

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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Imperialism out of the Balkans



**'COLLATERAL
DAMAGE'**

an ice cream factory • a car plant • a mining town • a civilian train •
a refugee convoy • Belgrade television station • a civilian bus on a bridge
• a market • the Chinese embassy • 100 refugees slaughtered in Korisa •
a prison • 18 hospitals and clinics • 200 education institutions • libraries,
theatres, museums and 14th-century monasteries.

Inside:

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REACTIONARY LABOUR:

Asylum for some ...
Healthy and wealthy
Education: looking after the
middle classes p2

DEVOLUTION:

No power for the people p3

FASCIST ATTACKS:

Nail bombs hit London p3

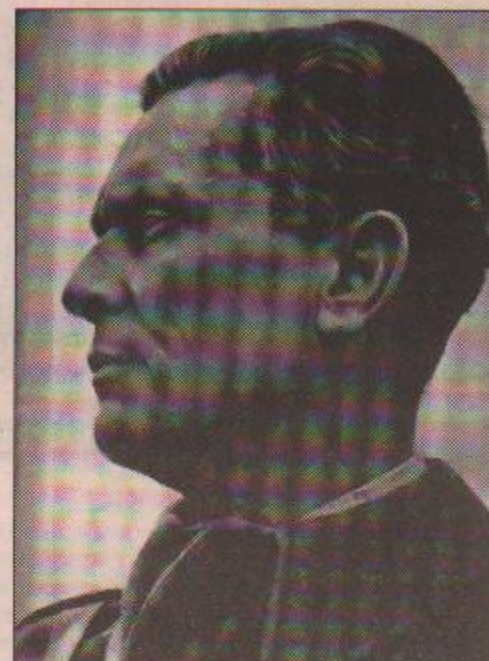
FIGHT POVERTY PAY:

Campaign takes new direction p4

INTERNATIONAL:

Terror in East Timor p5

IMPERIALISM'S WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA:



Editorial: Break with Labour p6

Yugoslavia's war of liberation
1941-1945 p6/7/8

Stop imperialism's bloody war
p8/9/10

Labour: a party fit for
imperialism p11

CUBA VIVE:

Opposition to imperialist war in
Yugoslavia
Rock around the Blockade p12

JOHN MACLEAN Part IV

Accuser of capitalism p14

HANDS OFF IRELAND:

Ireland's Peace Agreement
no gains for the nationalist
working class p16

+ Prisoners' Fightback, News, Letters

LABOUR PARTY HAS BLOOD ON ITS HANDS

Asylum for some...

NICKI JAMESON
As FRFI goes to press the Asylum and Immigration Bill is due to go back to the House of Commons for its final reading. The draconian Bill, which we reported on in detail in the last issue, would probably have slipped through the Committee stage with hardly a murmur, had it not been for the war in the Balkans and the prospect of up to 50,000 Kosovan refugees arriving in Britain. As it is, the proposed amendments to the Bill have still been pathetic and the opposition weak in the extreme.

Despite press rumours of a backbench revolt, there has been no real sign of any such thing and the Bill looks set to emerge intact. However, the timing is still mildly embarrassing for a government which claims to be driven by humanitarianism and ministers have therefore been at pains to point out how the Kosovans, who are due to begin arriving at the rate of 1,000 per week, will be treated differently and better than the 'economic migrants' the Bill seeks to exclude.

'Good' refugees
Despite it being incontrovertibly demonstrated that NATO's bombardment of former Yugoslavia would lead to thousands of displaced persons crossing the border and seeking sanctuary wherever they could find it, it is only in the last few weeks that Britain, after public shaming by the other European countries, was forced to concede that some of those fleeing the conflict could come to the UK.

The Kosovans will be given 12-month permits to stay in the UK and will be allowed to seek work and claim benefit. The Local Government Association,

which is working with the government and the Refugee Council on the 'crisis', is keen to avoid housing them in ex-army camps or prisons, although this is still a possibility, and has got local authorities seeking out former schools, nursing homes, children's homes and housing association properties. Presumably they will not have much of a problem locating such facilities, as they have closed down plenty of them in recent years.

'Bad' refugees
Once the Immigration and Asylum Bill has become law, refugees and asylum-seekers will not be entitled to work or claim benefit, but will receive vouchers worth 70 per cent of Income Support (£28.25 per week) plus £1 per day in cash and 50p for children. The powers to arrest and detain asylum-seekers are being greatly increased and the so-called 'fast track' system removes much of the remaining right to appeal against deportation.

'Opposition' to the Bill came from 'left' Labour MPs and liberals. The *'Big Issue'* mounted a campaign against the voucher system, in which readers were asked to send the following message to the Home Secretary: 'Dear Jack Straw, I believe that the voucher system for asylum-seekers is humiliating and inhumane. Do not abandon your commitment to social justice. Please amend the Immigration and Asylum Bill and restore benefit rights to asylum-seekers'. This plea was nonetheless stronger than that of the Labour MPs, whose initial revolt consisted entirely of an entreaty to increase the 50p a day for children to 75p or £1. Flushed with 'success' in the Commons revolt over disability benefits, the 'left' is now rallying around an



Jack Straw at a photo-call with a Kosovan child

amendment which would take families with children out of the voucher-system altogether, but still leave childless families without cash benefits.

Meanwhile an editorial in *The Observer* lamented the 'fundamental illiberalism' of the Bill but ended: 'We urge those voting this week to continue to vote for New Labour but it is a recommendation much more qualified than the one we made two years ago'. Strong stuff, indeed.

Hypocrisy
The temporary welcome it is forced to extend to those fleeing the Balkan war is an inconvenience for the government and an indication, if one were needed, of its all-pervading hypocrisy. Today's refugees are 'welcomed' on the basis they are fleeing Serbian attack, not NATO bombardment, while they are clearly fleeing both. But the 10,000 Kosovans and ethnic Albanians who came to Britain before the bombing began, seeking sanctuary from the Milosevic regime, were treated as pariahs, vilified in the press, derided as 'bogus' and warehoused in the worst

conditions which could be found for them. Seven thousand of them have outstanding applications for asylum sitting in the queue at the chaotic Lunar House Asylum and Immigration Department.

The stark truth is that the Labour government doesn't want any refugees or asylum-seekers coming to Britain, not even those on whose behalf it claims to be prosecuting a one-sided, totalitarian war. It has been shamed by other European nations into taking a small amount of responsibility for Kosovan refugees but is making extremely sure that this does not open the door to anyone else and that even that commitment remains as minimal as is possible. For the moment, the Kosovans are bona fide refugees, to be sheltered and pitied, while any other would-be immigrants are still 'bogus' 'economic migrants', deserving only of scorn and hatred. But, when the war is over, it will be business as usual, and those Kosovans who refuse to return to their ravaged homeland can expect the same treatment as any other asylum-seekers in racist Britain.

Education notes

Looking after No. 1

Refugees welcome here - but not at my child's school

Recent news headlines highlighting the objection of Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn to sending his child to a selective school are a simple case of the exception proving the rule. The Corbyn family debacle over Junior's education is a red herring; the majority of Labour MPs and their supporters are ever more determined to choose selective schools for their young. Middle class parents who live in wealthy enclaves in the cities are refusing to send their children to the local secondary comprehensive schools and primaries attended by refugees, ethnic minorities and poor children from the local estates.

Estate agents' bonanza

Middle-class parents will go far in cheating to get their children into the favoured school. Deceptions include giving false addresses near the school, fake

Death of the comprehensive school

Adding to the burden of poverty is the disappearance of the comprehensive school where children of all backgrounds and abilities mix together - except for the very rich. Schools that offer good resources to compensate for poverty and deprivation at home are being replaced by schools for the poor where disadvantage is reproduced. The middle classes who rush to engineer or buy educational privilege, including Tony Blair and Harriet Harman of the Labour government, have claimed the right to 'do the best' for their children. This 'best' is being achieved at the expense of other people's children. The Labour party continues to resource schools in accordance with the usual arrogant ruling class view that the working class must put up with over-crowding, large classes and too few text books.



Islington to follow Hackney privatisation

Islington Local Education Authority has followed Hackney LEA in failing Ofsted. No surprise there. Both authorities have been run by Labour parties which have never supported their poor and struggling communities. Now some of their services are to be privatised and, no doubt at huge expense, consultants have been called in. But just what does it mean to privatise an education authority? How can profits be made out of selling education services? For the small private school sector the answer is clear. Parents must pay up to £17,000 a year to buy the teaching, accommodation and educational facilities their children require from a business that will make a profit on investing in the supply of such commodities. Talk of 'privatising' education services for the working class, however, is merely ideological clap-trap. Firms will be given the £1.3 million school improvement service in Hackney and parts of the £85 million Islington annual education budget to run. They must provide the services and make a profit. It is a transfer of wealth from the public to the private sector, a distribution from the state to the business friends of the Labour Party. It is no wonder that over a dozen organisations are jockeying to get their snouts in the trough of the education business. We may be sure that many of the same useless personnel will transfer their well-paid services from borough to firm with little change in their attitude to the provision of schools for the working class.

religious conversions for entrance to religious foundations, claiming phoney family relationships including passing off cousins as brothers and sisters of those already at the school. Added to this is tutoring for selective examination entrance at £35 an hour, renting temporary rooms or driving children 20 miles a day on the round journey to school. The prices of homes near 'desirable' schools are at an all-time high and estate agents are making an extra fortune from the hostility of the middle classes to the children of the poor.

Two nations

New research shows that the polarisation between the educational achievement of the children of middle-class parents and those of the poor working class including the ethnic minorities has increased rapidly. Today 77% of pupils from professional and skilled backgrounds gain at least five good GCSEs while only 19% of children of unskilled workers achieve similar results.

Two conclusions are possible from this statistic. Firstly, that whatever educational changes have taken place under both Tory and Labour governments they have benefited the better off. Secondly, that increasing poverty is taking a toll on the education of the young poor. The recently published Joseph Rowntree survey (April 1999) has noted a sharp rise in the number of children in such conditions. According to a recent Treasury Report a quarter of the entire population now lives in poverty, which is three times as many people as 20 years ago.

Susan Davidson

Healthy and wealthy

HANNAH CALLER

The Acheson report into inequalities in health (November 1998) gave graphic evidence of the link between poverty and ill health. More evidence is now available regarding cancer and disproportionate survival rates linked to wealth.

The report by the Office for National Statistics, the Cancer Research Campaign and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine was produced at the end of April. It shows that over 12,700 deaths from cancer would be avoided every year if all people shared the overall cancer survival rates of the most affluent. For those diagnosed between 1986 and 1990, the richer were between 5% and 16% more likely to be alive after five years than the most deprived, across 14 types of adult cancers.

Factors which have been identified to explain this include the rich having a better diet, being more likely to go to the doctor if they suspect something is wrong, having easier access to hospital and being more demanding in general and in particular regarding being

seen and treated by dedicated cancer specialists. There is a lack of cancer specialists and cancer centres in Britain. Therefore the single most important factor in explaining these survival rates is that the rich have preferential access to the limited specialist care.

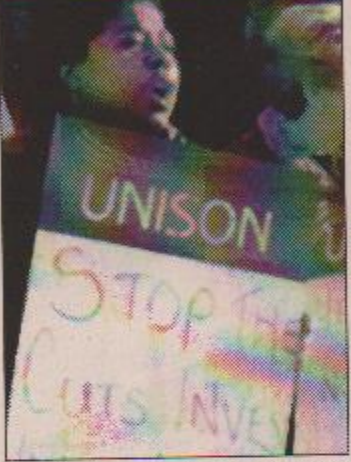
Cancer care in Britain has been under review since a report in 1995 recommended reorganisation into specialist units. Research had shown that Britain's survival rates were lagging behind those of other European countries with similar economies. If survival rates in Britain equalled the EU average, 10,000 lives would be saved per year; if they equalled the best in Europe, 25,000 would be saved per year. Britain spends less than half as much on cancer drugs as do France and Germany.

However there is still a scarcity of cancer centres and specialists which means that treatment by such specialists in dedicated centres is only available to a privileged minority - it is the middle class which benefits. One in four women with breast cancer is still being treated by general surgeons in non-specialist units. An observational study of the survival of

3,786 women with breast cancer treated in the west of Scotland between January 1980 and June 1988 found that, 16% more of the women treated at a specialist breast cancer unit were alive after ten years than those treated by non-specialists. Furthermore, British doctors use a greater variety of treatment than doctors in other countries, are less likely to stick to protocols and tend to delay implementing guidelines where they exist. A study of women with ovarian cancer in Manchester showed that less than half were receiving the best treatment as laid down in guidelines. Cancer care in Britain is a class issue.

Doctors work longer hours

The EU working time directive of a maximum 48 hours per week has excluded junior doctors since its introduction in 1993. A voluntary agreement of a maximum 56 hours per week in Britain was set in 1991. 15% of staff still work longer than this. The Labour Party has just secretly proposed, with no discussion, an increased limit of 65 hours per week for the next eight years and 60 hours per week for the following seven years. It is known and well-documented that long hours at work affect practice. The 1987 Confidential Enquiry into Peri-operative Deaths (CEPOD) -



report of voluntarily reported deaths at or around the time of surgery - estimated that the doctor's fatigue was a major contributory factor in about 140 deaths. Long working hours are bad for patients. The Labour Party has shown that it is not serious about offering adequate health care to the majority who use the NHS. The British Medical Association's Juniors' Committee has threatened industrial action. Their fight for better working hours and conditions is a fight for better care for those who use the NHS. Their fight will bring them into confrontation with the Labour Party, the party which is continuing to force ever greater numbers of already low paid NHS staff into casualised, de-unionised jobs.

Devolution elections

No power for the people

Scotland

MICHAEL MACGREGOR

On Thursday 6 May in a deafening fanfare of media hype about history and democracy, voting for the Scottish parliament took place. Radio, TV and the papers screamed about the reconvention of this parliament after 300 years. From feudal 'democracy' fast-forward to capitalist 'democracy' in a soundbite, leaving aside the inconvenient and undemocratic historical facts – such as the reality that 300 years ago the vote in Scotland was restricted to around 4,000 landowning men which neatly excluded the majority of our ancestors and the people. Then, as today, the non-voters were the propertyless poor, set down in the inventories as serfs alongside cattle, ploughs and swords.

The turnout in 1999 varied between 40.6% and 58.7%. On average 42% of people failed to participate in this democratic exercise.

No party received a majority share of the votes, hence the dull horse-trading between Labour and the Liberal Democrats over sharing power. Central to these sordid deals is the chief concern of the middle classes to ease the financial strain of sending and keeping their kids at university by reducing or abolishing tuition fees. Of no concern are the third of kids growing up in poverty in Scotland.

The Labour Party gained the largest number of seats at 56 out of a total of 129. The next largest

share went to the Scottish National Party, with 35 seats. They, like Plaid Cymru in Wales, will be pacified by comfortable places in the parliament. Winnie Ewing, Madame Ecosse, is along with three other members of the clan, on a nice little earner as SNP Euro MP, Westminster MP and Scottish MP. No need for free school meals for the bairns in that family.

Robin Harper of the Green Party, who became an MSP through proportional representation, expressed a healthy and commendable distaste for the Labour Party, spoiling the consensus approach by rejoicing in



Dennis Canavan

Labour getting 'a bloody nose' through defeat by Greens at local election polls in England. Not so the pathetic Dennis Canavan, who despite being kicked in the balls by Blair's stooges and excluded from the party list, stood as an Independent Candidate for Labour, trouncing official Labour by 12,000 votes. Canavan is clearly touting for the job of lefty mascot in Scotland, like Dennis Skinner in England. Canavan wept about

principles and values 'which I used to think the Labour Party held dear'. Get real, Canavan!

The election of a Scottish Socialist Party MSP is worthy of discussion. Despite there existing no socio-economic breakdown of those who did vote, Tommy Sheridan's claim that the majority of SSP voters were 'disillusioned Labour voters' is questionable. There is no doubt that the existence of a socialist organisation, based in the working class communities and able to muster the votes of the poorer sections of the working class, the youth and unemployed can have an impact. Set against this is the uncomfortable fact that after years of savage council cuts in jobs and services, Labour took all nine constituency seats in Glasgow and 74 out of 79 council seats. Still considerable work to be done, then.

In Dundee, the Labour councillors most closely associated with school closures three years ago were booted out of the affected areas.

Tommy Sheridan was moved to speak of 'Red Clydeside... definitely back on the agenda.' We would refer him to this paper's articles on Clydeside's John Maclean. Maclean castigated William Gallagher, later an MP for the Communist Party of Great Britain, for making speeches in 1915 which did not mention the war. The SSP's election broadcast, while talking of scrapping Trident, failed to mention the NATO bombing of Serbia. Such calculations demonstrably undermine socialism, comrades – tactics are tactics, but principles are principles. ■

parvenu First Secretary, won his seat as a top-up candidate. The Welsh Labour Party has been riven by internecine disputes since the former Welsh Minister, Ron Davies, was forced out by scandal. The party is now split three ways between Davies loyalists, Alun Michael's Blairite coterie, and supporters of Rhodri Morgan, who was favoured by grassroots members for Welsh leader but was forced out by a combination of trade union block votes and Welsh MPs who voted for Blair's choice. Plaid Cymru claimed the election as a victory and certainly strengthened its position. Whether its radical pretensions will live up to expectations, however, is debatable. Plaid Cymru kept the Callaghan government in power at the end of the 1970s, and vigorously disclaimed any republican intentions during the Assembly campaign. How these disparate elements will rule is a matter for speculation.

What is clear is that the Welsh Assembly could easily become yet another gravy train; and voters were very suspicious of this. Welsh Labour councils have a long history of backscratching and with little real power but plenty of time and money, the opportunities will abound. Alun Michael will be paid £98,000. This may well account for 'voter alienation'. ■



Wales' first secretary Alun Michael

Labour's poor showing were much more to do with disillusioned voters. Labour lost seats in its strongholds – even Neil Kinnock's former constituency, Islwyn, was won by Plaid Cymru. Glenys Kinnock, MEP, more accurately warned of alienation amongst Labour voters 'who felt the policies they wanted were not being delivered'.

Ironically, in this first outing for proportional representation, if the 40 constituencies had been decided on a simple first-past-the-post basis, then Labour would have had a clear majority. It would not, however, have had a leader. Alun Michael, Blairite

Nail bombs hit London

CAROL BRICKLEY

Nail bombs exploded on three consecutive weekends in London during April. The bombs were targeted at London's ethnic minority and gay communities.

The first bomb exploded at 5.30pm on Saturday 17 April in Brixton market. 39 people were injured, five of them seriously. The bomb, packed with four-inch nails, was clearly intended to cause severe injuries. The immediate response of police was to downplay any possible connection to racists – they were, they said, 'open minded'. The media speculated that the perpetrators were 'Serbs' (also at one point suggested to have killed Jill Dando), animal rights activists, drug dealers and Mardi Gras copycats. In reality, at such a place and such a time, with Brixton's multi-ethnic population as the target, it was always likely to be racists. In the aftermath the bomb was claimed by a series of fascist groups including the White Wolves and Combat 18.

One week later, almost to the minute, another bomb exploded in Brick Lane, east London, the heart of the Bangladeshi community. This time six people were injured. Speculation grew that this was part of a series of attacks on ethnic minority com-

munities and police began to take such a prospect seriously, warning that there might be further attacks. Right-wing groups again claimed the bombs. The White Wolves was considered the most likely group since Combat 18 was said to be riddled with informers, and, most conveniently, the White Wolves were said to have links with 'the Serbs'!

The worst casualties resulted from the bomb which exploded on the following Friday, 30 April, at 6.37pm in a crowded bar in Old Compton Street, Soho. The bomb was targeted at the gay community. Three people died, including a pregnant woman, and more than 70 were injured, many very seriously. There could be no doubt now that the bombs were aimed at groups hated by fascists: black people and gay people. Even the police by now recognised this.

The response of the gay community was anger and defiance. Together with representatives of the black and Asian communities, commemorations for the dead and injured were held. Early in the following week, a young engineer living in Hampshire was arrested and charged with the bombings. The police were very proud of their successful investigation and quickly announced that the person

arrested 'had no connections with any right wing group' and had acted entirely on his own. Given the nature of the bomb targets, this is unlikely and will have to be proved.

In the wake of these bombs it was understandable that people who were angry and frightened called on the government to ban violent right-wing groups. The solution to the threat of racism, however, is not going to be so simple. Such bans are unlikely to be successful in stamping out racist violence: such groups will just proliferate. More importantly the government and the police are fundamentally racist themselves. The power to ban organisations will more readily be used against left or black groups who choose to fight back. Every repressive law throughout history has been used in this way, and not to defeat racists or fascists. There are real lessons to be learned from the experience of the Lawrence family beyond the bland acceptance that institutionalised racism exists. Simply accepting its existence does not make it go away. The fight against racism and fascism will take place on the streets and in the working class communities which are its targets, not by arming an authoritarian government and police force with more instruments of repression. ■



The Soho bar where a nail bomb killed three people and injured more than 70

Parkhurst prisoners acquitted

GEMMA SHANKLIN

On Saturday 8 November 1998, following a 'serious incident', five prisoners in Parkhurst prison, all of whom were black or Irish, were moved to the segregation unit and a police investigation ensued. The prisoners, Darren Nash, Patrick Petrie, Michael Trevors, Tommy O'Rourke and Robert Kakoo, were charged with GBH and ABH on prison officers and violent disorder.

Their trial began on 15 March. Several of them faced automatic life sentences if convicted of GBH and were surprised when offered a last-minute deal – plead guilty to violent disorder and we will drop the more serious charges. But the prisoners were determined to show that they had been fitted up to cover up brutality at the prison and refused the offer.

It soon became evident that the prison officers had something to hide – one of them had recently been investigated by the police following an allegation that he had hit a prisoner in the seg. and another was investigated for dealing drugs to prisoners.

Prison officer after prison

officer gave evidence that the defendants had been involved in brutal assaults on their colleagues and, while in their original statements to the police they had not known who to name as the assailants, they had no hesitation in naming names during the trial. Although medical evidence showed that the injuries had been relatively minor bruising and cut lips, one of the 'victims' claimed he had sustained a 'swollen brain' and described a virtual bloodbath.

Of course, they did not all get their stories straight and some prison staff said that they were concerned when three naked prisoners were brought into Albany prison under control and restraint (C&R) on 9 November, and that one of the defendants was bleeding from a head wound and another had a cut above his eye.

All five prisoners gave evidence. They described an ordinary Saturday until late afternoon when one of them was walking towards the wing-office and an officer whacked him across the back of the head with his walkie-talkie. The prisoner fell to the ground but others, shocked and angered by the unprovoked attack, surged towards the officer and punched

and kicked him and two other officers who got in the way.

The injured prisoner tried to return to his cell on the 'threes' landing. He made it to the 'twos', where some other prisoners who had been watching attended to his wound. The door from the segregation block then burst open and this group of prisoners, who became the defendants, were confronted by a mob of angry prison officers with their batons drawn. The prisoners prepared to defend themselves and stated that one of them had been assaulted by an officer. Once they had received assurances about their safety, the prisoners calmly walked to the block.

The next morning three were confronted by large C&R squads, stripped totally naked and taken to Albany. The other two were left in strip-cells for the next three weeks, over which time they were physically assaulted and their food was thrown at them so they were forced to eat it from the floor.

The jury spent much of the trial looking at the prosecution witnesses in disbelief. After retiring for little over an hour on 5 May, they came back with not guilty verdicts on all 20 charges. ■

Fight poverty pay!

ALLAN HOPE

23 May marked two years since the sacking of Nigel Cook and the start of the campaign for his reinstatement. As we go to press M&S Packaging (Blackburn) Ltd is still using casual labour to pack CDs for PolyGram. Conditions at M&S have changed very little with many workers still employed on an hourly basis and still having to stand up throughout their shifts. Closed-circuit cameras continue to monitor the workers' every move and wages are still appallingly low. The introduction of the minimum wage has had virtually no effect on wages: many of the casual workers are school leavers and college students on £3 an hour for days; just a handful of over 22-year-olds receive the derisory minimum of £3.60 an hour. The night shift rate remains the same at £4 an hour.

Strangely, after all this time M&S is still in administration. This allows a virtually bankrupt company to continue trading. The owners can amass their profits and at the same time be exempt from having legal action brought against them by their employees at industrial tribunals. It was precisely this law, the 1986 Insolvency Act section 11(3)d, that allowed M&S to sack Nigel for organising a trade union.

The Transport and General Workers Union (T&G), which instructed Nigel to start organising the union at M&S, soon left him to fend for himself. After the initial legal hearings it withdrew all legal support and demanded that he agree to pay all future legal costs if the T&G was to continue representing him. To date the T&G is still refusing to pay Nigel his victimisation benefit, which he was promised and guaranteed by the union rulebook. Bill Morris, T&G General Secretary, will not give a reason for this decision.

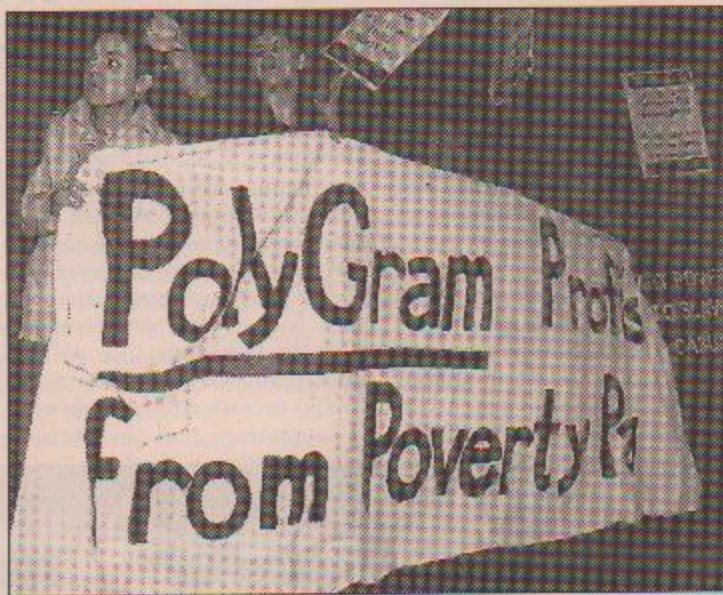
The T&G has now initiated disciplinary procedures against Nigel on trumped-up charges of 'harassing members of (T&G)

staff. This accusation was only made in March 1999 following a protest organised by the RNCC at the regional offices of the T&G in Manchester in November 1998, calling for victimisation benefit to be paid. It is convenient to throw Nigel out of the union now because M&S is due to come out of administration in July, and the T&G is on record as saying they would pursue the case to industrial tribunal when that happened.

The RNCC has never been solely about one man being unfairly sacked. It has always been part of the much broader struggle against the ongoing attacks on workers' rights, the increasing use of casual labour and poverty pay. In the two years of its existence the RNCC has proved that it will be those

situation where the unemployed and other claimants are being pushed into low-paid, casual jobs under threat of having their benefits stopped. Labour's minimum wage has institutionalised poverty pay. Margaret Prosser of the T&G has declared that 'we accept that the flexible labour market is here to stay'. The RNCC has always argued that the fight for workers' rights is inseparable from the fight against the attacks on the unemployed, lone parents and the sick and disabled.

With limited resources, the RNCC has attempted to support other workers in struggle and has shared platforms with the sacked Liverpool Dockers and the Tameside Carers. We organised the picket of the 1998 Brit Awards to highlight the 'down



who are directly affected who will be in the forefront of any effective fightback against increasing poverty. And in the course of fighting back, they will have to confront and challenge the Labour Party and the limited - and at times reactionary - role played by the trade unions and also those groups on the left who defend them.

Labour was elected to make British capital more profitable. To do so it has to ensure that there is a flexible, low paid and disciplined workforce. Using the Tories' Jobseeker's Allowance and its own New Deal scheme, Labour has created a

sizing, outsourcing' practices of the multinational PolyGram and held a national demonstration at the PolyGram plant in Blackburn where they use the sweatshop, M&S Packaging, to pack their CDs. PolyGram used mounted police and doghandlers in an attempt to break up our demonstration. The RNCC has campaigned against the role of the Employment Services in policing the unemployed and monitored how they try and push claimants onto New Deal. We have occupied the Jobcentre to publicise how the unemployed and low-paid are exploited. We also confronted Jack



Straw during his town centre 'shout-about' and disrupted his lecture at the Prison Reform Trust. The RNCC has supported several Reclaim the Streets and other anti-road/environmental protests. We were also involved in the occupation of Shoreham Docks organised by the Simon Jones Memorial campaign.

Whilst many of our activities have been covered by local and national newspapers, radio and TV, the left press has totally ignored the RNCC. Particularly the SWP, which has refused to get involved with the campaign and whose Blackburn members actually hissed and booed at RNCC campaigners. Red Action mocked and attacked the RNCC in their October 1998 issue, proving themselves no better than the Blackburn Labour Party which has continually publicly attacked and tried to undermine the campaign.

RNCC supporters regularly leaflet outside Jobcentres and hold 'Fight Poverty Pay' stalls in town centres. The response is always positive, but due to the current political climate many people do not feel they can do anything. The campaign's newsletter, *Fighting Poverty Pay!*, gives us the opportunity to break down this sense of isolation and apathy. At a recent campaign meeting it was agreed that the name Reinstate Nigel Cook no longer has the same resonance as it did in the beginning, although the aims of the campaign are as much of a live issue as before, if not more so.

Therefore the campaign will now continue under the slogan Fight Poverty Pay! We believe that the continued work of the campaign is a contribution to the building of a political movement that represents the interests of all sections of the working class. It is clear from our experiences over the last two years that a Labour Party that legislates for poverty pay and a trade union movement that accepts 'flexibility' can never become fighting forces for change. They are part of the problem and have to be fought. Fight Poverty Pay! End Casualisation! No to Slave Labour! ■

Elections in Israel

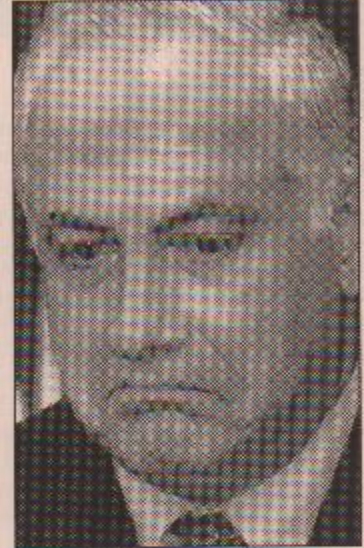
TREVOR RAYNE

Ehud Barak's coalition One Israel victory in the 17 May elections changes little for the suffering Palestinian people. Hopes that the stalled Middle East 'Peace Process' will revive, show the frustration of the US government with Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud-led coalition. This coalition was dependent on religious parties that prevented it adequately exploiting the weakness of the Palestinians' position under Arafat's Palestinian Authority leadership and the readiness of Syria to compromise with imperialism.

Netanyahu's coalition collapsed over the transfer of 2% of the West Bank to Palestinians, not even the miserable 13% envisaged in the October 1998 Wye Accords, which Arafat had signed up to. Implementation of the Accords was frozen. Netanyahu's government was mired in desertions and corruption. Electoral opposition to Netanyahu and Likud included four of his former ministers. Two former ministers are under criminal investigation and the leader of one of Netanyahu's coalition parties has been sentenced to four years' imprisonment for fraud and obstruction of justice. Netanyahu's government was an embarrassment and obstruction.

Barak's campaign was advised by James Carville, the US 'spin doctor' previously employed by Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder. Consequently, the formula of honeyed words and no substance was familiar. Barak vowed to make peace with the Palestinians, Lebanon and Syria.

Assad's expulsion of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan in October last year demonstrated his willingness to deal with imperialism, and Israel may believe it can leave southern Lebanon, which it has occupied since 1978, to Lebanon and Syria to police. This may be part of the price for an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights,



Benjamin Netanyahu - collapse

which Israel took from Syria in 1968.

For the Palestinians there will be more humiliation. Former chief-of-staff Barak has never said he will implement the Wye Accords. He has said that Palestinians will never establish a capital in any part of Jerusalem. He has made no commitment on handing land back to Palestinians or on ending 30 new Zionist settlements under construction. He has said that Israel would not withdraw to the pre-1967 war boundaries and that Zionist settlers on the West Bank and Gaza Strip should remain under Israeli sovereignty.

Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organisation leadership are looking to the USA and Europe for help in exchange for controlling the Palestinian people's struggle. Arafat accepted US advice not to make the promised declaration of an independent Palestinian state on 4 May, in deference to the Israeli elections. If the PLO cannot come up with something and if the Zionist settlement programme is not stopped, the Palestinian masses will revolt and challenge the PLO's control of them. As many Palestinians are refugees as were on the electoral roll in Israel's elections - over four million. The solution to their problem is the end of the Zionist state which Arafat recognises. ■

In brief

Voter pleasing? Porter wins in Appeal Court

Former leader of Tory Westminster Council, Dame Shirley Porter, won the latest round in a court battle over gerrymandering. The appeal court decided by a majority of two to one to dismiss the £27 million surcharge that Porter and her deputy faced as a result of the 'homes for votes' scandal. The matter will now go to the House of Lords.

Porter is notorious for the sale of three local cemeteries for 15p, including very valuable building land which was very quickly developed by the Panamanian purchasers. Westminster council tax payers had to cough up £4.2m to buy back the cemeteries. Porter and her cronies were eventually caught out when they manipulated council house sales in order to boost their vote in local elections. Council dwellings in eight mar-

ginal wards were sold off at enormous discounts to almost anyone who could claim a link with Westminster. The expectation was that home owners would be more likely to vote Tory. Meanwhile the homeless were shipped out to Labour boroughs and tenants in sub-standard accommodation could whistle - they were more likely to vote Labour. This was gerrymandering by any standards and at an earlier hearing the High Court, supporting District Auditor Magill's decision to surcharge, branded Porter a liar.

The Appeal Court, however, decided that 'voter-pleasing decisions are lawful... even if one of the motivating factors in the minds of councillors who vote for them is the desire to be re-elected.' Relying on the fact that Porter et al had taken legal advice before acting, the court has opened the door for council crookery. If the Appeal Court decision holds, local councillors will be able to ignore their legal duties to one set of voters in order to satisfy the demands



Shirley Porter

of their own supporters. Tesco heiress Porter, law-abiding British subject to the end, has transferred her considerable personal assets abroad and now lives in Palm Springs and Israel.

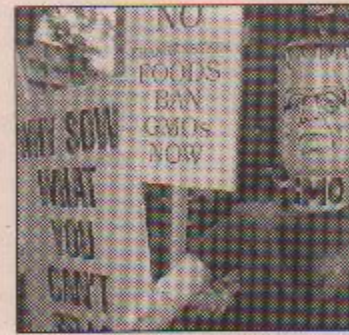
Make the poor pay

Labour has once again chosen to attack the least privileged and poorest section of the population in its latest round of 'welfare reforms'. Soon after they came to power their targets were lone parents. The victims this time are disabled people dependent on incapacity benefit. If Labour gets its way, disabled

people will only be eligible for incapacity benefit if they have worked during the previous two years and the benefit will be ruthlessly means-tested at the equivalent of a 50% tax rate. Labour argues that it is simply targeting benefits on those most in need. In reality they are making the poorest people pay and ensuring that their middle class voters benefit from low taxes.

More GM spin

The Labour government's uncritical support for GM foods has begun to look like skating on thin ice. Supermarket after supermarket has bowed to consumer demands to remove GM ingredients and for labelling. It has now become clear that the effects that GM crops may have on the environment and biodiversity have never been given serious consideration by either the biotech industry or the Labour government and evidence has emerged that pollen from GM maize kills monarch butterflies in the USA. Nonetheless, like Star Wars' Evil



Is the Government 'entirely safe'?

Empire, the government is determined to strike back. An anonymous group of scientists under the auspices of the Royal Society claim to have discredited Dr Pusztai's research into GM potatoes which revealed alarming side effects in rats. Cabinet Darth Vader, John Cunningham, has announced two new commissions to monitor GM food safety and proclaimed, once more, that GM foods are 'entirely safe'. Anyone with knowledge of the methods of the biotech multinationals, who routinely subvert such bodies, will be asking *who* were the six

anonymous scientists, *who* are the new GM food commissioners, and, most important, *who* are they really working for?

The government is now gearing itself to counteract its critics. It will be interesting to hear what spin can transform terminator technology and increased use of herbicides into progress for humanity.

The cricket test

British officials in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have subjected cricket fans applying for visas to travel to Britain for the World Cup to up to 40 minutes' questioning on cricket. Questions included: 'Who captained Sri Lanka when they last won the World Cup?', 'What does lbw stand for?' and 'What are the umpire's signals for a four and a six?' Fans from New Zealand, Australia and South Africa have only been asked if they have a valid return ticket.

So much for the World Cup's publicity with its carnival emphasis on 'multicultural Britain' and racial harmony. ■

Terror in East Timor

CAT WIENER

The campaign of terror waged in East Timor over the past few months by pro-Jakarta paramilitaries exposes the hollowness of Indonesia's apparent moves towards granting the territory independence. The aim is to intimidate the East Timorese population into accepting Indonesia's proposals for 'autonomy' in a referendum to be held on 5 August.

In January Indonesian President BJ Habibie offered the people of East Timor a referendum on autonomy, with the promise that, if it were rejected, the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly would vote on giving East Timor the full independence its people have been fighting for for 23 years. An agreement on this was signed between Portugal, the former colonial power, and Indonesia on 5 May. In the agreement, Indonesia makes it clear that the acceptance of special autonomy, on a constitution drawn up by the United Nations on Indonesia's terms and on which the people of East Timor were at no stage consulted, would signify full recognition of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor. There is no doubt that such an offer would be

overwhelmingly rejected by the vast majority of East Timorese.

This is why throughout April and May the death squads, armed and supported by the Indonesian military, have massacred over 100 people. Torture, threats, kidnappings, the burning and destruction of houses and churches are commonplace. Doctors report daily cases of casualties with bullet and machete wounds. While the Indonesian government distances itself from these groups, saying it cannot be held responsible for the actions of 'patriots', the truth is that its army is actively participating in the repression, as it has done since Indonesia's brutal invasion in 1975. *Guardian* journalist John Aglionby reported at the beginning of May, when Indonesian armed forces commander General Wiranto flew into East Timor's capital, Dili, to appeal for peace between 'warring factions': 'Militia rank and file were out in force, terrorising anyone they suspected of opposing integration with Indonesia... I passed at least 50 paramilitaries armed with rifles, machetes or iron bars, threatening anyone who tried to drive by them. Police and soldiers made no effort to stop the menacing behaviour.'

A US doctor working in East Timor described military re-



East Timor guerrillas

pression: 'Right now, in Liquica, where many people were slaughtered recently, there is a concentration camp. Three days ago ABRI (Indonesian armed forces) were rounding up people from all the villages and sending them to the camp and burning all the village houses. Everything was burned to the ground. Now there are 20,000 people in Liquica, many of them small children, with no

food, sleeping on the ground. Every morning they are all woken up by ABRI soldiers and forced to get into formation and stand singing the Indonesian national anthem. The soldiers beat the people, do all kinds of things to them.'

Last August, ABRI staged for the benefit of the international media what it said was a withdrawal of 1,000 troops. In reality, levels remained unchanged,

with 7,938 combat troops still in occupation.

What, then, is the response of the west, with its new-found humanitarian foreign policy? It is the same as it was during the 1975 invasion, when 60,000 people were rounded up and slaughtered in three months; the same as when sickening reports of torture in East Timor on a mass scale by the military began to seep out; the same as it has been for the last 23 years as upwards of 200,000 people – a third of the population of East Timor – have been systematically wiped out. They have not just failed to act, but have armed and supported these Indonesian murderers.

Most of Indonesia's arms come from Britain – Hawk ground attack aircraft, Sea Wolf and Rapiers surface-to-air missiles, Tribal class frigates, Marconi and other battlefield communications equipment, armoured vehicles, Tactical riot control vehicles and a fully-equipped Institute of Technology for the Indonesian Army. Indonesian special forces – Kopassus – patrol East Timor with automatic weapons supplied by British Aerospace and are trained by the SAS. Continuing the fine tradition started by David Owen, Labour Foreign Secretary in 1978, who sold the first Hawk jets to Indonesia, New Labour decided it would be 'impractical' to revoke licences for 16 Hawks

destined for Indonesia. The sale of water cannons and machine guns has continued unabated. Between May 1997, when Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announced his 'ethical mission statement' on arms sales and January 1999, the Labour government approved a total of 64 export licences for arms to Indonesia.

In addition, after last year's economic turmoil and social unrest in Indonesia, the imperialists are keen not to rock the boat before Indonesia's first democratic general election in 40 years on 7 June. US Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth, visiting Jakarta, made it clear everything would be left in the hands of the UN: 'It would be inappropriate to interfere at this time.' Cue Derek Fatchett, late British Foreign Office Minister of State, assuring us that he would 'remind the Indonesians that they have to take an even hand.' In other words, business as usual. Imperialism's shameful record on East Timor makes it blindingly clear that it cares nothing for 'humanitarian concerns' but only its strategic interests and the vast profits of arms-mongering. For the East Timorese, hope lies not in the duplicitous assurances of western politicians but in heeding the call of their imprisoned liberation leader, Jose 'Xanana' Gusmao, not to lay down their arms but to continue the struggle for independence. ■

Zimbabwe in May

DAVID KITSON

Margaret Dongo MP has charisma and initiative. Before the last general election in Zimbabwe she was a ZANU MP, but was outmanoeuvred from her candidacy in the ZANU primaries by the apparatchiks. So she stood as an independent and lost. Taking the result to court she showed that it was rigged and it was overthrown. She won the ensuing by-election, becoming one of the tiny handful of independents in Parliament. Now that the next election in 2000 is looming, she has become the leader of the Zimbabwe Union of Democrats (ZUD). ZUD has joined the Democratic Union of Africa, to which the New Nationalist Party in South Africa, the inheritors of the mantle of apartheid, and Renamo, a terror band originally set up by the Smith regime to destabilise Mozambique during the liberation war, are affiliated, along with other national organisations equally unsavoury. In turn the DUA is affiliated to the International Union of Democrats, whose founding members include Mrs Thatcher, currently vehemently defending the democratic rights of Chilean butcher General Pinochet. They all are dedicated to loud lip-service to their notions of democracy.

I think that Ms Dongo has shot herself in the foot to such effect that she will be lost, footless in the wilderness.

A collection of Mickey

Mouse parties has appeared on the pre-electoral political scene. Early on the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) appeared, mouselike, but more like Mighty Mouse than Mickey. It already has a couple of seats in Parliament representing Manicaland constituencies. It is led by Edgar Tokere, who, singularly devoid of illusions and a brilliant political analyst, was once the general secretary of ZANU (PF) but was thrown out for publicly denouncing the chicanery in which its leaders were (and are) engaged. Manicaland is a hotbed of dissension. Splintered from ZUM is the Democratic Party (DP), now led by Warayayi Zembe, the owner of the Foundation College of Commerce in Harare. It operates more than ten offices country-wide. It stands for a market economy, private ownership of property, and free enterprise, so we can see how principled its aims for democracy are.

Meanwhile the party led by Professor Austin Chakaodza has changed its name from the Front for Popular Democracy to the Popular Democratic Front. We need not bother with acronyms. It seems to be quite the thing for academics each to form his own political party. There are others.

The economy continues in its difficulties. The Reserve Bank (the local central bank) has raised the bank rate to 46%. Interest rates are up to 50%, but the government has imposed a withholding tax of 33% on interest income. Inflation is running at 53.8% and is expected to peak at 60%. I don't see a peak in sight. Sugar has gone up by

20%. The prices of bread and milk are being increased repeatedly. Bus fares have risen out of sight. The Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority has made an unauthorised increase of 15%, while NOCZIM, the state-owned oil company, wants to increase the price of oil by 30%, with inevitable knock-on effects. This is being denied by

teen of their leaders have been suspended.

The IMF, which has undertaken to supply Zimbabwe with a tranche of \$253m, is still being coy about handing it over after interminable delays. Some newspapers say it is being handed over, others are merely optimistic now that Zimbabwean business chiefs have been



President Robert Mugabe

the government. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has exhausted its annual budget of \$2391m in three months; as a result, Air Zimbabwe is not delivering its diplomatic bags. Students are still demonstrating against completely inadequate grants. Six-

to talks in Washington. But, like Macavity the cat, it is simply not there. The Cabinet is divided on the issue, some wanting to dump the IMF. Mugabe has been to China and may get funds from the Chinese instead.

Despite widespread local

distaste for its involvement in the DRC, the allies (Zimbabwe, Namibia and the DRC) have held a summit, deciding to pursue the war energetically despite efforts at peace brokering, in response to the invaders' delaying tactics during negotiations. Bomb attacks on Goma, unexpectedly killing hundreds of the enemy, have been launched with a push to the east. This war has cost Zimbabwe \$2500m so far.

Traditionally the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has been apolitical. Following last year's successful general strikes and the failure of subsequent negotiations with government and employers, this year they called for a mass stay-away as a response to high inflation. Mugabe invoked the Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) Act prohibiting mass strike action. This ban is due to expire soon, and the Act does not permit a renewal for six months. Parliament is engaged in promulgating legislation to get around this.

Realising that its leadership would be incapacitated by arrest, the ZCTU called off the mass action. Instead it pursued a campaign through the usual negotiatory channels for a cost of living increase of 20%. Some employers failed to carry this out so the ZCTU called for a sit-in on 22 May. The effect on tardy employers was so salutary that the sit-in has been postponed indefinitely. The ZCTU also realised long ago that it would have to get involved in the political process.

Last February the ZCTU attended the National Constitutional Convention (NCC) along with 30 other organisations: NGOs, grassroots and professional organisations. It was tasked with the setting up of a

worker-oriented political party. The NCC set up the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) to consider what reforms are needed, especially limiting the President's terms of office. The government has set up its own Constitutional Commission (CC), under the guidance of government minister Zvobgo. Although invited, the NCA declined to join. As three-quarters of the CC are ZANU functionaries, it is a rubber stamp for Mugabe. Some members of the NCA have defected to the Constitutional Commission.

May Day is an official holiday here. The ZCTU held a dozen well-attended May Day meetings up and down the country announcing a founding conference for the new political party in June. This was greeted with tremendous support. Morgan Tsvangirai said that the political leadership of ZANU was not welcome at any of these meetings. The new party, facilitated by the ZCTU, is to be a strong and broad-based political movement aimed at ousting ZANU. The standard of living has become political; the only way forward is a democratic alternative to prevent present government practices.

According to a South African report, the Conflict Prevention Network is advocating that, in the event of a military coup toppling Mugabe, SADC forces should intervene to restore civil government. I think that this is quite unlikely, but it would really exacerbate conflict. Such a spark might ignite a prairie fire in southern Africa that would extend to Marion Island. In Zimbabwe a situation akin to the February Revolution might then arise. So not merely roll on June but also, in a different context, October. Goodbye to May. ■

Break with Labour

In February 1997, three months before the General Election, we demanded to know where Labour would make a difference if they were to replace the reviled Tories. We said Labour 'will retain and extend all the repressive legislation that has been passed over the last 17 years. The absence of significant internal divisions, the insignificant left wing, and the removal of any inner-party democracy means it is far better placed than the Tories to mount a concerted attack on state welfare spending. It will continue with a bipartisan foreign policy and will maintain its support for the Loyalist ascendancy. It will retain all existing immigration controls. It will not repeal either the Asylum Act nor the Jobseeker's Allowance. In fact it will be more oppressive, more racist, more anti-working class than the Tory government it is almost certain to replace.' (Editorial: Don't vote for Labour, Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! No 135, February/March 1997)

Time has proved us right. At the same time as Labour is directing a blitzkrieg against the former Yugoslavia, it is forcing through cuts in disability benefits and railroading through even more draconian asylum legislation than it inherited from the Tories. Its relentless targeting of the poor and oppressed in Britain exposes the fraudulent humanitarianism with which its cloaks its pursuit of British and US imperialist ambitions in the Balkans. Labour's willingness to support the US drive to reassert its domination of Europe is matched by its determination to ensure that British imperialism achieves a position as the pre-eminent power within the European imperialist pack. With Middle East oil production set to rise from 41% of the world total to 65% over the next 20 years, control of the surrounding region will assume even greater importance as the major imperialist powers jockey for position. Russia is to be driven back and China contained, in a world order characterised by intensifying inter-imperialist rivalries.

Labour is the voice of contemporary British imperialism. It understands that the key to social stability lies in sustaining the privileged conditions of as large a section of the middle class and upper working class as possible. This means Labour has to ensure the preservation of Britain's position as the second imperialist power in the world. Hence Labour is serving a warning in Yugoslavia: it will pound into submission any resistance to British imperialism's interests. As economic crisis threatens financial collapse, such military actions will become the norm - Labour is also serving a warning to other European imperialist powers that they should not presume to undermine Britain's positions either.

The continuing privilege of the middle class and upper working class also depends on the continuing transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich that started in the 1980s. The intensifying attack on state welfare is crucial to this in that it minimises the financial burden the poor may place on the wealthy and better-off. Repressive legislation is a necessary accompaniment, to deal with any rebellion by those who have less and less to lose. It is therefore no surprise to socialists that Labour is attacking the working class at home at the same time as it is bombing working class people in Yugoslavia.

In these conditions, those who do not condemn Labour condone it. Left Labour MPs want it both ways: they want to have an easy conscience whilst retaining their positions of status and privilege. Meanwhile the left outside the Labour Party participates uncritically in this spectacle. They see courage in hypocrisy because they themselves have capitulated to Labour and imperialism. There can be no serious movement against the war unless it is against British imperialism. There can be no serious movement against British imperialism unless it breaks with the party that stewards its interests - Labour. That is the message that socialists and democrats must fight for.

Yugoslavia: the

Imperialist intervention in the Balkans is not new. History shows us that the Balkans have been a battleground for the Great Powers since the dawn of modern imperialism. At various times since the mid-nineteenth century, each of the Balkan nations has sought to ally itself with one or other of the imperialist nations, either to bolster the claims of one ruling class against another, or to suppress rebellions of the oppressed. This characteristic of the local ruling classes - their weakness, their dependency on imperialism - means that they have been willing pawns in the hands of competing imperialist interests and that, as a consequence, their national demands have always involved the subjugation of other nationalities within the region.

However, there is a different form of nationalism, a revolutionary, anti-imperialist nationalism, which expresses the interests of the working class and the oppressed. Such nationalism links the struggle for national liberation with that for social liberation, the challenge to imperialism with the challenge to its local agents. It fights against any national exclusivity, on the basis that all the Balkan nations have equal rights and, in particular, equal rights to self-determination. Such a movement does not exist today, but it has to be built if the poor and oppressed of the region are to achieve peace. That it can be built is proved by the history of the Partisan movement from 1941 to 1945, whose war of national liberation ended in social revolution. Their victory was secured against overwhelming military odds, at an enormous human cost, and against the designs of the western imperialist Allies. It proved possible because the struggle was led by a genuine communist party - the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), which championed the right of all the nations making up the Yugoslav federation to self-determination. It fused the struggle for national liberation with that for social emancipation. In so doing, it created an unstoppable army made up of and led by the working class and poor peasantry. The outcome was over 30 years of peace and social development, destroyed only by the economic might of Western imperialism.

Today, the epic struggle of the people of Yugoslavia has been forgotten, the revolution and its leadership - in particular, its general secretary Josip Tito - condemned by opportunists, 'Stalinists' and 'Trotskyists' alike. Yet as NATO bombs pour down on Serbia and Kosovo, it is vital for us to understand that peace in the Balkans will once again require the sort of movement that Tito and the CPY built and led.

The Balkans: the powderkeg of imperialism

It was the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria on 28 June 1914 in Sarajevo by Serb Bosnian nationalists that sparked the First Imperialist War. To understand why, it is necessary to go back to the 1850s, when the Balkans were occu-

pled by two enfeebled imperialist powers. The south, including Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia and Montenegro, was under the control of the Turkish Ottoman empire. The northern parts, including Slovenia and Croatia formed part of the Austrian empire. The Ottoman empire was economically bankrupt, whilst the Austrians were reeling following defeat, first at the hands of a united Italy, and then in 1867, by a resurgent Prussia. The formation of the so-called Dual Monarchy with Hungary in 1867 gave Austria a temporary respite, and allowed Hungary to gain almost complete control over Croatia.

A peasant uprising in 1875 in Bosnia-Herzegovina swiftly turned into a war against the Ottoman empire on whose military support the mainly Moslem landlords depended. Serbia and Montenegro declared war on Turkey, which speedily defeated them. Tsarist Russia, which had long sought control of Constantinople to protect its access to the Mediterranean, saw an excuse to settle a score left over from the Crimean war. After a brief conflict a settlement was imposed on Turkey which gave Serbia indepen-



Tito

dence and greatly enlarged Bulgaria. This was completely unacceptable to both Britain and France, and the carve-up was renegotiated in the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. This gave Bosnia-Herzegovina to Austria, thwarting plans for a Greater Serbia and assuring Serbian support for Bosnian nationalism.

The assassination of Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, set in train a remorseless series of events. Austria demanded that Serbia undertake to restrain the activities of Serb nationalists, investigate Serb nationalist groups, and hand over any accomplices to the murder. Serbia agreed to every demand except one: that Austrian officials be allowed onto Serbian territory to 'aid' the investigation. At the end of July 1914, Austro-Hungary ordered a general mobilisation. Russia ordered a counter-mobilisation as, in rapid sequence, did German imperialism (in support of Austro-Hungary) and then British and French imperialism (in support of Russia).

Four years of war and 20 million dead set the scene for another carve-up. The secret Treaty of London in 1915 had promised Italy swathes of

Slovenia and Croatia if it were to come into the war against Austria. The sudden collapse of the Austrian empire in 1918, however, left Serbia in a militarily dominant position. It was able to play on Croatian and Slovenian fears of Italian occupation to bounce them into a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia under the rule of a ruthless Serb monarchy. Serbian control of the state tightened during the inter-war period; Croatian nationalists were subject to intense repression, as was the Communist party of Yugoslavia (CPY).

Yugoslav foreign policy was dominated by hostility to Italy, which drove it towards Germany, particularly after the victory of fascism in 1933. The Italian invasion of Albania and Greece in October 1940 sowed panic in the Serbian ruling class. As a weak, dependent bourgeoisie, it could only survive in alliance with one or other imperialist power. British imperialism, anxious to safeguard its precarious position in the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt, sought to prevent the Yugoslav monarchy from concluding an agreement with Germany and Italy, but failed. At the end of February 1941, Yugoslavia signed the Tripartite Pact with the fascist powers, turning it into little more than a protectorate. Popular opposition was immense, and on 26 March, a group of officers deposed Regent Prince Paul, installed King Peter in his place, and rejected the pact.

The response was immediate and devastating. The German invasion of 6 April 1941 was accompanied by a bombing campaign which killed 20,000 in three days in Belgrade. Within three weeks, Yugoslav forces had collapsed, and the King exiled. German forces partitioned Yugoslavia, taking direct control of Slovenia and Serbia. Italy occupied Bosnia and Montenegro, whilst Bulgaria was given Macedonia. A puppet 'Independent State of Croatia' was set up under the leadership of the Croatian nationalist Ante Pavelic, who initiated a blood bath of unprecedented proportions. Under the guise of defending Catholicism, Croatian Ustashe forces slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Serbs in the most barbaric manner, laying waste to entire regions of Croatia.

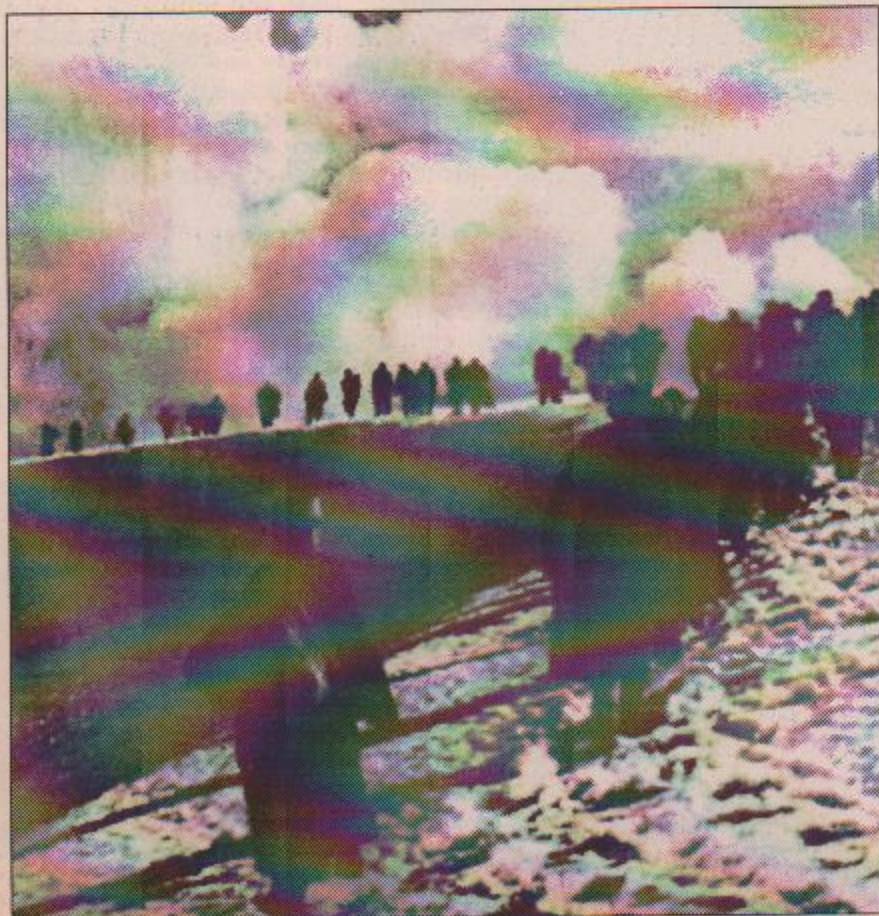
The Partisan struggle begins

The CPY, understanding that it would be impossible to build an urban-based revolutionary army in such conditions, took to the mountains and established the Partisan movement. The German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 triggered a generalised uprising throughout Yugoslavia against the brutal fascist occupation. Italian forces were almost completely driven out of Montenegro. Huge quantities of arms fell into Partisan hands. By the end of the year, the Partisan army numbered some 80,000 troops. They faced 18 divisions of German, Italian, Bulgarian and Hungarian troops as well as five divisions of Croatian Ustashe.

Within Serbia, acts of sabotage became widespread. In September

refusal to compromise with imperialism, or subordinate their struggle in any way to the requirements of the imperialist powers.

war of liberation 1941-45



The Partisans took to the mountains to conduct their struggle against fascism

1941. Hitler ordered three German divisions to attack the Partisans. Field Marshal von Keitel ordered that 'in a reprisal for the life of one German soldier, the general rule should be capital punishment of 50-100 communists. The manner of execution must have a frightening effect'. Following a Partisan attack near the town of Kragujevac which left 10 German soldiers dead, German troops rounded up the entire male population, including school children. On 21 October, they were taken out in batches of 100 and shot. All day the massacre continued. At least 5,000 died. Today, Kragujevac has become one of NATO's named bombing targets.

The class struggle against the Cetniks

The Partisans faced not just occupation forces from four countries together with their quisling allies, they also had to fight a movement which was to receive the political and military support of the Allies - the Cetniks. Their nucleus was a group of Serb officers who fled into the mountains after Yugoslavia's defeat. Led by Draza Mihailovic, fiercely pro-Serb and anti-Croat, they opened negotiations with the exiled royalist government through a radio link established in the summer of 1941. Mihailovic was appointed war minister. At the same time, however, he also established links with the quisling regime in Serbia under General Nedic. Cetnik policy was dictated by its class base amongst the rural bourgeoisie with Greater Serbian ambitions. Given the ruthlessness of the occupation forces, the Cetniks knew that any war of liberation would mean dreadful material loss, completely unacceptable to its bourgeois base.

This was exposed when the Partisans attempted to negotiate a

united movement, proposing in September a joint command, joint administration of liberated areas, and joint action against quisling forces. But talks between Tito and Mihailovic reached no conclusion, and on 2 November, Cetniks launched co-ordinated attacks on Partisan-held areas. Mihailovic sent radio messages to London demanding aid and denouncing Tito. On 11-12 November, he met with the Germans to solicit their support, handing over 365 Partisans who were forthwith shot. By the end of 1941, Cetnik forces were receiving money and arms from both Germans and Italians to fight the Partisans whilst also receiving Allied assistance.

People's Liberation Committees

Once the Partisans liberated areas of the country, they established broad-based People's Liberation Committees which were generally led by Communists, and which dealt with all aspects of civilian life - health, education, food distribution. Women and young people played a vital role in the functioning of the committees. Feeding and housing were particularly important, but so, with the huge number of refugees, were health and hygiene. 'Consideration for the population was basic to winning their support. There was a moratorium on debts, but taxes had to be levied and collected, wages and prices fixed, transport and communications repaired, and local industry and agriculture put into some kind of working order' (Phyllis Auty: *Tito - a biography* p240). Basic land reform was implemented, a move which alienated the ruling class even further.

Such a revolutionary policy, however, created new allies for the liberation struggle amongst the poor peasantry, and forced the likes of

Mihailovic to reveal his reactionary aims - the preservation of the old system. It was the class position of the forces he led that pushed Mihailovic into more and more open forms of collaboration with the occupying forces. The Partisans would not allow the local bourgeoisie to sit on the fence. And, when presented with the choice - to side with the fascist occupation or with the forces of liberation - they chose the former. As a result, not only did Mihailovic lose popular support and influence, but so did the monarchy in exile, and its supporters - the western imperialist Allies.

Tito himself placed special stress on the importance of the Liberation Committees: 'It is essential to build up close relations between army and civilians so that the people feel itself one with the military... The correct functioning of even the smallest organs of government is the very basis for success in the war of liberation; without this, the greatest victories in the field are built on sand'. A further area of work for the Committees was education, both technical - reading and writing classes were set up for young and old alike - and political, to win conscious political support for the Partisans and the CPY. The first elections to the Committees took place in 1942, with women enfranchised for the first time. By the end of 1942, with large areas of Bosnia and Croatia liberated, there were thousands of Liberation Committees along the full length of the country; it was truly a pan-Yugoslav force.

The Proletarian Brigades

If the formation of National Liberation Committees was a crucial step in securing popular support for the Partisans, the decision to form a regular, revolutionary army through the creation of Proletarian Brigades was to be no less important. What was at issue was whether the Partisans had the military means to support their political independence, or whether they would be mere auxiliary forces to the armies of the imperialist powers to the West or the Soviet Union to the East. In short, such an army would be a crucial factor in determining the character of any post-war settlement; in particular, whether the western imperialist Allies would be able to re-impose the monarchy.

The first Proletarian Brigade was established on 22 December 1941, made up of 1,200 volunteers from Serbian and Montenegrin units; a further four were established over the next six months. Each had its own political structures led by political commissars attached to the commander, and were made up overwhelmingly of Communists. They were the shock troops of the Partisans, used up and down the country against the Germans and the Italians. By the end of the war, the Partisans had 800,000 under arms, a staggering achievement. That Tito and the CPY were preparing in 1941 for the assumption of political power, when the western imperialist powers and the Soviet Union were reeling under the fascist onslaught, is testament to their political foresight.

The Partisans in the international arena

Throughout 1942, the western imperialist powers continued to supply the Cetniks with military equipment and political support, despite the fact that they were aware of the leading role of the Partisans in the fight against fascism, and the collaborative actions of Mihailovic. The exiled monarchy continued to broadcast appeals to the Yugoslav people to support the Cetniks, and denounced the Partisans. However, the major political battle the CPY had to face was with the Soviet Union. Throughout the war Tito submitted regular reports to Georgi Dimitrov, Secretary to the Communist International, even after it had been dissolved in May 1943. The Communist International was completely opposed to the strategy of the CPY, in particular the decision to form national Liberation Committees and to set up the Proletarian Brigades. In response to one report from Tito, Dimitrov asked:

'Why... did you need to form a special Proletarian Brigade? Surely at the moment, the basic, immediate task is to unite all anti-Nazi currents, smash the invaders and achieve national liberation... Are there really no other Yugoslavian patriots, apart from the Communists and Communist sympathisers, with whom you could join in common struggle against the invaders?... We honestly request you to give your tactics serious thought, and your actions as well.'

The point of course was that there were no other 'patriots': they had compromised already with the fascist occupation. The CPY was also alone amongst other liberation movements. Neither the Italian nor the French Communist Parties sought to

organise guerrilla movements independently of local bourgeois forces, let alone attempt to create an independent revolutionary army. In Greece, the armed struggle against the German occupation was also limited by the Greek Communist Party to what was acceptable to the local bourgeoisie. Its refusal to create an independent revolutionary army left it incapable of opposing the British army which invaded Greece in December 1944 to restore the old order, and on 6 February 1945 it capitulated to a force it vastly outnumbered.

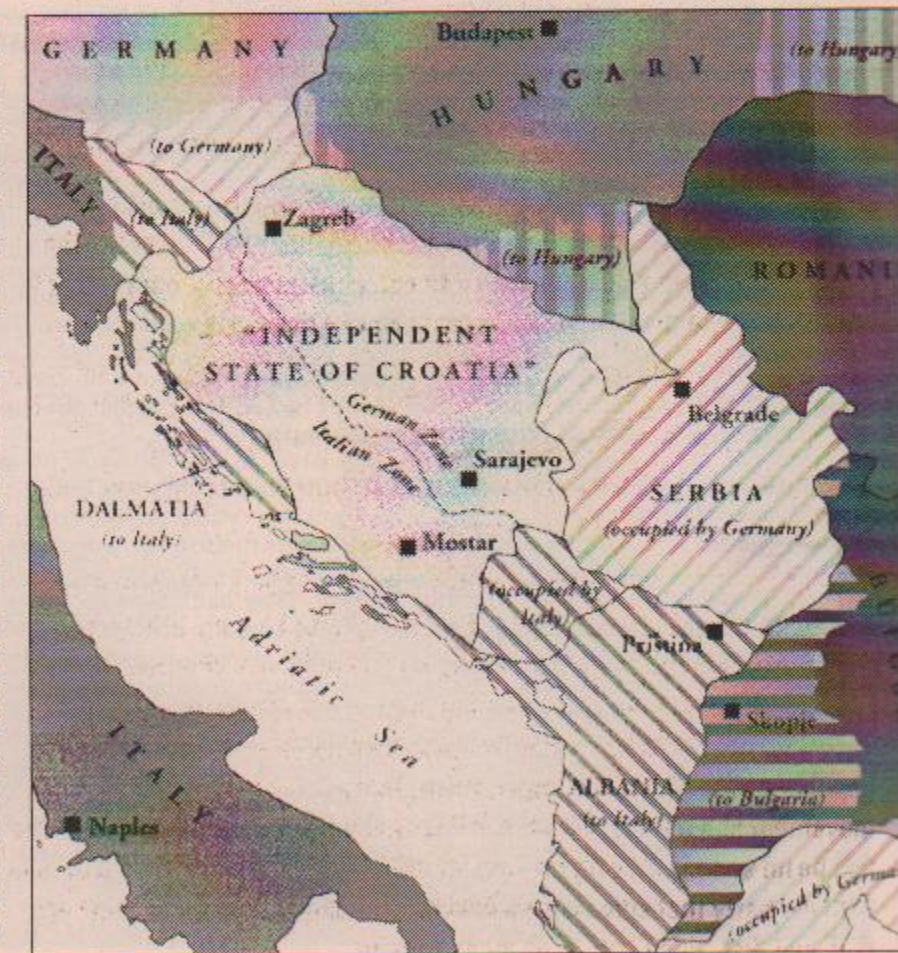
The military struggle

In mid-1942, Tito evacuated positions in southeast Bosnia to move into liberated territory in northern Croatia, where at Bihac he held the first meeting of the Anti-Fascist Council of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) on 26/27 November 1942. Dimitrov had radioed Tito urging him not to 'look upon the committee as a kind of government, but as the political arm of the national liberation struggle. At this stage do not raise the question of the abolition of the monarchy. Do not put forward any republican slogans. Yet as Tito concluded in his assessment of the conference, 'the whole body of people present condemned the Yugoslav government as traitors. Although we do not look on this committee as a kind of government it will nevertheless have to look after all state business and occupy itself with the war, in which it will have the support of the People's Liberation Committees...'

The Germans organised seven major offensives against the Partisans, the fourth of which was in April 1943 and was aimed at encircling Bihac. 18,000 Cetniks - still

continued overleaf

1941: the partition of Yugoslavia



continued from previous page
 being supplied with arms by the British – were mobilised for the campaign alongside the occupation forces. The Cetniks were destroyed as the Partisans broke through their lines to the south and moved into Montenegro. Tito nearly lost his life during the fifth offensive as the Partisan leadership was forced out of Montenegro into eastern Bosnia during May. Although the British took a step towards recognising the Partisans during the summer, they also withheld advance warning of the Italian surrender in September 1943. This was to prevent the Partisans seizing weapons from surrendering Italian forces in Montenegro and Dalmatia. The ruse failed: Tito ordered the Partisans to break off all actions and head to the ports of Split and Sibenik and disarm 10 Italian divisions ahead of the Germans.

Second meeting of AVNOJ

The second meeting of AVNOJ, which took place in Jajce in November 1943, marked a decisive step in the political struggle. Delegates came from all over the country, some travelling for several weeks through connecting strips of liberated country. The meeting deposed the royalist government-in-exile, condemning the royal family to permanent exile. It agreed to the establishment of a federal state, and elected a provisional government. With 300,000 under arms, the Partisans were now in a position to make this a reality, despite having to fight over 50 enemy divisions – some 600,000 German, Bulgarian and quisling troops. A measure of their confidence was that Jajce was in the middle of the 'Independent State of Croatia', yet Tito was able to spend two months there preparing the AVNOJ conference.

The Partisans consolidated their position during the first part of 1944 as the Soviet armies advanced from the East. The pace of the political struggle accelerated as the western imperialist Allies attempted to manoeuvre Tito into accepting a deal with the government in exile. In June 1944, Ivan Subasic, a pre-war governor of Croatia met with Tito at his headquarters on the island of Vis. Subasic's attempt to have the Partisans recognise King Peter as commander-in-chief failed: as one leader said, 'You have neither people, nor army, nor territory'. Subasic had to acknowledge AVNOJ as the sole authority in the country. In turn, Tito agreed to leave the issue of the monarchy until the end of the war because 'we knew we had the vast majority of the people with us...what was more, we had a strong army, the size of which our rivals could not begin to imagine.'

The political pressure continues

Allied pressure continued: first in a meeting with Churchill, and later with Stalin in August 1944, who urged Tito to compromise with King Peter: 'You need not restore him forever...Take him back temporarily. Then you can slip a knife in his back at a suitable moment.' In response to Stalin's question as to how the Partisans would react if the British landed in Yugoslavia, Tito responded that they 'would resist with every possible means.' Stalin conceded that the Red Army would only enter Yugoslavia to engage in such campaigns as were necessary to its advance through Europe. In particular, this meant a joint campaign for the capture of Belgrade, secured on 20 October 1944. Within a month, the Red Army had withdrawn and the Partisans had liberated Montenegro and Macedonia.

At the beginning of February 1945, Allied leaders met in Yalta to decide on the future shape of Europe. Churchill and Stalin had already agreed to a division of influence in

Greece (90% British, 10% Soviet) and Yugoslavia (50:50). Under this accord, British troops had landed in Greece in December 1944 and attacked the ELAS/EAM liberation movement to secure a return of the old order. On 12 February 1945, the Communist Party of Greece, the effective leadership of the ELAS/EAM alliance, capitulated to a British force far weaker than the German army of occupation they had confronted over the previous years. At root was the subordination of their struggle to the military and political requirements of the Allies, and their failure to form a revolutionary army, despite the constant urgings of the CPY.



Tito and a comrade in the mountains

The surrender at Varkiza coincided with an ultimatum from the Allies that Tito should immediately form a new government with Subasic which would admit members of the pre-war Yugoslav assembly who were in no way compromised as collaborators, and that this government should ratify all AVNOJ decisions. Yet all Yugoslav bourgeois politicians had been collaborators in one way or another: the pre-war assembly had sought accommodation with the German-Italian Axis. The government in exile had supported the collaborator Mihailovic, and now elements of it (including social democrats) were urging British military intervention.

Tito temporised: he understood that the issue would be decided by troops on the ground. In a series of huge offensives, the four army groups of the Partisan army liberated the rest of the country, completing the task on 15 May 1945. The cost had been appalling: 1,700,000 Yugoslav people had died – one in nine of the population. The western Allies were powerless to intervene: there was no army they could assemble to defeat the Partisans. On 27 November, general elections confirmed the popular mandate of the CPY as they gained 96% of the votes cast. Subasic resigned. On 29 November, the parliament abolished the monarchy, nationalised industry and the banks without compensation, and set in motion widescale reform of land ownership. Imperialism had been defeated: it was to scheme and manoeuvre for the next 40 years to destroy what the people of Yugoslavia had achieved.

Decisive to the success of the Partisans had been their refusal to compromise with imperialism, or subordinate their struggle in any way to the requirements of the imperialist powers. They had based their struggle on the equality of all nationalities within the federation, and turned the struggle into a genuine war of liberation. Above everything else, they had established a regular revolutionary army based on the people, and thereby ensured that they had the force to back up their political standpoint. For this, imperialism and its defenders were never to forgive Tito or the CPY.

Robert Clough

'The general leaning towards barbarity acquires a certain method, immo-

Stop imperialism

'Nowhere in the world is so far away that it is not relevant to our security interests.'

Robin Cook, Labour Foreign Secretary

The century that has seen more slaughter than any preceding it closes in a darkening atmosphere of tension and threat. The storm gathered over Yugoslavia threatens to discharge its accumulated force across the planet in the fight for resources, markets, profits and power. Barbarism cannot long be dressed in 'humanitarian' garb before naked self-interest, voracious and unrestrained, shows through. This is the lesson of NATO's war on Yugoslavia. TREVOR RAYNE reports.

The war was launched on 24 March to a fanfare of righteousness; NATO was 'preventing a humanitarian catastrophe', 'defeating fascism in Europe', 'putting an end to ethnic cleansing' etc. Blessings came forth from Ken Livingstone, Vanessa Redgrave and the editor of *The Guardian*. Few wars, we were told, had such impeccable credentials. Six weeks into the war, with over half a million Kosovan refugees, and with NATO bombs raining down on civilians, smashing up villages, towns and cities, the big lie is exposed.

This military onslaught, like the entire western intervention in the Balkans since 1991, was never about saving lives, defending persecuted minorities, installing democracy or the rest of the eye-wash pumped through the media. It is a war about US power in Europe, about German expansionism, about Britain asserting its position in the European Union (EU). It is about isolating and containing Russia, and it is a warning to China. Only a socialist federation of Yugoslavia could offer the people a prospect of enduring peace and development, and it was precisely this which imperialism and its allies in Yugoslavia destroyed. In its remnants, imperialism has groomed and installed gangsters and fascists. In Bosnia and Croatia they are its friends, in Serbia Milosevic has become inconvenient.

US terrorism

The war is part of a fight for world supremacy, with the USA leading the way. Kosovan refugees, Serbs, whoever, are expendable as the US state enforces its ambition. The US ruling class is determined to preserve its position as the dominant power in Europe and to be the main beneficiary from the collapse of the Soviet Union and socialist bloc. It has to assert itself over a potentially powerful Europe, led by France and Germany, which will not necessarily follow the US lead. The war comes less than three months after the launch of the euro, a future rival to the dollar, and in the midst of EU discussions on the formation of a

European Defence Force.

The 24 March attack came a fortnight after Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined NATO. Germany and the USA favour extending NATO eastwards. Russia is against. The USA, in particular, is intent on penetrating into the former Soviet republics. It wants to isolate Russia, push it out of its former zones of influence. Serbia is seen as an outpost of Russian influence. Had NATO wanted an agreement to prevent the war, it could have been achieved if the USA had accepted Russian participation in a peace-keeping force, and agreed on a joint approach to Milosevic and Yugoslavia. The USA rejected this and determined to enforce its will on the Balkans by launching the assault.

US military spending is greater than the combined spending of the six other countries with the biggest military budgets in the world: Russia, China, Japan, Germany, France and Britain. Since 1983 the USA has bombed, shelled and missileed Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Panama, Grenada and now Yugoslavia. The US ruling class means to enforce world supremacy by military force. Saddam Hussein got in the way, so US armed power cut his country down. Milosevic stood in the way – his country must be cut down. The USA is predatory. From the Baltic states, to the Balkans, to the Caspian Sea energy reserves, to Central Asia, US capitalism is on the march, privatising state assets. Multinationals



are buying up whatever they want. US firms have drafted plans for the privatisation of state assets in Montenegro, part of Yugoslavia.

Labour imperialism

The British Labour government is the US military's number one ally. The British ruling class is defending its overseas assets, second only to those of the USA, and the global financial role of the City of London. British imperialism is using its alliance with the USA to elevate its global status relative to that of France and Germany, and to force them to defer to it within the European Union. Imperialism is at the heart of Labour's strategy; from the outset, it has exposed itself as the most viru-

lent and militaristic partner in the NATO alliance. It has been the first to revise and extend the aims of the campaign: the first to talk of a NATO protectorate in Kosovo, the first to propose a ground invasion. For the USA, the alliance with Britain is a bridgehead to power in Europe.

British imperialism has had more military experience since 1945 than any other European power. The war on Yugoslavia is Britain's 96th separate overseas military operation since the end of the Second World War. Britain's arms industry exceeds that of any other European Union country, with British Aerospace triple the size of the nearest European competitor. Britain is second only to the USA as arms dealer to the world. The British ruling class uses this military strength to compensate for its relative economic decline compared with Germany within Europe: 'punching above our weight', as former Foreign Secretary Hurd put it. British capitalists intend to dictate the conditions under which the proposed European Defence Force is constructed and to get the lion's share of the ensuing contracts.

Unless they are opposed, both their heartlands and abroad, the imperialists will launch war upon war to put down any who resist. Their bloody march takes them to the borders of Russia and China. The prospects for World War Three are real. The history of Yugoslavia's disintegration provides the backdrop to this bloody war.

Shattering the socialist state

The collapse of the Yugoslav socialist state in 1991 was a consequence of both internal and external forces. The internal dynamic interacted with and was accelerated by the external powers. Economic crisis was used by imperialism to destroy the socialist character of the economy. (For an excellent analysis of the destruction of socialist Yugoslavia see Peter Gowan, NATO's Balkan Tragedy, *New Left Review* 234.)

Over one and a half million Yugoslavs were killed during World War Two, whilst 3.5 million were left homeless. On 29 November 1945 a Constituent Assembly abolished the monarchy and proclaimed a federation of six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia), and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo). Between 1953 and 1965 national output grew by an average 8.1% per annum. In 1968 industrial production was twelve times greater than in 1950. Socialised production amounted to 82% of the economy. Yugoslavia enjoyed health and education systems comparable to those of the most developed European countries.

From the 1970s, uneven development within Federal Yugoslavia brought tensions which were exploited by the imperialist powers. The north and Adriatic coast were more developed, as a result of German investment in particular. The east and south, being further from European markets, were poorer and more backward. By 1990 per capita income in the north and coastal regions was

'Reality becomes a system, lawlessness gets its law givers and club law its law books.' Karl Marx

Imperialism's bloody war



NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade led to mass protests in China

over \$2,200, whilst in Kosovo it was \$730. As the Yugoslav state borrowed in the 1960s-1980s to fund infrastructure projects and export industries, it was caught in a debt trap. By 1987 foreign debt was \$23.5 billion and debt service payments consumed a fifth of export income, \$3.7-3.8 billion. The International Monetary Fund, representing imperialist banks, imposed draconian measures on the economy in exchange for further credits and credit extensions.

Nationalist forces re-emerge

President Tito died in April 1980. Governing power was then vested in a collective presidential body made up of representatives of each republic and autonomous province, the president of the League of Yugoslav Communists (YLC) with a rotating annual presidency.

In the late 1980s, two positions emerged within the Federal Yugoslav state and YLC. Tudjman of Croatia and Kucan of Slovenia – the wealthy north and west – wanted more decentralisation to relieve the richer regions of their obligation to subsidise the poorer regions. Milosevic campaigned for greater centralisation, a standpoint which expressed itself as Serbian chauvinism. Slovenia accused Serbia of boycotting its businesses, Serbia accused Slovenia of paying low prices for raw materials. Milosevic used the tensions in Kosovo to destroy Kosovan autonomy within Serbia in 1987-89 and to remove local communists from power. He asserted Serbian domination over the predominantly Albanian population of Kosovo. This exacerbated suspicions of greater Serbian ambitions in the rest of Yugoslavia and violated the principles of the Socialist Federation for protecting national minorities.

The communist parties of Slovenia and Croatia withdrew from the YLC in the late 1980s. In January

1990, the YLC renounced its constitutional single party role. The context was over 20% unemployment and 100% inflation. Reactionary bourgeois leaders had emerged within the party and state apparatus to challenge the socialist character of the Federal state. They allied with western capitalist interests and used religion and pre-1945 nationalist symbols to overthrow socialist ideology and destroy the Socialist Federation. In April 1990 the first multi-party elections were held since World War Two. Nationalist parties demanding secession from the Federation won in all republics bar Serbia and Montenegro. By 1991, draconian IMF measures meant that Yugoslavia was incapable of paying its soldiers. Bigotry was unleashed, the demon of war let loose to rage over the land – and capitalism rejoiced.

Yugoslavia redivided

The sundering of Yugoslavia was systematic, demonstrating the predatory nature of imperialism and its utter contempt for life and democracy. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was the signal for Germany and Austria to start tearing Yugoslavia apart. Germany bargained with the British government to accept independence for Slovenia and Croatia in exchange for British opt-outs from the 1991 European Union Maastricht Treaty's clauses on monetary union and the Social Chapter governing workers' rights.

Hungary supplied Croatia with weapons in 1990. It claimed Vojvodina within Serbia. Germany and the USA also armed Croatia after it and Slovenia declared independence in June 1991. Germany supported Croatia's claim and denied the national rights of Serbs within Croatia which had been guaranteed them as a minority population by the Federal constitution. Croatia's President Tudjman presided over the eth-

nic cleansing of 200,000 Serbs from Krajina in 1995. His operations were conducted under the cover of US and NATO jets. Tudjman rehabilitated the Ustashe fascists who collaborated with the Nazis during World War Two and who operated their own death camps. Chancellor Kohl's Foreign Minister Genscher later described the destruction of socialist Yugoslavia as his greatest success.

Responding to the expansion of the German sphere of influence, the USA encouraged Bosnia to demand independence from 1992 onwards. Bosnia contained Moslems, Serbs, Croats and other Yugoslavs. The USA backed the Moslems with weapons. This was a move certain to provoke more killing. Germany and the USA forged an alliance between the Croatian and Bosnian governments to drive Serbs from Croatia and parts of Bosnia. The Serbs fought this plan. Ethnic cleansing on all sides took place in a scramble for territory. With European military capacity insufficient to intervene decisively, the USA used its military power to bomb the Serbs into accepting the 1995 Dayton Accords. Bosnia was turned into a corrupt, gangster-ridden NATO protectorate. The Accords made no mention of Kosovo; despite Kosovan pleas, their rights were of no interest to imperialism at that time. The USA, Germany, Britain and France had no interest in promoting demands that might lead to the creation of a Greater Albania.

War in Kosovo

During the post-1995 period, the USA saw Milosevic as 'a man they could do business with', and in late 1995 suspended sanctions against Yugoslavia. It was happy that German ambitions had been contained and that US troops were in Bosnia and Macedonia. What it did not calculate on was the collapse of the Sali-

Berisha government in Albania in 1996 in the face of a mass uprising. The Berisha government had given no support to Albanian nationalist sentiments in either Kosovo or Macedonia, and had prevented organisations such as the Kosovan Liberation Army (KLA) from establishing bases within Albania proper or acquiring arms. As the Albanian security forces disintegrated, hundreds of thousands of weapons fell into the hands of ordinary people. The KLA seized the opportunity, and equipped itself to launch an armed offensive in Kosovo in February 1998.

Initially the US went along with Milosevic's attempts to crush the KLA, with the US ambassador in Yugoslavia naming the KLA as a terrorist organisation. As a quid pro quo for non-intervention by the US, Milosevic agreed a deal which would offer Kosovo some provincial autonomy. What changed was the collapse of the Soviet economy in autumn 1998. From then on, US attitudes were completely transformed. It saw an opportunity to consolidate its leadership within Europe and acquire new positions at an enfeebled Russia's expense. In February 1999 the Contact Group of Britain, France, USA, Germany, Italy and Russia proposed that Yugoslavia give greater autonomy to Kosovo and accept 28,000 NATO troops being stationed there. Kosovo would become a NATO protectorate.

Undisclosed to the public, but part of the proposal, was that NATO forces, including aircraft and vehicles, would have right of access to any part of Yugoslavia, immune from Yugoslavian legislation or control. This was a deliberate NATO provocation. In mid-March, the Kosovan Liberation Army accepted the proposal; Yugoslavia could only reject it. Five days later, on 24 March, NATO attacked.

The US shift in approach therefore had nothing to do with the increasing Yugoslav atrocities against Koso-

vans. It was a cynical move to assert US power in Europe and the world. Consequently, imperialism has no intention of allowing an independent Kosovo leading to a greater Albania to be assembled. This would threaten Macedonia, Montenegro and much of the Balkans with a new source of instability. The Kosovans can expect the fate meted out to the Kurds after they were encouraged by the US government to rebel against Iraq in 1991: willing but expendable tools. All that the USA and Britain have in mind is the establishment of another imperialist fortress in the Balkans.

Club law

'The general leaning towards barbarity acquires a certain method, immorality becomes a system, lawlessness gets its law givers and club law its law books.' Karl Marx

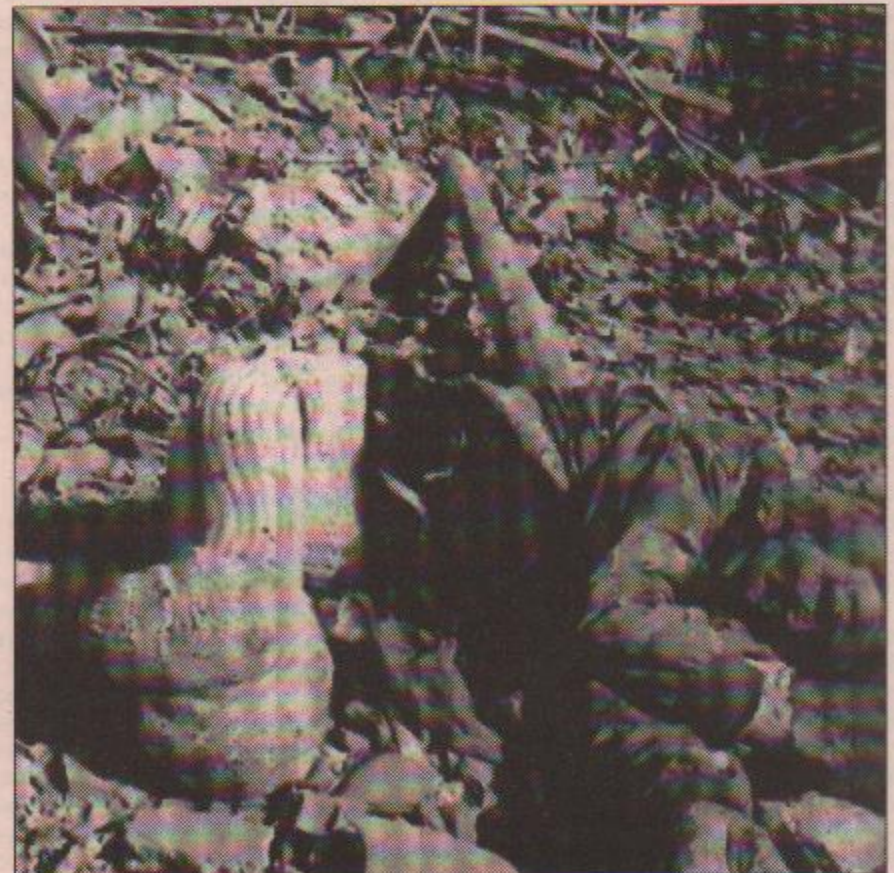
'We will redouble and intensify our campaign. We will carry on pounding day after day after day.' Tony Blair

'NATO seems to have gone onto military autopilot. NATO hits targets because they are there, not because hitting them might have some political purpose.' John Simpson

In the first 21 days of the war, NATO averaged 282 air sorties a day. After six weeks this had risen to 500 a day and over 1,200 Yugoslav civilians had been killed. By late May it stood at 700 air sorties, with plans to take it to 1,000. Half a million Kosovans have been made refugees. NATO Commander General Wesley Clark described the Serbian assault on Kosovans as 'entirely predictable'. 'Entirely predictable!' Clare Short, Labour Minister for Overseas Development, said that if the West had been seen to prepare for the refugees people might have assumed this to be 'the inevitable effect of NATO's bombing action'. What scenarios of death and destruction does NATO plan for and cover up to protect the big lie?

Merchant bankers Lehman Brothers estimate the cost of aerial action alone at \$3 billion a month. With support forces that is \$6.5 billion a month. Britain is paying 14% of the total cost. The monthly cost of the war is greater than the size of Yugoslavia's economy. The cost of a protracted war, involving ground

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invasion, has been estimated at \$32 billion. Six weeks of the war would pay for clean water and sanitation for every person on the planet. The Cuban paper *Granma* pointed out that a single night of bombing costs the USA more than it offered Central America in aid for damage wrought by Hurricane Mitch. The wealth is used for death and destruction in pursuit of power and profit, not for life.

On 27 March an F-117 Stealth bomber was shot down at a cost of \$45 million. Eighteen days into the war *The Financial Times* reported British Aerospace shares were up 9%, GKN's up 8%, Raytheon's 7%. These are weapons producers anticipating replacement orders. The 1912-13 Balkan wars were funded by western loans, supplied by western technology; officers were trained by British, French, German and Russian officers; and the fighting was overseen by arms firms Krupp, Vickers, Skoda etc. Little has changed.

Imperialism is using the Balkans as a laboratory to test weapons. For the first time since Hermann Goering the Luftwaffe took to the skies in combat. *HMS Splendid* was the first British submarine to fire cruise missiles. New US satellite guidance systems for missiles were tried out, and laser-guided bombs. The B2 Stealth bomber made its debut, at \$2.1 billion each – a sum greater than the entire Albanian economy.

NATO claims that of the first 9,000 bombs and missiles fired at Yugoslav targets only 12 have gone seriously astray. This attempt to sanitise the war for the western audience is another lie. Almost from the start civilian targets were hit and as the war progressed more and more of them were prioritised by the NATO planners.

Early targets were stated to be army barracks, military airports, radar installations and weapons factories. Oil installations, chemical and pharmaceutical plants were also hit. The range of targets quickly broadened: an ice cream factory was blown up – a 'technical error' said NATO. A car plant and mining town were hit – then assigned a 'military function' as justification. On 12 April at least 10 people were killed when NATO bombed a civilian train. Eighty Kosovan refugees were killed on 14 April when NATO bombed a refugee convoy. They were 'collateral damage'. On 21 April the Yugoslav television station was destroyed – described by Blair as 'part of the war machine', 'a propaganda unit'. On 1 May a NATO missile struck a civilian bus on a bridge north of the Kosovo capital of Pristina, killing at least 40 people. Five days later a cluster bomb hit a market and a hospital, killing 15 and injuring 60. Then on 14 May, up to 100 refugees were slaughtered in the Kosovan village of Korisa. Eighteen hospitals and clinics and over 200 education institutions have been destroyed or damaged, along with libraries, theatres, museums and 14th-century monasteries.

NATO has set about destroying Yugoslavia, bombing it to bits, just as the USA and Britain have done, and continue to do, to Iraq – reducing it to a pre-industrial condition. The bombing campaign is calculated as having had a bigger effect on the economy than the German and Allied bombing of World War Two. Yugoslavia's unemployment is set to double from its pre-war 27%. Damage is put at between £25 billion and £62.5 billion. Civilians and civilian industries and infrastructures are described as 'dual use' targets, just as they are in Iraq. People are being targeted, their deaths are not 'accidents'. New tactics include carpet bombing by B52s which will add to the slaughter.



Blair and Clinton: a meeting of political aims and ambitions

Depleted uranium weapons are being used, as they were in Iraq, where the incidence of leukaemia and rare cancers has multiplied sevenfold since the 1991 Gulf War. Thousands of Iraqi children have been born without eyes, limbs or brains since the war. What fate is in store for unborn Yugoslav children? Chemical factories have been destroyed, seeping fatal toxins into water supplies. The River Danube is being poisoned by chlorine, ethyl dichloride and carcinogenic transformer oil, threatening eco-destruction to areas of Romania and Bulgaria. This is what Blair's 'humanitarian mission' amounts to – war in all its brutal forms, barely masked by his perpetual grin. When Ken Livingstone declares: 'We need to take military action, but we should avoid the use of depleted uranium and anti-personnel cluster bombs. Then we can start to convince the world that NATO's actions in the Balkans have honourable objectives', he is fooling only himself.

The question of Kosovo

Sections of the British left (The Socialist Party, Socialist Outlook, Workers Power, Workers' Liberty etc.) have called for Kosovan self-determination and support for the KLA. The KLA currently supports NATO's bombardment and provides it with intelligence information. The KLA says it receives training from the British SAS.

Whatever the wishes of the majority of the Kosovan people there can be no question of self-determination for any Balkan republic or region, Kosovo or wherever, for as long as imperialism is bombing Yugoslavia and assembling a giant armada on its frontiers. The demand for Kosovan self-determination

For saying what he saw and writing in the *Daily Telegraph* an article entitled 'Why this war isn't working', the BBC's foreign affairs editor, John Simpson, was targeted for muzzling and discrediting by the Labour government. Simpson was described to *The Times*, in 'off the record' briefings by government spin-doctors, as a mouthpiece of the Serbs. Terrestrial television is to be a channel for government propaganda or nothing at all. Anyone who questioned the progress of the war quickly came in for the same treatment: opposition is treason and to be suppressed. Clare Short describes opponents as 'fascist' sympathisers; John Pilger is denounced as Milosevic's 'useful idiot' by John Sweeney of *The Observer*. This is the democracy in whose name the war is conducted.

In response to a German proposal to involve Russians as a peacekeeping force in Kosovo on 14 April – a plan accepted by Milosevic as long as it was a civilian force (non-NATO) – Blair ratcheted up the bellicosity by flying to the USA to talk about preparation for a ground assault. He announced 'a new doctrine of international community... a subtle blend of mutual self-interest and moral purpose', the ethical foreign policy:

the right of the USA and Britain to go anywhere and do as they please. Club law.

Without a ground offensive NATO must achieve a diplomatic victory rather than an outright military triumph. On 6 May Russia joined NATO in agreeing the need for an 'effective international civil and security presence' in Kosovo. NATO presents five conditions for an end to the bombing: an end to violence in Kosovo, acceptance of an international force, the return of refugees, negotiations on political settlement and withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo. NATO insists that its forces will constitute the core of an occupation force in Kosovo and it wants UN support for this aim as well as for the war itself. Britain and the USA are the most insistent on their troops participating in the international force, and on the complete withdrawal of Yugoslavian forces from Kosovo. Germany and France are more ready to concede to Russia on the force's composition. Russia sup-

is also NATO's demand. It cannot play a democratic or progressive role in the context of NATO's war. It confuses the nature of the war and lends support to NATO's efforts. Imperialism cannot play a progressive role in the Balkans or anywhere else.

All the poor and dispossessed of Yugoslavia need socialism. Kosovan self-determination in the context of imperialism's presence in the Balkans would be a myth, a ruse against the Kosovan workers, peasants and refugees. Kosovan self-determination was only ever a reality in the Socialist Federal Republic, a republic freely entered into by the Balkan peoples.

ports the continuation of Yugoslav forces in Kosovo. Britain and the USA are testing just how far they can push an enfeebled Russia, they want it to accept their terms without compromise.

Into these diplomatic manoeuvres flew B2 Stealth bombers from White-man airforce base in Missouri on 8 May to deposit their load on the Chinese embassy, killing three people.

China stirs

Let China sleep. Napoleon

NATO described the attack on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade as a 'tragic accident and nothing else'. That is not how the Chinese people and government experienced it: it was consistent with a pattern of US and imperialist behaviour. The attack was on a known residential area and would necessarily result in civilian deaths whether maps were up to date or not. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese demonstrated their fury at the USA and Britain. Students said they were fired by the patriotism of the 4 May Movement of 1919; a protest against imperial powers attempting to carve China up and a key moment in the development of national consciousness. After the

raid China announced that it will not consider any UN resolution on Yugoslavia until NATO stops the bombing. It has been drawn into the diplomatic shuffles to enforce a deal on Yugoslavia. China can be expected to exact a price.

In FRFI 148 April/May 1999 we said 'For those who wonder where the war is heading, look to Russia, look to China, look to the re-emergence of German military power.' Some days before the embassy was bombed the *Chinese People's Liberation Army Daily* recommended that China prepare for 'warfare against airstrikes and remote precision strikes (launched) from a distance or great distance.'

In ten years China will import 40% of its oil. Much of this will come through its western borders. The *China Economic Times* recently stated that, 'We must pay careful attention to the fact that the US controls the oil in the Middle East.' Last year the US flew 3,000 troops direct from US bases to take part in exercises in Kazakhstan, on China's north-western border; a place where China has invested in oil resources and a transshipment route from the Middle East to China. China plans to invest in Iraqi oil production and has several deals under discussion with Iran.

The US is threatening to establish an Asian missile 'defence' system which would include Japan and Taiwan. China has said that it would consider any such deployment on Taiwan as an act of war. Earlier this year China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution renewing a UN peace-keeping force in Macedonia (US and British-led) because Macedonia had recognised and taken money from Taiwan.

Russia has become China's main weapons supplier; submarines, jets, weapons that require long term support services. China is co-operating with Russia to develop gas fields in Siberia and build pipelines to China's cities. Russia, reduced though it is, and China are potential obstacles to the US quest for global dominance. As a consequence, they are having to prepare their defence.

The shape of things to come

The blitzkrieg takes place against a background of an impending global financial collapse whose first tremors have already hurled millions of people into poverty in Asia. A trade war looms between the USA and Europe, which, if it breaks out, could rapidly trigger financial collapse and degenerate into a military rivalry between the two power blocs.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and socialist bloc has accelerated the essential characteristics of capitalism, its drive for profits, its tendency towards crisis, its aggressive and militaristic nature. The 'Soviet threat' can no longer be used by the USA to demand compliance from European and Japanese capitalists. Rival imperialist powers are fighting to re-divide the world between them. Socialist Yugoslavia and the more than a quarter of a million people killed there since 1991 have been among the victims. In 1988, before the Berlin Wall was pulled down, the world had 13 million refugees; today there are 22 million. The defeat of socialism is proving to be a catastrophe for humanity.

Already the USA has promised to allocate \$100 billion more to its military budget over the next five years. Britain, Germany, France, Japan, Russia and China will follow suit. In Britain, France and Germany this will be done in the name of social democracy. Unless these governments are fought all along the line, they will lead us all to more slaughter than has ever been seen. As surely as they did after the 'incident' in Sarajevo when the planet was engulfed in the inferno of World War One.

Round-up of anti-war events

The anti-war movement barely exists in Britain and what there is has been hyped beyond any semblance to reality. Numbers at marches are grotesquely exaggerated. Tony Benn claims 10,000 rallied at Trafalgar Square on 11 April – there were no more than 4,000. On 8 May, march organisers claimed 25,000 for the London demonstration against the war. In reality, it barely exceeded 5,000, many of whom left before the rally started in Hyde Park. 1,000 demonstrated in Manchester on 24 April; stewards doubled this figure to 2,000.

There is of course purpose in this: it is to bolster the view that there are huge numbers of Labour supporters and members who oppose NATO's actions, and that if the movement does not mention the sordid role of either the Labour

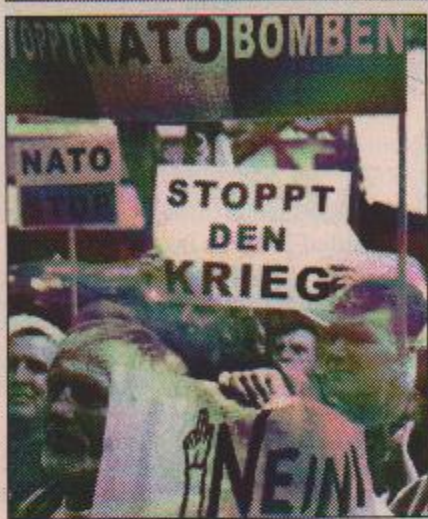


Party or the Labour government, then these people will be seduced into marching against the war.

The truth is that this will not happen. The ever-diminishing Labour left is split on the issue, and the average Labour supporter or member concerned only with his or her privileged position in life, which the war as yet does not touch. Hence the demonstrators are overwhelmingly the extra-Labour left and its periphery.

In the meantime, the left are policing their various committees against the war for any anti-Labour heresy like a modern-day Spanish Inquisition. Our Torquemadas are determined that only the true faith – in the absolute saintliness of the Labour left – shall prevail. In the Northwest, any attack on the Labour Party has brought apoplectic responses from the SWP. At a meeting in Preston, for instance, a proposal that one of the slogans of the anti-war committee include something as anodyne as 'Labour, stop the bombing' was deemed too radical and extreme by (once again) the SWP. Many years ago, when it still had tens of thousands of members, the Communist Party used to be the force providing troops for the Labour left when it wanted a gesture against the Labour leadership. Nowadays, that role falls to an equally enthusiastic and equally uncritical SWP.

RCG supporters have been active taking the anti-imperialist message onto the streets. Regular street meetings have been held using a special bulletin to expose the imperialist nature of the Labour Party, in and out of government. Sales of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* have nearly doubled during this time, and over 100 copies each of the Counterattack books, *Labour – a party fit for imperialism* and *The New Warlords – from the Gulf War to the recolonisation of the Middle East*, have been sold.



Forthcoming events:

National Demonstration:
Saturday 5 June
Assemble 1.30pm Embankment, London
Called by the Committee for peace in the Balkans

London
FRFI Supporters Group: (starting 7:30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square – nearest tube Holborn)
Monday 7 June: Labour left MPs – the truth.

Monday 12 July: Subject to be announced.

Public meeting
Wednesday 30 June, 7.30pm:
Labour Party – warmongers in Europe.
For details of anti-war activities and street events, phone 0171 837 1688.

Lincoln
Street meetings against the war every Saturday 10.30 to 1.30 in the High Street near the war memorial.
For details of meetings, phone 01400 230 151.

Northwest
Street meetings against the war every Saturday 12.00 to 3.30.
12 and 26 June in Flag Market, Preston
19 June in Blackburn by Andy's Records by the Spiral.

Public meeting Sunday 4 July 2pm:
No to Labour warmongering! Break with Labour now! Bangor Street Community Centre, Brookhouse, Blackburn.

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by Robert Clough
Published 1992 192pp
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**The New Warlords:
from the Gulf War to the
recolonisation of the
Middle East**



Edited by Eddie Abrahams
Published 1994, 192pp

Order from Larkin Publications
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Labour: a party fit for imperialism

As bombs pour down on Serbia and Kosovo, the Labour government has exposed itself as the most virulent and militaristic partner in the NATO alliance. It has been the first to revise and extend the aims of the campaign: the first to suggest that they include the overthrow of Milosevic, the first to talk of a NATO protectorate in Kosovo, the first to propose a ground invasion. It has engaged in virulent attacks on those who question or oppose its policy, with Clare Short a particularly enthusiastic enforcer. It has created an opportunity for Blair to define a new doctrine enshrining the right of imperialism to intervene wherever it chooses. Under Labour's direction, British imperialism is pursuing its own agenda as well as supporting that of the US. It is, after all, second only to the US in terms of its global interests, whether these are measured by overseas assets or arms exports.

Labour's barbarity is not new. Every single previous Labour government has been willing to use military means to defend the interests of British imperialism. Between 1945 and 1951 Labour:

- Brutally suppressed the Malayan national liberation struggle;
- Committed British troops to aid the restoration of French colonial rule in Vietnam and Dutch rule in Indonesia;
- Continued military intervention in Greece against the ELAS, and blockaded Iran following the nationalisation of the British-owned Anglo-Persian Oil Company.
- Ruthlessly exploited the British empire in Africa to aid post-war reconstruction in Britain.

Later, between 1964 and 1970, it:

- Unconditionally supported the US onslaught on Vietnam;
- Defended apartheid South Africa, blocking calls for sanctions in the UN. It capitulated to the racist settler regime in the former Rhodesia;
- Sent troops into Ireland in 1969;
- Was responsible for the routine torture of suspected freedom fighter detainees in Aden.

Finally, between 1974 and 1979, it:

- Continued to defend apartheid South Africa in the UN;
- Supported the Shah of Iran as he faced a mass popular uprising against his tyrannical regime;
- Began the infamous sales of Hawk aircraft to Indonesia at the height of the genocidal war in East Timor;
- Implemented a ruthless regime of torture against republican prisoners in the North of Ireland.

Back in opposition, Labour's unqualified militarism continued unabated. In 1982,

it supported the war in the Malvinas/Falklands. In 1991, during the Gulf War, Neil Kinnock thundered 'Our forces are engaged in pursuing a legitimate objective and should enjoy full support across the political spectrum...Dictators don't withdraw, they have to be defeated.' Earlier, the Labour Party conference of October 1990 voted 7:1 to send in troops; Tony Benn was prevented from speaking in the debate. Shadow Foreign Secretary Gerald Kaufman had accused the Tories of being 'slack, lax and negligent' in their drive to war. Two days before 'Desert Storm', 55 Labour MPs voted against military action. They preferred, along with Tony Benn, to allow

that if you scratch a Labour left-winger you will find a shameless imperialist, particularly as they come closer to any position of real power. Livingstone's driving ambition is to be Mayor of London. Tony Benn has no such ambitions left, but when he was a Cabinet member of the 1964-70 government, he was quite happy to sign a contract with RTZ for the supply of uranium illegally extracted from the Rossing mine in apartheid-occupied Namibia.

Yet he left outside the Labour Party is no better. Whatever position various groups adopt, they refuse to go on the offensive against Labour and imperialism. They are absolutely united in deny-



George Robertson with the latest fashion accessory for government ministers: a guided missile

further time for UN sanctions. Eight years later we know the price the Iraqi people have had to pay for those sanctions – over 500,000 child deaths, 4,000 a month at present.

In the last two years under Labour's direction, more bombs have been dropped than under 18 years of Tory rule. This is the reality of Labour's 'ethical' foreign policy: a fig leaf to cover a ruthless drive to ensure Britain's place at imperialism's high table. It is doing what it has always done, and as ever uses all sorts of 'democratic' and 'humanitarian' imperatives to hide its murderous intent. The bogus character of such 'humanitarianism' is revealed by its initial refusal to admit any more than a handful of Kosovan refugees whilst it railroaded its new Asylum Bill through parliament.

And what of its pitiful left wing? Although there are twice as many Labour MPs as there were in 1990, only 13 voted against the NATO onslaught when it was debated in Parliament, of whom only nine were drawn from the 44 supposedly left-wing Socialist Campaign Group MPs. Ken Livingstone's stand in favour of the war confirms the old adage

ing the particular interests of British imperialism. They describe the war as NATO's or US imperialism's, never Labour's. Blair is accorded a secondary role, a 'fellow traveller of US imperialism' (*New Worker*) Clinton's 'American factotum' (Tariq Ali, *Independent* 28 March) 'cheer leader of US imperialism' (*Socialist Appeal*). This has a purpose: it enables the left to minimise the culpability of the Labour government, the Labour Party, or those who refuse to break from the Labour Party. Hence *Socialist Worker* can describe the stand of MPs who voted against the war as 'courageous' when in reality it is no such thing. None of these MPs will put their own positions at risk. Setting out their position in May's *Socialist Campaign Group News*, neither Alan Simpson nor Alice Mahon mention the government, whilst Tony Benn merely alludes to Blair's commitment to the war without offering any comment, let alone criticism.

Some sections of the left avoid the issue of confronting Labour by calling for Kosovan independence, or by supporting the Kosovan Liberation Army (KLA). Whatever the flavour, it all

amounts to a cover for imperialism. There can be no self-determination for Kosovo or any of the Balkan nations whilst NATO remains in the region. The KLA is no more than a pawn in imperialism's game. It calls on NATO to continue its bombing campaign, and sections of the British left support it. They capitulate to Labour's war drive.

Others oppose the KLA, but use the Labour left to avoid a confrontation with the Labour Party itself. When the SWP argues in its pamphlet *Stop the War* that 'Labour is rarely united behind war', it gives the game away. Its strategy is to tailor any anti-war movement to what is acceptable to the narrow, self-interested sectarianism of the Labour left. It resolutely opposes any slogan which hints at the slightest criticism of Labour, such as 'Labour, stop the bombing' or 'No to Labour warmongering'. It will police its so-called 'broad-based' movement to drive out any anti-imperialist tendency and so protect its alliance with the Labour Party. Even when the Socialist Party asserts in *Socialism Today* that 'The support of Blair, d'Alema, Jospin, Schröder and company for NATO's first war marks the final stage in the bourgeoisification of the social democratic parties', it has no practical content. Lenin had already concluded this 85 years ago when the European social democrats supported the imperialist war in 1914.

The Labour Party has always been an imperialist party. It has always represented the narrow self-interest of the middle class and more affluent sections of the working class whose privileged position is maintained by the super-profits of British imperialism. Today's left draws its membership overwhelmingly from these strata. Hence to confront imperialism, it has to confront the material basis of its own privilege and the party that sustains it – Labour. This the left will not do. It will find any excuse to duck the issue. Even acknowledging the historical role of the Partisans is out of the question – Tito and the communists had to fight the Yugoslav social democrats of their day because they had sold out to western imperialism.

There is now no crime that Labour can commit which will drive the left into open, campaigning opposition. It will always compromise. But it is clear that there can be no anti-war movement unless it is anti-imperialist and therefore anti-Labour. This is the movement that *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* calls on socialists and democrats to build.

**Hands off the Balkans!
No to the Labour warmongers!
For the defeat of US and British imperialism!**

What we said then...

... during the Falklands War

The Labour left – shamefaced imperialists
The Labour left has found itself in disarray. It cannot afford to be seen to fully back the Thatcher government. But the fact is that the Labour left does not oppose British claims of sovereignty to the Malvinas/Falklands islands. They merely object to the means of pursuing the claim. Hence Benn said: 'There is unanimity in the House on the question of opposing the aggression of the junta. There is also unanimity on the right of self-defence

against aggression.' Benn merely wants to use effective economic sanctions rather than military force to 'strangle Galtieri' and force negotiations with all cards in British imperialist hands. Under all the left's talk of 'fascist juntas' hides a shamefaced refusal to fight the real enemy of British workers and the oppressed – the British imperialist ruling class... Those who today cling to the hope of a socialist anti-war movement coming from the Labour and trade union movement are at best fools and at worst sowers of illusions. (FRFI 20, June 1982)

... and during the Gulf War

What of the Labour left? 55 of them voted against a war, but they remain in favour of the use of sanctions. In other words, their dispute with Kinnock is not over aims, but means. This tiny gesture, however, which demands no sacrifice of themselves whatsoever, had proved quite enough for the SWP to hail their 'courage' in opposing Kinnock's naked militarism.

What of this 'courage'? It is not two years ago that Tony Benn said that the 'the Labour Party is not and probably never was a socialist party'. That has had no practical consequence for him, even now when the Party

has endorsed a holocaust throughout the Middle East. Indeed, the only outcome is that the left has felt obliged to leap to its defence. For instance, John Molyneux in *Socialist Worker* argues that socialists still have to vote Labour because 'notwithstanding its bourgeois leadership, Labour remains at base a workers' party'...

...the conclusion is, as always, that no matter what bestiality Labour commits, the John Molyneuxs of this world will still be queuing at the ballot box, ready to prove they are not cut off from a privileged, ever-so-British working class. (FRFI 99, February/March 1991)

Cuba opposes imperialist war

'Yugoslavia is the epicentre of an armed conflict that is bringing into play not only the destiny of that nation but also that of Europe and the rest of the world.'

Granma International, 11 April 1999

Through the pages of Granma, at the United Nations Human Rights Commission and at the UN Security Council, Cuba has publicly taken an unequivocal stance, condemning NATO's war aims and offering moral and political leadership to those opposed to imperialism's barbaric onslaught on Yugoslavia.



War against the Serbian people

'Housing, hospitals, health centres, schools, homes for the elderly, historic monuments, churches, works of art, have been destroyed. Civilian targets have been intentionally attacked with prior knowledge that they were dwelt in by civilians, and that civilians would be killed, which is a gross violation of the Geneva Protocols and of international humanitarian law... Can anyone believe the refrain that the war is not with the Serbian

people?' (Cuban Permanent Representative Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla addressing the UN Security Council, 8 May)

Cuba, itself long subject to the destructive hostility of the United States, has no illusions about NATO's aims. 'The real intentions of the strikes point to geopolitical and strategic interests... to maintain and strengthen US domination, now unipolar, over the world.' (Granma 11 April) This war is 'the bitter fruits

of the conspiracy to break up the former Yugoslavia, and this is at the root of the conflict and the grave events that we are living through. Some of those who are today brutally bombing the noble Serbian people conspired and fought... for the breakup of that multinational state.'

Who are the terrorists?

In the first place, the United States and its naked greed for world domination:

'This NATO-launched warfare is reviving humanity's justified fears related to the formation of an abusive unipolarity applied by a militaristic empire and self-styled world gendarme, capable of dragging its political and military allies into the most preposterous actions... in order to impose their designs on every state in the planet, in the name of a new and contemptible world order created in its image and its likeness.' (Statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 March)

In the dock with them stand the leaders of the major European states. In a withering attack reprinted from *Monde Diplomatique*, *Granma International*, the newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party, condemns NATO General Secretary Javier Solana, a long-standing leader of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party. He, like Gerhard Schröder, Lionel Jospin, Massimo D'Alema and Tony Blair, heads of government of Germany, France, Italy and Britain respectively, are 'eminent European social democrats'. It continues:

'With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, social democrats won the intellectual battle. The conservative parties lost it, and are preparing to leave history as they forced the aristocracy to do after 1789. From this point, in the political context, the left will have to be reinvented, given that the social democrats have taken conformity away from the conservatives; they are the modern right. Out of a theoretical vacuum and opportunism, they accepted the historical mission of naturalising neoliberalism. Today they are making war on Serbia, and tomorrow they could make war on the suburbs of our cities, in the name of "realism". Because, from now on, they don't

want to rearrange anything, the social order least of all.'

Most culpable of all, Cuba argues, is the United Nations Security Council, which in capitulating to NATO's flouting of international law has become 'little more than a crude instrument of repression for the powerful nations'.

For a just peace

Cuba points to the dangers of an escalating conflict: 'Since the alleged end of the Cold War, global stability has never been at so much risk as it is now with the current attacks on that Balkan country by the western powers.' 'Humanity's very existence' is threatened by the possibility of an escalation of the conflict, such as sending in ground troops, which could draw in Russia and China.

Cuba calls instead for an immediate end to the bombings. Only in that context, it insists, can a 'just and honourable political solution' be found that 'respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and of all the states in that region.' Such a peace, it recalls, existed under socialism: 'We sincerely hope for the reestablishment of a just, honourable and lasting peace for all the people that built a fraternal Yugoslavia and that lived in prosperous harmony for over 40 years.'

In the meantime, Cuba has offered its support to all those suffering in the former Yugoslavia and has announced it will send 1,000 doctors and medical staff to help Kosovans stranded in refugee camps on Yugoslavia's borders.

BREAKING THE CHAINS THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN THE THIRD WORLD

Saturday 19 June, 10am-5pm,
St Faith and St Martin School, Lincoln

A day of ideas and discussion in the week of protest to cancel the third world debt.

Sessions on ● exploitation and oppression – origins of third world debt

● the third world fights back – Cuba heads the resistance

● warlords in the new world order – from the Middle East to the Balkans

● an 'ethical foreign policy' – who profits from the Labour Party?

Enrolment and details from *The Paper*, PO Box 22, Alford, Lincs or tel: 01400 23015

Rock around the Blockade to go to Guantanamo

Two Rock around the Blockade members have just visited the Cuban province of Guantanamo, where our next project is destined. They were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the local Union of Young Communists for our proposal to provide a mobile disco for Guantanamo City and disco equipment for Baracoa. In this rural and comparatively poor province, recreational facilities for young people are currently available only to those with dollars.

The new music systems will be inaugurated by our next brigade in spring 2000. The brigade will have the opportunity to stay in the beautiful ecological area in Baracoa, work in agriculture and participate in discussions and recreation with Cuban youth and political organisations. We hope also to incorporate a visit to Cuba's second major city, Santiago and participate in the May Day 2000 march there. To be included on the brigade, you need to get active with Rock around the Blockade!

A fantastic opportunity to do just that and raise awareness about music in Cuba – while helping us raise the £5,000 we need for the two music systems – is coming up with the Barbican Centre in London's *Cuba Presente!* Arts festival in May and June. Some of the greatest Cuban artistes will be performing live, backed up by film, art and other cultural displays. We will be leafleting events and holding a weekend over the May Bank Holiday weekend, talking to people about the need to support the youth of Cuba and get active.

Meanwhile, in the Midlands, new members have been brainstorming ideas to raise money, with a fundrais-

ing Cuban meal planned in Lincoln along with car-boot sales and regular stall collections. A dayschool is also planned on 19 June on cancelling debt, which will include a workshop on Cuba's internationalist position. In the northwest, Rock around the Blockade comrades will be repeating their successful fundraising event by holding a coconut shy at the Unity Festival on 3 July. Bristol, meanwhile, has fundraising, information-disseminating stalls planned around the city for the summer.

To get involved in any of these activities, or to find out about our regular campaign meetings, call the campaign on 0171 837 1688. Better still, organise your own events in support of Cuba, join Rock around the Blockade and get involved in our brigade to Cuba in Spring 2000. Then you can spend May Day in Santiago de Cuba surrounded by the mountains of the Sierra Maestra where the Revolution was born.

JOIN ROCK AROUND THE BLOCKADE!

I would like to join Rock around the Blockade (£10 waged, £4 low waged, £2 unwaged/student)

I would like information about the brigade to Cuba

I enclose a donation of £_____ towards your work in solidarity with Cuba (Cheques/POs payable to Rock around the Blockade)

Name _____

Address _____

Return to Rock around the Blockade, c/o BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

CUBA IN BRIEF

Cuba and human rights: US and British hypocrisy at UN

Last year the UN Human Rights Commission rebuffed the annual attempt by the US to condemn Cuba for its so-called 'human rights situation'. This year, US puppets and new NATO states, Poland and the Czech Republic, were quick to curry favour from their imperialist masters by presenting a new draft resolution condemning Cuba. And, not to be outvoted again, the US exerted its strongest and crudest pressure ever against representatives from the underdeveloped nations to toe the line. Even so, reaction only managed to scrape a 21-20 victory – with the full support, of course, of the British Labour government and other major European powers. Twelve countries, including some of the poorest on earth, abstained.

There is no doubt this vote was intended as swift retribution for Cuba's temerity in publicly opposing NATO's war against Yugoslavia. Cuba condemned the United States – 'the world's principal human rights violator to date' for using the issue of so-called 'human rights' as a smokescreen to conduct ideological warfare against those who oppose its aims. In the USA today, the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world, there are 43 million people, including 11 million children, without health insurance; nearly one million people live on the streets and millions of low-income people including elderly people and single mothers, are

excluded from welfare coverage. It has the highest penal population in the world; 20% of the population are functionally illiterate; racism is rife. What, asked Cuban minister Carlos Lage, gives the United States 'the right of self-appointment as chief justice for human rights worldwide, apparently for life?'

Massive May Day backing for Cuban Revolution

Any imperialist hope that Cubans might be weakening under the twin pressures of the US blockade and the Special Period were given a profound rebuff on May Day this year when over a million workers marched through the streets of Havana in support of socialism and the Revolution. Half a million Cubans were on the streets of Holguin; in Santiago 300,000 demonstrated and in Santa Clara 150,000 marched past the monument to Che Guevara. In all, an estimated seven million Cubans out of a total population of 11 million joined the May Day demonstrations.

US court backs Bacardi fake rum

Genuine Havana Club rum is made by a joint Cuban-French venture (HCH), bringing much-needed hard currency into the Cuban economy. But since 1996 Bacardi, not content with its sinister activities in support of the US blockade, has been marketing rum under the same label, even though their rum is made in the Bahamas.

After HCH filed a suit against Bacardi in the US courts, an amendment was made to the US Budget Law which ostensibly meant Bacardi could ignore Cuba's legal right to sole use of the trademark. Needless to say, in April a New York court

dutifully backed Bacardi's illegal actions and refused HCH's claim. HCH will now appeal to the World Trade Organisation.

The Bacardi fake is not Cuban rum, but the product of a company whose aim is to destroy the Cuban Revolution. Boycott Bacardi!

Health for all

Cuba is attempting to forge unity amongst oppressed nations to offer them an alternative to submission to neoliberal exploitation. As part of their commitment to self-reliance for the underdeveloped nations, Cuba has sent over 800 health workers to countries in Africa and Latin America and has opened a Latin America School of Medicine in Havana to give free scholarships to over 1,000 trainees from oppressed nations. Fidel Castro told the Cuban health workers union that Cuba can incite a revolution of ideas and health care methods for people using their own potential.

Meanwhile, infant mortality rates in Cuba itself continue to fall impressively despite the US blockade, with the most recent figure of six deaths per 1,000 live births living testimony to the Revolution's commitment to the health of its people.

Jim Craven

Close down the Woodhill Control Unit!

The Woodhill 'Closed Supervision Centre' (CSC) opened in February 1998. It was the brainchild of the Conservative government, but there was never a second's doubt that Labour would continue with the project and indeed embrace it wholeheartedly. The CSC consists of three units where prisoners considered too 'subversive' to be contained in the mainstream of the prison system are arbitrarily confined until they 'progress'. There are two further units at Durham prison.

There has been constant resistance by prisoners sent to Woodhill, many of whom have refused entirely to co-operate with the behaviour modification programme. These prisoners deserve support. On this page, two prisoners describe life inside the CSC and two prisoners at Full Sutton call for solidarity action with the prisoners at Woodhill.

The ship of no hope and no return

On 7 April I was transferred to Woodhill and allocated to B wing. I was given four 'reasons': 1) I super-glued myself to a chair in the visiting room (this never occurred); 2) I was charged with a serious assault on an officer (I was acquitted); 3) I threatened to go on a dirty protest; 4) I was suspected of encouraging prisoners to assault a screw!

I had heard about this cesspit before it opened and I fully knew what was in store, but it only struck me fully when I received a letter from Chris Brasher, who is on D wing, saying: 'Welcome to the ship of no hope and no return.'

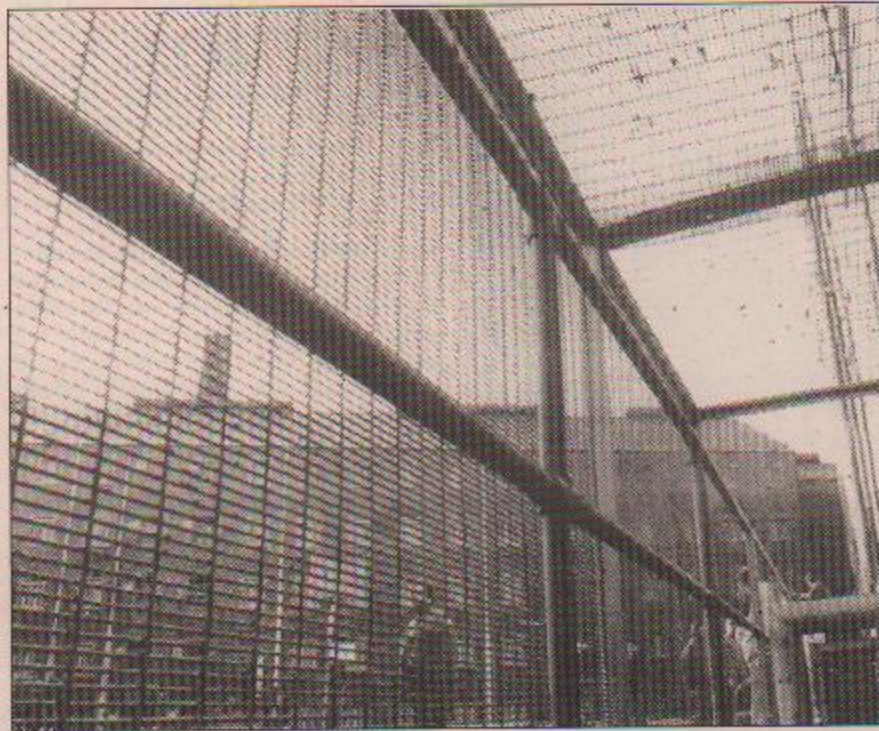
Prisoners on A and D wings are treated like animals. They are fed through door hatches, no access to own radios or drawing materials, half-hour visits, £2.50 private cash; the cell windows don't open, to prevent prisoners talking to one another; 23 hour bang-up, one shower a week. The list is endless.

B wing is known as the 'structured wing'. The operating standards (produced in evidence at a High Court hearing brought by Rifat Mehmet and Sean O'Connor, who unsuccessfully challenged the lawfulness of their allocation) stipulate that prisoners will be allowed out of their cells for an average of three hours per day. It won't come as a surprise that last week a notice was issued outlining that Monday and Friday association has been withdrawn, reducing the average to 1½ hours every other day.

Since the unit opened only six prisoners have progressed from B to C wing, three of them going on to the Hull unit. Two of these returned, another went to Whitemoor and lasted weeks before allegations of hostage-taking put him in the seg.

Four prisoners have been selected to go from B to C wing but due to no-one moving from C to Durham, due to lack of staff (!) they will have to stay longer. There are 32 prisoners on this 'ship' and for months it has been taking in water. Prisoners like Mehmet have fired distress signals but for some strange reason, the coastguards are either blind or there are no volunteers to man the lifeboats. To come straight to the point, someone out there needs to come up with a plan to organise mass support to either shut down this inhumane shit-hole or change the conditions very drastically. Are you interested? You know where to write.

Domenyk Noonan



Letter from D wing

I can't seem to put my ideas down on paper at the moment. I've got no work top. Can't get comfortable enough to draw. Even my letter writing is affected. These cardboard chairs and tables are a health hazard. You wouldn't know what I mean unless you've sat on one for weeks, months, years at a time and gradually felt your shoulders and upper back rounding. Then after a very uncomfortable day you have to endure an uncomfortable night on a mattress with no give, or in this place on a concrete slab! I have always said that prisons are about breaking the individual. If it's not the system with its petty mundane rules, then it's the furniture.

Everything is regarded as a 'privilege' here; if you're 'abusive' or 'threatening' towards members of 'staff', you simply don't get it, which makes us even more 'abusive' and 'threatening'. Their aim is to condition me and instil in me a 'new set of values', their values. And I am expected to accept and value those values, which means participating in the regime, conforming to every rule and obeying every command. Well, I don't value anything that much that I'd be willing to crawl through shit to get it.

We are told that things might be improving here, well at least on levels A, B and C. There's talk of 'more privileges' and 'more property', to try and tempt prisoners, but unfortunately for them their privileges are meaningless. For example, if we have 'earned' it through 'good behaviour' they will 'allow' us to exercise with another prisoner. They will 'allow' us to have more reading and writing material. And they are attempting to

make differentiations between A wing - level 1 and D wing - the unit seg, where before there were none. There's talk that we, on D wing, might be allowed three showers a week - THREE! - but only if we've 'earned' them. They might even let us out of our cells to collect our meals instead of being fed through the door. If we've earned it. And it's all designed to encourage the prisoners on D wing to progress and see the error of their ways. I would laugh if it wasn't so pathetic and annoying.

Reg Wilson

Prison Service defends torture regime

In early May the Prison Service made a lame attempt to defend its now infamous Woodhill control unit by feeding information to the press which

claimed conditions in the unit had been 'humanised'. This was a response to sustained criticisms of the regime and the recent court case, challenging the lawfulness of holding prisoners in conditions clearly designed to psychologically destroy them.

David Yeomans, the unit governor, who had gained a certain notoriety for his treatment of prisoners in the Whitemoor segregation unit in the mid-1990s, was quoted in *The Times* on 4 May as saying: 'We have humanised the regime at Woodhill because we felt it was too spartan'. Apparently this 'humanisation' will take the form of prisoners being allowed to possess their own training shoes, a battery-operated radio and six books. Meanwhile they will remain locked in cells for 23 hours a day containing nothing but a cardboard table and chair and a mattress on a concrete plinth. The windows of the cells, which admit little natural light, will remain sealed shut, allowing no natural fresh air or visual stimulation. Fundamentally, nothing has changed and Woodhill remains an environment that engenders psychosis and despair.

The CSC was created on the premise that the structural ills of the prison system are in fact located within the pathology of individual 'troublemakers', whose removal from the mainstream would result in reduced disruption and rebellion in the rest of the system. This scapegoating of individual prisoners for institutional injustices and abuses of administrative power is a familiar tactic.

Over the last five years there has been a concerted attempt by the prison authorities to roll back the

gains won by long-term prisoners over the previous three decades, and struggles are currently taking place within the prison system which will decide conditions for many years to come. The Woodhill unit should therefore be seen in the context of a struggle for prisoners' rights and humane conditions throughout the whole prison system. Unfortunately the liberal reform organisations have called only for a minor amelioration of conditions at Woodhill, while never questioning its basic existence. The fact is that control units are instruments of political repression, specifically designed to eradicate collective resistance and psychologically destroy those targeted as leaders of that resistance. They should therefore be abolished outright.

As part of the struggle to close the Woodhill unit we ask all those who are genuinely committed to the cause of prisoners' rights to support a picket of the gaol, planned for International Prisoners' Justice Day - 10 August. Your voice at Woodhill will inspire and encourage our comrades in the unit and will remind their gaolers that these prisoners are not alone and unsupported. We are calling for maximum support for this demonstration of solidarity and hope it will serve as a catalyst for a sustained campaign to close the Woodhill unit and thereby very considerably assist the struggle for prisoners' rights everywhere.

John Bowden

Open letter to supporters of prisoners' rights

I have been asked to write to you, on behalf of my comrades behind bars, to encourage you to support the range of solidarity activities being organised in support of the occupants of the Woodhill Torture Unit on International Prisoners' Justice Day.

Rather than asking for piecemeal actions in support of individual prisoners on Prisoners' Justice Day, we are calling for the focus of prisoner support to be centred on Woodhill for the day, as a show of solidarity with all of us who are fighting for justice and humanity behind bars.

The brutality at Woodhill is of significance to all prisoners, not least because of its role as a 'big stick' being held over our heads. All those involved in supporting prisoners, no matter which gaol they are currently held in, should be concerned by the regime at Woodhill and by the sustained ill-treatment of those who fall victim to it.

At a time when human rights in prison, and those who are fighting for them, are under unprecedented attack by the state, we need an effective prisoners' solidarity movement more than ever. The movement can only start to become effective if it puts aside petty sectarian considerations and delivers mass collective action in support of those prisoners who are on the frontline in terms of the state's current attempt to smash prisoner resistance once and for all.

The prisoners in Woodhill have shown immense courage in defiance of the attempts to brutalise and break them, but they are presently isolated and vulnerable. You can help to end that isolation and raise their spirits by giving maximum support to the International Prisoners' Justice Day activities, which we hope will form the basis for building a truly effective prisoners' solidarity movement. The brutality at Woodhill must end.

An injustice to one is an injustice to all. Solidarity is strength!

Mark Barnsley

Inside News

CCRC update

Since the last FRFI, when we reported on the exceptionally slow working of the Criminal Cases Review Commission, most of those we mentioned have had some positive news. The M25 Three and John Kamara have



had their cases referred back to the Court of Appeal and Gary Mills and Tony Poole have finally had a caseworker allocated to investigate their case. None of these men should be behind bars one day longer than the years of injustice they have already suffered and if the state wants to salvage any crumb of credibility it should free them immediately.

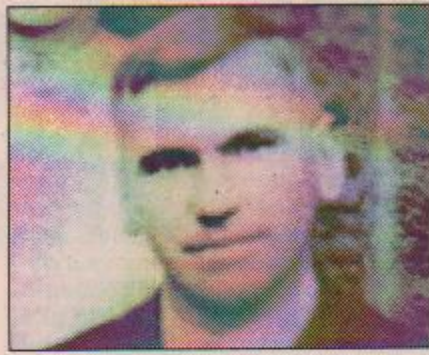
Group 4 chaos

On 6 April Group 4 took over the contract for the 'National Bus', which transfers all prisoners, apart from those in the top security category, between prisons. The result is chaotic and unpredictable. Each prison is supposed to give the Group 4 office in Runcorn a list at the beginning of the week of movements it wants in the following week. On Friday Group 4 tells the gaols who will be moved the next week, but not on which day. There have been stories of prisoners waiting in reception four days running, prisoners arriving at gaols where there was no space for them and endless hassle with accumulated visits being booked, unbooked and booked again. And the icing on the cake came on only the fourth day of operation when the central computer supposedly sorting out all this mess crashed!

Full Sutton

Due to the importance of the coverage on Woodhill, we have been unable to publish the 'inside story' of the Full Sutton mutiny, as promised in the last issue. Copies of this article are available on request from FRFI and we apologise for any inconvenience.

Maclean's release in June 1917 had been preceded by a dangerous deterioration in his health. He had been moved to Perth Prison infirmary at the beginning of the year.



John Maclean: accuser of capitalism

Since beginning his sentence at Peterhead Prison in 1916, Maclean had contended that his food was being drugged. These allegations have never been taken seriously but were used instead as evidence of the comrade's 'mental instability'. Conveniently, this so-called delusional behaviour was then used to explain his subsequent political action and development. John Maclean's principled record and conduct demand that this be challenged.

In an otherwise reasonable and fair biography of Maclean by BJ Ripley and J McHugh, the authors state that his claims 'clearly confused the doctors. They knew his food was not drugged and could think of no reason why a normal individual should think it could or would be drugged'. While the authors accept that official restrictions on prison records have limited the debate, they conclude that the claims are without basis.

Prison brutality

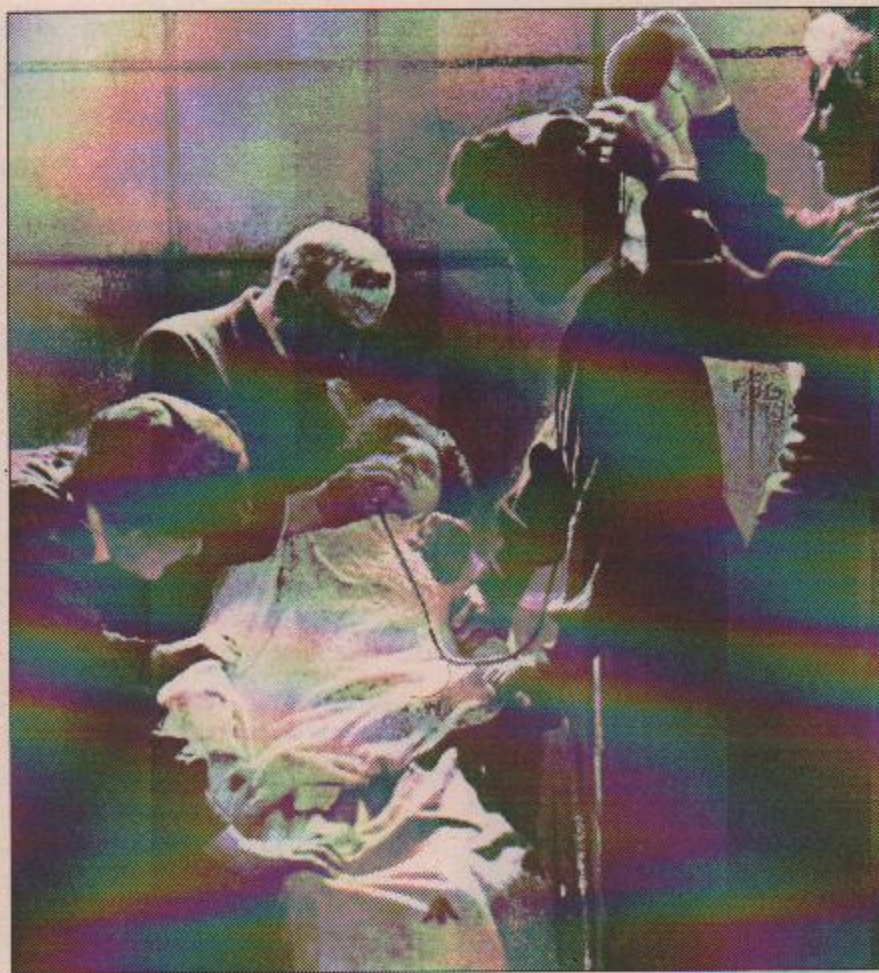
However, evidence is there to the contrary for those prepared to examine it. The British prison system is capable of acting with the most sinister violence and calculation against all prisoners. It reserves its most refined physical and mental torture in particular for those who struggle for justice and political rights. The treatment of Fenian prisoners like O'Donovan Rossa in British gaols and the unprincipled tactics of the press in relation to any exposure of such treatment is well-known. In 1870 Karl Marx's daughter Jenny wrote:

'Some time ago, O'Donovan was put in a dark cell with his hands tied behind his back. His handcuffs were not removed night or day so that he was forced to lick his food, gruel made with water, lying on the ground.'

Floggings, daily strip-searches, solitary confinement and beatings took their grim toll. Twenty Fenians died or were driven insane in the prisons of humanitarian England.

The 'confused doctors' of Maclean's time had obviously failed to keep up-to-date with the professional literature: in 1909, Charles Mansell-Moulin, vice president of the Royal College of Surgeons, spoke out against the dangers of forced feeding. In that year, militant suffragettes in Dundee had adopted the hunger strike tactic to protest at the authorities' refusal to recognise them as political prisoners. The campaign spread and the government introduced the barbarity of forced feeding. It was described as 'government torture of militant women, incompletely disguised as feeding to save their lives.'

Emily Davison, who died in 1913 under the hooves of the king's horse at the Derby, described the horror she suffered:



Forced feeding was described as government torture of militant women, incompletely disguised as feeding to save their lives

'It was the nasal tube that was used now; up one nostril it goes and down into the throat; if it does not go down properly the doctor pushes it down with his hand.'

Maclean, who was force-fed twice daily for three months in 1918, was not unreasonable or deluded in claiming adulteration of his food. The same Mansell-Moulin continued to expose the physical dangers of forced feeding in the pages of *The Lancet* and *British Medical Journal* and significantly, in 1914, focused on the question of drugging militant prisoners. In this context, Maclean's contestation in 1916 was not absurd. He too had demanded treatment as a political prisoner and, at a rally after his release, he publicly decried the barbarism of British gaols. In July 1917 in *The Call*, newspaper of the British Socialist Party, he stated:

'In my bare cell I resolved that on my return to civilian life I would appeal to the workers to demand the release of conscientious objectors, especially those detained in ordinary prisons, on the grounds of the harsh treatment meted out to them. I know that they are suffering from what I saw in Perth Prison.'

Back in the fight

Maclean's prison experience served to strengthen his determination to pursue his political activity and in autumn 1917 he was described as 'a driving dynamo of energy driving, always driving towards his goal.'

Maclean was back in the fight, agitating and educating for the socialist

revolution. He had declared on his release that all the forces of the workers' movement must be thrown into the fight against the war and for the overthrow of capitalism. Three years of war had brought about increased calls from religious and liberal circles for peace by negotiation, but Maclean instinctively linked the issue of peace and the class struggle: 'I want peace, but it must be a peace with revolution in it.'

It was the working class of Russia that delivered peace and revolution and began the process of breaking out of imperialist war. Maclean saw the strike in August 1917 of 50,000 Lanarkshire workers against rising food prices as representing a political step forward in their receptiveness to anti-war and socialist agitation, but this was insignificant on a world scale. The workers of Moscow and Petrograd under Bolshevik leadership rose and took power. When news of the October Revolution came, Tom Anderson records that Maclean shook hands with him silently for several minutes, too overcome with emotion even to speak.

Maclean was elected as an honorary president of the first Congress of Soviets, along with Lenin and Trotsky. In January 1918 he was appointed by Lenin as the Bolshevik Consul for Scotland. Maclean travelled across the country - Clydeside, Fife, Durham, Consett - speaking at pitheads, factory gates, street corners, football pitches and public parks. Speaking before thousands, his powerful oratory united passionate denunciations of the

war and exposure of British imperialism's murderous role in Ireland with a call for workers to follow the example of their Russian comrades.

The police spies at these meetings were pointed out and challenged, but Maclean's activity was alarming the ruling class. They by no means agreed on how to deal with him but, critically, they were able to recognise that despite Maclean's enormous stature, there existed more 'reliable' leaders of the working class:

'Another report on the role of agitators distinguishes between those like MacManus, Gallacher and Moxton who keep to industrial issues and the even more notorious Maclean and MacDougall who continually raised political questions, including the war.' (Ripley and McHugh, 1989)

Maclean: true defender of the working class

The decision to arrest Maclean again was based on an assessment that industrial calm would continue to prevail despite this repressive step. That this assessment arose from a recognition that the leadership of the a significant section of the working class would limit itself to narrow, trade union issues in the midst of the hell of imperialist war is an indictment of that leadership. That same leadership was to play a major role in the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain. It was Maclean's revolutionary communism that represented the fundamental interests of the working class nationally and internationally. While Maclean showed the clear-sighted determination and preparedness to fight for those interests in his revolutionary character, he was numerically and politically isolated in Scotland and Britain.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks had explicitly based the revolution on the expectation it would spread to Europe. While consolidating actual working class power in the new Soviet state, they were having to confront the isolation, thought temporary, of that revolution internationally. Socialist revolution did pose a potential threat to the ruling class of Europe, particularly in Germany, while the imperialist war and its effects continued. The example of the October Revolution in Russia existed now as an historical fact. Despite the cowardice, timidity and political opportunism of the leadership of the working class in Britain, men with ideas like Maclean had to be dealt with.

On 15 April 1918, two detectives arrived at the Russian Consulate in Glasgow and arrested Maclean. He was tried, again for sedition, in May at the High Court in Edinburgh. His conduct at this trial was historic and its uncompromising revolutionary message should ring even louder today after two world wars, fascism and 80 years of imperialist violence and oppression.

'I am not here, then, as the accused. I am here as the accuser of capitalism, dripping with blood from head to foot.'

Maclean refused to plead and objected to the whole jury, demanding one drawn exclusively from the working class. He patiently explained his motives, the economic basis of war and its probable re-occurrence within 15 years 'if capitalism lasts'. During the trial he again publicly asserted that his food had been drugged while in Peterhead serving his previous sentence, and stated that he would therefore accept no government food.

This was no dramatic exaggeration, as he was aware. Nine months previously, in September 1917, Thomas Ashe, a commandant during the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland, had died during force feeding. He was on hunger strike for political status. In Dublin, a huge demonstration of 30-40,000 people took part in the funeral procession in military formation. Irish Volunteers carried rifles and Constance Markievicz led a Citizen Army contingent wearing full uniform, with a revolver in her belt. A year later Maclean was to stand with her at the May Day celebrations in Glasgow and she was to support him as a candidate for the Scottish Workers Republican Party in later years.

Maclean was sentenced to five years' penal servitude in May 1918. Lenin wrote:

'Maclean was sentenced for a second time, to five years' imprisonment ... for exposing the real objects of the war and speaking out about the criminal nature of British imperialism. Maclean is in prison (again) because he acted openly as the representative of our government; we have never seen this man...he has never belonged to our party, but we joined with him.'

Maclean found himself in gaol again, facing possible death for his politics. While across the world workers and the oppressed moved forward, the British working class, the workers of the Clyde, stood by in dumb shock at the savagery of his sentence and its possible outcome. Protest demonstrations did take place; in July the police attacked marchers as they reached Jail Square in Glasgow, but those with the responsibility to lead and organise did nothing.

From this period Maclean was to increasingly identify with the anti-imperialist forces in Ireland, in India and across the British Empire. He saw these struggles as exemplifying the revolutionary attitude and organisation needed to seriously challenge capitalism. Maclean was developing the revolutionary communist, Leninist position of the soon-to-be-born Third Communist International: 'Workers of the world and oppressed peoples, unite!'

Michael MacGregor

CHOOSE THE RCG

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

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

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MARK BARNESLEY - FIVE YEARS OF INJUSTICE 8 JUNE

International day of action to highlight Mark Barnesley's struggle for justice. Actions in Ireland, Australia, France, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Norway, Greece, Malta, the USA and elsewhere.

Solidarity pickets
Sheffield Crown Court, 12.30-2.30pm
The Star, York Street (off High Street), Sheffield 3.30-5pm

Public meeting
Saddaca Centre, 48 The Wicker, Sheffield, 7.30pm. Speakers include Paddy Hill of the Birmingham 6.

Mark will be on a hunger strike protest from 12 noon on 6 June to 12 noon 9 June. Send messages of solidarity to Mark Barnesley WA2897, HMP Full Sutton, York YO4 1PS.

FRIENDS OF THE GARVAGHY ROAD

An open campaign that works alongside the Garvaghy residents and calls for the rerouting of the July Orange march away from this 95% Catholic area of Portadown. The campaign will be organising public meetings with residents and a support delegation to Garvaghy Road in July. For more information or to join (£5 individuals, £25 organisations), write to Friends of the Garvaghy Road, BM Box 5519, London WC1N 3XX or phone 0181 442 8778.

THINGS CAN ONLY GET BETTER

A new play exposing the Labour Party by RCG member Richard Roques. At The Etcetera Theatre, above the Oxford Arms, Camden High Street. 7.15pm 20 July to 8 August (Sundays at 6.15pm) Not Mondays. Phone 0171 482 4857.

LETTERS write to FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX e-mail: rcgfrfi@easynet.co.uk website: http://www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk

Unity between Kurdish and Turkish workers

In his article on the Kurds (FRFI 148, April/May), Trevor Rayne ends by claiming that 'with millions of Kurds in the big cities of western Turkey, the fate of the Kurds is increasingly linked to that of the Turkish working class'.

I assume by this he means that there is a need for Kurdish and Turkish workers to recognise their common oppressors and then to forgo a unity to defeat them. It is not just, however, in Turkey where Kurds and Turks live alongside each other. It is therefore crucial that instances of unity are properly documented and this was not the case in the section headed 'Kurds in Britain'.

In particular, when the piece refers to what happened in January 1991 it does not reflect the significance of the day. On 3 January 1991 at least 1.5 million workers in Turkey took part in

a one-day general strike. This, of course, was declared illegal by the government. The miners from Zonguldak had ignited the struggle when 48,000 had gone on strike at the end of November.

In such a climate, clothing workers in factories in Hackney decided to strike and pickets were organised from early morning. Most workers, including a small but not insignificant number of African, Chinese, Vietnamese and English workers, also supported the strike call. In fact, four of those arrested were English sympathisers. The result of the actions was to produce possibly the biggest international solidarity strike in Britain over the last decade. The attacks which the police then mounted on the strikes demonstrated the importance the British state attached to the actions of

these who had expressed solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Turkey.

I appreciate that the aim of the article 'Kurds in Britain' was to draw attention to the criminalisation of Kurdish people in Britain, and by implication anyone engaged in political protest, but I feel that where instances of unity between Turkish and Kurdish workers (and the unemployed) do occur they should be recognised, applauded and built upon.

These criticisms aside, the article was excellent!

Victory to the Kurdish people in their struggle for an independent Kurdistan! Victory to the Turkish people in their struggle to overthrow the military government!

MARK METCALF
East London

'Left' Labour opportunism

Jeremy Corbyn split up with his wife due to her insistence that their son should go to a grammar school, which was against his so-called principles. So why, you may ask, can't he split from the Labour Party? Their policies seem to be opposed to his 'principles' frequently, judging by his speeches. It seems it is just another of his token protests to prove his left credentials. There's no fear of him doing anything of political significance like breaking with Labour both organisationally and politically. His career, unlike his family, won't get bogged down by principles.

DAVID HOWARTH
South London

Support Afghan women!

On 28 April, led by the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), Afghan women and children marched on the UN offices on Pakistan denouncing Afghanistan's Taliban rulers and demanding the world sit up and take notice of their plight. It was a courageous act - in December, a similar march was cancelled in northwestern Pakistan when men, identifying themselves as Taliban, threatened to break the legs of any woman who participated.

Protesters shouted anti-Taliban slogans and demanded 'freedom, democracy and women's rights' and delivered a memorandum asking why the world community was content to remain a spectator to the multitude of atrocities committed in Afghanistan, particularly against women: 'According to Amnesty International, Afghanistan continues to remain "the world's largest forgotten tragedy". World media has lashed itself into a frenzy over Kosovo, but the brutally savage massacre of tens of thousands of innocent people by the fundamentalists in Kabul alone did

not even get into the news. Is it because European blood is thicker than the blood of the people of Afghanistan? [Are we] doomed to an existence of agony as far from world bullies and their henchmen?' The statement went on to condemn UN peace efforts that offer fundamentalist groups a share of power. 'We demand to know why the United Nations and other world bodies insist on delivering the destiny of our people into the hands of fundamentalist murderers.'

The answer, of course, is that in supporting the fundamentalist and viciously anti-woman Taliban, the imperialist powers cared nothing about human rights and only about destroying the progressive regime of Najibullah which, with the support of the former Soviet Union, had held back religious intolerance and reaction and guaranteed educational, employment and health rights for all. Today women in Afghanistan find all doors closed to them while the west looks the other way.

Contact RAWA via PO Box 374, Quetta, Pakistan, e-mail: rawa@rawa.org, homepage: http://www.rawa.org

BETH MILLAR
South London

Union sells out Skychefs workers

370 sacked Skychefs workers at Heathrow are being sold out by the TGWU. Six months into their strike over being dismissed during an official day of action over pay and conditions, they have only the faint promise of negotiations and have just found out that 60 people will not get any compensation under the two-year rule. It has been impossible to find out the pay and conditions of the scab workers at Skychefs and the union officials have stitched up other catering workers in the airport. Those are workers at Alpha, another of the six multinational-controlled firms who together control all in-flight catering. Alpha workers were being forced into worsening pay and conditions, identical to Skychefs, and the union officials urged them in writing to accept the deal.

The sacked Skychefs workers are on a picket line at Faggs Lane, Hatton Cross and welcome all supporters. Their case highlights many important issues including the role of the unions in low pay disputes, the role of multinationals and their increasing control of the labour market. Support the picket, highlight their case, say no to slave labour and casualisation and expose the Labour government for what it is: a government of greed, where profit comes before people.

MEGAN LANE
North London

Miscarriage of justice

I could do with some help in highlighting my case nationally. In 1986 I was convicted of the murder of Anita Kirkwood in Reading the previous year and have been trying to clear my name ever since.

DNA testing would clear me and would convict the real criminals. For me to get justice I need a full trial transcript and DNA evidence but I don't have legal aid with which to get them and the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) says it is not sure that I need either item for an appeal. But without DNA evidence, they will just believe the police like the court believed them before. The police lied in court and I believe that if I can study the full transcript I could prove perjury.

The cases which have recently been referred back to the Appeal Court by the CCRC all had public campaigns or journalists pushing for them to be re-looked at. Even then they had a struggle. I have been fighting my conviction on my own for the past 14 years. No one has ever been willing to help me except my parents, who are OAPs. My tariff is 15 years but the Home Office tells me that I cannot be released until I put my hands up to the murder, which I will never do. Please can your readers help by writing to the Criminal Cases Review Commission on my behalf, asking them to get hold of the full transcript and DNA evidence and to refer my case back to the appeal court immediately.

TERENCE ALLEN L55957
HMP Maidstone, County Road,
Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1UZ

Write to CCRC, Alpha Tower, Suffolk Street, Queensway, Birmingham B1. Quote ref: 02021/98

Tweedledum and Tweedledee go to war

Mainstream politics, whether in the USA or United Kingdom, whether Republican, Democrat, Labour or Tory - when it comes to protecting rich people and the ruling class you couldn't put a cigarette paper between their material and political interests.

We had 18 years of Tory reactionary war-mongering: sinking *The Belgrano* and violating Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas; arming the racist South African regime to keep black working class people on their knees so the whites could live hunky-dory; beating the miners in a strike that lasted a year and cost 100,000 mining jobs and decimated communities; continuing repression in Ireland. In all this time there was not one punch-up in the Parliamentary chamber. The only violence the Labour Party ever condemned was that of the miners, or that of the Argentinians against Falklands islanders, that of nationalists against loyalists, that of the ANC against the white South African regime. Kinnock distanced himself from the just violence of the miners - he never attacked the violent destruction of communities brought about by the National Coal Board. Today, it is no surprise to see the Labour Party having a field day unleashing its own war against the people of Yugoslavia.

DARREN HEWITT
Doncaster

Full Sutton

In response to John Bowden's letter in the last issue of FRFI re: the administrative decision to renew my continued torture by relocating me back in the isolation/punishment block, I would like to thank all those prisoners who voiced their discontent at the fabrication used against me by warders on E wing of Full Sutton prison. Albeit not all warders participated in the gross injustice and it was in fact put into action by a small hardcore group of ex-isolation/punishment block warders, who undoubtedly feared my presence on the wing, due to the horrendous treatment I had received in these blocks over the years. However, I am now fully aware that no matter where I go in the dispersal system, I will never cease being the target of such brutal treatment. As a result of this, I shall now resign myself to long-term isolation, refusing to accept any type of location within the

Hillgrove frame-up

At the 12 December 1998 anti-Hillgrove Cat Farm demonstration, Nottingham and Thames Valley police wrongfully and violently arrested John Codd for 'incitement to violence' and subsequently fitted him up for jumping bail.

All the evidence our defence campaign has collected suggests the police framed him up because he is a libertarian activist. In the past he and I have exposed Nottingham police as being racist, homophobic and anti-protest.

There have been major irregularities in John's case including his police interview tape being withheld, denial of access to the courts and missing bail forms, almost causing John to be rearrested for jumping bail. These and other irregularities mean we have been unable to collect all the evidence needed to prove his innocence and were unable to consult a lawyer before his trial on 5 May. The Home Office has not responded to our letter, although the Lord Chancellor referred John's case to them on 20 April. The trial has not been postponed although irregularities in the case are under police investigation.

Please could readers send us any evidence on anti-protester activity, including other attempted frame-ups, by either of the two police forces. Send it, anonymously if you wish, to Box AB, c/o Androgyny Shop, 176 Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3HW.

STUART TIDESWELL
Defence Campaign Coordinator

dispersal system. Inevitably and sadly, this is what the administration wants, as they derive their pleasure from other people's misfortunes. However, as we know, nothing more can be expected from the lynch-mob mentality of those who keep us contained.

So, to all prisoners, I can sincerely say that for a very short period of restricted freedom which I had, your moral support and company were an enjoyment and will often keep me smiling through the most oppressive times ahead. Respect and solidarity to those who know, and to John Bowden in particular. Your friendship, support and solidarity are as solid as a granite block of stone!

KENNY CARTER
(This letter was written from Full Sutton prison. Shortly afterwards, Kenny was moved to Woodhill, where he can be written to at: HMP Woodhill, Tattenhoe Street, Milton Keynes MK4 4DA. His prison number is AD3434.)

STOP THE WAR

NEW VIDEO PRODUCED BY PLATFORM FILMS

featuring footage of the horrific effects of NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia, never broadcast on British television. John Pilger, Mark Steel, Germaine Greer, Tony Benn and others speak out against the war. Essential viewing for anyone who wants to know the realities of what's happening in Yugoslavia.

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Send cheques made payable to TV Choice to Norman Thomas, TV Choice, 22 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0HR. Tel 0171 378 0873 for more details.

What we stand for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!
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FIGHT RACISM

FIGHT IMPERIALISM

One year on from the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement, nothing has changed for the nationalist working class. As *An Phoblacht*, the paper of Sinn Fein, clearly put it: 'While IRA guns have been silent, the nationalist people have continued to face assassination, bomb attacks, church burnings, lynch mobs and attacks on their homes'. BOB SHEPHERD reports on a year of violence which belies the talk of peace.

Ireland's Peace Agreement:

NO GAINS FOR THE NATIONALIST WORKING CLASS



Examples include the following.

■ **April** 12-year-old attacked by loyalist mob, Crumlin Road, Belfast. 21-year-old beaten unconscious by loyalist gang, Finaghy, Belfast.

■ **May** Pearl Segar of the Women's Coalition intimidated out of her East Belfast home. Catholic schoolboy attacked, Antrim Road, Belfast. Attack on Catholic home, Stoney-path, Derry. Attacks on Catholic homes in Portadown. Loyalist mob attacks homes, Whitwell area, North Belfast.

■ **July** In one 48-hour period, 73 Catholic homes and 71 businesses attacked, 136 cars hijacked, 213 cars damaged. Catholic churches and schools attacked in North Belfast. The three Quinn children brutally murdered in a pipe-bomb attack on a 'mixed' estate in Ballymoney. 144 other Catholic homes in predominantly Protestant estates suffered fire bomb attacks. 155 other Catholic-owned premises damaged. 14 homes in Carrickfergus petrol-bombed. Two homes in Greenisland and five in Antrim petrol-bombed. Catholic homes in Larne attacked. Integrated school and Catholic primary school attacked in County Antrim. A pub and two businesses fire-bombed in Killeel. Mass-goers fired on by loyalist gunmen. Bushmills, County Antrim. Protestant family driven out by loyalist mob, Eastvale estate, Dungen.

■ **September** Loyalists picket Aghadrumsee primary school, Fermanagh, to prevent two newly-appointed Catholic cooks from taking up their positions.

■ **October** Homes attacked in Serpentine Road and Whitwell Road, North Belfast. Brian Service shot dead, North Belfast.

■ **January** Bomb attack at building site, Magherafelt, South Derry. Petrol bomb attack, Waterside. Eleven families forced out of their homes in Garvaghy Road area, Portadown. Pipe-bomb attack on group of mass-goers, Antrim. 16 families intimidated out of one estate in Antrim.

■ **February** 250 loyalists gather at the end of Garvaghy Road and attack local residents.

■ **March** Rosemary Nelson murdered.

The attacks and intimidation of the nationalist community have escalated as the Peace Agreement has deadlocked. On 9 April the 'Orange Volunteers' launched a pipe-bomb attack on a bar in County Antrim, injuring a customer. In the same week a couple living on the Steeples estate, Antrim, had their cars destroyed because they are in a 'mixed' relationship. On 14 April two Catholic homes in Randalstown, County Antrim, had pipe bombs pushed through their letter boxes. On 19 April a Catholic home in Serpentine Park, North Belfast, was

attacked with a pipe bomb. Sinn Fein said the attack 'was part of the loyalist campaign to drive Catholics out of that area'. On Monday 26 April a gang of up to 30 loyalists rampaged through the Parkside area of North Belfast. Armed with sticks they attacked residents and hurled bricks and petrol bombs at houses.

On 6 May loyalist gunmen opened fire on two 12-year-old boys in Ardoyne, North Belfast. It was only because the gun jammed that the boys survived, it didn't stop the gunmen firing five shots as the boys escaped into a nearby betting shop.

It has come to light that over 100 people in the Ardoyne area have been informed by the RUC that their details are in the hands of loyalist death squads and their lives are in danger. The RUC conveniently refuse to say how these details passed into the hands of the loyalists or who told them! On 12 May a Catholic worker was shot in the legs and chest by a loyalist gunman as he went to work in Carrickfergus, County Antrim.

Official figures given by the British government reveal that between 1 May and 31 December last year, 1,358 families sought rehousing due to intimidation. This eight-month period begins with the start of the marching season, at the beginning of the period of the new 'Peace Agreement'. The overwhelming number of families seeking rehousing are nationalists. The events around the

Drumcree stand-off forced large numbers of nationalist families to move. Within a few days of the sectarian murder of the Quinn children, 36 other families had applied to move from the same estate. At the time of the murders, five other Catholic families had already received death threats.

This is the reality of life for the nationalist working class in the north of Ireland today. The Peace Agreement hasn't improved conditions, and in some respects has made them worse. Sinn Fein's commitment to the peace process and the ceasefire of the IRA have left nationalist communities vulnerable to the attacks of fascist loyalist terror gangs.

Underlying the increase in sectarian attacks is a deteriorating economy. A report produced by accountants Price Waterhouse Coopers showed that economic growth in 1998 was half the rate of 1997, 1.9%, whilst the rate of redundancies rose by 31%. It states that 'the threat of recession hangs over a substantial percentage of Northern Ireland industry'. The report also points out that more people are employed at Heathrow airport than in the whole of manufacturing in the north of Ireland!

Whatever the outcome of the 30 June deadline, the pressure from the nationalist working class on Sinn Fein and the Republican movement to defend their communities will increase. ■

The process of the Peace Agreement remains deadlocked as Trimble and the Ulster Unionists repeat their demand for IRA arms decommissioning as a precondition for sitting in an executive with Sinn Fein ministers. Deadlines set for April came and went, with Blair now setting 30 June as the absolute deadline for reaching agreement on the setting up of the 'Assembly Executive'. What happens if this deadline isn't met wasn't made clear, but one thing we can be sure of is that loyalist attacks and intimidation of the nationalist community will continue.

The 8 April issue of *An Phoblacht* had a full page covering 'A year of loyalist attacks' from March 1998 to March 1999. The attacks reported ranged from murder to petrol-bomb attacks to families forced out of their homes.

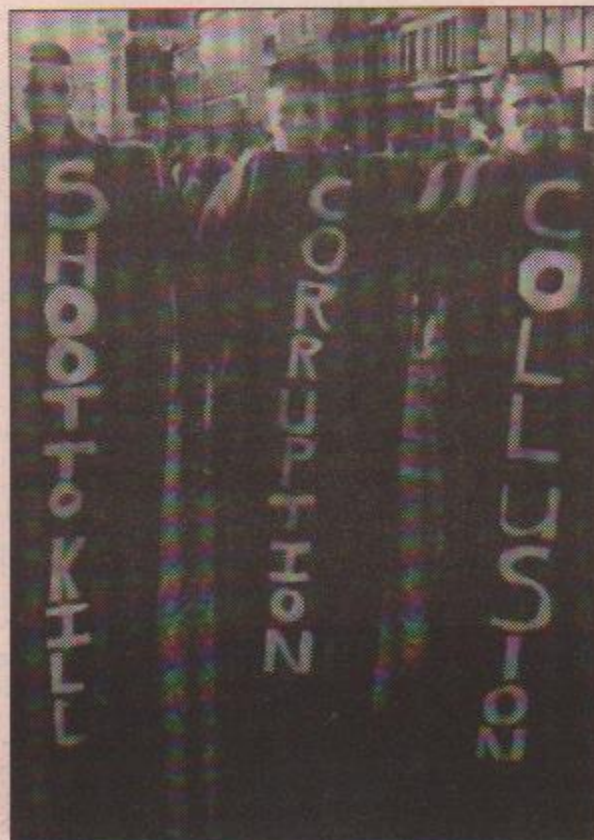
BRITISH TERROR

British media - mouthpiece of British imperialism

A new report produced by the University of Ulster, *Northern Ireland's Troubles: the human costs*, exposes yet again the myth of Britain's so-called independent media. Over the past 30 years the mainstream media in Britain has continually pedalled the propaganda of the British state in portraying the war in Ireland as a sectarian conflict instigated by 'mad, bad IRA criminals'.

The report, by analysing the deaths in the conflict, produces facts which show that the forces of the British state have been engaged in a war against the nationalist community as a whole.

- 88% of the total number of people killed by British state forces were Catholics.
- 87% of those murdered by loyalist death squads were unarmed civilians.
- Of the 1,066 people killed by pro-British forces only 161 were Republican Volunteer soldiers.
- The RUC has killed twice as many unarmed civilians as they have Republican Volunteers. More than



80% of their victims have been Catholics.

These figures contrast sharply with the statistics concerning Republic-

can activities. These show clearly the Republican Movement was engaged in a war against the forces of the British state, killing 1,070 of them.

Rosemary Nelson: collusion between RUC and loyalists

On 12 April, at the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, a report was presented by its investigator Dato Param Cumaraswamy, which highlighted collusion between the RUC and loyalist death squads in the murder of solicitors Pat Finucane in 1989 and Rosemary Nelson in March this year.

The report accused the RUC Chief Constable Ronnie Flanagan of treating with 'complete indifference' reports of intimidation and death threats to Rosemary Nelson. It states that there is concrete evidence to suggest RUC collusion with loyalist death squads and calls for a public inquiry into the death of Pat Finucane. Cumaraswamy also calls for an independent inquiry into the murder of Rosemary Nelson.

The sister of Pat Finucane, speaking in Geneva, said:

'Both were subjected to death threats from the same state authorities during the period prior to their murders. The circumstances surrounding both murders point almost conclusively to collusion between the RUC, British military and loyalist armed terrorist groups.'

In the summer of 1997 Rosemary Nelson had made an official complaint of RUC harassment to the Independent Commission for Police Complaints (ICPC). An investigation into the complaint was begun by the RUC under ICPC supervision. A year into the investigation the ICPC expressed 'serious concerns' to Mo Mowlam about the conduct of the RUC and the investigating team was replaced by police from the London Metropolitan police force. The ICPC is part of the British state machine; for them to express 'serious concerns' over the conduct of the RUC shows the level of bigotry and sectarianism that runs throughout the RUC.

In an attempt to give the 'investigation' into the murder of Rosemary Nelson a veneer of independence, the Chief Constable of Kent, David Philips, has been brought on board. It was, famously, the Kent constabulary which carried out the inquiry into the Met's investigation of the Stephen Lawrence murder. The inquiry gave the Metropolitan Police a 'clean bill of health' and actually commended them on their investigation.

The RUC investigation will have the sole aim of preventing the truth about the murder of Rosemary Nelson becoming known. The previous experience of David Philips in these matters will no doubt be extremely useful to the 'investigation.'

British forces behind 1974 Dublin bombs

On 17 May 1974, bombs exploded in the streets of Dublin and Monaghan, killing 33 people and injuring hundreds more. No one was ever arrested for the crime and the UVF was thought responsible. Now, in a signed affidavit, former RUC Special Branch officer John War states that:

- the explosives were supplied by an officer in the Ulster Defence Regiment
- the bombs were assembled in a farmhouse owned by an RUC officer
- the bombs were planted by a group including a UDR officer
- the RUC and British army intelligence knew who had planted the bombs but did nothing
- it was quite probable the RUC and British army intelligence knew of the attacks in advance

The affidavit was signed in February this year and is part of a legal case surrounding the book *The Committee*. The book exposes the connections between the British army, RUC, loyalist death squads and so-called respectable members of the loyalist community.

Bob Shepherd