circumstances democracy could not apply to Britain's colonial subjects - it just would not be profitable.

The USSR and the defeat of Nazism

As Britain manoeuvred to defend its colonies, the real burden of defeating Hitler rested on the Soviet Union. Despite the hype, the British military played only a minor role in defeating fascism. Britain was incapable of mounting any serious resistance to Hitler. With British imperialism already in decline, it hadn't the economic means to defend its empire. In 1940 British steel-making capacity was 18 million tons a year. Germany was producing 212 million tons. In the same year British arms production was only half the German level, despite the fact that the German economy was not yet mobilised for war. Churchill admitted 'We have no continental army which can defeat the German military power', adding that Britain was therefore unable to match 'the immense armies of Germany in any theatre where their main power can be brought to bear.'



Labour's post-war government often evicted homeless people whose only hope of housing was a squat

Hitler's defeat was brought about primarily by the Soviet armed forces backed by the power of the planned economy. From 1941 onwards Germany deployed the majority of its forces against the Soviet Union. In the first two years between 153 and 300 German divisions were concentrated on the German-Soviet front representing some 70-72 per cent of its armed forces and even at the end of the war the figure was 57 per cent. The Soviet Red Army destroyed 506 German divisions and 100 more from its satellites. The Allies in North

Africa, Italy and Western Europe destroyed only 176 German divisions. Of the 100,000 aircraft Germany produced during the war, 62,000 were brought down by the Red Army. Of the 13,600,000 German soldiers who died in the war, 10,000,000 fell on the Soviet front.

It is often claimed that these Soviet victories were made possible only by Allied military assistance. Whilst such assistance was unquestionably useful, it was marginal. Deliveries from the Allies accounted for less



Churchill enjoying a roadside picnic during the 1945 election campaign

than 2 per cent of artillery, 12 per cent of aircraft and 10 per cent of tanks used on the Soviet front. Calculated in terms of millions of tons of steel produced, the Soviet economy produced 3 times more tank machinery than Germany, 3.8 times more than Britain and 6.3 times more than the United States. The statistics on aircraft production are equally impressive.

The Soviet people paid a high price in their fight against fascism. Over 27 million dead; 25 million homeless; 1,170 towns destroyed; 70,000 villages burned down; 32,000 industrial enterprises destroyed; 65,000km of railway line wrecked. Overall the Soviet Union lost some 30 per cent of its national wealth in the fight against fascism. To ease its war burden, the Soviet Union, sup-

were the driving anti-fascist force. In contrast to the bourgeoisie who lived the good life safely in London, in Canada or New York, tens of thousands of Communists were brutally tortured and murdered in the fight for democracy and liberation.

British perfidy and brutality

Even a passing glance at the history of the Second World War reveals a catalogue of British capitalist barbarism, hypocrisy, vileness and money-grubbing.

The British and US governments collaborated to stop Jews from fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe. As US and British forces swept through a defeated Germany, they disarmed and imprisoned concentration camp inmates who had organised uprisings against their captors. Tom Bower, in his book *Blind Eye to Murder*, shows how, after the war, in the name of the war against communism 'SS and Gestapo men became chiefs of police...Doctors, lawyers and teachers who aided the Nazi genocide were reinstated to their posts...Bureaucrats who had organised deportations and concentration camps soon returned to their comfortable offices. Industrialists who had supported Hitler and profited from slave labour were not dispossessed...The great majority of those responsible for the murder of 12 million people went unpunished.'

As the war was ending, the British cabinet engaged in an act of outright terrorism. Throughout the war Dresden had been left intact. Then on 13-14 February 1945, 1,300 British and US bombers dropped more than 3,300 tons of bombs on the city killing 130,000 and destroying 90 per cent of all buildings. Low-flying planes machine gunned the population fleeing along the Elbe. This was wanton murder. Hitler was already effectively beaten and Dresden had ceased to be of significance. The only possible military target - the train station to carry troops to the Eastern front - was left intact.

In Britain, the wealthy were able to send their children off to Canada. They secured safe posts for their sons in the army whilst working class youngsters were sent to the slaughter. On the evacuation from Dunkirk young soldiers who had discarded their backpacks to save themselves from drowning were fined £40 each. The rich escaped German bombing raids by going into the country. In London, the working class had to fight and break down locked entrances to get shelter in underground railway stations. The rich never lacked in their luxuries while working class children went hungry.

As for Winston Churchill, the great hero of the war: he demonstrated staggering military incompetence, his speeches in the Commons were so boring that party whips were instructed to organise standing ovations for the purposes of national morale. He rarely broadcast to the nation. His famous 'We shall fight them on the beaches' speech was actually broadcast by the actor who played Larry the Lamb on Children's Hour. When he died the rich cried, but Welsh miners danced in the streets. A vicious anti-working class thug, a captain in the Black and Tans, Churchill was a fitting leader in a British war effort whose sole aim was the protection and enslavement of the colonies.

Eddie Abrahams

GERMANY VE DAY 1945

In April 1995 a group of French concentration camp survivors and families of inmates travelled together to Auschwitz/Birkenau concentration camp in Poland. The visit commemorated the 50th anniversary of the camp's liberation by the Soviet Army in 1945. Among the group were Jewish communists who reject the Zionist attempt to claim that the Jews alone were Holocaust victims. They knew from experience that many of the victims were communists, trade unionists, gypsies, homosexuals, prostitutes... all the targets of fascism. They knew also that the concentration camp inmates heroically resisted their fate.

Among this group was EVA TICHAUER, a young French Jewish woman, who was deported to Auschwitz/Birkenau concentration camp in 1942. There she saw the solidarity and resistance of inmates and became a communist. She has written an account of her detention *I was number 20832 in Auschwitz* which has been translated into English by Colette Lévy and Nicki Rensten. Below we print an extract from Eva's book in honour of the millions who suffered and resisted fascism. It is an account of the last days of the War, when camp inmates were transported across Germany to flee the approaching Red Army. The extract ends with the survivors' celebration of VE Day.



Victory over fascism

We stayed at Ravensbrück for a few weeks, in a tent... The influx of survivors of the death march has not been taken into account in the organisation of the camp, and certainly not in the kitchens. We only continue to survive thanks to the solidarity of comrades from the French convoy of the 31,000, who arrived here a few months before us. They come surreptitiously in the night to bring us whatever they have saved from their own rations of soup and bread.

On our side, the sharing is done rigorously. At Rose's instigation, a single spoon is used as a measure for all of us and we take turns to have a spoonful of soup until it is all finished. We operate in this way often... Sleeping in the tent poses a serious problem. There are three-tier bunk beds made of a few planks. There are no straw mattresses but what matters are the planks. We manage to find a place at the bottom, thinking we shall have the advantage of greater mobility. We are four to this bed...

We have not thought of everything, though. The snow is melting and water seeps into our tent. It stagnates a few centimetres from our planks. At the start we have seven planks. Three of them will be stolen: snatched or coned out of us, leaving four of us on four planks, scarcely protected from the water, which we can reach with our hands. It is crucial to keep hold of the remaining planks and we organise a rota for guard duty. At least two of us stay on the bed at any one time; the others try to bring some life back into their legs by splashing around in the icy water.

We are not allowed to leave the tent. We are freezing and even tightly huddled together... we don't manage to keep warm... For me, Ravensbrück is a long succession of nights without days. So we are fairly pleased to be leaving this transit camp for a new destination. I think there are about a thousand of us leaving... In no time the train carries us further north.

Our new camp is still under the administration of Ravensbrück... It is

a small camp planned to hold two thousand detainees. There will be three thousand mouths to feed including ours. We are not made welcome...

I think it is at Malchow that I celebrate, for the first time, International Women's Day, on 8 March. We have 'organised'* what is needed to make a good round tart. We scrape raw potatoes and mix them with carrots, also scraped. The top is decorated with the green part of a leek. I cannot recollect our speeches but the tart was good. I bequeath you the recipe. We thrived on it while singing the *Internationale* in very low voices...

At Malchow we feel that the end of the Great Reich is near. Those of us who go to the market town see cars full of refugees from the East. They are fleeing from the Red Army, who have already recaptured territories lost in 1917 and those stolen by Poland a long time ago. Their panic spreads through the population which lets itself be dragged into exile. It is their turn now.

There is no more work around to make the SS a profit, so we are on the move again, in convoy to our final camp... [Our train] stops in Leipzig, a big city. Our new camp comes under the administration of Buchenwald.

The last camp

At this final camp we shall not even know where it is situated, whether it is in the centre of town or outside it, nor what kind of work is done by the ordinary detainees. We shall only know our own Block with its bunk beds, where we lie almost all day long, totally exhausted.

Wherever we arrive now, there are too many of us and we are not expected for work or for food. Luckily, from time to time, an *Aufseherin* comes and asks for volunteers to bring in and stack the vegetables for the soup. We move quickly and efficiently. 'Organising' is quite easy. We are so thin that hiding vegetables in the emaciated holes around our bodies and walking away with a large

quantity of potatoes in our knickers poses no problem to us at all. In this way we survive.

There are sixteen of us remaining in our collective of French speakers. Guiza and Rose oversee the fair distribution of food. I have never eaten so many raw potatoes... The soup they bring us is just water with a few pieces of peelings swimming in it. We fish out the thick pieces of peeling for the sick and weakest among us.

Don't imagine that even when we were lying down we were inactive. Rosa, who knows how to sew, invents a pattern for slippers, easy to cut and to make out of the old blankets... our collective becomes a sewing workshop. These slippers will be used as barter to improve our food. They are in great demand.

But our imagination runs wild when we hear the guns to the east and west of the camp. The two allied fronts are getting nearer each day. We are caught in between the two, as between pincers. How are we going to get out alive?... We must get civilian clothes. Nothing seems impossible to us. Rose... requisitions all our good blankets and we start making dresses, skirts, jackets: all tailored to fit. We put on these civilian clothes as soon as they are ready, wearing our striped dresses on top. We hardly look any fatter and we are just as warm with our double clothing...

We can also feel the gentle warmth of an early Spring. Our hearts are filled with hope. There are no gas chambers at Leipzig. In our mad calculations we think the allies are racing one another to liberate us. Some bet on the Americans, others on the Russians. We listen to the guns. But we know we also have to reckon with the SS, still present and unpredictable...

On 13 April the Leipzig camp is evacuated. In rows of five we take to the road again.

The final march

...We are heading east at a speed which must be in the order of one

kilometre per hour. We drag ourselves miserably along.

We now encounter many civilians... They dare not look at us. It is we who approach them, begging for peelings. They give us nothing, apart from one woman who furtively slipped me a crust of stale bread. We see that they are dead scared, perhaps because of the SS. They also know that the end is near. As we pass through, we search the bins ourselves.

On the way we meet prisoners of war, walking in the opposite direction. Full of pity, they pass us four blankets. That will make two between eight of us... I remember the only occasion on which some pieces of raw meat are distributed. We try to make a fire by knocking flints together but we have lost the skill of our cave ancestors. We eat the meat raw; we would have eaten anything...

As on the preceding march, many comrades die during the ten days we spend on the road between the two fronts... The SS still have orders to shoot anyone who is incapable of following the column or who tries to escape. At night they surround us and keep watch. In spite of the risk of death, escapes increase...

This zig-zag march will last ten days, ten days of thirst and hunger beneath the bombings from both fronts. At times we pass through woods where, out of fear, the SS delay our advance and make us lie down on the ground. We enjoy these moments of rest during which more and more comrades take off to the woods. The terrified SS have now given up chasing us. But they don't let us get away and they carry on killing those of us who fall down.

When we walk alongside fields it is up to whoever has the courage to throw herself into the field to collect a few forgotten potatoes or pull out some handfuls of rape... The SS shoot the comrades who linger in the fields like rabbits. One must be quick and not venture too far...

At the final night's halt our SS surround us as usual, in order not to lose us but also to save themselves

from going to the front to be massacred. There is an abandoned windmill. We take shelter in it with the intention of not leaving the next day. We do not yet directly know the extent of the fanaticism of the Hitler Youth, even in the last hours of combat. The following day three or four youths, only just fourteen or fifteen years old, armed with guns, dislodge us and force us to take to the road again...

We reach the banks of the Elbe. Even today I do not understand what compels our SS towards the east, in the opposite direction to the increasing flow of German refugees. They are indifferent towards us and we expect nothing from them. I see a bridge. It is intact but our executioners make us cross by ferry. We collapse on the bank completely exhausted... waiting for death.

Hours go by and night starts to fall... The SS are still there, unfortunately! We must get out of this place. I just about manage to arouse my comrades for a final effort; we lean up against the walls of the nearby houses... With the night come the bombers. After all this are we going to die under friendly fire? I advise my comrades to seek refuge inside the houses...

In the comings and goings of the night one sentence in German changes our lives: '*Die Ivans sind da*' ('The Russians are here').

When the sun rises, which it does emphatically on the 23 April 1945, we leave that house, alive! On the spot where we had collapsed the day before, there is a huge hole. The bridge has been destroyed. The first sight that I register... a Soviet soldier, perched on an abandoned baker's cart, his legs stretched apart, who in a great gesture of triumph throws us the first loaf of freedom.

...The day before this, we could hardly drag ourselves along; now freedom gives us wings... we walk alone along this road. An unusual sight and one which makes a military lorry moving in the same direction pull up alongside us. Red Army soldiers jump off; officers or ordinary soldiers, we don't know the difference.

None of us speak Russian but some of us, who are of Polish origin, try to explain who we are by showing the tattooed numbers on our arms and pronouncing the dread name Auschwitz... The soldiers pull photos out of their pockets, yellowed and dog-eared. They are of their families, their homes. They know what we are talking about; they have suffered like we have. That is why they are among the first to the front. To smash Hitlerite fascism is to avenge their own dead...

They lower the back of their lorry and help us to climb in... What they are doing is probably prohibited by army regulations. But we belong to the same community of 'judeo-bolsheviks', according to Hitler's definition... They take us with them so that we can become true survivors who will give evidence on their behalf as well as our own.

We reach the village where their quarters are. Their first concern is to find lodgings for us. They requisition a farm... Together we celebrate May Day. On that day it is the Red Army which brings our food, but we do the cooking. What the dishes or drinks were escapes my memory. But I remember the toasts. Each man and woman lifted their glasses to the definitive defeat of fascism, to victory and peace forever, to freedom and happiness for all, to socialism in a fraternal world. Love is also in the air. Both we and they are in need of it... We celebrate.

During the night of 8-9 May, there is much knocking at our door. This time, it is victory, and the festivities start again and go on all night.

Eva Tichauer's book is published by l'Harmattan in France.

* 'Organising' meant 'stealing' from the SS. The detainees did not regard this as stealing but as active resistance.

A system within a system

Although women make up just four per cent of the prison population, they receive an incredibly raw deal when it comes to rights and privileges and are more likely to be severely punished when they step out of line. While injustice is prevalent throughout the system, females are less likely to complain about mistreatment. CLARE BARSTOW reports from HMP Holloway.

There are a number of reasons behind this. The main one has its roots in the way the judicial system treats us, and it is influenced by society's moral viewpoint, backed by Tory policy. If we fail to live up to their expectations of perfect mothers, wives, carers, child-bearers, lovers, we are automatically judged as mad, bad, whores, liars and infidels. Once we fall off that pedestal, we are condemned.

At our trials, dominated by male judiciary and counsel, our past lives are paraded before the jury and any lapse in morals seen as heinous. Female witnesses are not called in our defence as our counsel advise us their testimony will not be believed. Many female defendants are frightened to give accurate evidence for fear of being abused.

Once women are convicted they are considered more evil than men who have committed the same crime and treated as such. The proportion of women in custody who have been physically, psychologically, sexually or verbally abused is much higher than the national average. Therefore, many have low self-esteem and feel guilty, even though a substantial proportion are not, or have been given a much higher sentence than the crime merited. That is why few women appeal who should do - they give up more easily than men when any setback arises.

Women, on the whole, suffer more while in prison, as many have dependent children. Separation and subsequent anxieties usually come to the surface in the form of self-harm or depression. The counselling level in female establishments is minimal so they often have recourse to prescribed psychotropic drugs. This merely allows them to temporarily block out the traumas which are often reasons why they offended in the first place; it does not resolve the problems, which often come back.

Obviously there are other factors where the capitalist state lets women down, such as single mothers being forced to live below the poverty line: benefits being so low compared to other countries in Europe that it is impossible to bring up children properly and healthily.

State support to abused women is decreasing as Women's Aid and other centres close due to lack of finance. Children growing up in such a disruptive environment are also likely to show signs of severe disturbance and may resort to crime for ways to express their pain. Battered women still receive little justice in the courts, as do sexually abused children. Some women end up in prison as nothing is done to protect their children against abusers so they are forced to take the law into their own hands.

Very little research has been carried out about female prisoners. What has been published shows females are discriminated against throughout the system. One third of women are in prison for their first offence and many end up there for fines and motoring offences or petty shoplifting charges.



Most male prisons housing lifers and long-term inmates have catering and laundry services on the wing, some even having plug-sockets in the rooms, but many female establishments which hold first and second-stage lifers do not have these facilities.

Many penal measures are first tried out on women to see if they will accept them. The Prison Officers' Association decision to work to rule in protest against new security measures aimed to prove they could not be implemented without bringing the system to a halt as there were not sufficient staff to carry out the duties. At Bullwood Hall officers supported the POA by carrying out daily cell searches for approximately three and a half hours per room. This was designed to cause maximum aggravation among the other women, who were locked in while the searches took place. Usually the whole room was not spun, as it was the disturbance which was important, not the need to discover illegal possessions. This happened on Swan Wing for lifers and long-termers.

Other rules were introduced, such as decrease in property allowed and reduction of private spends to £11.25 per month, including phone-cards, batteries, stamps and tobacco. These particularly discriminated against foreign nationals and others without family and friends in this country who can visit or offer support. The officers hinted that they were not allowed to strike against the security measures but didn't want to carry them out any more than we wanted to endure them.

After several hints, one officer suggested we take part in a peaceful protest, promising we would not get into serious trouble, she would back us up and the most we would face would be a fine or loss of remission. She even gave us hints on how to conduct the protest, which was to take place at 8pm lock-in. We then spent the evening taking things into the TV room: blankets, duvets, warm clothes, buckets for toilets, mini-TVs, games, books, paper, food, flasks, crockery, under the watchful eyes of officers, including a senior officer.

By 7.45pm, Saturday 4 March 1995, 18 of 26 women on the wing are in the TV room. The officer who suggested the protest says, 'I take it

none of you are going to your rooms then,' and walks out, locking the door. During the evening we ask to see a governor and detail our grievances. We are denied access to a governor but eventually receive written confirmation he will see us concerning our problems. Around 12.30am we return peacefully to our rooms.

The next day, Sunday, we were informed the governor would see us on Monday. Then, during lunch-hour lock-in, nine of us were taken to the segregation unit and transferred (ghosted) without our possessions to Holloway Prison punishment block. We were placed on report by the same officer who had advised us to do the protest in the first place. At the adjudication she lied through her teeth, stating she had told us individually to go to our rooms. Obviously they preferred to believe an officer's word so we were found guilty. I asked for legal representation but was denied it. We were given 14 days no association (23 hours a day cellular confinement) and a £12 fine. We were denied the opportunity to work or go to education. I asked to appeal but was refused request/complaint forms, which is illegal. Anything I asked for was denied. I was discriminated against in every situation: allowed half hour visits instead of an hour, denied private spends, given two cell searches within three days, etc. Some other women from Bullwood were treated harshly too. We were viewed as major security risks when most of us had rarely been on report before.

The officers won, as they proved the rules could not be implemented in other prisons, particularly male establishments, without serious disciplinary problems. They manipulated us as political pawns in their grievances against the Home Office. This is a regular occurrence and many rules we are forced to abide by are unthinkable in men's prisons. Women are encouraged to be passive stereotypes and if we act upon unjust situations we are automatically punished more severely. Until authorities and other bodies take us seriously, female prisoners will always suffer even more harshly than men.

Clare is serving a life sentence for murder and is campaigning to prove her innocence.

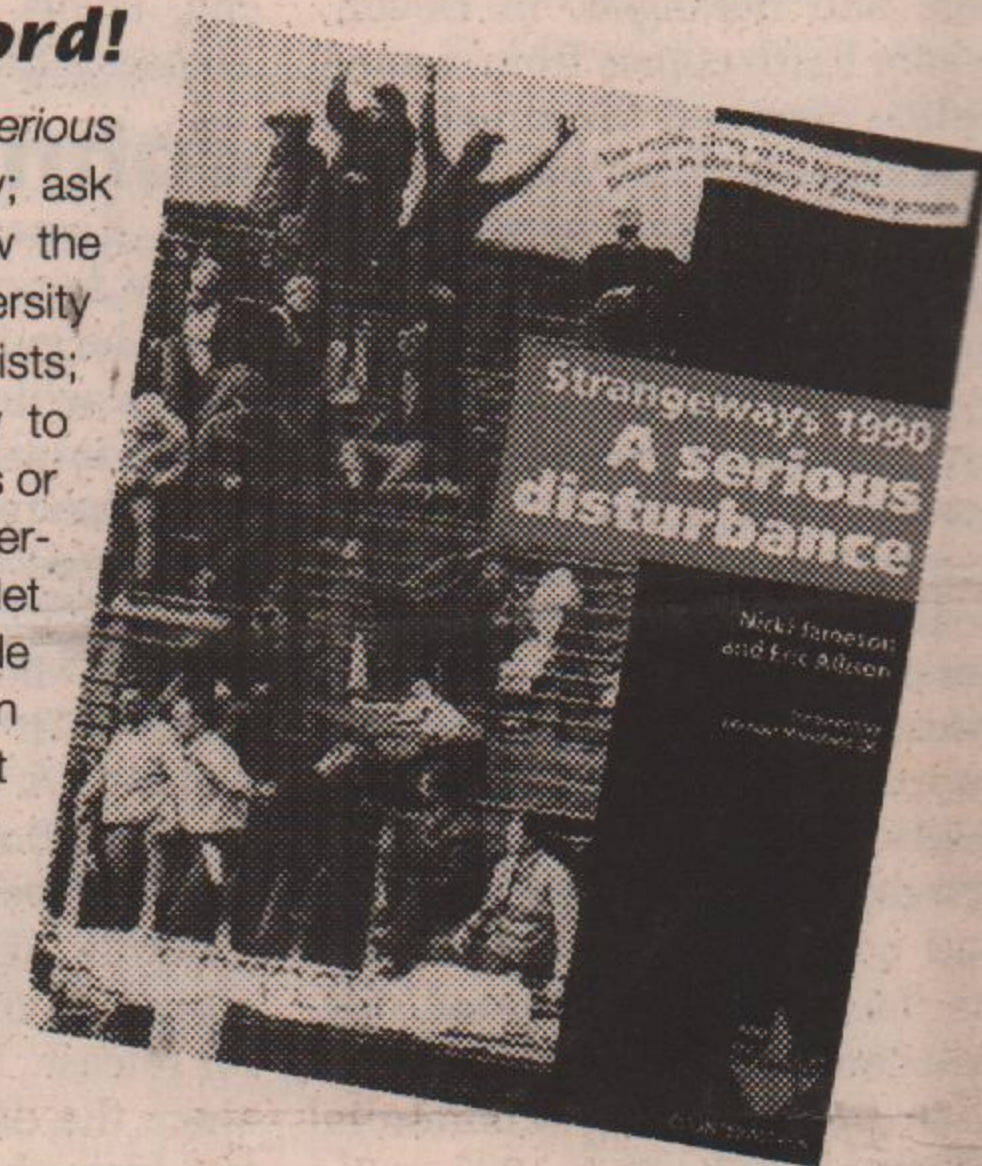
Help us make a serious disturbance!

Strangeways 1990: a serious disturbance by Nicki Jameson and Eric Allison was published by Larkin Publications on 6 April. Successful launch meetings were held in Manchester and London. The authors were interviewed on eight radio stations and the *Manchester Evening News* carried a full page article by Eric which has sparked off a heated debate in the paper's letters page between former prisoners and former prison officers. *Strangeways 1990* is now on sale in shops in most major cities and has been ordered in bulk by library suppliers. It has also been made recommended reading for the 'Criminal Justice in the UK' course at Portsmouth University.

But we still need your help! All the work of distributing and publicising the book has been done on an entirely voluntary basis by members, supporters and contacts of the RCG or by ex-prisoners who understand the importance of getting this 'alternative viewpoint' on the prison system distributed as far and wide as possible. It is an uphill struggle: while all the publicity we have had has been favourable, the mainstream media has so far managed, despite repeated promises of reviews, to ignore the book entirely. If the one and only book about the biggest uprising ever to hit the British prison system had been written by a representative of the Howard League or an established national journalist, it would have been inconceivable for it not to receive widespread publicity. The inside story of the *Strangeways* revolt is too important to be marginalised. The book contains compelling and unique material and it deserves the widest possible audience.

So, spread the word!

Request *Strangeways 1990: a serious disturbance* in your local library; ask lecturers and teachers to follow the example of Portsmouth University and include it in their reading lists; encourage everyone you know to buy a copy. If you know of shops or other outlets we may have overlooked, contact our office and let us know, or speak to the people concerned yourself. If you are in touch with journalists who might review the book, encourage them to contact us. With your assistance, we can ensure that the inside story of the *Strangeways* uprising cannot be forgotten or ignored.



Strangeways 1990: a serious disturbance by Nicki Jameson and Eric Allison

With a foreword by Michael Mansfield QC

Photographs by Ged Murray

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SUPPORT DAVID BOWEN

David Bowen is already serving nine years for his alleged part in the *Strangeways* prison protest, and a further three years on a trumped up charge of perverting the course of justice, against which he recently lost an appeal. On 12 June 1995 David goes on trial again, for escaping from custody between Hull prison and Manchester Crown Court, where he was being tried for riot in December 1992.

At the time of the *Strangeways* revolt in April 1990, David was a remand prisoner, awaiting trial for shop-lifting, anticipating a sentence of weeks, not years. Following his escape, he was found guilty in his absence of conspiracy to commit GBH; he strenuously denies this and is appealing against the conviction.

PICKET NOTTINGHAM CROWN COURT IN SOLIDARITY WITH DAVID BOWEN

9.30 am onwards -
Monday 12 June
Nottingham Crown Court,
60 Canal Street,
Nottingham, NG1 7EJ

Supported by ABC, RCG/ FRFI and Conviction. For details of further pickets, contact Nottingham ABC, PO Box 192 Nottingham, NG1 1SJ.

Write to: David Bowen (DA0146), HMP Leicester, Welford Road, Leicester, LE2.

When life means life - two studies in justice denied



Keith Rose

On 3 January Keith Rose was one of three prisoners who escaped from Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight; they were recaptured five days later. The media characterised them as exceptionally dangerous, unpredictable and deranged. In Devon, where Keith comes from, armed police patrolled the streets and special protection was given to 15 people whose names were alleged to be on a 'hit-list' found in his cell. This 'hit-list' story was complete fabrication, the only document from Keith's cell handed over to the police being a detailed examination of the 'evidence' produced at his murder trial. In 1991 Keith Rose was already serving 15 years for kidnapping, to which he pleaded guilty, when he was tried and convicted of a murder which had occurred 10 years earlier. He has always protested his innocence and saw the escape as a way of drawing attention to his case.

In revenge for the embarrassment caused by the Parkhurst escape Keith's 'tariff' (the minimum number of years a life sentence prisoner is expected to serve) has been increased from the 20 years imposed by the trial judge to a staggering 40 years, known as a 'whole life tariff'. Even if he were guilty, this is exceptionally punitive, such tariffs being usually reserved for multiple murderers. This is the shape of things to come as Britain heads towards US-style sentence lengths but in Keith Rose's particular case it neatly provides the Crown with a reason not to pursue the escape charge (a waste of public money when the sentence already be-

ing served is so long), thus depriving Keith of his 'day in court' and possibility of making public his reasons for escaping.

Keith Rose is now in Full Sutton, rated 'Category A/E high risk' and subjected to increasing, rather than decreasing, levels of security as time elapses since the escape.

John Kamara

John Kamara is in gaol today solely because he is innocent. Were he guilty of the 1981 murder for which he was sentenced to life imprisonment, he would now, having passed his tariff date three years ago, probably be a free man. He is still inside because he cannot 'come to terms with' a crime he did not commit. A report to the Lifers' Review Board, before whom John refuses to appear on the grounds he is innocent, concluded 'Kamara is not suitable for release, he has done nothing since the day of his conviction to address his offence.'

John was convicted, along with Raymond Gilbert, of murdering the owner of a Toxteth betting shop during a robbery. The evidence against him was a vague identification of the back of his head by one witness (while another eyewitness stated in court that he was the wrong man) and the testimony of prisoners from Risley, who said he told them about the murder. Midway through the trial Gilbert changed his plea to guilty but the judge refused to sever the cases and grant John a retrial. With one defendant who had claimed innocence now admitting guilt, the jury assumed the second defendant was guilty too.

In 1988 John made submis-

sions to the Home Secretary in pursuit of a retrial. These resulted in an internal police inquiry, lasting five years, on the basis of which the Home Office concluded there were no grounds for appeal. Throughout 1994 John attempted to obtain statements taken during the inquiry, being told by Merseyside Police that 'Decisions over disclosure are the prerogative of the Home Secretary'; by the Home Office that 'disclosure... is a matter for the Chief Constable of the force concerned'. However, following the High Court decision on disclosure in the case of the Bridgewater Four and others, in November 1994, the Home Office conceded it must disclose the statements. This does not, of course, mean they have rushed to do so, and in April 1995 were still 'making final arrangements for disclosure'. These 'arrangements' are, in fact, discussions with Merseyside Police as to whether there are informers or witnesses whose statements they wish to hold back in the interests of 'confidentiality'.

John Kamara is in Wakefield prison, doggedly continuing the fight to clear his name, while members of staff openly tell him he is wasting his time. In the same prison is a guilty man who is treated like a royal guest: his name is Private Lee Clegg.

Nicki Jameson

POWs' birthdays

Michael O'Brien BT3782
HMP Full Sutton, Moor Lane,
York YO4 1PS **11 June**

Peter Sherry B75880
HMP Belmarsh, Thamesmead,
London SE28 0EB **30 June**

outrageous proposal to install microphones in the visiting room - the privacy of prisoners' families is already invaded by video-cameras - 20 Whitemoor prisoners have been shipped out to locations around the country.

The Wolds

For anyone still seeing the new private prisons through rose-tinted specs, here is an item from The Wolds Prison's 'Notice to Prisoners in Segregation Unit': 'Prisoners placed on GOAD will have visits behind glass within the Segregation Unit, they have to be booked at least 24 hours in advance.'

FRFI has been advised that a blanket imposition of closed visits is illegal and recommends that prisoners subjected to such visits without specific individual reasons being given contact their solicitors or the Prisoners' Advice Service.

Paul Taylor beaten

Paul Taylor was violently assaulted by prison officers at Winson Green on 19 March. He is the latest in a long line of 'high profile' prisoners to be targeted. Supporters of Paul and other recipients of the 'Winson Green welcome' will be demonstrating outside the prison on Sunday 28 May to demand an end to the violence.

Belmarsh victory

After nearly four months 'on the blanket' Dingus Magee and Andy Russell won their right not to wear prison uniform or escapee 'patches'. They were on the point of seeking judicial review of the refusal to allow them exercise or visits. Having waged a long struggle against closed visits, all six prisoners involved in the Whitemoor escape have now won the right to receive 'normal' high-risk Category A visits. The struggle continues!

Free KANI YILMAZ

Kani Yilmaz, European spokesperson for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), was seized by police on his way to address MPs and Lords at the Palace of Westminster on 26 October 1994 and is held in Belmarsh Maximum Security Prison, London. He faces an extradition order from Germany. Trevor Rayne interviewed his German lawyer, Hans-Eberhardt Schultz, an expert witness in the extradition hearings. The hearings continue. Free Kani Yilmaz!

What condition is Kani Yilmaz in?

High security conditions similar to those used in Germany. He has the right to legal visits but social visits are very difficult. Contact with other prisoners is almost totally excluded. The prison is a horror. It is like a military and concentration camp combined. Huge walls, a sterile zone, followed by five gates. I did not see the cells. I cannot imagine they can see anything besides another wall. A Kafkaesque nightmare. I was not even allowed to take my medicine with me - astonishing.

Despite being in these conditions for over half a year Kani Yilmaz seemed courageous, concentrated and knows what he is doing. When he was first imprisoned he received more than 100 letters a day. Very annoying for the authorities.

What is the significance of the seizure of Kani Yilmaz and the extradition trial?

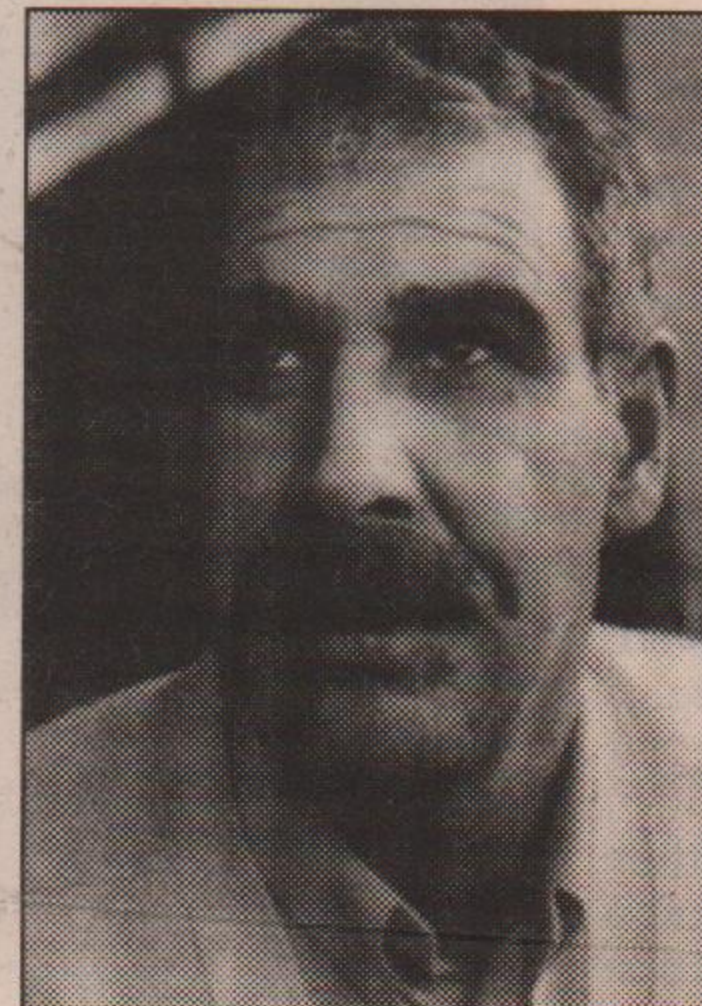
Kani Yilmaz was trying to get support for a political solution to the Kurdistan war. It is clear there are forces in Germany and Britain who want to stop his diplomatic activities and block any political solution.

The court has to decide whether it is a political offence that he is charged with under the German warrant and if it is political it falls under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Even if the judge says Kani Yilmaz can be extradited under the German charges, the British government can say that for political or humanitarian reasons it will not extradite. It is not just a legal question, it is a question for the government.

Tell us about the prosecution of the Kurds in Germany.

Just take one case, the Dusseldorf trial, which started with 20 defendants. It lasted four and a half years, and procedures six years, which meant that my client was in detention for six years. He was charged with being a member of an alleged terrorist organisation within the PKK. The prosecutor stressed this: 'We don't criminalise the whole PKK, it's only the alleged terrorist organisations within the PKK. They prosecuted the whole PKK leadership, General Secretary Abdullah Ocalan, the central committee in



wore a red flower the state said that this was an indication that you were working with the communists. The same state security forces which are now without an enemy since the fall of the Berlin Wall are looking for a new enemy and they are a huge sector of Germany's administration, a big employer.

What about the treatment of the left and anarchists in Germany compared with the treatment of the neo-Nazis?

They are treated very differently. Until two or three years ago, the differences were like day and night. Even if a neo-Nazi committed a murder the courts would say, 'He is a poor, irresponsible young man.' The authorities would not look for the organisation behind him - it was just the individual who did it. If it is someone from the left it is always an 'organised fanatic' and it is the organisation the prosecution is after. This has changed a bit since the massacre at Zoelingen when the Turkish people were killed and there were nationwide protests. They banned one or two neo-fascist organisations. The problem remains; if there is a fascist demonstration the police protect them and attack those who demonstrate against the fascists.

If the fascists in east Germany, but not only there, throw someone out of a bus and they are killed we are told about the poor, drunken individual who has been misled by the former GDR government. But if it is a Kurd, then we have a 'militant, terrorist member of the PKK'. When two young Kurdish women burnt themselves to death a year ago, the Chancellor declared this a 'new form of terrorism by the Stalinist, Marxist-Leninist PKK'.

When you look at the use of Anti-Terror Law 129a against the right, you can count the number of cases on one hand. When you look at the left and the Kurds, there are thousands of cases. When it comes to sentences, say a Kurd protesting at a Turkish consulate against a massacre in Kurdistan, and destroying some property in the consulate, he will be charged with attempted murder. A neo-fascist, even in a gang, who has beaten a black person to death will be charged with manslaughter, as if the death was unintentional.

Inside News

Whitemoor rounds 1 and 2 - victory to the prisoners!

In February, Tony Bush and Matthew Wainwright were acquitted of criminal damage to a wing office at Whitemoor. Then in April mutiny charges arising from an incident at Whitemoor in December 1993 were thrown out of court at the committal hearing, on the grounds it was an abuse of process that the CPS had delayed 13 months before deciding to prosecute. However, the CPS is appealing and this is being used as an excuse to delay the transfer of POW Paul Norney.

Whitemoor round 3

Following a recent protest on the exercise yard against the

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Review

Utopia Unarmed

by Jorge Castaneda, Vintage Books 1995 (distributed by Latin American Bureau), £12.99.

JK Galbraith has called it the 'contented majority'; Will Hutton talks of the '40:30:30 society'. Both are writing about that section of the society outside the ruling class which nevertheless has a stake in the continued survival of the capitalist system - the middle class. Jorge Castaneda writes about Latin America, where the proportion who have a stake in the system is far smaller - no more than 25%. Yet he is an enthusiastic proponent of their interests. In his view, the left must 'move on to a politics of broad coalitions' which will include a 'substantial part of the middle class as well as a significant chunk of the business community'. Elaborating, he says the left has to build a 'new constituency' which includes:

'first and foremost the poor, for whom the status quo is unacceptable, and labour, who must make sacrifices but can

FRFI banned in HMP Wymott

I am replying to your letter of 17 March, concerning the refusal to allow JH1430 Hughes to have your newspaper *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*. The February/March edition of the newspaper was withheld by Governor 4 Tomlinson, on the grounds that the articles on prisons were inflammatory and could incite disturbances in prisons. I have read the newspaper myself and, despite my own left-wing views, find the decision to withhold this particular edition entirely appropriate. I would not necessarily put a blanket ban on the publication in future months, but the tone of the article on prisons was inappropriate in my view.

Should you wish to pursue the matter, we will take it up with the Security Group at Prison Service Headquarters. It is of some concern to me that large numbers of dispersal prisoners may have read this particular issue.

Yours faithfully,

J PARKIN, GOVERNOR 5
HMP Wymott,
Ulmes Walton Lane,
Leyland, Preston PR5 3LW

Irish POWs face further repression

Nine months after the ceasefire, prison conditions for Republican POWs continue to worsen.

A recent visit to Frankland Prison revealed again the British government's refusal to move forward on prisoners' rights - or rather, their determination to move backwards.

The new 'visitors' centre at Frankland - supposedly meant to reduce waiting time - in reality only adds an extra layer of red tape. There are no facilities at the centre, not even a drinks machine. Given that friends and families of prisoners often have to travel a long way, this must be seen as a deliberate policy to dissuade their visits by making them as uncomfortable as possible.

Tables and chairs are fixed, and there is now a rule that says prisoner and visitor must stay in their own seat. The pretext is that some prisoners were behaving in an 'indecent' manner. The real reason is to further humiliate prisoners and their families. When I visited Republican POW Patrick Hayes last month, another POW, Tommy Jack, was prevented by prison warders from hugging his fiancée under the new rule. The aim is to deprive prisoners of any form of reasonable, decent human contact with their

visitors: in short, to make visiting conditions intolerable.

Many POWs get visits from their families, including young children. Such visits are extremely important to people serving such long sentences and are the only contact they may get with their children as they grow up. Yet the new visitors' centre has absolutely no facilities for children. Throughout the endless waiting that inevitably precedes any visit, the children are expected to sit quietly and behave themselves, stuck in a tiny space until the category A officers decide to process you.

The fact is that conditions for visitors have now deteriorated to such an extent that at least two POWs in Frankland have indicated they will no longer accept visitors. Nor is the situation restricted to Frankland. The same conditions, the same attitudes on the part of the authorities are repeated up and down the country, in particular where Irish POWs are concerned. Is it the intention of the Home Office to increase the pressure on POWs, escalate the trouble in the gaols and repress the prisoners even more, thus putting more and more pressure on the ceasefire?

JULIE HILLIER
North London

Defend the Kurdish people

Immediately after the First World War, the imperialist powers rushed to the Middle East to monopolise and profit from the production of oil. Ever since, they have controlled the area, causing environmental damage and bringing poverty, deprivation and war to the peoples of the region. The Western imperialists, fearing the Soviet Union, imposed a military stranglehold on the Middle East through blocks such as NATO and the Baghdad Pact. They carved up the region into spheres of influence, ensuring control via their puppets, to prevent the tide of communism reaching the oil workers of Iraq, Iran and the Persian Gulf. The main casualty of the policies was the Kurdish people, whose land was divided up between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Ever since, these oppressed peoples have suffered constant intervention and war.

The last major war was in early 1991, when half a million US troops occupied the whole of the Gulf region, in the name of 'democracy' and overthrowing Saddam Hussain. In fact, Saddam had been put in power by the CIA and was later used to crush the Iranian people after they revolted against the tyranny of the Shah. You saw for yourselves democracy was not installed in Kuwait, nor was Saddam Hussain removed from power. Instead, more than a quarter of a million Iraqis were slaughtered and more than two million injured.

George Bush and Maggie Thatcher appealed to the people to rise up and topple Saddam. When they did, Bush changed his mind and ended the war in order to keep Saddam in power, on the grounds that 'a known evil enemy is better than an unknown bunch of Islamic fundamentalists'. Some two million Kurds were forced to abandon their homes, climbing the mountains on foot to take refuge in Turkey or Iran, hungry and desperate, knowing that the armies of Bush and Major were there so that control over the oilfields would be easier, Saddam would fall into their trap, and the

power of the ayatollahs be curbed. For me personally the final score was a child dead (a niece) and 16 members of my family refugees in Turkey.

Operation 'Provide Comfort' then resulted in a new war against the Iraqi Kurds and intensified Turkish government aggression against the Turkish Kurds. The US and British imperialists put the destiny of the Kurds of Iraq into the hands of a bunch of feudalist crooks such as Masoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani. In 1992, the Turkish government used these forces to conduct a war of genocide against the Kurds in Turkey. According to *The Guardian* and *Independent*, 2,000 Iraqi Kurds have been murdered by Barzani and Talabani and thousands more injured. Barzani and Talabani collected so much in cash and kind they ended up waging war against each other.

The Turkish fascist government claims the war between the Iraqi Kurds actually helped Turkish Kurds flee from Turkey and settle in the so-called 'safe haven' of Northern Iraq. Using this pretext the Turkish army, on the eve of the Kurdish Newroz festival on 21 March this year, sent 35,000 soldiers, together with tanks, armoured vehicles, warplanes and helicopter gunships into Northern Iraq in order to destroy mud huts and enter mountain caves where they claim members of the PKK are hiding. Thousands of Iraqi Kurds were displaced, many killed or injured. In addition, the Turkish authorities provided the Barzani and Talabani gangs with money and weapons to attack Turkish Kurds and set up check points to prevent the Kurds escaping the murderous Turkish army. The 'safe haven' has been converted into a hell for the destitute Kurdish people on both sides of the border.

I appeal to you to protest against the atrocities being committed by the Turkish government and by Barzani and Talabani against innocent Kurds in both Turkey and Iraq. Protest to the British and US governments who condone these atrocities, who set up the 'unsafe haven' and who guard the area with their warplanes, ensuring that the misery, poverty and war continue.

KAMAL MAJID
London

FRFI FUND DRIVE

FRFI urgently needs £5,000 over the next six months to sustain our bi-monthly newspaper and the political work we are engaged in.

As racism and right-wing organisations grow in strength across Europe and in the face of the defeat of socialism in eastern Europe and the revival of inter-imperialist rivalries, the need for a communist newspaper that fights to defend the independent interests of the working class and oppressed has never been greater.

FRFI is the only left-wing newspaper in Britain that has been able to show why the Labour Party has moved sharply rightwards to represent middle-class interests and why it can never represent the interests of the working class. We bring consistent coverage of political economy, international events, environmental and criminal justice issues, the struggle against racism and fascism and the history of the communist movement. We continue our solidarity with prisoners in struggle against inhumane conditions and have recently published our fourth Counterattack title - *Strangeways 1990: a serious disturbance*. We are engaged in practical solidarity with Cuba, defending the ideas and practice of the revolution against imperialism.

We can't continue to do all this, and more, without your financial help. We need to maintain our office and renew our computer equipment which is now obsolete. We need to pay our printing bills in the face of the escalating price of paper. We need to build up funds to pay for the next book in the Counterattack series which will be a major assessment of British capitalism.

We need your money! Please give generously.

I enclose £ _____ towards the FRFI Fund Drive (cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications)

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MEETINGS

KINGSTON AGAINST FASCISM AND RACISM PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday 15 June
No platform for fascism - never again.

50 years after the holocaust, Leon Greenman, a survivor of Auschwitz, speaks.

Surbiton Library Hall, Ewell Road, Surbiton (Surbiton BR, or buses K2, 406, 479, 281)

CONTAINER FOR CUBA APPEAL

Two lorries will converge on London bringing the two 40ft containers from the North and South of England and Wales on 17 June. There will be a major rally in London to celebrate the event - contact the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG for details and venue, or tel: 0171 263 6452.

If you live in London and wish to contribute material aid to the Appeal it can be taken to the War on Want office, 37 Guildford Street, London SE1 between 8.30am-6.30pm every weekday.

obtain in exchange significant advances regarding involvement in production, job stability, social benefits for families, even a reduction in the working week if this allows others to find employment. *It incorporates the middle class, which will have to make greater sacrifices than labour but will get more in return: a decent country to live in, an end to the growing fear of violence, drugs and social disintegration, and real participation in the nation's affairs, through the strengthening and preservation of a democratic system that is untenable without social reform. Finally it needs the business community, which can expect significant concessions on the part of labour if it is willing to act as an entrepreneurial class.* (p475, our emphasis).

As he points out elsewhere: 'Even - or perhaps most of all - former guerrilla fighters are convinced of the priority of municipal democracy ... As the left wins mayoralities, it becomes more convinced of the virtues of decentralisation and municipal democracy.' (p371). Whilst the masses starve - and he quotes figures (see below) which show the desperate straits of the mass of the people - his preoccupa-

tion is that the middle class obtains 'real participation'. Blairism is clearly an international phenomenon.

- In 1981, 136 million Latin Americans lived in poverty; by 1986 this had risen to 170 million, and by 1990 to between 200 and 270 million.

- Unemployment and under-employment reached 80 million, some 44 per cent of the labour force.

- In 1980 one in five Buenos Aires households was poor; seven years later the figure had risen to one in three.

- Between 1980 and 1985, not the worst years of the crisis, Latin American social expenditure fell by 18 per cent.

- In 1984, the poorest 40 per cent of the Mexican population received 14.4 per cent of all income; by 1989 this had fallen to 12.8 per cent.

- In Chile, between 1978 and 1988, the poorest 50 per cent saw their share of national income fall from 20.4 to 16.8 per cent.

- In Brazil, between 1981-90, the share of the poorest 50 per cent fell from 13.4 to 10.4 per cent.

Robert Clough

Rock around the Blockade Meetings

Saturday 27 May
London planning meeting
3pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube)

Wednesday 7 June
Video showing and discussion: Strawberry and Chocolate
Father Redcap Pub (function room), 319 Camberwell Green, London SE5 (buses 36, 185 from Oval tube, 171, 12, 35, 40, 45, 176, 68 etc from Elephant & Castle tube). Doors open 6.45pm. Entrance by donation.

Thursday 15 June
Dundee planning and information meeting
7.30pm, DASS Office, Kandahar House, Dundee. £1/50p.
The video 'Inside Castro's Cuba' will be shown.

Sunday 9 July
Sponsored bike-ride Manchester to Blackpool
For sponsorship forms and information contact FRFI, Dept 4, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1WH.

COMMUNIST FORUMS

A series of public discussions of communist politics introduced by members of the *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* Editorial Board.

MANCHESTER
Wednesday, 14 June
A world to win: the fight against environmental destruction and capitalism

Wednesday 12 July
Safe in whose hands? The dismantling of the NHS
Both at 7.15pm, Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester

LONDON
Sunday 11 June
A world to win: the fight against environmental destruction and capitalism
Speaker: Maxine Williams (postponed from 14 May)

Sunday 9 July
Safe in whose hands? The dismantling of the NHS
Speaker: Robert Clough
Both at 2pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube: Holborn) £1/50p. A creche is available on application.

For further details tel: 0171 837 1688

**FIGHT
RACISM!
FIGHT
IMPERIALISM!**

So the Labour 'left' have been trounced in their desperate attempt to cling to the myth that Clause 4 represented some socialist or working class spirit. Conveniently forgetting that it was written by an arrogant middle class racist and imperialist – Sydney Webb – to unite the trade union leadership and the middle class in opposition to anything that smacked of independent working class politics and organisation, the left also 'forgot' that the past of Old Labour was as filthy as the future we can expect from New Labour.



New Labour: old crap

Just to remind ourselves: Clause 4 Old Labour was responsible for the following 'socialist' and 'democratic' achievements when in government between 1924 and 1979:

- It sanctioned the use of the RAF to bomb unarmed Kurdish villagers in 1925;
- It used the RAF once again in the brutal suppression of the Indian freedom struggle in 1929-31;
- It provided massive military support to Greek fascism in the war to destroy the democratic freedom movement between 1945 and 1947;
- It provided military aid to restore French rule in Vietnam in 1945-46 and Dutch rule in Indonesia during the same period;
- It saw no offence to its socialist principles in using head-hunters in a murderous war against Malayan freedom fighters in 1949-51;
- It gave slavish support for the US war against Vietnam from 1964-70 and to Zionist aggression against the Arab people in 1966;
- Principles about 'the common ownership of the means of production' did not extend to the people of Namibia when Tony Benn approved the plunder of uranium by RTZ for Britain's nuclear programme in 1968;
- In 1969 it sent troops into the North of Ireland to bolster the tottering Loyalist statelet, and then between 1975 and 1979 supervised a regime of torture and criminalisation directed against the nationalist minority;
- It supported the Shah of Iran right to the last days of his regime in 1979, because his regime was the biggest purchaser of British arms.

If Webb's imperialism lived on with his Clause 4, so did his racism. Labour has implemented all forms of immigration controls from the 1962 Act to that of 1971 with equal alacrity. In 1976 it oversaw the use of thousands of police against the Grunwick workers, whilst in 1979 it used the police to defend a National Front election meeting in Southall. The resulting police violence left one anti-racist dead.

Whilst in opposition since 1979, Labour has been as consistent as ever. It supported the racist police against the uprisings of black and white youth in 1981. The same summer, it assisted the government in its murder of the Irish republican hunger strikers. The following year it supported Thatcher and the war over the Malvinas. In 1984-85 it was the turn of the miners to learn the practical meaning of Clause 4 as Labour betrayed their struggle and helped destroy their communities. In 1990

the Iraqi people were attacked and tin pot generals such as Kaufman and Kinnock bayed for blood.

The Clause 4 'debate' is just further confirmation that Tony Blair's New Labour is no different from the Conservatives. As a former Tory Party treasurer Lord McAlpine put it, 'I don't think you could put a razor blade between Major and Blair.' Every time Blair opens his mouth he gives voice to the meanest and most

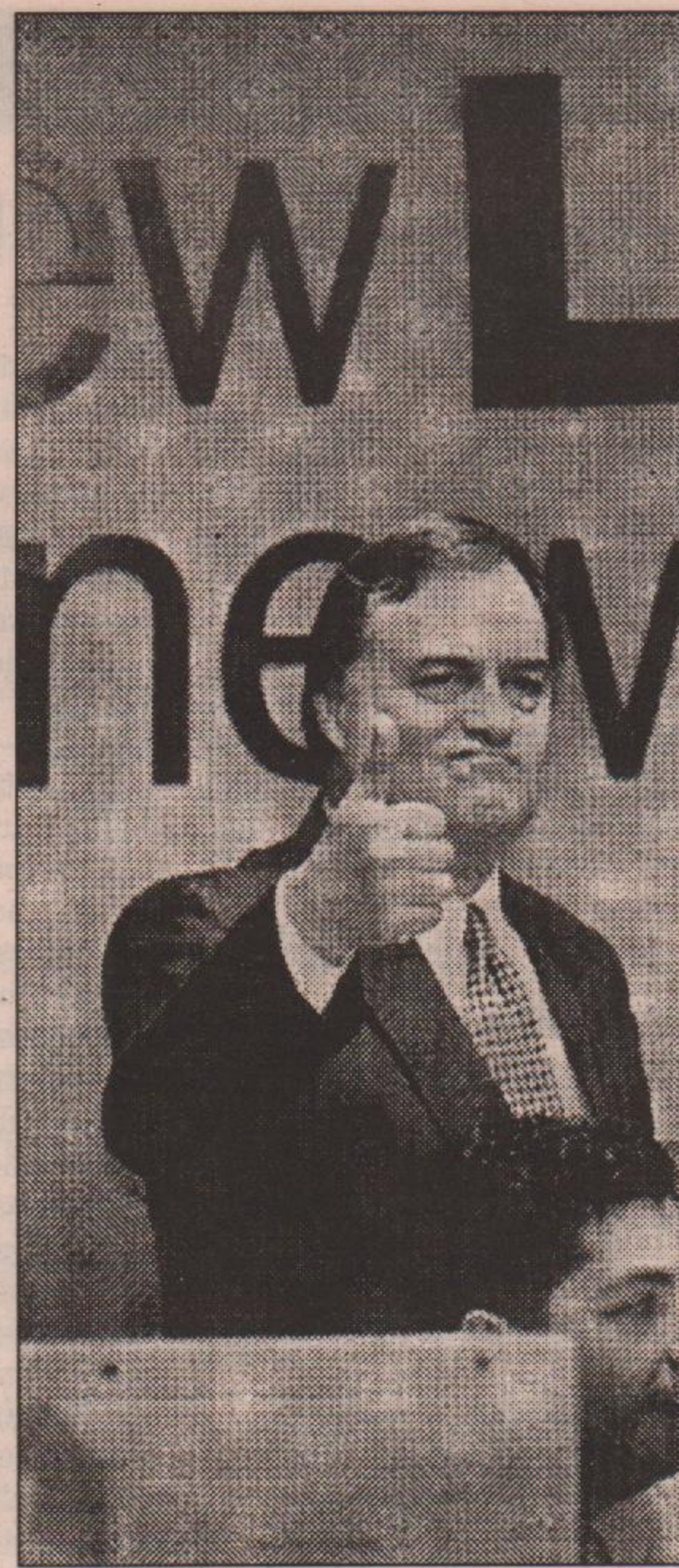
The Clause 4 'debate' is just further confirmation that Tony Blair's New Labour is no different from the Conservatives. As a former Tory Party treasurer Lord McAlpine put it, 'I don't think you could put a razor blade between Major and Blair'

vicious middle class prejudices, a hatred of all things working class. On every policy issue of any substance, both he and other leaders have made clear that Labour Party policy will be to make the working class pay to support the middle class in their privileged position. There are innumerable examples.

Poverty

Under the Tories, one in three children are growing up in poverty – 4.1 million to be exact. Added to them are two million pensioners. One third of all East End of London households have an annual income of less than £4,500. The share of national income held by the poorest 40 per cent fell from 24 per cent in 1979 to 17 per cent in 1991/92. In the same period, the real income of the poorest 10 per cent fell by 14 per cent. One million people earn less than £2.50 per hour, of whom 300,000 earn less than £1.50 per hour.

Tony Blair now wants policies that 'reduce dependency', and arguing against state welfare says 'The world has changed since 1945, there is no turning back'. Frank Field MP, Labour's expert on the 'underclass' – the new Labour term for the working class – says that 'defining a poverty



line is a political Eldorado for any welfare scheme'. He wants identity cards and 'a core of SAS-style anti-fraud officers' to stop that bogey of the gutter press, welfare fraud. He says 'The system we have penalises those who work hard and have savings. We don't reward honesty. The time has come to reconstruct welfare. We need to encourage self-interest, self improvement and altruism once more.' Whose altruism? Not that of the middle class, for Fields goes on to argue for a 'new welfare structure that appeals to the self-interest of today's insecure middle classes.' So: altruism for the working class – they get poorer; self-interest for the middle class – they stay richer. As he so pointedly says 'There is no groundswell amongst middle class groups for redistribution of wealth to the poor, particularly after the Thatcher years.'

Meanwhile Labour pointedly refuses to set any level for a minimum wage, despite the fact that the EC Threshold of Decency is now £5.90 per hour. Even TUC attempts to obtain a commitment to a minimum wage set at half average wages (between £3.60 and £4.15 per hour) have been dismissed. The self-interest of the middle class would not stand for the 'undeserving poor' getting a decent wage.

Education

Under the Tories, one in five 21-year-olds is innumerate, one in seven illiterate. Spending on education has fallen from 5.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product in 1980 to 4.5 per cent in 1990. 4,000 teachers will be sacked in the latest round of expenditure cuts.

In the face of this, Blair has condemned teachers' unions for even discussing industrial action. He has condemned parent-governors for setting 'illegal' budgets. He wants a 'crackdown' on children playing truant and their parents. David Blunkett, Labour spokesperson on education, thinks that 'trendy, liberal teachers who cannot keep children under control are the biggest obstacle to educational achievement'. He wants the return of prefects – shades of Tom Brown's Schooldays! He thinks there is now 'no substantial difference' between grant-maintained schools and schools having to operate local budgets. He wants a 'fresh start' scheme that would see 'under-performing' schools closed. One estimate puts this at up to 1,500 schools. And funding? 'Retrospective catch-up is going to be an almost impossible task'. But then if 'trendy liberal

teachers' are the biggest problem we wouldn't want to throw good money after bad, would we?

Democracy and civil liberties

The Tories have swept away many of our civil liberties – the right to silence, the right to demonstrate. They have passed nine different pieces of anti-trade union legislation. There have been over 50 pieces of legislation restricting local council powers. They have intensified racist controls through the Asylum Act. They want to give local council officials the right to investigate the immigration status of black people. The prison population is now the highest in Europe, and contains a disproportionate number of black people.

Tony Blair is quite happy with the Tory trade union laws – he recently confirmed to a conference of the British Chamber of Commerce that the legislation of the 1980s would remain in place under a Labour Government because 'we do not want a re-run of the industrial disputes of the 1970s'. Labour are now the party of Law and Order, 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'. There will be no more holidays abroad for juvenile offenders. In her contribution to maintaining the prison population at its record level, Blair's barrister wife asked a court to send a poll tax defaulter to gaol even though she knew he had no money to pay his arrears. Labour are committed to all forms of racist immigration laws. They have made no commitment to repeal the Criminal Justice Act or the Asylum Act.

The NHS

One in ten accident and emergency units have closed in the past three years. 40 per cent of all long-stay geriatric beds have closed in the past seven years. There is no NHS dental provision to speak of in most of the country. The latest nurses' pay settlement means a further cut of 2 per cent in funding. 'Community Care' has imposed means-tested poverty on the sick and disabled.

Labour have promised they will not increase spending on the NHS. They promise they will not end the separation between purchasers and providers which has introduced the 'rigours of competition' into the NHS. And of course, there have been the usual words of condemnation for nurses and paramedics just debating whether or not they should change union constitutions to allow them to undertake even minimal industrial action.

Wanted: a party for the working class

Whatever the issue, Labour and its leadership are as one: screw the poor, screw the elderly, screw the single parents, screw the working class, all that matters are the middle classes. Whatever they want, Labour will take from the working class and give it to them. Recently John Pilger, the radical journalist, repeated his call for a new party to replace Labour: 'The defeat of the Tory party is pointless if the replacement is its literal shadow. The alternative – starting again – is both an historical and moral imperative.'

It is a call we echo. The Revolutionary Communist Group has consistently opposed Labour at every election since 1979. Then we campaigned against its racism and its regime of torture and murder against the Irish people. Today the course for honest socialists remains the same if increasingly urgent. We have to break with Labour if we are to retain any contact with the working class. Those who reject this conclusion will put the self-interest of the middle class first, and will condemn the working class to even greater impoverishment and oppression.

Robert Clough