

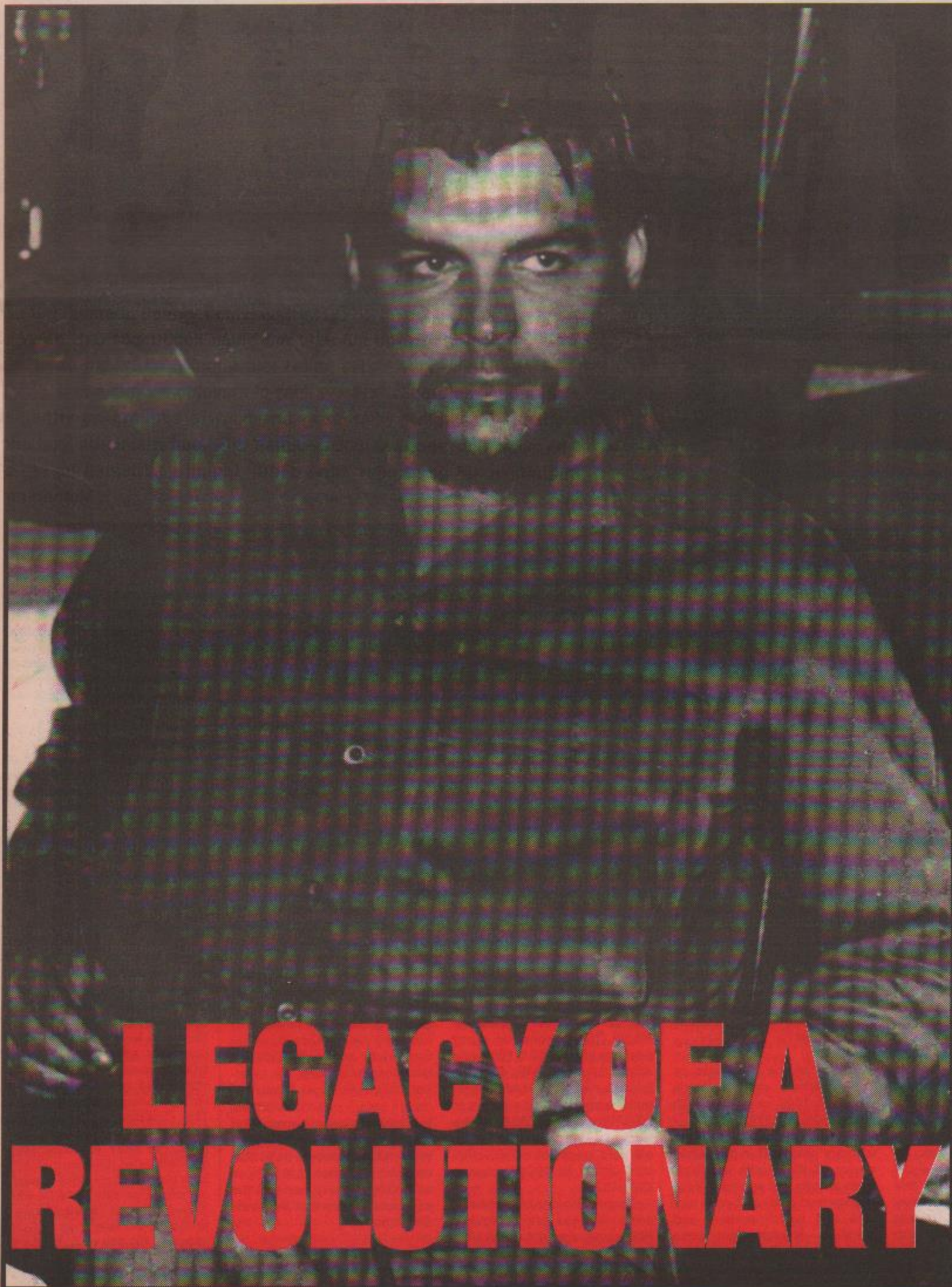
FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 139 October/November 1997

(unwaged 30p) 50p

CHE GUEVARA



LEGACY OF A REVOLUTIONARY

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price
£1

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Taking sides: Fighting poverty pay

The fight against poverty pay – that of the Liverpool Dockers, the Hillingdon hospital workers, and Nigel Cook, a few examples among the growing number of struggles – highlights forcefully the economic, social and political impact of globalisation and neo-liberalism in Britain. It exposes sharply the class polarisation that is taking place and begins to sort out the line up in the class battles of the future. The fight against poverty pay, more than any other issue, asks the question 'which side are you on?' – are you with the real working class fighting poverty pay, fighting for basic employment and trade union rights by any means necessary, or are you in alliance with those forces backing, as Labour leader Blair succinctly put it at September's TUC conference, Britain's 'crusade for competitiveness'.

Let us examine Nigel Cook's fight to get his job back at M&S Packaging*. The multinational PolyGram, an increasingly important player in the globalisation stakes, shows with brutal clarity the real processes at work underlying the Labour government's so-called 'crusade for competitiveness'.

PolyGram is one of the three biggest record producers and musical publishers in the world. It operates in over 40 countries and controls 20 per cent of the worldwide music sales with 25 per cent of the music market in Britain. It has sales of £2.97bn and assets of £2.94bn and employs more than 12,500 workers worldwide. It is also rapidly expanding into the film industry – a point acknowledged by the Labour government with the appointment of Stuart Till, PolyGram's Chief Executive in Britain, as co-chair of the government's Film Working Group. Multinational company and Labour government arm in arm, partners in crime.

75 per cent of PolyGram shares are owned by Phillips, a Dutch company, and 24th in the list of world's top 100 multinational companies ranked by foreign assets. It operates in more than 60 countries and has worldwide assets of £27.8bn (1994) and employs 253,000 people.

PolyGram 'outsources' its packaging to M&S Packaging to improve its competitiveness, that is reduce costs: workers at M&S are paid around £3.70 an hour with no holiday or sick pay, work 12 hour shifts and are supported by 'core teams' supplied by an employment agency on a when needed basis. There is no union. Last year PolyGram paid £6.2m to its Board of Directors and former Board members.

This gives us some idea of the processes at work in what has been called 'globalisation'. And Labour's 'crusade for competitiveness' is designed to make Britain a central player in the globalisation stakes. That is why the representatives of British multinational capital are at the centre of the coalition supporting the Labour government. For example, Lord Simon,

chairman of British Petroleum, is Minister of Trade and European Competitiveness, and Martin Taylor, chief executive of Barclays Bank, will work two days a month on Labour's tax and benefit taskforce, a committee set up to see how state welfare can be rapidly cut back.

Labour government policies of disciplining the poor through draconian Welfare to Work

right. For the unions in Britain, in the main, increasingly represent the interests of the middle classes and better off sections of the working class. Fighting poverty pay is not a priority. Indeed John Monks, General Secretary of the TUC, insists that the union's agenda does not run counter to Labour's intended flexibility. In a typically meaningless sound bite he said



Hillingdon: striking hospital workers have been abandoned by the union

schemes is a key component in its 'crusade'. Welfare to Work reduces state welfare and disciplines potentially subversive young people by forcing them in to low paid jobs. At the same time, by drawing them into the labour force as cheap labour, even for short periods of time, it serves the interests of multinational capital, by pressurising the rest of the working class into accepting ever worsening work conditions at lower rates of pay. Blair told the TUC conference that he had no intention of abandoning 'the flexibility of the present labour market'. Low pay for ever increasing sections of the working class is for these reasons at the heart of Labour's economic policy. To fight poverty pay, therefore, it will be necessary to fight the Labour Party.

At the TUC conference, Blair urged the Unions to modernise and said their role was to win the 'crusade for competitiveness'. Of a motion passed unanimously at the TUC for the right to take solidarity action in line with ILO conventions, he said: 'You don't want it and I won't let it happen.' Yet this speech was said by Rodney Bickerstaffe leader of Unison, Britain's largest union with many low paid workers, to contain 'nothing hostile to the unions'. In one sense he was

'we want positive flexibility of the kind one sees on the continent...' Tell that to the workers of Renault who took to the streets in their thousands to oppose such policies. Monks in fact sits on a government committee investigating ways of improving Britain's competitiveness. He calls for a partnership with business and says 'that the days when trade unions provided an adversarial opposition force are past in industry'.

Given all this, can the trade unions be made to fight poverty pay and therefore fight Labour's policies? To get an idea of the answer to this question we need only look at their composition. British trade unions are losing members and increasingly are composed of the professional, better-educated 'middle class' workers in relatively stable employment.

- 31.3% of the workforce or 7.2m workers were in trade unions in 1996, compared with 13.3m (50%) in 1979.

- The proportion of workers who are unionised in the public sector (60.9%) – with very high rates among civil servants, local government officials, health service and social workers and teachers – is nearly three times that of the private sector (20.6%).

- Unionisation among profes-

sionals (52%) and associated professionals (47%) has the highest density. That among less skilled workers (26%) and those in retail sales (11%) has the lowest.

- Unions organise a much larger proportion of the workforce with a degree or equivalent (38%), or with other higher education (47%), than those with no qualifications (26%).

- Full-time workers with more secure employment are more likely to be in a trade union than those who have temporary employment or work part-time. Only 12% of workers employed for less than a year are in unions as opposed to 58% employed by the same employer for 20 years or more. Unionisation of casual workers (20%) and part time workers (20.3%) is much lower than that for permanent workers (33%).

- Unionisation among women workers has fallen from 33% in 1989 to 29% last year in spite of the rise in female employment.

- The older you are the more likely you are to be in a trade union. Only 6% of workers under 20 are unionised and 23% of workers under 30. The average age of union members is 46 compared to 31 for the workforce as a whole.

Over the last 4 years only 38% of net new jobs are permanent, so union membership will continue to fall without a significant drive to organise among younger, part-time and casual workers.

Because trade unions tend to organise highly qualified, increasingly 'middle class' older workers, with strong predominance in the public sector, obvious conflicts of interest tend to arise. Union members in the public sector are often involved in policing the poorer sections of the working class – CPSA and PTC members in job centres for example. In addition, in the health service and local government, members of Unison are still involved in organising competitive tendering which drives working class members into the hands of cost-cutting private sector employers. Is it surprising that the Hillingdon hospital workers had to occupy Unison offices to get official support for their strike action?

In addition to this, the unions are run almost like businesses. Top union leaders are paid executive salaries between £60,000 and £80,000 (1994), far higher than that of most of their members. This is true of the leaders of manual unions. Bill Morris (TGWU) received a pay package of £71,213 in 1994, and John Edmonds (GMB), £73,000. Even Garfield Davies of the predominantly low-paid workers in USDAW received £65,914. The leader of Unison was the highest paid leader of a TUC-affiliated union in 1994 receiving £77,546.

Despite the loss of members, union finances are improving. Net assets rose by 4.4% in 1994 to £568m and gross income rose by 17.5% to £724m with a rise in membership subscrip-

tions income to £603.8m. Unions have invested heavily in the capitalist system, on the stockmarket, in pension funds and other financial institutions. In other words, unions and their officials have an important stake in the capitalist/imperialist system. They have a lot to lose. They have overcome the loss of members not by seeking to recruit previously unorganised low paid workers, but like capitalist corporations before them, by cutting their costs through mergers and amalgamations. The number of trade unions has fallen from 454 in 1979 to 273 in 1994. 79% of members were in 17 trade unions in 1994. 95% of members of TUC-affiliated unions were in the top 20 unions in 1996. So it should not surprise us that while the representatives of the Liverpool Dockers, now out on strike for two years, could not get a hearing at the TUC conference, the CBI did.

Today some 13.7m people live in poverty – below half the average income – nearly one quarter of the population. 31% of children live in the 20 per cent of households where nobody is in full time employment. More than 5m workers earn less than £4 an hour – less than half the average wage – with nearly half of them in full time work. It is not a priority for the trade unions to put their relations with the Labour Party and their substantial financial assets at risk by fighting for the interests of the poorer sections of the working class.

So who will fight that battle? As Nigel Cook has argued in his fight to be reinstated at M&S Packaging: 'Any effective campaign against the increasing tide of sweatshop firms paying crap wages would have to be built by those directly affected.' Support has to be built in the local communities, among other low paid workers, with trade unionists, students and socialist and other radical organisations campaigning on the streets, on housing estates, seeking allies from all forces that are prepared to fight in the interests of those directly affected. It will be a fight which will meet official trade union resistance. It will be a fight against Labour and the capitalist system it fully supports.

The fight against poverty pay is the beginning of the fight to rebuild a fighting working class movement in Britain. The RCG calls on all socialists and communists to take the side of those fighting back whether or not they have the support of their trade unions. The Hillingdon Hospital strikers, the Liverpool dockers, Nigel Cook and others before them have shown that courage and determination to take the movement forward – we must join them to build that coalition of forces that will put an end to poverty pay and the capitalist system that demands and imposes it.

* See this issue of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* p16 and the previous two issues.

Jis for Judi Bari (1949-1997): Bari was an EarthFirst! (EF!) activist in the US involved in the struggle against the devastation of the Pacific forests. She brought her background as a labour organiser to the environmental struggle, arguing against methods such as tree-spiking that could injure timber and mill workers. She consistently steered the EF! work against the larger timber corporations, and worked to build alliances between timber workers and environmentalists. Her success brought her up against the FBI, under Richard Held. Held also headed FBI operations to destroy the Black Panther Party and American Indian Movement under COINTELPRO in the 1960s and '70s. Over a decade after that programme was officially closed, counterfeit EF! press releases began to appear in Mendocino County, where Bari was organising. The press releases advocated violence against timber workers. Soon disruptors began attending EF! meetings, and the activists were smeared as 'eco-terrorists'. In August 1990 in an incident reminiscent of the Silkwood case, Bari's car was rammed from behind by a log truck. It was investigated as nothing more than a traffic accident. Death threats began arriving, and then, on 24 May 1990, a bomb exploded under her driving seat. The blast smashed her pelvis in ten places, fractured her spine and caused extensive injury, but she survived. Police and FBI were quickly on the scene, and within three hours arrested her and her comrade, Daryl Cherney. The press were told that the two were the only suspects – injured by the accidental explosion of a bomb they were transporting. The story was kept going for weeks by a series of FBI and police statements claiming to have found incriminating evidence. FBI agents later testified that no such evidence had been found. Bari spent the last seven years of her life in pain, but refused to stop fighting and together with Cherney filed a lawsuit against the FBI, as well as continuing to mobilise against the lumber companies. 'They bombed the wrong end of me!'. In March this year she died – The Mendocino campaign, and the lawsuit, continue.

EMERGENCY NEWS

Jakarta and Java: as we go to press, up to 70 million people are engulfed in one of the worst human-created environmental catastrophes yet witnessed. Satellite pictures show that uncontrollable fires are burning across a hundred square miles of south-east Asia. The fires, which were started deliberately to prepare ground for producing palm oil, have now spread to a million hectares of deep peatlands. They could well burn underground for decades. The burning forests used to be among the most biologically rich ecosystems on Earth. The fog caused has engulfed the region. Hundreds have died in the fog, thousands are being treated for related illnesses, and 234 people were killed when an Indonesian airliner plunged into a ravine. The choking millions affected have not seen the sun for weeks. Now, the same economic laws that deforested the area originally have pushed up the price of surgical masks, so only the elite who caused the crisis can afford a way to ignore it. Last year the UK imported 201,650 cubic meters of tropical timbers from Indonesia.

Steve Byrne

Southall train crash: Profits before safety



ROBERT CLOUGH

The Southall train crash on Friday 19 September was a graphic indication of the continuing deterioration of the railway system over the last twenty years, a process that is now accelerating following privatisation. Seven people died and 160 were injured as a Swansea to Paddington express ploughed into a goods train which was crossing its path.

The immediate question everyone asked was about the state of the signalling equipment on the line. Within 24 hours there were more questions about the Automatic Train Protection

(ATP) equipment that was supposed to be functioning on all high-speed trains on the Great Western routes. Three days later, it was revealed that the ATP equipment was not functioning in the leading car, and that the driver had reported this on arrival at Swansea on the outward leg of the journey. The inquiry into the Clapham rail disaster in 1988, when 35 people were killed, had strongly recommended the installation of ATP in all British trains in a ten-year programme. But as the costs escalated to £1 billion, so the scheme was quickly abandoned. In the end, Great Western Trains were one of only two companies piloting the use of

the system, and then only in a fitful manner. Thus, although the driver reported the fault, the regulations did not require the train to be withdrawn from service, since Swansea is not a recognised repair depot.

Media attention quickly moved onto the role of the driver. TV reports on the Friday evening claimed that the driver had been arrested and questioned 'in connection with manslaughter charges'. This was a complete fabrication. The driver had voluntarily gone to a police station and passed both drink and drug tests, to be released shortly before midnight. By the next day, however, newspaper reports were leading with headlines such as 'Fatal rail crash driver held'. The following week, *The Sun* really got going, with an 'exposé' of the driver, whom they described as an 'ageing hippy', and inviting their readers to ring if they knew anything more about him. This, of course, was in the week in which the press had agreed to tighten up privacy regulations following Princess Diana's death. One rule for the royals, another for the workers.

The Sun claimed that the driver had been bending over to pack his hold-all and had missed three warning signals just before the accident. This is a physical impossibility: he would have had to release the 'dead man's handle' to do this, which would have brought the train to a halt.

The fact is that cuts in safety investment caused the crash, and will cause more in the future. ■

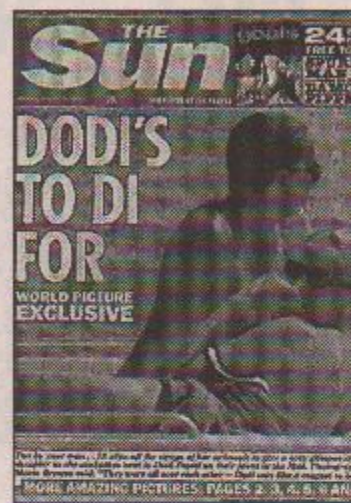
Death of a princess

CAROL BRICKLEY

The 1997 silly season reached its apogee on 31 August with the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in a car accident. She was killed with her lover, 'play-boy' Dodi Al Fayed, after a summer of cavorting around the Mediterranean. They died, as they had lived, in the fast lane; another statistic in the slaughter that is routine on Europe's roads - even rich princesses ultimately come to dust. What followed turned a sad statistic into a grotesque pantomime.

Already titillated by the prospect of a spectacular engagement of a future King's mother(!) to an Arab(!), the media went into paroxysms at their even more spectacular and tasty deaths. They licked their respective lips: television and radio schedules were swept aside to be replaced by minute-by-minute tosh; newspapers devoted entire issues to every last morsel of gossip and mawkish ceremony; videos and books went into instant production - the Nation would MOURN whether it liked it or not. All news is good news under capitalism: there was lots of money to be made and lots of agendas to pursue.

The Deaths looked almost convenient: the 'engagement' would have been an embarrassment for the Royals; Prince Charles could do without the popularity of his ex-wife and



her constant upstaging of his faint attempts to win favour with his subjects. A Dead Diana could be sanctified and rehabilitated into the Royal Family for the good of their reputations and at little cost: a live broadcast from the Queen; a walk down the Mall behind the coffin; a few flags at half-mast - peanuts. The bulk of her £40 million fortune, in large part the pay off for divorcing Charles, would return to the Royal coffers and, above all, Diana, the pain-in-the-neck, would be Dead.

The funeral cost the taxpayer £6 million - 'well worth it', said Tony Blair, who would spit blood rather than splash out for the pensioners or the NHS. And it was well worth it for him. In this bizarre neo-Tory nation, the death of a 'Young, Good and Beautiful Princess' is a wonderful photo-opportunity: the trembling lip, the welling tears, the halting tribute. It is calculated to be a good substitute for political policy. The NHS may be in ruins, education may be a disaster, free higher education may be at an end for the working class, millions may live in grinding poverty, but never mind the quality, feel the sentiment. It was all of a piece with the Scottish and Welsh referenda on devolution - the politics of window-dressing.

And millions of people did mourn Diana's death. Millions believed that she cared; that she devoted her life to charity and educating her sons to be 'ordinary'. Millions embraced the myth in the absence of any hope

Susan Davidson

Education notes

Poverty decides

'If there is increased revenue from the economy as a whole in the years ahead, then nursery education, standards in the 3Rs and tackling inequities in primary and secondary schools in our most deprived areas must have the first call on resources'. (David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, September 1997)

We should ask what Blunkett means by 'our most deprived areas'. The words are a useful soundbite for the minister, but a terrible reality for millions of people. These are the old 'inner city' areas of crumbling homes, schools, medical facilities and low-paid labour, vast housing estates where unemployment is the norm, or rural areas where services are disappearing and the only work is servicing the rich.

Blunkett and New Labour do know about what they coyly call 'inequity', their word for inequality, injustice, economic cruelty and privilege. The minister himself states that 80% of the children of professionals go to university, compared to 17% or fewer from low-income families. But they are interested only in how to contain and control working class children, not in carrying out a class struggle on their behalf. Hence New Labour's education policies have nothing to do with socialism, or any form of democracy whatever. (See FRFI 138 'Labour education means listen and obey'.)

The Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics has just published

a study which argues that: 'Over the long run, the most powerful educational policy is one which tackles child poverty, rather than any modest interventions in schooling'. The government's key educational initiatives, including improving pre-school education, reducing class sizes, introducing new teaching methods and regulating homework strategies are attacked as irrelevant to the totality of problems suffered by the poorest in this society. 'What schools can do will generally be overwhelmed by the social and economic background', the report states.

The report also shows that in a capitalist society, improved education leads to improved living standards for the individual, not for the nation as a whole. There is no doubt that earning power improves for those who gain higher qualifications. But the tax system and employment patterns of British society, carefully preserved by the Labour government, also reinforce these inequalities. In the words of the report, 'individuals, not nations, are made richer from improved educational standards'.

Truancy - criminality and punishment

Britain continues to be a rigidly class divided society and the education system mirrors it. It is only during periods of economic expansion of a particular kind that a new layer of the working class is provided with the educational opportunities needed by the employers and can 'improve' themselves. This was the function of the compre-

hensive schools at their best. Now, however, when 'flexible' working conditions and unskilled jobs are the norm, there is a return to separate, poorly-resourced schooling for the working class which has no future prospects under capitalism, and whose labour is required only on an unskilled, flexible basis.

Young people know this, and they fight back in their own way - they walk out of school. The Labour government really cares about the increasing rate of truancy only because 65% of school-age offenders sentenced in court have been excluded from school or were persistent truants, and its solution is to lash out at parents. Laws are on the way to fine or even gaol parents if they do not: i) impose a 'curfew' on their children, keeping them off the street after 9pm; ii) ensure that they attend school; iii) undergo 'corrective' training by probation officers, social workers and police for up to three months. This, then, is the Labour government's only response to the sufferings of the poor - punishment.

Hackney - no piss-up in a brewery

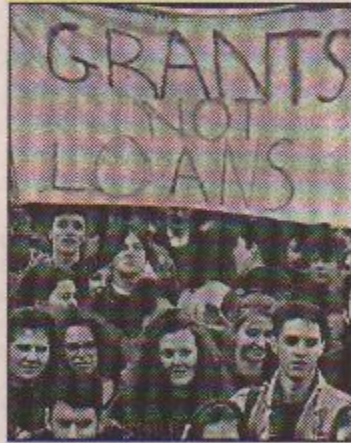
Hackney Local Education Authority could not organise one of these, let alone a decent education for its 10,000 school-aged children. Labour may be called a 'broad church' but in Hackney its members are narrowly self-interested - a caricature of the British left as a whole. The borough is one of the poorest areas in western Europe and has the highest rate of unemployment in London. Census figures for 1993 show that a third of households had a gross income of under £5,000. Two thirds of

pupils take free school meals and many speak no English when they start school. The education system is imploding. For example, many children have not been assigned to new secondary schools this term. A government inspection team has moved in, but it will take millions of pounds to achieve anything decent and if the effect is only to provide what goes on in the neighbouring boroughs of Islington and Haringey, then watch out for that spiral of truancy and parents in prison.

More debt for students

LEO MAXIM

In August the Labour government announced the introduction of university tuition fees, forcing students to pay £1,000 per year for their undergraduate education together with the complete abolition of maintenance grants. This is a direct attack on free and universal education, and demonstrates the Labour Party's contempt for the working class. Higher education will become the exclusive preserve of the rich or those who are not put off by the prospect of massive debt. Students already leave college with an average debt of £6,000 as a result of cuts to maintenance grants. Whilst poorer students will pay reduced tuition fees, the new system will mean that they will face debts of £12,000 and more by the time they graduate. Tuition fees will not only increase the inequality of access to higher education,



but will create a two-tier system with the most famous and well-funded universities charging more than other institutions. For working class students the best universities will be beyond their means.

The National Union of Students gave up protecting student grants more than two years ago, but said they opposed tuition fees. Surprise, surprise, with the National Organisation of Labour Students in charge of

that their own lives will really change, or that they can change things for themselves. That's what Fairy Princesses are for, to wave wands. In your dreams!

The reality is very different. There are very good reasons why the Charity Industry is booming: it is a substitute for really caring and changing the world. Charity keeps everyone in their place. The middle classes get well paid jobs doling out pittances to the working class. They have always loved their role as Poor Law Guardians. Much equipment for the NHS is now reliant on Charity, not on whether it is needed. Shortly the government will be dispensing Charity to a few working class children to fund their university education. What used to be rights have become discretionary payments - well-paid middle class patrons will decide if you deserve it or not (mostly not). That is Charity.

Diana spent a few weeks a year visiting the sick, travelling the world and troling at Charity functions in glam frocks. It made her feel good and it brought in the money. The rest of the year was spent jet-setting while her children were educated for their future lives as parasites, not among 'ordinary folk', but amongst the rich and privileged. This is what the ruling class calls saintliness.

We are still only a few weeks into the post-Diana era, and many are still manoeuvring to take advantage of her absence. Earl Spencer is honing his skills as Keeper of the Diana Myth - protecting his nephews from the cold protocol of Royal privilege, meanwhile abandoning his own wife and children for a series of girlfriends and selling his story to *Hello!* magazine. He has abandoned his ancestral pile in Northamptonshire (soon to be a Diana Theme Park) in favour of a laager in Cape Town, South Africa where land and dispossessed black domestics come cheap. A super role-model for rich kids!

And auditions are still open for the main Job - Charity Queen. Have you noticed Cherie Blair's recent penchant for off-the-shoulder outfits, diamond earrings, pearl-chokers and charitable concerns? May they all rot!

the NUS, and the Presidency of the NUS being a step up the ladder to the Parliamentary gravy train (four ex-Presidents are now MPs) the NUS is now busy defusing any opposition to the government's latest attacks on working class students.

The NUS has planned a national demonstration on 1 November to protest against tuition fees, but Douglas Trainer, NUS President, has already aired the possibility of compromise as long as fees are held until 1999.

Despite their pre-election platform of 'education, education, education', the Labour Party has refused to put any more money into the education system. They will be even more ruthless than the Tories in forcing education to follow the dictates of buying and selling education - market capitalism.

As a student myself, who has just completed a university course, I know the cost of full-time education. Already I have a £4,700 debt! How much more impossible for the next generation will the Labour Party make it?

The Irish 'peace process'

BOB SHEPHERD

The declaration of the IRA's ceasefire on 20 July and the invitation to Sinn Fein to join the 'peace talks' has led to the inevitable, dishonest manoeuvring of the Unionist parties over whether they will or will not speak to Sinn Fein at the negotiating table. This Unionist farce over whether to sit down with 'the men of violence' was played out while the British army, RUC and loyalist terror gangs carried out business as usual.

On 27 July, three days after he went missing, 16-year-old James Morgan's mutilated body was found at the bottom of a water-filled animal carcass pit in Clough, South Down. He was killed because he was a Catholic; the local community named the LVF as the killers.

In the Lower Ormeau area of Belfast during the local community festival, 200 drunken loyalist bandmen attacked local residents on the evening of 26 July assisted by the RUC and British soldiers from the Royal Irish Regiment.

On 28 July, a loyalist mob

attacked homes in the White-well area of north Belfast. When nationalist residents came out to defend their homes, the RUC moved in, firing plastic bullets.

On 2 August, a nationalist family living in the Waterside district was attacked by petrol bombers. Sinn Fein stated that there is a concerted campaign against Catholics in the Waterside area.

The following day, Nationalists demonstrating against a planned Orange march in Newtonbutler were attacked by the RUC. Six people were taken to hospital, five with head injuries.

Between 11 and 15 August, the British army engaged in a massive reinforcement of border lookout posts in South Armagh. The Faughill Mountain base, which overlooks the main Dublin to Belfast road, has been extended.

At the annual nationalist band parade in Kilkeel, Co Down on 15 August, the RUC attacked watching Nationalists. On 30 August, the RUC forced nationalist protesters off the streets in Newry to allow the Orange Royal Black Preceptory



The aftermath of a car bomb explosion in Armagh on 16 September

to march through the town.

On 9 September Sinn Fein entered Stormont and took their seats at the negotiating table. Gerry Adams affirmed the Mitchell Principles which commits Sinn Fein to democratic politics, opposes the use of violence and agrees to parallel talks on the decommissioning of weapons. The loyalist parties stayed away. On 11 September, in an interview in Sinn Fein's newspaper *Republican News*, a spokesperson for the IRA stated that 'the IRA would have problems with sections of the Mitchell Principles' and added, 'I don't think anyone has ever realistically expected us to agree to decommissioning this

side of a political settlement... decommissioning on our part would be tantamount to surrender.' But as the IRA's spokesperson pointed out, 'the IRA is not a participant in these talks.'

On 22 September the Ulster Unionist Party, led by David Trimble, sat down at the negotiating table with Sinn Fein. Although Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party and the UK Unionist Party are boycotting the talks, the Ulster Unionists will remain in the talks process, determined to defend the Union and the sectarian statelet of the north of Ireland.

For the nationalist working class, the talks will mean nothing

as long as British troops remain on the streets, POWs remain in prison and loyalist gangs, in collusion with the RUC, attack nationalist homes.

Although Sinn Fein has stated they will be putting forward a republican agenda at the talks calling for a united Ireland, any agreement reached must be approved, firstly, by 75 per cent of those involved in the talks and, secondly, by a majority of the British parliament. Martin McGuinness, quoted in the Irish *Sunday Tribune*, said that 'a united Ireland would not emerge from the current all-party negotiations on future constitutional and political structures for the north.'

The northern Irish statelet is based on discrimination and sectarianism. A strategy based on attempting to democratise it will fail. The statement by the IRA that it will not decommission any weapons this side of a political settlement is in part a recognition of that political reality.

The car bomb detonated outside the RUC station in Market-hill, Armagh on 16 September, and claimed by the Continuity Army Council IRA, points to the fact that there is a sizeable trend within the nationalist community who are opposed to the present strategy of Sinn Fein.

Communists and socialists in Britain continue to demand the release of all Irish POWs and call for troops out now!

Pensioners notes

RENE WALLER

Having helped get rid of the Tories, we still have not secured any firm promise to bring pensions into line with the increase in the cost of living and pensioners have not yet really come to terms with the urgent need to campaign vigorously for our demands. But the big turnout on the demonstration on 24 September showed that pensioners are angry at the excuses and delays. We want action now.

Lewisham pensioners have had an indoor rally and discussion, again paying tribute to the inspiring example given by Les Stannard's life. We know he would have backed our continued fight for justice. The best way to pay tribute is to continue to fight, and I hope that, even though winter weather makes it difficult, that's what we'll do.

Our fight is not just for today's pensioners. We all get old, if we survive at all. We need to be able to face the future with confidence. So let's not apologise if we're still around but try and ensure lack of cash doesn't prevent us making the contribution we still could.



Tory-free Scotland not enough

MICHAEL MACGREGOR

Prior to the general election, we argued that its outcome would make no difference to the plight of the poorest sections of the working class. It was useless and dishonest to call on Labour councils in Scotland not to do the Tories' dirty work. As we learn every day, Labour is quite capable of carrying out its own dirty work! None of the Scottish left - the Scottish Socialist Alliance or the Socialist Workers Party - were prepared even to heckle the big union leaders and Labour Party figures touting for Labour votes at a Scottish TUC protest against council cuts in March. Now that Labour has secured its victory at Westminster, the real agenda is emerging for all to see. Two days before the referendum on Scottish devolution on 12 September, Jim Stevens, an arch-Blairite in the Scottish Labour Party Executive stated that 'irrespective of whether there is devolution, Scottish public expenditure is expected to contract by 8% in real terms...cuts are coming whether there is devolution or not.'

Stevens' remarks would have been spectacularly mistimed had the middle-class media not ignored them, desperate as they were for a 'Yes, Yes' result - Yes

for a Scottish parliament, Yes for giving it tax-raising powers. For the same reason, there was little coverage of the massive corruption in Labour Renfrewshire, involving the disappearance of £1.6m amidst allegations of drug profits laundering, racketeering and gangsterism. Despite the efforts of every major Scottish paper, which devoted issue after issue to support for a 'Yes, Yes' vote, the overall turnout at 60% was lower than in the 1979 referendum, whilst in Glasgow, Scotland's biggest council house concentration, only 50% voted. The working class stayed at home.

Within days, Glasgow learned it would lose one in five of its schools. As a sop to the middle class, Labour offered a £1m subsidy for free bus travel in the city so that their children could be sent to the school of their choice. Meanwhile, nine members of Glasgow City Council have been suspended by the Labour Party, including the Lord Provost Pat Lally; they are alleged to have offered trips abroad for votes.

What chance that the Edinburgh parliament will be any different from that at Westminster, a sorting office for plain brown envelopes, and a jobs agency for drunks, gangsters, careerists, mistresses, family friends or journalists? ■

United States: UPS strike victory

DAVID HOWARTH

Workers have defeated the largest US delivery company, United Parcel Services (UPS), after a two-week strike in August. UPS, which accounts for 80% of parcel delivery in the US, was brought to a virtual standstill. This victory marks a dramatic turnaround in the militancy of US workers after decades of reactionary, protectionist and corrupt union practices, and falling living standards.

185,000 members of the Teamsters union, the largest union affiliated to AFL-CIO (the US trade union federation), UPS drivers, loaders and sorters, voted overwhelmingly to reject the proposed contract renewal from UPS and by 95% in favour of strike action. The union demanded better pay for part-time workers, more full-time workers, improved health and safety conditions, and an end to UPS' plans to pull out of the Teamsters pension plan in favour of a company scheme.

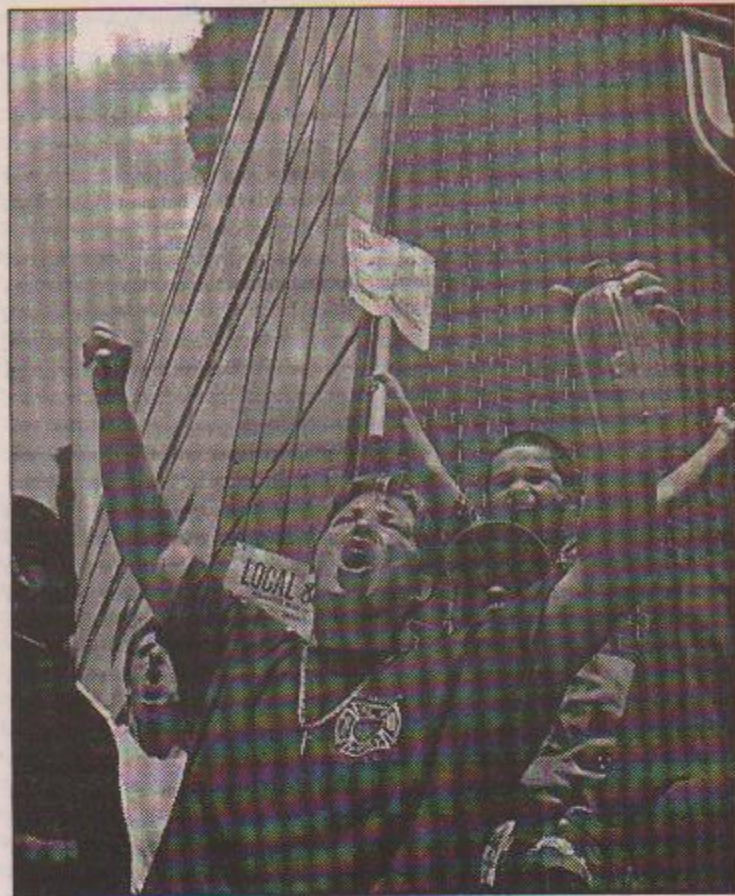
Of the Teamsters working for UPS, 100,000 work part-time (mainly women and ethnic minorities) for whom the starting wages had been frozen at \$8 per hour since 1982. UPS have created 46,000 jobs since 1993, 83% of which have been part-time. With annual profits at \$1 billion last year it pays to deny workers full-time rights. The union says more than 10,000 part-timers work 35 hours or more a week!

UPS threatened job losses if the strike went ahead and took out full-page advertisements attacking the strikers. They tried to use workfare workers, and urged all their customers to pressure Clinton into using the anti-union Taft-Hartley Act and

impose a mediation board. The Taft-Hartley Act can be used by the president to stop strikes by declaring the action a threat to national health and safety. Clinton preferred to rely on an alliance of UPS, Wall Street, the Federal Reserve Bank, the media and state forces (police and judiciary) to defeat the strike. Judges in several states imposed injunctions limiting the number of pickets - in some cases to as low as three. Police attacked and arrested picketers, whilst turning a blind eye to life-threatening activities of the UPS managers and scabs.

The strikers not only had overwhelming unity amongst themselves, they also received massive support and solidarity. CNN reported opinion polls showing 55 per cent support for the strike as opposed to 27 per cent for UPS. Support was taken to the picket lines by unions and community groups and individuals, including Federal Express workers - themselves involved in a unionisation campaign and the postal workers union who refused a request by the US postal service to hire emergency temporary workers. Pilots who fly for UPS refused to cross picket lines. UPS cancelled their hotel rooms leaving nearly 300 stranded outside the US. Their union paid for the rooms until UPS agreed to fly them home. The AFL-CIO promised \$10 million a week to keep the Teamsters' strike fund afloat as long as necessary. Workfairness, a New York organisation of workfare workers, supported the strike, encouraging workfare employees not to cross the picket lines.

With this unity the strikers won. After 20 years of continual decline in living conditions for large sections of the US working



class, the workers are saying enough is enough. With new union leadership, there are massive recruitment drives often led by the rank and file, to organise the unorganised workers - often the lowest paid, part-timers, on temporary contracts, those forced into casual work etc. Showing workers that militant united action can win should boost their attempts.

Compare this to the leadership of the TUC who want to cosy up to the CBI and form a partnership with industry. Or to the action of TGWU leader, Bill Morris, who, when proposing a motion at the TUC conference concerning the Magnet workers and others on strike, failed to

even mention the Liverpool dockers, on strike for two years. Or to Unison's sabotage of the struggle of the Hillingdon workers. Compare it to the SWP's tailing of the union leadership and backing away from these two struggles.

The message of socialists in the US is that the working class must get organised before the next downturn and recession, or once more it will be the working class who pays for the restoration of capitalist profits. All socialists, trade unionists and progressives have to organise the unorganised - the low-paid, the part-timers, casual labour and the unemployed - and start the fight back. ■



Palestine: US-Zionist 'intimidation and terror'

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

Two Palestinian suicide bombings in Jerusalem in July and September again brought the ill-named Middle East 'peace process' to a standstill. So, in September, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited the region to try and put the process 'back on the tracks'. Her first act was to denounce the Palestinians. 'There is no moral equivalent,' she pontificated, 'between killing people and building houses'. 'It is simply not possible,' she added, 'to address political issues seriously in a climate of intimidation and terror'.

What staggering moral corruption. 'Building houses!' Albright is referring to Israeli settlements built, in defiance of international law and UN resolutions, on confiscated and colonised Palestinian land. Indeed, since the Zionist conquest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, 70 per cent of Palestinian land has been confiscated. Since the 'peace process', the number of Israeli settlers has increased by 50 per

cent. Today nearly 320,000 armed Zionists occupy 130 settlements dotted around the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Strategically placed, they have reduced the major Palestinian population centres to isolated clusters dependent entirely on Israeli authority. Simultaneously, East Jerusalem is being ethnically cleansed and Palestinians have been reduced to a minority where they were once the overwhelming majority.

Resistance to this destruction of Palestine is met with murder, imprisonment, torture, collective punishment, the destruction of family homes and of orchards and fields. In an obscene twist, the colonial administration is seeking to introduce legislation to prevent Palestinians injured by Israeli soldiers from seeking compensation! Anyone else so injured will retain the right to seek redress through the courts.

Whilst the colonisation of Palestine continues unabated, Israel has failed to fulfil even the most elementary of its 'peace process' commitments. Planned troop withdrawals have not taken place, political

prisoners have not been released. Israel has blockaded the Palestinian territories, refused to implement safe passages between the West Bank and Gaza, and blocked the development of a Palestinian port and airport. And to top it all, the two per cent of Palestinian territory nominally controlled by the Palestinian Administration is encircled by 100,000 Israeli soldiers.

Even though the suicide bombings have been organised and carried out in areas directly controlled by Israel, Israel has retaliated by imposing total blockades and curfews on the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians cannot travel to work in Israel and are also blocked from travelling between Gaza and the West Bank and within the West Bank. The effect has been devastating. Trade has slumped as goods cannot be moved. With farmers prevented from travelling to their fields, the World Bank warned that 'crops requiring harvesting are rotting.' It also reported that for every full day of border closures, Palestinians lose \$1.32m. From 31 July to 28 August they lost some

\$31.1m. With 30% unemployment and many families dependent on work in Israel, these measures have provoked hunger.

Who then are the real authors of Albright's 'climate of intimidation and terror'? Certainly not the Palestinian people. It is in fact the US, without whose \$3.4bn annual subsidy the racist Israeli state would be unable to pursue its colonial ambitions in Palestine. But then of what weight is the suffering of the Palestinian people compared to the US Administration's alliance with Israel for the purpose of securing capitalist control of the region's oil reserves and profits? What does a small people count when, in alliance with Israel and Turkey, the US prepares to stretch into oil- and gas-rich Central Asia? What does human suffering count for when there is the prospect of billions of dollars of profit?

The British media's ritual condemnation of 'Islamic fanaticism', served up with instant moral outrage, concealed the forces behind developments in Palestine. The suicide bombers, manipulated as they may be by Islamic fundamentalists, nevertheless express the profound desperation of a people living through the process of their own annihilation. For them the 'peace process', sponsored by the US and Europe, is a weapon in the armoury of the violently expansionist Israeli machine. With the domination of Palestinian politics by Arafat and his corrupt clique and the temporary demise of progressive and democratic politics internationally, it is hardly surprising that Palestinian youth faced with overwhelming international and regional indifference to their fate will resort to desperate acts. The death of innocent civilians is tragic. But the source of the tragedy is not the Palestinian bomber but the US-backed Israeli machine, relentlessly working to bring about a 'Greater Israel' at the expense of the Palestinian people. ■

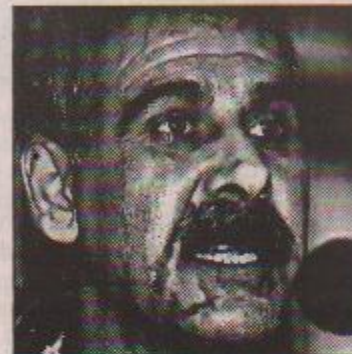
Labour deports Kani Yilmaz

TREVOR RAYNE

Home Secretary Jack Straw extradited the European representative of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Kani Yilmaz, to Germany on 19 August. Kani Yilmaz was arrested outside the Houses of Parliament on 26 October 1994 while on his way to address parliamentarians on a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. He was there at the request of the parliamentarians. For most of the time after his arrest he was held in Belmarsh Prison.

In accepting the German extradition order, Straw recognised crimes that Kani Yilmaz is accused of in Germany as having counterparts in English law: arson, incitement to riot, conspiracy to cause an affray, kidnapping etc. Of course, the only crime that Kani Yilmaz has committed is to be a Kurd and a member of the PKK. In extraditing Kani Yilmaz the Labour government has demonstrated its willingness to back the Turkish state's war effort against the Kurds.

Before his extradition Kani Yilmaz thanked those who had campaigned for him in Britain. He said, 'Turkey is quite content to be criticised over human rights violations as long as trade continues and it can maintain the level of its brutal war against the Kurdish people.' Between 1992 and 1996 Turkey was the second biggest spender on conventional weapons in the world. Its main suppliers are the USA, Germany, Britain and France, in that order. In February this year, British weapons producer Vickers bid to supply 800 battle tanks to Turkey. If successful it will be the biggest



order ever received by Britain for armoured vehicles. In this context no word has emanated from Foreign Secretary Cook on 'ethics' or 'not permitting the sale of arms to regimes that might use them for internal repression or international aggression'.

No word either in the British mainstream press on the Turkish Armed Forces invasion, launched on 25 September, of Northern Iraq (South Kurdistan) accompanied by the bombing of refugee camps. The Turkish state believes it can get away with anything. One incident illustrates this: at the beginning of September Turkish authorities banned delegates on the Peace Train to Diyarbakir from giving a press conference in an Istanbul hotel. Police attacked the hotel, beating up and detaining delegates and observers, among whom was the British vice-consul. Those who ask themselves why no effort has been made in Europe to find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue need look no further than the arms sales, and the response given to Lord Rea by a Labour government representative when asked if British military training was given to the Turkish armed forces: 'it is normal practice between NATO nations' (*Hansard*). ■

Black Panther freed: 'We are still at war'

JACK MELLOR

After 27 years in Californian prisons, Black Panther leader Geronimo Ji Jaga was released on appeal on \$25,000 bail on 10 June. He awaits the result of a counter-appeal by the state attorney. As head of the Los Angeles branch of the Black Panther Party, he was falsely imprisoned for the murder of Caroline Olsen and wounding her husband in December 1968. At the public meeting held in his honour and in support of Mumia Abu Jamal (see FRFI 138) the day after his release, he said 'Everyone knew that I didn't commit the murder'. At the time of the murder he was at a meeting in Oakland 600km away, which the FBI had bugged, but later said they had 'lost' the recording.

When he was arrested he was on the list of black nationalists considered the main targets for 'neutralisation'. Over 100,000 pages of information on Ji Jaga held by the FBI show he was a key target of the 'Cointelpro' programme aimed at destroying the Black Panthers in the 1960s and early '70s. Ji Jaga had been a decorated soldier in Vietnam before join-

ing the Black Panthers. The FBI witness (an ex-deputy sheriff of Los Angeles who infiltrated the BPP and stated that Ji Jaga admitted the murder) was being paid for information for over two years before the trial by the district attorney's office and the Los Angeles police department!

Ji Jaga has spent eight years in solitary confinement - longer than any other US prisoner. This included 18 months on death row when the state spoke of him being involved in Patricia Hearst's 'kidnapping': he didn't even know who she was. The state offered him \$1 million and a passport to Algeria if he would compromise Tom Hayden, a left liberal in the Democratic Party who opposed the Vietnam War. Conditional liberty was refused 16 times and in 1987 a district attorney declared he would never be freed because 'he continues to be a revolutionary'.

On his release, Ji Jaga stated: 'Our lives are not important, the liberation of our people is. It is not the individual but the principle that counts. For this we accept all we can do as individuals, as soldiers. Because we are fighting a class enemy which killed us, threw us in prison,

drove us to clandestinity and exile, we are well prepared'.

The brothers in prison want him to get the US Congress to launch an investigation into Cointelpro - like that on Waco. 'If I had been able to do this from prison, we would all have been out years ago. The state could not escape the proof I offered. They played dirty.'

Ji Jaga, as a Black Nationalist, has also called for a UN-supervised plebiscite to decide if Afro-Americans should have the status of an independent nation. 'We are the second largest African nation, after Nigeria, in the world. Yet we don't govern ourselves. We have the means, we have doctors, scientists, engineers, all that a nation needs, but keep calling Bill Clinton our leader. I don't understand it'. Ji Jaga argues that compensation for 400 years of slavery would provide a starting point for a new nation. 'If for any reason the indemnities are not conceded, we will initiate another phase in the armed struggle that is legitimate and our right.' (Quoted in *El Pais*, 29 July 1997)

The new thrust Ji Jaga is giving to the revolutionary challenge to US imperialism should extend the discussion of the role of Afro-Americans in the working class's struggle against the evil system of rule by a few thousand private property owners. ■

Daily life in Havana

TANIA JACKSON

As Cuba's tourist industry grows, a vital source of hard currency in the face of the US blockade, it is hard to escape the effects of the dollar economy.

Visitors to Havana are immediately confronted with people touting cigars, taxis, meals and sex. The dollar has a very powerful pull. With the average wage equivalent to about \$10 a month, selling on the street can seem an attractive alternative to working. This is the price of the economic reforms that Cuba has been forced to undertake to survive the Special Period.

In Havana, as Fidel Castro has noted, people don't want to be construction workers, police officers or teachers; Havana DJs will only work for dollars - those working in the youth discos have been brought in from other provinces. Many employees in joint ventures with foreign capital receive some of their wages in dollars. Tourism workers have access to dollars through tips. People can now, if they have a licence, pay taxes and employ only themselves or family members, legally-run

restaurants, rent private rooms to tourists and operate taxis or long-distance transport.

Castro recently referred to the fact that 'Various factors have led to the need for certain reforms, openings and other activities that did not exist before in the country, and have created injustices and inequalities, and they do not contribute to the formation of a socialist and communist consciousness.'

These inequalities are only too apparent in Havana. Most of the bars, and restaurants on the seafront in Vedado or Old Havana only sell drinks and food for dollars. Whole families feast in ice-cream parlours for the equivalent of two months' average salary. Other families have to spend an entire month's wages on soap and washing powder, imported items that are available in dollar shops but scarce in peso stores.

Cuba has been able, through its socialist revolution, to provide the basics: food, water supplies, housing, medical services, transport, electricity. But most are severely restricted. The majority of Cubans survive on their rations and what extras they can buy in the farmers'

markets or shops.

What is most remarkable is that, up to now, there doesn't appear to be resentment by the majority towards those on dollar incomes. Most will say 'What they spend in the dollar shops comes back to the state and provides for the education and health services' - the state-run dollar shops have deliberately inflated prices to capture some of the surplus wealth. Importantly, the richest individuals do not have power or influence in the country; they are not a class and they cannot defend their privileges. But over time, if Cuba remains isolated in the world and is not able to pull out of the Special Period, nepotism and corruption could develop.

The Cuban Communist Party and state leadership discuss these problems openly and critically: the Political Bureau's report to the 5th Plenum of the Communist Party, presented by Raul Castro in March and covered in FRFI 131, gives a frank appraisal of the situation. The overriding concern during the 5th Party Congress at the beginning of October will be how best to ensure Cuba's survival and recovery. During this process, it will deal with the dollar economy and combat inequality. The key to success is improving the efficiency of the economy and producing goods that are currently imported. ■

Black people in Britain

race and class

Black people in Britain - who lives where

The ethnic minority population is massively concentrated in the south east, particularly in Greater London: 51% of Caribbeans and African-Asians and 53% of Bangladeshis resident in Britain live in Greater London, compared to just 8% of the white population. The next highest concentration of most groups is in the West Midlands, with the exception of Pakistanis who, mainly due to employment in the textile and engineering industries, are concentrated in the north west, Yorkshire and Humber-side. Ten per cent of African-Asians in Britain live in the east Midlands (ie Leicester). Although such concentration would be expected to lessen over time, comparison of the 1981 and 1991 censuses shows the ethnic minority population is becoming more, not less, intensely concentrated in urban areas.

Work

The majority of Caribbean and Indian people living in Britain today either came as part of the post-war migration, when black people were deliberately encouraged to come here to do low-paid work in the NHS, transport, and manufacturing industry, or are the children of those who came here at that time. Low-paid jobs and racism remain prominent features of their employment despite discrimination being officially outlawed by race relations legislation. Controlled tests in 1968, 1977, 1982 and 1994 all produced the result that a third of employers discriminate against either Caribbeans or South Asians or both.

Different ethnic groups are still concentrated in particular areas of employment:

- one third of white, Caribbean, Pakistani, Indian and African-Asian men work in manufacturing industry, with Caribbean and Indian men disproportionately concentrated in engineering, including the motor industry, and Pakistanis in textiles;
- over half of Bangladeshi and a quarter of Chinese men work in hotels and catering;
- more than one in eight white, African-Asian and Indian men work in the financial sector.

In most groups surveyed, 30-40% of men were skilled manual workers or foremen and a very small proportion were unskilled manual workers. The most striking difference was in incidence of semi-skilled manual workers: over half the Bangladeshi men in employment were in semi-skilled manual work, compared to one in five Caribbeans, one in six Indians and one in ten whites, Chinese and African-Asians.

Average male weekly earnings for 1994 were £336 for Chinese and white men, £335 for African-Asians, £306 for Caribbeans, £285 for Indians, £227 for Pakistanis and £191 for Bangladeshis. This has changed since the PSI's last report, particularly regarding African-Asians, who in the 1970s averaged less income than Pakistanis; in 1982 they equalled Indians and 'now they seem to have caught up with whites'.

The explanation can only be a class one:

'As a group they were always highly qualified and were largely in the professions, administration and business in East Africa. After the period of being political refugees and rebuilding their livelihoods and establishing themselves in Britain, they seem to have made considerable progress in re-creating their prosperity.' (p114)

However, even African-Asians have not broken through the 'glass ceiling' into



Between 1988 and 1994/5 the number of racially-motivated attacks and threats reported to the police increased from 4,300 to 12,000; however there is overwhelming evidence that more than half such incidents are never reported and many which are reported are not recorded as racial. The 1991 British Crime Survey identified 130,000 racially motivated crimes against people originating from the Caribbean and South Asia and even this figure is certainly an underestimate.

It is in this context that the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) recently published its fourth report into living conditions and experiences of black people in this country. **Ethnic minorities in Britain - diversity and disadvantage** graphically demonstrates that racism still has a major impact on the lives of first, second and even third generation immigrants. However, not all ethnic groups are equally affected and to understand why, for example, African-Asians* and Chinese people now have income levels and educational qualifications on a par with or above the white population, while Bangladeshis live in the direst poverty experienced by any section of British society, it is necessary, as NICKI JAMESON shows, to understand not only race, but class as well.

the real bastions of power. Viewed as a whole, the top category of jobs, 'Professionals, managers and employers', appears to reveal parity between white and African-Asian men, and show Chinese men far in advance; however, when broken down into 'Professional workers' and 'Employers and managers' of small and large establishments, it is clear that big business is still the exclusive domain of white, upper middle class men.

The majority of women workers from all ethnic groups are in non-manual employment. However, a significant section of Pakistani and Indian full-time women workers are still employed in semi-skilled manual (ie factory) work. Only a tiny number of Bangladeshi women are in any type of full or part-time paid employment, with over 80% describing themselves as full-time mothers and housewives.

Average female full-time weekly earnings were predictably far lower than those of men and the scale of differentials for women is also far smaller although, apart from the relatively high income of Caribbean women and the relatively low income of white women, the order is similar: Chinese women averaged £287, Caribbean women £267, African-Asians £254, Indians £252, white women £244 and Pakistanis and Bangladeshis £181.

Employment and unemployment

The researchers found that the major determining factor in all matters concerning employment and unemployment was the movement of the economy as a whole:

'The changes in job levels for the minorities, no less than for the majority population, are above all a consequence of the continuing loss of jobs in manufacturing especially those that require low levels of skill, in favour of the service sector, which has seen a continuous growth in higher level jobs and lower level part-time work. It is this fundamental and continuing shift, together with the demographic shortages that have increased job opportunities for women and some minorities, that is the cause of the differential advantage and disadvantage experienced by the different minority groups.' (p149)

Unemployment among ethnic minorities is 'hypercyclical': when the economy is contracting, ethnic minority unemployment rises much faster, and

Households below half average income	White	Caribbean	Indian/African-Asian	Pakistani/Bangladeshi
Pensioners	50	67	68	N/A
Lone parents	70	70	80	78
All others	21	32	41	63

to a higher peak, than white unemployment; when it expands, ethnic minority unemployment falls at a higher rate than among white people. This reflects the movement into low-paid, casual jobs of a 'reserve army of labour'.

On the subject of youth employment, the survey concludes that although, 'It is a well-established fact of most labour markets that new entrants are more likely to experience unemployment', young people from the most disadvantaged ethnic minority groups do have consistently higher unemployment rates than the white population. The most striking feature is the extremely high unemployment rate of Caribbean men under 35 who have no qualifications - 61%. Having 'O' levels or the equivalent halves this rate, although 'A' levels or higher qualifications only lead to a further marginal improvement. This can only be explained by racist employment practices.

Education and health

The majority of immigrants who came to Britain aged 16+ had no qualifications or qualifications below 'O' level standard. The second generation are twice as qualified overall but the process is uneven. African-Asians and Indians have higher average qualifications than white people and the proportion of qualified Caribbeans has gone from 29 to 74%, with women doing particularly well at higher but non-degree level. However, among Bangladeshis and Pakistanis the change is tiny and the educational system appears to be drastically failing the Bangladeshi population.

This survey was the first in which the PSI investigated issues around health and their findings echo the rest of the report: whites, Chinese, African-Asians and Indians have the best health, followed by Caribbeans; the worst health is among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. The determining factor was irrefutably socio-economic: all groups had poorer health among the unemployed, followed by manual workers, followed by non-manual workers and poorer health among home-renters than among home-owners.

Household income and living standards

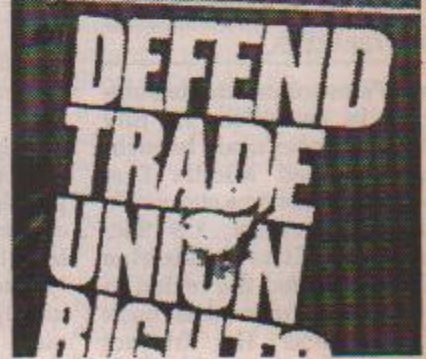
An analysis based on various indicators of living standards and household as opposed to individual income paints a less rosy picture of the lives of some ethnic groups whose earnings, education and health are on a par with or above those of white people and an even more bleak one of the lives of the most impoverished groups.

Average household income where nobody is in employment is £98 for white families, £80 for Caribbeans, £73 for Indians/African-Asians and £57 for Pakistanis/Bangladeshis. This is weighted to account for differing family sizes but includes pensioners, of whom there are a disproportionately large number in the white category, and lone parents, who likewise make up a large number of non-earning Caribbean households.

Of households where someone is in work one indication of low pay is whether Family Credit is claimed: 25% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi working families with children claim Family Credit, as opposed to just 5% of all other groups.

The extreme poverty of Pakistani and Bangladeshi families seems to have genuinely shocked the researchers: 'The author of this chapter has been analysing household incomes for more than 20 years. Pakistani and Bangladeshi are easily the poorest group he has ever encountered... More than four out of five Pakistani and Bangladeshi households fell below a benchmark which affected only a fifth of white pensioners. Name any group whose poverty causes national concern - pensioners, disabled people, one-parent families, the unemployed - Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were poorer.'

While the income of Chinese households was close to that of white ones, Caribbean, Indian and African-Asians were more likely to be in poverty and less likely to have relatively high family incomes. 'The size of this difference would look large if there were no Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the survey to make it seem small...the analysis suggests that some



of the optimism expressed about the progress of Indians and African-Asians may have been exaggerated. All minorities included in this survey, with the exception of people of Chinese origin, were disadvantaged with respect to white people, according to this measure.' (p180)

Divide and rule

There is definitely a far greater stratification along class lines among the different black groups in Britain than there was 20 or 30 years ago. As with previous generations of white immigrants (Jews and Irish people being the most obvious examples), class position prior to immigration has had a major effect.

Imperialism is key. Asians in Africa were used as a middle class layer to govern the African population on behalf of the British. In the 25 years since Asians were expelled from Uganda and came to Britain, they have largely regained that middle class status, but it is still the white British rulers who control business, finance and politics. The 'glass ceiling' is still intact.

At the other end of the spectrum, Bangladeshi and Pakistani people in Britain live in desperate poverty and a whole section of young Afro-Caribbean men is being shut out from almost any possibility of stable or meaningful employment.

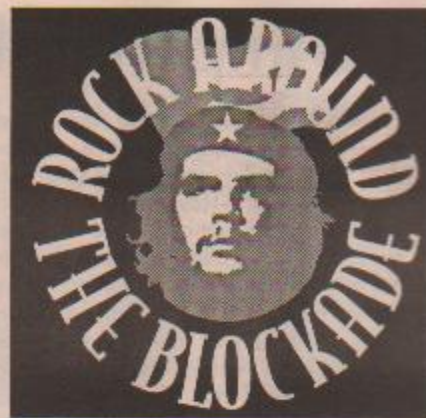
Divide and rule has worked extremely well for British governments for hundreds of years. Britain today is divided by race, divided by class and ruled by the same old rulers. It's time for a change!

■ **Ethnic minorities in Britain - diversity and disadvantage** is published by the Policy Studies Institute, 1997. Research based on Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities, 1994

* Until the late 1980s most surveys did not distinguish between different groups of people from the Asian sub-continent. Since then most reports have differentiated between Indians, on the one hand, and/or Pakistanis/Bangladeshis, on the other. The current PSI survey goes further by specifically dividing people previously classified as 'Indian' into those who came directly to Britain from India and those who were born, or whose parents or grandparents were born, in East Africa.

This article will be discussed by London FRFI Readers & Supporters Group on Wednesday 29 October, 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

THE LEGACY OF CHE GUEVARA



30 years ago this October, Ernesto Che Guevara was murdered by CIA-trained Bolivian soldiers after being arrested and tortured. After playing a leading role in the Cuban Revolution, both in the war of liberation and building socialism after 1959, he had travelled as a revolutionary first to Africa and then Bolivia, with the aim of carrying out in practice his call to build 'one, two, three and many Vietnams'. Che Guevara was a revolutionary fighter, an internationalist, and, first and last, a communist. His political and economic writings remain vital weapons in the hands of all socialists and continue to inspire those fighting against imperialism around the world today. His image continues to embody the triumph of Cuba's socialist revolution and each generation of Cuban schoolchildren pledges each morning 'We will be like Che!' Rock around the Blockade examined key aspects of Che's political legacy at a dayschool earlier this year and is holding a torchlit commemoration rally in London on 8 October. Our contingent on the Cuba Solidarity Campaign march on 18 October will be dedicated to Che's memory. (See page 14 for details of events). Below, TREVOR RAYNE examines Che's ideas on communism and, especially, the role of the Communist Party, and refutes ignorant and reactionary attacks on Che from sections of the British left. On page 10, DAVID YAFFE analyses vital aspects of Che's writings on economics and socialism.

Commandante Che Guevara

Anyone who visits Cuba cannot but recognise that here is a specially educated people. A socialist would recognise that here is an exceptionally politically conscious working class. It is this core of Cuban society tied to the Communist Party that is the central pillar of the Revolution and is the reason why it has survived. Che Guevara was essential to its construction.

Che Guevara was a communist who 'brought the ideas of Marxism-Leninism to their freshest, purest, most revolutionary expression'. (Fidel Castro) Che Guevara was a communist because he brought his mind, moral worth and his destiny to the service of humanity. That is why we remember him. His contribution to socialism will endure and multiply for as long as there are people willing to fight, dream and build - for as long as we live.

In Che's lifetime as today he was hated just as he was loved. Hated and loved because the world, reality, is divided between those that own, control and exploit and those that labour, possessing nothing but the hours they can sell. Che's purpose was 'to change reality', to help to build communist society.

Communism, Marxism-Leninism, is a guide to action. It provides an understanding of the conditions of our existence and the means by which the mass of humanity can solve the problems posed. At the core of Che's thought is the absolute necessity for humanity to take command of itself and begin to determine its destiny. Capitalism depends upon ignorance, upon the duped and the led. Communism depends upon consciousness, honesty and democracy for the mass. Central to the development of consciousness and hence progress in the alleviation of human suffering is the Communist Party: the vanguard.

Following the Cuban Revolution, Che Guevara had the experience of Cuba and the preceding revolutions of the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe from which to develop his conception of the Party. 'Our aspiration is for the party to become a mass party, but only when the masses have reached the level of development of the vanguard; that is, when they are educated for communism'. But this leaves in question how does a party become a mass party and how is it communist?

In Cuba and elsewhere Che had witnessed how the political apparatus had been seen as 'little by little becoming a peaceful and cosy bureaucracy... a springboard for promotions... cut off from the masses...', where members were 'lost in the bureaucratic labyrinth or in the temptations of power'. This was 'communism' in name only. Critically, a Communist Party must draw its ranks from the working class, the proletariat, and they must remain part of it; part of it in relation to their income, where they live and where they work; they must feel their experiences, interpret and relay them to the rest of the party and its leadership.

'For all of them (cadres), the common denominator is political awareness. This does not mean unconditional support for the principles of the Revolution, but rather reasoned support, great capacity for sacrifice and dialectical capacity for analysis.'

'It is dynamic in the sense that it is not a simple transmitter of slogans or demands, but rather a creator that will aid the development of the masses and the instruction of the leaders, serving as a point of contact between them... it transmits what emanates from the masses, and instils what the party teaches.'

It is not a communist organisation that sends directives and receives nothing in return. Unless there is a two-way flow, weaknesses in the party, the working class and the organisations and consciousness of society will go unidentified and spread. So what will distinguish the Communist from all other politically ambitious people the world over? Che was adamant on this. The transition to socialism was not pre-determined in some mechanistic fashion by the objective forces of history. Neither by a state plan nor democratic centralism, though they are necessary prerequisites, nor any other political and economic mechanism could the advance to socialism be assured. The transformation of humanity from being the objects of historical processes into their subjective shapers requires that we - the subject - transform ourselves into the new socialist human being. It is essential to educate the educator.

Che believed that example was necessary to people's education; that is the principle of emulation. Communist Party members do not select themselves, they are chosen by the people because they have demonstrated that they are worthy of responsibility.

'Whoever aspires to be a leader has to be able to face or, rather, expose himself to the verdict of the masses. He must be confident that he has been chosen or proposed as a leader because he is the best of the good - on account of his work, his spirit of self-sacrifice, and his constant sense of belonging to the vanguard in all the struggles the proletariat must carry on daily in order to create a socialist society.'

What Che preached, he practised. His willingness to sacrifice his life in battle is renowned, but he was willing to forgo even the slightest trappings of privilege accompanying his ministerial positions. Che refused to collect the ministerial salary that he was entitled to, receiving only a soldier's wage, and he both launched and vigorously joined in voluntary unpaid labour schemes.

'We must banish totally everything that means thinking that being elected a member of some organisation of the masses or the ruling party of the Revolution... permits a comrade to enjoy the slightest opportunity to get something more than the rest of the people. We refer, in other words, to the policy of rewarding excellence with material things, to rewarding with material



things the one who has shown greater conscientiousness and spirit of sacrifice.'

The conduct of the Party and its members is crucial to the advance of the working class as a whole. Whereas in the Soviet Union and the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe the cynicism of people towards the party functionaries, who often behaved as an elite enjoying material comforts not available to the majority of people, became profound, this was not the Communist Party of Che Guevara. People will inevitably have an interest in material things, but the point is to prevent that interest developing into a selfish, egotistical identification with material rewards.

'But precisely for that reason the function of the vanguard party is to raise the opposite banner as high as possible - the banner of interest in non-material things, the banner of non-material incentives, the banner of men who sacrifice and hope for nothing but recognition by their comrades.'

The continuing ability of the Cuban Revolution to endure against tremendous forces pitted against it is testimony to the ideas and practice of Che Guevara on the relation of the Party to the masses.

The foco question

Among those on the left who seek to diminish the significance of Che Guevara's contribution to Marxism none are so intent as the British Trotskyist organisations. For them he was a 'Stalinist', 'a petit bourgeois revolutionist' etc: cheap insults intended to stop people examining what Che said and did. In particular, they focus on a

supposed theory of the 'foco', that Che is said to have developed and followed, as proof that he was not a Marxist. This is achieved with the customary devices of selected quotations and deliberate neglect of the facts.

In *Socialism Today*, journal of the Socialist Party (formerly Militant) Tony Saunio elucidates, Che's 'ideas were confused and his understanding of Marxism superficial... The most important deficiency in his ideas was his lack of understanding about the decisive role of the industrial working class in overthrowing capitalism and building socialist society... (Che) never actively participated in the struggles of the working class and could not grasp its potential as a class... For Che, the movement in the cities was an auxiliary to the struggles of the peasantry, or more accurately, the struggle waged by the guerrilla "centre" with the support of the peasants.'

Thus we are presented with the notion of the guerrilla unit, the 'foco', substituting for the masses and the industrial working class and serving as a 'trigger' for the revolutionary movement. Proof of the anti-Marxist nature of such a concept, we are told, is the failure of Che's missions to the Congo and Bolivia and the failure of the Latin American movement in the 1960-70s. Of course, further proof is that the one place where this foco worked is Cuba where consequently there has never been any 'workers' democracy', there is a 'crystallised bureaucratic elite', 'Stalinism' etc.

This grotesque caricature and falsification is easily and necessarily countered. The Cuban revolutionaries from the outset tried to combine their guerrilla struggle with the movement in the towns and cities; without the coordination of the two the military cam-

paign could not have been sustained. In the end it was this combination that removed Batista and went on to establish a socialist state in Cuba and defend it with the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, which is the working class organised, armed and in command in the towns and the countryside. *Tricontinental*, a Cuban magazine, carried an interview with the former head of the Intelligence Department of the Cuban Interior Ministry, Manuel Pineiro, who worked with Che Guevara. He describes Che's approach to guerrilla war and it contrasts sharply with the 'foco theory'.

Che would study the political, economic and social conditions of countries in detail. He would analyse the different forms of struggle among the different classes and the different political organisations. 'He never failed to point out to visitors (from different countries) that whenever there was the most minute chance for engaging in legal activities, they should take advantage of that - but without any illusions. They should also be aware... how indispensable it was to strengthen their forces as much as possible and prepare for military repression of the popular and revolutionary movement that would occur as soon as they became a serious threat to the ruling system.'

Talking of Che's expedition to Bolivia, Pineiro said, 'As the Cuban experience demonstrated, the original guerrilla nucleus, if well directed, could be the small motor whose political and military actions could set in motion the big motor of the masses of the people. Che's anti-imperialist, continental concept of armed revolutionary struggle was based on this. It is essentially a political and military concept based on the masses, which contradicts that reductionist interpretation of the "guerrilla foco" which has been falsely attributed to Che. He always spoke of an insurrectionary guerrilla foco linked to the people, not a small group of armed men who acted divorced from the popular movement and the people in general.'

'He also said that a guerrilla struggle couldn't be carried out in countries where the governments were the result of some form of popular choice and where all possible forms of civic struggle had not been exhausted. But one of Che's main ideas should be emphasised: it is not necessary to wait for all the proper conditions to exist before starting the revolutionary struggle; the struggle itself will create the conditions as it goes along.'

'It wasn't Che's fault that some Latin American revolutionaries, albeit with the best of intentions, oversimplified and misinterpreted his ideas.'

Che Guevara's Bolivian mission was critically undermined by the leader of the Bolivian Communist Party, Mario Monje who, having initially said he would back the mission, stabbed it in the back and effectively broke the urban support structure for the guerrillas. Monje was a social democrat posing as a communist. The British working class has had a surfeit of Monjes and must understand what they are.

Trevor Rayne

US imperialism's war on Cuba

Two weeks before the World Festival two explosive devices were detonated in the Capri and Nacional hotels in Havana. Fortunately no one was killed, although one explosion coincided with a playgroup organised for the children of the hotel workers. These bombs clearly had the aim of sabotaging Cuba's burgeoning tourist industry and disrupting the Festival. Another sabotage attempt during the Festival itself was foiled but, tragically, on 4 September, a second series of bombs, planted in the midst of crowds and with no warning given, left a young Italian tourist dead. The dead tourist's brother said: 'My brother loved the Cuban people. He went to Cuba often. I have no doubts that it was the CIA dogs who set off the bombs.'

An El Salvadorian, Raul Ernesto Cruz Leon, who travelled to Cuba as a tourist, was arrested and has confessed on Cuban TV to planting six bombs with the aim of 'creating panic amongst tourists'. His only motivation, he said, was the money offered - \$4,500 per bomb. He has not admitted who his paymasters are, but all evidence recovered by the Cuban authorities points to the involvement of the US, primarily to the counter-revolutionary Miami-based Cuban-American National Foundation.

US imperialism is determined to wipe out Cuban socialism. Its war of attrition is

conducted both openly - through the savage US blockade - and covertly, through the operations of the CIA and their stooges, the Miami counter-revolutionaries.

The blockade, the most sustained and severe blockade ever imposed on any country, includes all trade and exchange with Cuba and attempts to impose these conditions on other states. In effect, Cuba is a country under siege. The Special Period, which began when the Soviet Union collapsed between 1989 and 1992 and Cuba lost 85% of its markets, now affects every area of Cuban economic activity. Yet in spite of this, in the 38 years since the Revolution, Cuba has transformed conditions for the Cuban people. In 1958, life expectancy was 57 years; by 1993, it was 76, equal to the industrialised countries. In 1958, infant mortality was 60 per 1,000 live births - today, despite the material shortages of the special period, it is 7.9, significantly lower than the poorest areas of London or New York. In 1958, there was one doctor for 5,000 people - in 1993, there was one doctor per 231. Literacy has risen from 76% in 1958 to 98% - higher than Britain's 'functional literacy' of 80 per cent.

However, in spite of socialism's outstanding gains - the example the US is hellbent on destroying - the Special Period has taken its toll and this has led to a fundamental restructuring of the economy.

This includes measures to encourage foreign investment, joint ventures with foreign capital, self-employment in some sectors and the decriminalisation of the holding of hard currency in the form of dollars.

In short, the Special Period has seen the introduction of market forces into the Cuban economy. The result is that some people can become wealthy in contrast to the majority. These privileged sectors have interests which are not necessarily those of the Cuban people as a whole and represent a potential ally for the interests of US imperialism. However, the Cuban communists are well aware of these dangers and maintain a constant discussion with the people of Cuba about the problems they face and the need to maintain the gains of the Revolution. As Raul Castro said, 'Our system would fail to be socialist if we did not concern ourselves with the fate of each of the 11 million Cubans that live here.'

Cuba has shown its will to resist. As attacks against the Cuban Revolution escalate, so must our solidarity with Cuba. Though the World Festival was barely reported in the world press, you can be sure that the imperialists heard the commitment to solidarity from around the world - a call to arms more resounding than their mercenaries' bombs.

Susan Rose, additional reporting by Tania Jackson in Havana



ROCK AROUND THE WORLD FESTIVAL OF

'We share dream, we the same'



This summer, 11 Rock around the Blockade activists, in Revolutionary Communist Group, joined the 100-strong and Students which took place from 28 July to 5 August opportunity to meet and discuss with over 12,000 young contingent of 1,000 young Cubans. We heard about struggle with the vast global problems facing the youth some of the richness and variety of the experiences of from the example of Cuba itself.

Rock around the Blockade go

In 1947, 17,000 young people met in Czechoslovakia to call for 'a stable and lasting peace' and launch the World Festival movement. Fifty years later, in a changed world where the socialist bloc has collapsed and imperialism has embarked on a new offensive against the peoples of the world, we arrived at Jose Marti airport, Havana, to reaffirm the principles of internationalist solidarity on which the Festival movement was launched.

The most important part of the Festival, the conferences, were each attended by over 300 people and lasted for two days on 18 topics including peace and a nuclear-weapon free world; racism and fascism; young women; children; national liberation and self determination. Each conference drew up final statements, whose common feature was a condemnation of neoliberalism and impe-

rialism, most overwhelmingly directed towards the USA.

After a day at conferences, there were music, parties, rum and open days and exhibitions and basketball games and visits to hospitals, old people's homes and trade union centres and other achievements of the Revolution. Political discussion, formal and informal, was going on all the time. Delegates from each continent had a large club house with book stalls and videos, meetings and socialising and a constant exchange of information about the political situation in all our different countries. Rock around the Blockade held a stall every day with Che Guevara t-shirts and copies of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* and distributed our statement about conditions facing British youth.

The situation is hard in Cuba and the festival could have been seen as an

Environment and development

At the environment and development conference, we discussed the international problems of rainforest destruction, desertification and ozone depletion. These will eventually affect us all, rich and poor, but at the moment it is the exploitation of developing countries by the richer nations that create social problems and poverty directly linked to environmental destruction. It is the governments and multinationals of the imperialist countries, that are sacrificing the environment for profit. Solutions and technology are prevented from being internationally available through patent laws described by a Colombian delegate as 'a privatisation of human rights.' The environment is being sold out to multinationals in the name of free market economy and privatisation. Capitalism believes the Earth's re-

sources are there to be exploited for profit and are therefore expendable. It is this short-termism and arrogance which create most of the world's environmental and social problems.

Education alone cannot solve the problem. A Panamanian delegate described how environmental education in her country was linked with neoliberal impositions that undermined the needs of her people: 'Our communities are not consulted, so how can you talk about environmental education if you ignore the people who live there?' A Belgian delegate stated, to rapturous applause, 'there is one solution worth fighting for, and that is socialism'.

Cuba's achievements since the revolution demonstrate in practice that only under socialism can we begin to solve the world's environmental problems. Before the Revolution, there was a 14%



Youth in Cuba

The conferences at the Festival looked at the situation for youth today, and the situation in Cuba which stands out as a shining example for the rest of the world.

Delegates described how, in the Third World, neo-colonial policies mean poverty and marginalisation for many children. They spoke of child labour and described how many become street children, are utterly destitute, turn to prostitution and drugs and end up rejected by the very society that corrupts them.

In comparison, Cuba promotes a caring, educational upbringing of children. Pregnant women receive exemplary medical and dietary care in centres where they can stay, if they wish, the full nine months. There are daycare centres for the children of working mothers and regular medical and developmental homechecks.

At the daycare centres, children learn their first numbers and letters, as well as 'play' doctor, dentist, shop worker and other activities. All children start primary school at four. In addition, the state provides after-school centres, the Pioneer centres, which offer hundreds of interest circles, including music, medical tech-

nology, sculpture, gardening and boxing.

This is a Third World country - yet how different from Britain, where 'lack of funds' means after-school clubs close and children receive only what the national curriculum offers, unless they can pay for extra private tuition. Yet in 1958, before the Revolution, Cuba had just 82 high schools and two universities. The revolutionary government devoted considerable resources to ensure a system of universal, free and compulsory education. Within ten years every Cuban child had access to primary school and over 80 per cent were enrolled in secondary school. Today there are over 2,000 high schools and 37 universities. Every Cuban student can study to postgraduate level. And life-long learning is a reality in Cuba - a staggering three out of every five Cuban adults has enrolled in some form of free, part-time education. Illiteracy has been eliminated and more than 33,000 students graduate from university each year.

In Cuba, all-round education is emphasised and co-operation, not competition, is the guiding principle.

Cultural, musical and sporting abilities are equally encouraged - and it is very cheap to watch any musical, cultural or sporting event. In Britain, such experiences are exclusive and discriminate on the basis of wealth. The poor just cannot afford to attend. Football matches now cost between £10-£15, and even the cinema is around £7, let alone the prices of the theatre or ballet. But Cuba remains true to its constitution, which defines culture as 'an inalienable right of working people to enjoy it from childhood.'

Meanwhile in Britain, the introduction of university fees by New Labour demonstrates how even in one of the richest countries in the world our right to free and universal education is not guaranteed and wealth alone determines the level of education and culture we have access to.

The Education, Science and Technology conference unanimously recognised 'the alternative of dignity, hope and human development offered by Cuba... We recognise what a country with limited resources can do when there is a political will and a revolutionary commitment to humankind.'

Leo Maxim

BLOCKADE AT THE 14TH YOUTH AND STUDENTS

the same share enemies'



cluding members and supporters of the
British delegation to the 14th World Festival of Youth
t in Havana this summer. There we had the
g people from all over the world – not least the
uggles against imperialism and injustice and began to
of the world today. The articles printed here reflect
our delegates and the incredible inspiration we drew

es to Havana

extravagance, but it wasn't. The Cuban Revolution has been built directly on the needs and dreams of the Cuban people, on genuine democracy and participation. People say it's a miracle it's survived so long, but in that case it's a miracle made real by 11 million people. If they hadn't really wanted the Festival, then it wouldn't have happened. It was an amazing accomplishment, a logistical nightmare of 12,000 delegates, 18 urgent topics to discuss about a world at war in an island under siege and 240 hours to do it. A lot of sacrifice went into making that happen by the Cuban people who have made many sacrifices already. I heard some criticisms, but what I saw most, over and over again, on every street, was a revolutionary commitment by the people to their Revolution.

When on 28 July we marched through the streets of Havana as an international force of tens of thousands, waving ban-

ners that said 'We share the same dream, we share the same enemies' and 'Cuba, we salute you', waving a hundred different flags, it was a slap in the face to imperialism. Clinton and his multinational bastards would have hated every minute of it.

The Festival brought young people from 135 countries into socialist Cuba. It showed them the best of what that country has achieved and gave them the forum to unite their struggles and broaden their understanding, to raise their revolutionary enthusiasm and give them the knowledge that it is truly possible to create a better society, and it sent them back again. 11,325 young people to all those different countries to get on with their revolutionary work, not on one front but on many, just like Che said, to defeat imperialism. And that's what we've come back to do with Rock around the Blockade here in Britain.

Steve Byrne



Rock around the Blockade stall at the Festival

Ruairidh Wright

loss of forest and 76% of the soil was eroded in the first half of the century. Only 64% of the population had access to clean water. Since the Revolution, 21% of the land has been reforested and sustainable land management has greatly increased.

94% of the population now has water and due largely to the US blockade there has been a unique experiment in organic agriculture on a national scale. Due to the lack of resources, there is now a much more rational use of resources, including less dumping and more bicycles.

The conference agreed to set up an international environmental network so that cooperation could continue and an international collective could begin to link the environmental struggles of the world's youth.

Building anti-imperialist solidarity

In my economic history seminars at university, I've been surprised to hear the general opinion that imperialism is a phenomenon of the past. Attending the Festival in Cuba made it clear to me that such ignorance could only arise in one of the oldest imperialist nations, with a history as brutal as Britain's. The Festival gave us an opportunity to hear the voice of the oppressed, to witness the pain of those exploited and to see the anger of those suffering repression at the hands of imperialism.

Delegates from Panama spoke strongly at the anti-imperialist conference, denouncing the relentless and brutal imperialism of the US, which has intervened in Panama 50 times this century. The delegate declared that the Festival was 'launching a war cry against imperialism' and denounced the use of Panama as a springboard for attacks against the people of the region.

A delegate from Chile saluted all the guerrillas who are fighting in the mountains of the continent and the underground combatants in the cities. He assured the conference that the young people of Latin America will construct a free continent on the Cuban model of national independence and international solidarity. Of the imperialists he said, 'We only want war with them – we don't want their crumbs'.

From Ecuador, we heard that the youth are working towards the Marxist revolutionary path to freedom: 'The continent has been shaken by militant youth from the Sierra Maestra to Managua. As Sandino, Zapata, Jose Marti and Che Guevara have shown us, to

recover our world we must educate, arm and fight as one people.'

The delegate from Argentina also spoke of continental unity, but emphasised that the anti-imperialist struggle must take the form of class struggle within each nation. The FARC – the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, a guerrilla movement – spoke impressively, assuring the Festival that the strength of the FARC's armed struggle is based on their ideological strength as Marxist-Leninists. From Trinidad and Tobago, a delegate emphasised the importance of the ideological revolution which will prepare us for a united global struggle – 'Look how strong we are, look how strong socialism is, look how strong is Cuba.'

Delegate after delegate denounced US imperialism and called for the immediate withdrawal of US bases around the world. One of the 850 US delegates who had defied threats from their government to attend the Festival in spite of the US blockade assured the conference that 'today the gallstones in the belly of imperialism will be tomorrow the cancerous kiss of death from within'. At the anti-imperialist tribunal, it was US foreign policy which was the focus of accusations, but Israeli and European imperialism were denounced with equal passion and the message of the conference was that the struggle against all forms of imperialism is strong and growing. In the words of the delegate from Greece, 'anti-imperialist solidarity cannot be begged. It is a right, it is a duty.'

Helen

A health worker in Havana: an eyewitness account

I went to Cuba to see for myself the social achievements of the Cuban revolution and also to compare the health service with Britain's.

I'm married to a communist, so I had heard and read a bit about Cuba. I am a member of Unison and my branch supports Rock around the Blockade, so we asked them to pay for me and Cath to attend the youth festival, because, as nurses in mental health, we wanted to see for ourselves how a socialist society cares for its people who have a mental illness.

The first event we attended in Cuba was the opening ceremony and demonstration. Tens of thousands of people marched to the university of Havana. I was struck by the flags and banners – thousands of them, hanging out of windows, draped down building after building, and the singing and chanting never stopped. During the whole of the march, it came from the Cubans watching and the marchers themselves. The unity was something – I have never experienced anything like it. In this country, when I go on demos against hospital closures, cuts and job losses, there is only a small number of people and it is mainly the staff who are going to lose their jobs with, sadly, very little support from the community.

I was struck by my visit to the Neuro Hospital. The patients participate fully in their treatment and are told exactly what will happen to them from operation to recuperation by all the medical staff – which doesn't happen here. The rehab facilities are amazing – swimming pool, therapy rooms, hair and beauty rooms and – most important – one-to-one physiotherapy eight hours per day seven days a week. In Britain, you are lucky to get physio for an hour once a week, and as for the rest, forget it.

We also visited a general hospital, the biggest hospital in Cuba. As we were shown around, we noticed they did not have the hi-tech equipment, bandages and medicines practically falling out of cupboards like they do in ours. This was obviously due to the

blockade. We were amazed to see a man enter casualty, being seen by a nurse and, within five minutes, two doctors. He was assessed and treated in 15 minutes! That is completely unheard of in our casualty department, where you can wait six hours and more, for all our medicines, equipment and bandages. In the surgical ward, we saw they did not have many drips etc, but plenty of staff working as a team. I saw a doctor mopping the floor – unheard of here. But I also saw they had just five bottles in the medicine cupboard – paracetamol and diazepam. But the ward was spotless and the patients obviously well cared for by staff who were doing the best they could in spite of this terrible blockade. We had nothing but admiration for them and it made me think that for all our resources, we have lost that care they show so openly.

We also visited a mental hospital, caring for 3,500 patients and saw a museum of how it was for them in Batista's day – no clothes, no beds, no cutlery. They ate with their hands, had no contact with the outside world and were treated worse than animals, lost to their families and society. Today, the hospital is semi self-supporting. The patients themselves grow their food, make plates and cups in pottery classes, tables and chairs in basket-weaving and beds in woodwork. They also have proper sports facilities and patients who are athletes compete internationally in their own Olympics. They have bands and theatres where they put on their own shows and while we were there the patients entertained us with opera, modern music and dance.

I have worked in a mental hospital for 20 years and I can tell you these patients were treated with dignity and respect and valued equally in society because that is where they were going back to – at their own pace, not the doctor's.

But the highlight of our visit was on the last day, when the family Cath was staying with took us both to dinner at the grandmother's. There we were

The Festival is taken to the provinces

Bienvenido, gracias! and Viva! shouted the huge crowds that lined the streets as we entered the small town of San Jose de las Lacas. The whole town had come out to welcome the visiting delegates of the Festival. The incredible atmosphere moved many of us to tears – just the beginning of an unforgettable few days in San Jose.

We stayed with local families who, although they had very little, made us feel instantly at home with their hospitality and friendship. When asked who wanted to house a delegate, the organisers were overwhelmed as the whole town applied!

With great pride, the people of San Jose lovingly showed us places they obviously treasured – their small but expanding hospital (12 beds costing \$250 each before the Revolution, now over 40 beds – free). The Centre for Animal and Plant Health where top scientists worked with local farmers to find practical solutions to the problems of farming under the conditions imposed by the US blockade; and a farming commune which, due to more ecologically friendly methods, had won prizes for its milk yield.

Everywhere we were met with the same hospitality and overwhelming kindness. We were there as friends, helping the struggle against the blockade. We were there in solidarity, supporting their Revolution. To the people of San Jose, this was cause for three days relentless partying and celebration.

Ruairidh Wright



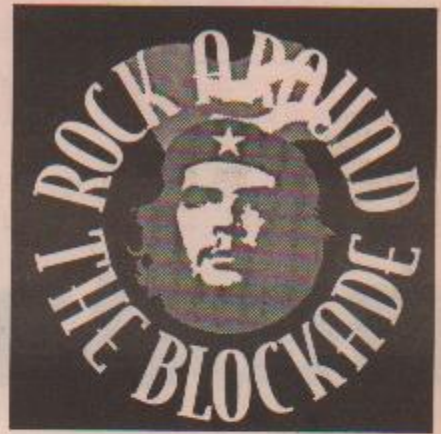
The people of Havana gave the Festival a great welcome

introduced to Angela Castro, sister of Fidel. She asked us about England, our jobs and our families. She lives on a smallholding farm where, aged 74, she looks after her own pigs, chickens and ducks and grows her own vegetables. Meeting her was a great way to end a fantastic festival. Families and people of Cuba, viva!

Deborah Derbyshire

THE LEGACY OF CHE GUEVARA

ECONOMICS AND SOCIALISM



was being produced, contradictions arose between certain economic enterprises and society overall – a trend was developing which would undermine the spirit and consciousness of the working class. The Cuban Communist Party recognised these problems and a rectification programme was begun in 1986 to correct these developments. The working class, the trade unions and other mass organisations were actively drawn into the decision making processes. Inevitably, it led to a revival of Che's ideas. In a speech marking the 20th anniversary of Che Guevara's death, Fidel Castro explained what they were rectifying.

'We're rectifying all those things – and there are many – that strayed from the revolutionary spirit, from revolutionary work, revolutionary virtue, revolutionary effort, revolutionary responsibility; all those things that strayed from the spirit of solidarity among people. We're rectifying all the shoddiness and mediocrity that is precisely the negation of Che's ideas, his revolutionary thought, his style, his spirit and his example.' (*Granma* 18 October 1987)³

The rectification process saw the return of the mini-brigades – volunteers who leave their unit of production to join a collective work brigade working longer hours for the same wage on social projects which benefit the whole population, leaving behind productive units of increased efficiency and lower cost. In Havana, at the time, there were more than 20,000 mini-brigade members. They achieved remarkable results. Some 20,000 housing units were built without any extra expenditure on wages, and so were 50 daycare centres in one year, meeting the needs of 19,500 children, when previously only five had been planned over five years and were not even built. These developments, however, came to an abrupt end with the Special Period following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the intensification of the US economic blockade.

Today, after years of surviving the Special Period without abandoning its socialist principles, Cuba has been forced to put more reliance on capitalist methods and capitalist market mechanisms. The introduction of the private farmers' markets, the free circulation of the dollar, the greater weight of foreign capital in the Cuban economy, and the wider use of material incentives, all necessary for the recovery of the Cuban economy, however, make the contribution of Che Guevara ever more relevant to the future of Cuban socialist development.

Not only was Che inspired by Marxism but he developed it and turned it into an ever more vital tool for building socialism today – a remarkable intellectual and practical achievement for a person who died aged 39, sacrificing his life to build a society fit for the vast majority of humanity.

David Yaffe

1 All references to Che Guevara's writings are taken from *Venceremos! The Speeches and Writings of Che Guevara*. Edited by John Gerassi, Panther, 1972.

2 See *Che Guevara Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism*, Carlos Tablada, Pathfinder, 1989, pp109-119. An excellent review of this book by Eddie Abrahams can be found in *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* 90 October 1989, reprinted in *The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution*, Larkin Publications, 1992, pp37-42. For Che's article 'On the Budgetary System of Financing' see *Venceremos* pp409-p441.

3 This speech is reprinted in Tablada, pp32-57.

These articles will be discussed by London FRFI Readers & Supporters Group on Wednesday 15 October, 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Over six years ago, with most of the bourgeois media celebrating 'the death of socialism', *Socialist Worker* launched a totally spurious and unsubstantiated attack on Che Guevara. Che Guevara, it said, was never inspired by 'anything which remotely resembled Marxism'. (*Socialist Worker* 14 December 1991)

No one who had the slightest acquaintance with the economic writings of Che would dare to be so arrogant and so demonstrative of their remarkable ignorance. For Che's writings on the economics and politics of the transition to socialism showed that he had a deep understanding of Marx's *Capital* and, in particular, the most difficult chapters on value, money and capital. Moreover, his published works show that he was familiar with Marx's philosophical and political writings – for example, *The German Ideology* and *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* – as well as Lenin's writings on the transition to socialism, the new economic policy, the role of the party and so on. He was also knowledgeable about the debates on the transition to socialism in the former socialist countries, as well as having practical experience of the problems confronting Cuba in its efforts to consolidate socialist development in an economy blockaded by the strongest imperialist power some 90 miles from its shores. In addition, Che was both President of the National Bank and Minister for Industry in Cuba when the socialist revolution was being consolidated. Such a record speaks for itself.

Che was a remarkable revolutionary – he was prepared to put his hand to anything if the revolution needed it. Fidel reports that when he was appointed president of the National Bank, people would say that we had asked for an economist and Che had volunteered. When asked if he was an economist Che replied 'Oh, I thought you said a communist'.

Plan and market

Che was a communist who rejected the current fashion of 'market socialism' – that planning has been proved a failure and socialist countries have to use the market. He argued quite differently. Capitalism could only be defeated by a non-market rationality. Che wrote that 'the law of value and the plan are two terms linked by a contradiction and its resolution'. (*Socialist Planning* p563)¹

The law of value governs the development of the economy and the social relationships under commodity production and has its fullest expression under capitalism with its anarchic 'free' market, with the unfettered exploitation of the working class, plunder of oppressed nations through free trade and export of capital. The building of socialism through the planned economy will gradually destroy the space for its operation and with it the market which gives it expression. As Che put it:

'We can therefore state that centralised planning is the way of life in a socialist society. It is what defines it and is the point at which man's consciousness succeeds in finally synthesising and directing the economy towards its goal, which is the complete

liberation of the human being within the framework of communist society'. (*Socialist Planning* p563-4)

Socialist revolutions have occurred in the less developed countries and not as Marxists had expected in the most advanced capitalist countries. Some question whether it is possible to build socialism in countries colonised by imperialism and without any development of its basic industries. Che was very clear on this issue and followed Lenin:

'Within the great framework of the world-wide capitalist system, struggling against socialism, one of its weak links can be broken. In this particular case we mean Cuba. Taking advantage of unusual historical circumstances and following the skilful leadership of their vanguard, the revolutionary forces take over at a particular moment. Then, assuming the necessary objective conditions already exist for the socialisation of labour, they skip stages, declare the socialist nature of the revolution, and begin to build socialism'. (*Socialist Planning* p557)

The relative backwardness of these countries had created even greater difficulties for overcoming the impact of the law of value and the market. Cuba could combat this to some degree with the economic assistance of the Soviet Union before its collapse in 1991, and through more equal and just economic and trade relations with the socialist bloc. Che, however, realised that the law of value would exert its influence particularly through the international capitalist market dominated by the main imperialist powers with their much superior productivity of labour – but also in the relationship between the state sector and consumers. But he did not see this as something to be welcomed in the interests of some technical efficiency but something that had to be combated by the systematic development of the plan – of the conscious power of a centralised and planned economy. To give greater freedom to the law of value and the market was to facilitate the development of capitalist tendencies within the socialist countries.

That is why Che argued for a different system of managing the state sector of the economy to that which applied in most of the European socialist countries and most Cuban enterprises except those dependent on Che's Ministry of Industry – the budgetary system of financing as against the self-financing enterprise system. There are a number of differences in the two systems but fundamentally in the first the funds for the industry and the 'profits or losses' made went into the same overall state fund, while in the latter each enterprise had its own fund and they competed with each other. Both systems complied with an overall plan but one more directly than the other. Money plays a different role in each system. In the budgetary system it operates as 'arithmetical money', a measure of value, as a price reflection of the operation of the enterprise. It is analysed by the central bodies to exercise control over its operation, in a similar way to that of multinational companies and their subsidiaries. In the self-financing enterprise system, money acts, in addition, as a means of



Che Guevara with Commander-in-chief Fidel Castro

payment – it functions as an indirect instrument of control. Its relation with the banks are similar to those of a private producer in contact with capitalist banks to which they must exhaustively explain their plans and prove their solvency. When he looked at the latter system in Yugoslavia he said it seemed dangerous 'because competition between enterprises dedicated to producing the same article may introduce factors that distort what the socialist spirit should presumably be'. (Tablada p111)² A different concept of competition in relation to the social interest is indicated here, potentially, that is, in terms of who benefits?

Capitalist mechanisms versus communist consciousness

The social relations of capitalist production, the production for private profit, the exploitation of man by man, produce a definite individualistic consciousness – a motivation based on competition as opposed to co-operation, individual interest and greed at the expense of others. A system based on the collective organisation of social production has to produce people with a quite different consciousness – a consciousness adequate to the new mode of production. However it does not come ready made and has to be created as part of the process of building socialism. Just as the capitalist production through the market reproduces capitalist social relations and consciousness, so socialist economic production has to produce and develop socialist social relations and consciousness. However while under capitalism such relations and consciousness are the spontaneous, anarchic product of the market, adequate forms of social consciousness have to be worked for and developed under socialism. Socialism has to produce a different type of human being than under capitalism.

Summarising Che's position Tablada says: 'The point therefore is to discover and sweep away the structures that generate selfishness and personal ambition, replacing them with new social institutions and mechanisms capable of moulding future genera-

tions in a different way.' (p86)

Typical was Che's position on the question of material and moral incentives. While not denying the objective need for material incentives as a factor in achieving improvements in productivity and production, he was unwilling to use them as a fundamental driving force.

'Material incentives are something left over from the past. They are something we must accept but whose hold on the minds of the people we must gradually break as the revolutionary process goes forward... We must establish the conditions under which this type of motivation that is operative today will increasingly lose its importance and be replaced by non-material incentives such as the sense of duty and the new revolutionary way of thinking.' (*On Party Militancy* pp343-4)

As opposed to competition generated by the law of value, Che put forward the concept of emulation, fraternal competition based on socialist comradeship as a weapon to increase production. 'Emulation had to fulfil the great task of mobilising the masses.' It is 'competition directed toward the most noblest of aims, which is to improve the functioning of each work centre, each enterprise, each unit, and place it in the front ranks of building socialism.' Emulation would have its own incentives, 'moral incentives, such as those that individually or collectively recognise workers in a workplace as the best amongst the best.' It was an incentive mechanism that linked the production of goods with the creation of communist consciousness. (Quotes from Tablada p200-1)

In this context, Che stressed the importance of voluntary work and the use of mini-brigades in helping to resolve, in a collective way, crucial problems facing the economy – a method of work, however, that went into decline after his death, becoming almost a formality as Cuban economic development became increasingly reliant on precisely those capitalist economic mechanisms that Che had warned against. Material incentives began to be abused, higher wages were paid which bore no relation to what

Ronnie Easterbrook

lives to fight another day

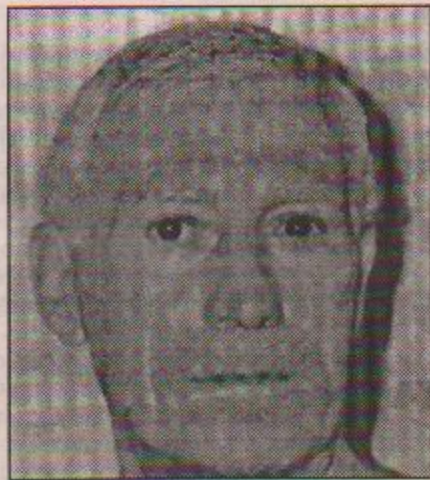
INSIDE NEWS

On 12 September Ronnie Easterbrook ended a hunger-strike which had taken him close to death. Following two and a half years of determined protest against his detention in maximum security dispersal prisons as a High Risk Category A prisoner, Ronnie finally forced the Prison Service to move him to a non-dispersal prison, remove the High Risk label and review his Category A status.

Ronnie is 67 years old, has only one lung and suffers from claustrophobia and panic attacks. He was convicted in 1988 of participating in an unsuccessful armed robbery in south London. The robbery was a set-up: the police were lying in wait, accompanied by a television crew filming one of the first 'police in action' documentaries, *The Flying Squad*. Tony Ash, who was with Ronnie, was shot dead by police marksmen. Ronnie was also shot but survived and, despite having killed no-one himself, was sentenced to four life sentences, with a 'whole life tariff' - the kind of sentence generally reserved for multiple murderers.

Ronnie began his protest at White-moor in 1995, where he spent over a year and a half on continuous dirty protest. At the end of 1996 he was moved to Belmarsh, where he ended the dirty protest but instead refused all solid food, staying alive for eight months purely on vitamins and liquid supplements. During this time, Ronnie's friend Jackie Abbot, together with supporters of FRFI and the Anarchist Black Cross, staged a number of protests outside the Home

Office, local media in Cambridge-shire and south London took up the story and solicitor Simon Creighton applied for Ronnie's tariff and categorisation to be reviewed. But the Prison Service did not budge.



Ronnie Easterbrook

Tony Benn took up Ronnie's case and wrote to the New Labour (same as the old Tory) Prisons' Minister, Joyce Quin. She wrote back that there was nothing to worry about as Ronnie was 'now on normal loca-

tion...eating normally and progressing well'. As a result of this ridiculous statement, Ronnie decided to make his hunger-strike total and immediately stopped taking anything other than water. The Prison Service responded by moving him to the block at Winson Green prison, claiming this was to 'cheer him up'. Needless to say, it didn't and within a week, Ronnie's condition was so severe that he was transferred to a Birmingham hospital. The real reason for the move from Belmarsh was probably that ten High Risk remand prisoners were staging a week-long hunger-strike in protest at lack of association; a protest which spread to other Category A prisoners and prompted rumours that the rest of the prison was poised to join in. The POA was working to rule and Belmarsh was receiving daily publicity along the lines that it was 'out of control' - Ronnie was one problem they could do without.

Ronnie's supporters immediately began publicising what was happening to him and, despite the death of Diana blocking out most other news, his situation was covered in *The Guardian* and on Radio 5, as well

as by local TV, radio stations and newspapers in London and Birmingham. Ronnie received masses of cards, letters and offers to stage pickets or vigils. The Prison Service's reaction? Did they give in? Did they, at the very least send him back to Belmarsh to be near his friends and legal advisers? No, they moved him out of hospital and transported him 200 miles further north to Durham prison.

On 12 September the 'compromise' deal was struck - a victory for Ronnie but phrased to save face for the Prison Service. Ronnie would come off the hunger-strike and in two weeks time be moved to Highdown, a non-dispersal prison with a Category A wing; his Category A status will be reviewed on 26 October.

Ronnie was seriously prepared to die rather than continue enduring the conditions he had been held in for the past ten years. The Prison Service knew he was not bluffing; if he had died, his blood would have been on their hands.

As we go to press, Ronnie should be being moved to Highdown. Letters of support and encouragement can be sent to Ronnie Easterbrook B88459, HMP Highdown, Sutton Lane, Sutton, Surrey, SM2 5PD. Letters complaining about Ronnie's treatment so far and supporting his decategorisation can be sent to John Goulds, Prison Service, Cleland House, Page Street, London SW1P or to Joyce Quin MP, Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1.

Nicki Jameson

End of the SSUs?

The government has reversed its previous stance of refusing to close the Special Secure Units at White-moor, Full Sutton and Belmarsh. In August the SSU prisoners, all but one of whom were Irish POWs, were downgraded from 'Exceptional' to 'High Risk' Category A status and moved into the mainstream maximum security system.

The present government is as vicious as its predecessor but not so stupid. The last IRA ceasefire and 'talks about talks' period was dominated by demands for improved prison conditions for POWs; Labour do not want this kind of distraction to spoil their moment of glory. Furthermore, the downgrade gives them a way to end closed visits for top security prisoners without conceding the issue as a matter of principle.

Locking up the children

Even before Jack Straw gets his way with our unruly children, there are already 1,600 young people illegally imprisoned in adult gaols. A court case in August concerning a 16-year old girl detained in Risley led to the ruling that it is unlawful to imprison anyone under 21 in an adult prison.

Racism in Cookham Wood

Asian women in Cookham Wood prison, Kent, report they are being bullied by a gang of white prisoners and that the staff are blatantly allowing this to continue. The abuse ranges from name-calling to threats of violence, including the use of scissors and boiling water.

It is hardly surprising that this racist abuse is not being stopped by the prison authorities. The Asian women also say that prison work is allocated on a racist basis, with white prisoners being put on the well-paid 'Contract Services' (part time, safe work, earning up to £20 a week), while black and Asian women are inevitably made to work in the Tailors' Shop (full-time, with dangerous machines, for £7 per week).

Full Sutton

- retribution continues

On 21 July, in a written answer to a parliamentary question asked by Dr Lynne Jones MP, Prisons Minister Joyce Quin replied that:

'Claims for compensation for prisoners' property damaged during the January disturbances at Full Sutton prison are being dealt with through the normal Prison Service request and complaint procedures. Although the Prison Service does not accept liability for loss of personal property held by prisoners in their cells, it has been agreed in this instance to make ex-gratia payments to prisoners who were innocent victims of the disturbance. Those prisoners who are judged to have been involved in the disturbance will not be liable for compensation.'

Fascinating. As no charges have been brought against anyone involved in the 'disturbance', is it safe to assume that everyone present was an 'innocent victim' and will be recompensed for the trashing of their belongings? A trashing which, it seems virtually certain, happened *after* the riot was over. The day after the revolt, which destroyed two wings of Full Sutton, a POA spokesman denounced the rioters as hooligans who smashed 'everything except their own possessions'; however, on arrival at other gaols



these same prisoners found that, almost without exception, their walkman headphones had been broken in an identical manner to one another and their clothing, books and legal papers were drenched in a substance which forensic testing in one case identified as bleach.

In the absence of criminal charges, the prison system continues to exact its own retribution. FRFI has received the following account from Mark Gillan:

'On 16 August another prisoner and I were taken to Swaleside seg unit. Two days later we were told that we would be staying down the block on suspicion of jamming doors on A wing and pressing the alarm bells! We knew nothing about any of this

and it seems they just wanted us off the wing.

'When I got down the block I had six screws waiting at the cell I was being placed in. Once I was in the cell, one of them started the old intimidation tactics, as in "you are one of those cunts from Full Sutton", at which stage I was jumped on by all six of them. They were all kicking, kneeing and punching me. I was on the floor, face down, and the one who started it was kicking me in the ribs. Then my arms were pulled right up my back until breaking point. It was agonising. Then I was wrenched off the floor with my arms right up my back. Another screw grabbed my head and bent me forward so my head was between my legs. It is pure agony to have this done while your arms are up your back. Then wrist-locks were applied and I was taken to the strip cells. I was told to get on my knees but every time I tried they twisted my arm up my back and applied the wrist-locks - they did this for about ten minutes and all the time they were going on about "hard-cases from Full Sutton" and "let's hear you scream, scum".'

After this assault, Mark was left in a cell for three days and three nights, without access to a toilet. He was seen by a doctor who told him not to complain: 'This is the block and you are in the strip cell - you're still breathing.'

Mark was moved from Swaleside to Lewes and has now been moved again to Albany on the Isle of Wight. He is taking civil action against Swaleside and the prison officers concerned in his treatment there. The

block at Swaleside has developed a bad reputation for prison officer violence, with claims that two or three serious beatings were being carried out every week. However, since Mark announced he was suing for damages, the word is that the beatings have stopped. Let's hope this continues.

Charles Emmerson, who is one of the solicitors co-ordinating property claims for prisoners who were at Full Sutton on 20 January, is still keen to hear from prisoners whose property was damaged. He can be contacted at Freedman, Hamilton and Emmerson, 22 John Street, Sunderland SR1 1JJ, telephone 0191 567 1562.

Death in Winson Green

Christopher Lemathy died in Winson Green prison on 10 June aged 34. He had not long been released from Rayside mental hospital, where he had been detained following charges of arson and attempts on his own life. He was registered as a paranoid schizophrenic and on medication. As a result of an incident in a day-centre he attended after leaving Rayside, he was arrested and remanded in custody. In court, he announced his intention to kill himself; consequently the prison located him in the hospital wing on so-called 'suicide watch', which means essentially that a prison officer looks in on you every 15 minutes to check you are still alive.

Christopher did not die in his cell. He jumped to his death, while being 'escorted' from the hospital to the main prison by a priest. Apparently no prison officers were available to escort him. The escorting priest left Chris alone in a passage while he went to collect another prisoner.

This is a supreme case of gross negligence and hopefully some of it will be exposed at the inquest in October. The injustice also extends to Chris' brother Pat, himself a prisoner, who will not be able to attend the inquest and was not allowed to attend the funeral. In a letter to FRFI, Pat wrote, 'My brother would be alive today if the Prison Service cared. Mental patients in prison don't stand a chance of survival.'

The Indian sub-continent today is racked by poverty, malnutrition and disease. Its one billion inhabitants are amongst the poorest in the world, with the lowest life expectancy. Literacy in India is 36 per cent; in Bangla Desh 29 per cent, in Pakistan a mere 26 per cent. India's gross domestic product, with its 850 million population, is no more than that for the Netherlands with its 15 million inhabitants; that for the whole sub-continent is about the same as Canada (26 million inhabitants). In Bangla Desh, millions are constantly at the prey of floods which have cost hundreds of thousands of lives. In all three countries, political structures are riddled with corruption. Fascists recently formed a short-lived coalition government in India. In Pakistan, heroin dominates the economy. Inter-communal violence provoked by fundamentalist, neo-fascist organisations is a feature of political life in both countries – between Sunni and Shia Moslems in Pakistan, and between Hindus and Moslems and Sikhs and Hindus in India. Today, the economy of the sub-continent is at the mercy of neo-liberalism. Multinationals are plundering its natural resources, aided and abetted by the local ruling classes. Under imperialism's regime, the future for the mass of the rural poor and the working class is even greater poverty and oppression.

All this is a far cry from the optimism expressed by Pandit Nehru during his speech at India's independence ceremony on 14 August 1947 when he declared 'Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge... At the stroke of the midnight hour, while the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom... We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell.' Yet these words were spoken in the midst of an appalling communal slaughter, as rival ruling class interests imposed a settlement to protect their interests, one which involved the partitioning of the sub-continent. This involved collaborating with British imperialism to destroy any revolutionary movement of the working class and oppressed.

India: from 1931 to the 1935 Constitution

That such a movement was possible was shown in Part One. Although relatively small in relation to the mass of the population, the urban working class could mobilise the support of a peasantry which lived in destitution, bankrupted by an alliance of wealthy landlords and money-lenders. At key points in the earlier period, especially between 1919 and 1922, and then 1928 and 1931, the oppressed had given the national freedom struggle an anti-capitalist content. When Gandhi called off the struggle in 1922, his declaration at Bardoli was as much about the property rights of the zemindars or landlords as it was about non-violent struggle, and it came as the industrial working class and rural poor were not only making India ungovernable for the British, but through rent strikes and land occupations demonstrating their own concept of a free India. In 1931, his agreement with the Viceroy Lord Irwin ensured that key representatives of the new movement – the Meerut detainees and members of the Garwhali Rifles – remained under lock and key, and he specifically declared that 'strikes do not fall within the plan of non-violent co-operation'.

Following the failure of the London Round Table Conference, the Raj unleashed a tidal wave of repressive laws and ordinances under the direction of a former leader of the Black and Tans, Sir John Anderson. In January 1932, The Indian National Congress and all associated organisations were banned, and by the end of the year, 90,000 were in gaol for political offences. Despite the severe economic crisis, it took a further two years before the movement was finally crushed. The strength and durability of the revolutionary trend amongst the working

INDIA

the struggle for independence

PART TWO: 1931-1947

15 August 1997 marked the 50th anniversary of the formal independence of the Indian sub-continent. In the last issue ROBERT CLOUGH outlined the course of the struggle to end British colonial rule up to 1931. In this issue he explains how British imperialism was able to ensure that the struggle ended with a neo-colonial solution, where political independence masked a continuing domination by imperialist rule, and how the conduct of the Labour Party was critical to the outcome.

class and peasantry terrified the Indian bourgeoisie as much as it did British imperialism. Both now moved to ensure that such a movement would never challenge them again.

The 1935 Constitution

The first step was taken by British imperialism. It realised it would have to make some concessions on Indian self-government to give political space to the Indian ruling class. The outcome of its deliberations was the 1935 Constitution, an elaborate scheme whose purpose was to play off the 565 Princely States and the various communal movements against Congress. The Constitution proposed the establishment of 11 Provincial Assemblies, and a two-tiered central parliament consisting of an upper house – the Council of State and a lower house – a Federal Assembly.

The electorate was organised along communal lines, and deliberately excluded the poor. Out of a total of 1,585 seats in the provincial assemblies, only a minority (657) were designated 'open' seats for general contest. Others were reserved for particular sections of the electorate: 482 for Moslems, 151 for scheduled castes (the so-called untouchables). There were 56 for commerce and industry, 37 for landlords, 34 for Sikhs, even 26 for Europeans. Educational and property qualifications limited the electorate to the wealthiest 11 per cent of the total adult population. The assemblies themselves would have limited powers, all of which would be subject to veto by their respective Provincial Governors.

Centrally, the Council of State was to have 260 seats, of which 104 were allocated to the Princes, whilst a further 81 were allocated to minorities such as Moslems, Sikhs, Europeans and so on. The Federal Assembly would have a mere 86 out of 375 seats open to general election. Of the remainder, 125 were reserved for Princes' nominees, the rest for specific minorities, including, once again, Moslems (82 seats).

Elections to the provincial assemblies would be the first step in enacting the Constitution. The issue for Congress, unbanned the previous year, was whether to accept the proposals, and participate in the elections, or to boycott them. Gandhi, representing the Indian ruling class, was for immediate acceptance. The Congress left, led by Nehru and supported by Subhas Chandra Bose, was for a boycott. At the Lucknow Congress in April 1936, Nehru moved two resolutions: the first for the complete rejection of the Constitution, the second demanding col-

lective affiliation of workers' and peasants' organisations to Congress. Both were decisively defeated by a movement now firmly in the hands of the money-lending and landlord interests. From now on, Congress was clearly set against the oppressed; there was no way the Indian ruling class would tolerate the views of the dispossessed being expressed within the ranks of its own organisation.

The left from 1931

Excluded from Congress, the working class and rural poor had no serious organisation to turn to. The Communist Party of India (CPI), which had been established in the early 1920s, was almost irrelevant. Although its substantial base in Bombay had given it significant influence over the most organised section of the Indian working class by 1928, within a year it had all but collapsed. Two factors had decided this: first the arrest and deten-

tion of most of its leadership in April 1929, and second, the standpoint it had adopted under the direction of the Communist International, which argued that the immediate struggle was one for socialism rather than national independence. Isolated from the mass movement, its membership plummeted from 5,000 in 1928 to no more than 150 at the height of the movement in 1931. In 1934, it was banned.

The only other option was a brand of social democracy represented within Congress by the Congress Socialist Party (CSP). This was not however a socialism for the oppressed, but for the petit bourgeoisie, who needed a vehicle to represent their interests given the bourgeois domination of Congress as a whole. Its purpose was to prevent any new movement from going beyond the bounds of what was acceptable to Congress as a whole. Hence its role was one of a loyal opposition, unwilling and unable to organise within the

working class or amongst the rural poor, and equally unwilling and unable to stop the bourgeoisie from retaining its control of Congress.

The 1937 elections

Elections to the Provincial Assemblies under the 1935 Constitution took place in 1937 and resulted in a victory for Congress, as it confirmed its dominant position within the Indian ruling class. Despite all the communal gerrymandering, it won a total of 715 seats, taking an overall majority in six provinces. Yet, in a significant concession to communalism, it contested only 58 of the Moslem seats, winning a mere 26. Although the Moslem League won far more – 104 seats – it got only 4.8 per cent of the total Moslem vote in a striking demonstration of its eclipse.

In a replay of the 1936 Lucknow Congress, the CSP and Nehru now argued against taking office given the absolute powers of the Provincial Governors. Once again, Gandhi and the right wing prevailed, this time by a two-thirds majority, and after extracting a meaningless verbal concession from the Viceroy on the powers of provincial governors, Congress accepted office in the seven provinces, and formed coalitions in two more (Assam and Sind). Only in the Punjab and Bengal was it forced into opposition.

The results proved a great stimulus to the growth of Congress: following a campaign led by Nehru during his presidency of the organisation, membership rose from just over 600,000 in 1936 to six million in 1939. But Gandhi and the right wing moved to ensure that this was not translated into any greater influence for the left. In 1938, Gandhi urged the expulsion of those who did not believe in 'observing truth and non-violence as conditions of attainment of Swaraj [self-government]'. Next, he put forward a resolution which observed that 'in the name of civil liberties' some Congressmen were advocating 'class war by violent means' (in particular by supporting strikes) and warned that 'civil liberty does not cover acts of incitement to violence or promulgation of palpable falsehood'. The resolution reaffirmed support of all measures taken by Congress governments in 'the defence of life and property' – a powerful re-assertion of the class interests Congress represented.

The provincial governments and the rise of communalism

Yet whilst the Indian ruling class was consolidating its grip on Congress, it was also sowing the seed of its own division. In accepting office in the



Partition forced millions to leave their homes



Child labour: in India today millions suffer the direst poverty

provincial governments, it started to foment the communal interests that were eventually to lead to partition.

Nowhere was this more true than in Bengal, where although Moslems were in an overall majority, land ownership and money-lending was concentrated in the hands of Hindus. Suspicion of Congress intentions amongst the Moslem peasantry had already been aroused when Congress opposed a Tenancy Act passed by the Viceroy's Legislative Council in 1928, which offered minor improvements in the rights of tenant farmers. Later, Congress politicians opposed further reforms passed by the Bengal coalition government such as a second Tenancy Act, and a Moneylenders Act in 1940 which fixed rates of interests and abolished compound interest. For the Bengal peasantry, Congress appeared to be a party of the landlord and money-lender, and Hindu to boot. Meanwhile, fundamentalists of the Hindu Maha Sabha started to increase their influence on Congress as a whole when the ruling coalition rigidly enforced communal ratios in public employment, so that unemployment amongst educated Hindus started to rise.

If Congress more openly expressed the interests of a predominantly Hindu ruling class, so the Moslem League started to gain in political influence in provinces such as United Province where Congress land reforms threatened Moslem landlord interests. Although Congress was avowedly a secular organisation, the fact was that where Hindus were the predominant landlord interest Congress was seen to act in a communal way. Although there had been communal riots in the 1920s and early 1930s, these had been in periods of defeat and of a very limited scale. Thus at Chaura Chaura in 1922, where two peasants were hanged for their part in burning down the police station, one had been a Moslem and one a Hindu. Communalism as a political trend was able to predominate only once the revolutionary nationalist position had been isolated and destroyed.

1939 and the outbreak of war

1939 saw the complete eclipse of any opposition within Congress as Gandhi continued his drive to purge the organisation. Subhas Chandra Bose had been elected Congress President unopposed in 1938; he decided to stand again in 1939 alleging that members of the Congress Working Committee, its de-facto leadership, were preparing to compromise over the federal component of the 1935 Constitution.

Behind this lay a refusal of Congress

to organise against the feudal Princes. Indeed, Congress policy had been to seek an alliance with the Princes to ensure a safe transition to bourgeois rule following national independence. Gandhi had told the Round Table Conference in 1931 that 'up to now the Congress has endeavoured to serve the Princes by refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs', continuing 'I feel and I know that they have the interests of their subjects at heart...I wish them well; I wish them all prosperity.' Whether or not Congress should organise in the Princely States, where one in five Indians lived, had been debated in 1937 and 1938 and rejected. With the federal component of the Constitution giving great weight to Prince's nominees, Congress strategy was to appease them in the hope that they would support self-government.

Unexpectedly, Bose won the presidency against Gandhi's nominee in January 1939. 12 out of 15 Working Committee members resigned immediately. At its March Congress in Tripuri, the old guard moved a resolution defending the Working Committee, and demanding that Bose as President appoint one which reflected Gandhi's wishes. The resolution was passed, with Nehru and the CSP abstaining, but CPI delegates voting in favour. Gandhi refused then to co-operate with Bose in selecting the Working Committee, and thereby forced his resignation. Gandhi's dictatorship over Congress was now total.

In autumn 1939, Congress provincial governments resigned in protest at the Viceroy's unilateral declaration of war on Germany. This created an opportunity for British imperialism to develop its alliance with the Moslem League and force through the division within the Indian ruling class. Under Mohammed Jinnah's leadership, the Moslem League had transformed itself from a moribund organisation dominated by the Moslem landlords and titled gentry in the mid-1930s to an organisation that claimed over 100,000 members, and which was now supported by virtually all the Moslem bourgeoisie and upper middle class. The League celebrated the Congress governmental resignations as Deliverance Day, and offered its support to the British war effort, receiving British funds for its paper *Dawn* as a reward.

Yet until this point the League had not adopted any position distinct from Congress on the nature of an independent India. A combination of British pressure and the fears of the Moslem section of the ruling class made the acceptance of partition inevitable. At the end of 1940, the League formally adopted the demand for a separate

state - Pakistan, to include the Punjab, Kashmir and Baluchistan. Only later was Bengal thrown in for good measure: although it had a Moslem majority, it did not include the sort of landlord interest amongst whom the League could organise.

The Cripps Mission and the Quit India movement

Although its war effort was supported by both the Moslem League and the Princely States, British imperialism still needed to reach an accommodation with Congress if it were to use India's resources in the fight to defend its empire. Negotiations proved fruitless, particularly after Churchill's coup in May 1940. By the end of the year, most of the Congress leadership was back in gaol as a result of a very limited non-cooperation campaign. In August 1941, Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter with US President Roosevelt guaranteeing the right of nations to self-determination, whilst declaring that this provision did not apply to the British Empire in general, and to India in particular.

However, the situation was transformed by Japan's declaration of war and invasion of Malaya in December 1941. On 7 March 1942, the Burmese capital of Rangoon fell as British power collapsed like a pack of cards. An invasion of Bengal was now a very real threat. In these circumstances, Congress support for the war effort had now become vital, and its leaders were released from gaol. On 11 March the Cabinet sent out Sir Stafford Cripps, a prominent left-wing member of the Labour Party to negotiate a solution with Congress.

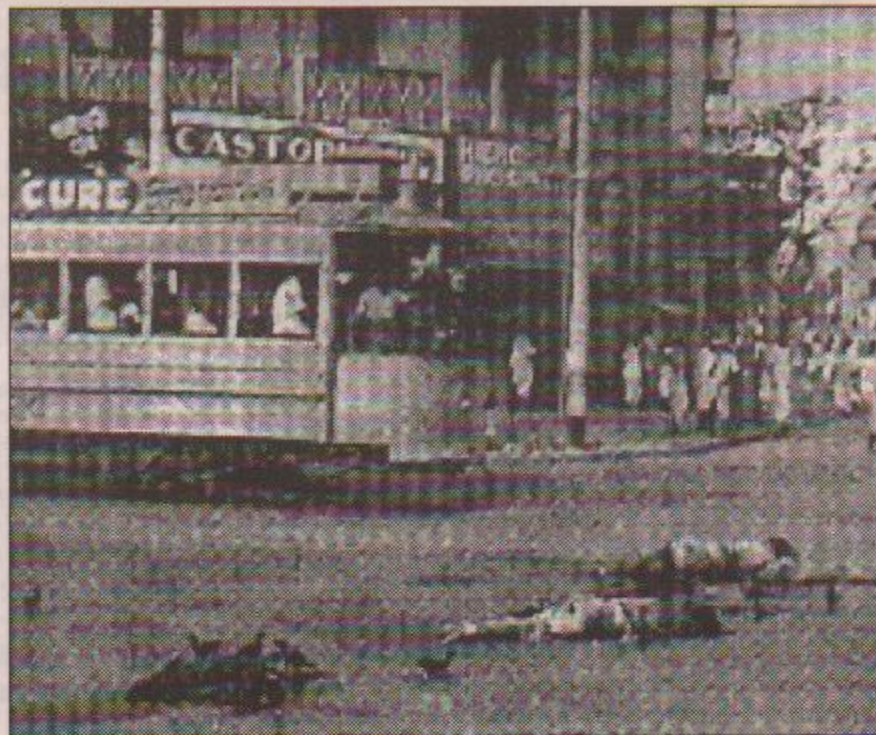
Cripps' proposals however offered no significant advance. Self-government as a British Dominion would be possible - after the war. But there was a significant exception: any part or province of India which did not want to enter a future Indian union could form a Dominion on its own account. This was a let-out clause both for the

However, Congress itself was now in a weak position. Its whole strategy had been based on destroying mass movements rather than creating them. But it had to do something since it was in danger of being outflanked by Subhas Bose, who had left India and was now raising an army of volunteers from regulars captured by the Japanese in Burma and Malaya - the Indian National Army (INA). For many, it seemed that here was the force which would at last drive the British out of India. In desperation, Congress launched the Quit India movement in August 1941, with Gandhi exhorting its supporters to 'do or die'. Within three months it had been defeated by a combination of savage repression and communal and other political divisions. Tens of thousands were arrested; official claims of 900 deaths at the hands of the police and troops were countered by Congress claims that up to 10,000 were killed. Later, a famine in Bengal in 1943 caused in part by a scorched earth policy operated by the British Army was to cost at least a million lives: starvation, cholera, malaria and small pox were rampant in Calcutta even in 1945.

The Quit India movement itself was opposed, not just by the Moslem League, but also by the Hindu Maha Sabha. However, they were not alone: crucially, the campaign was opposed by the CPI, which had recovered much of its earlier strength, and others on the left and in the trade union movement. Together, they were able to prevent the working class from playing any significant role in the campaign, and contributed to its early defeat. Never again did Congress attempt to organise a mass civil disobedience campaign: it no longer had the troops to do it.

Towards partition

With the Congress leadership once more in gaol, the Moslem League was free to consolidate its position in the provincial legislatures which still functioned. Bose's popularity was



Calcutta riots - 5000 were killed in the space of three days

larger Princely States and for the League's proposed Pakistan, and would lead to the Balkanisation of India. Any new Indian constitution would be framed by an electoral college, one part drawn from representatives of the Provincial Assemblies and elected on the restricted 1935 franchise, the other from delegates appointed by the Princes in proportion to the population of the Princely States. Hence the Moslem League and the Princely States could not only decide on the constitution, they could then decide whether they wanted to abide by it. Yet Congress was prepared to concede on all these points - what finally led it to reject the Cripps plan was the British refusal to allow an Indian War Minister into the Viceroy's Executive Council with anything beyond responsibility for supplies. Cripps flew back to London at the end of March with nothing.

never seriously tested, since the INA only fought in a very limited number of engagements. Meanwhile the Indian working class was kept in check by the CPI's and the trade unions' opposition to any industrial action. The Indian Army itself grew from 175,000 to over two million. Indian troops were used in the Middle East, in Greece in 1944/45 to suppress the ELAS freedom movement, and later in Viet Nam against the Viet Minh and in Indonesia in an attempt to restore Dutch colonial rule.

At the end of the war, the Congress leaders were released as the newly-elected Labour government sought to re-open negotiations on self-government. Elections took place in March 1946 to a constituent assembly and the provincial legislatures, still on the privileged bourgeois franchise of 1935. In the Central Assembly, Congress won 57 general seats, and although the Moslem League won all 30 Moslem

seats, it was still unable to form a majority government in any province, not even in those it had designated to be part of a future Pakistan.

Yet time was not on the side of either British imperialism or the Indian ruling class, for, despite their careful efforts to prevent it, a movement of the working class and oppressed suddenly exploded into life. The spark was the British attempt to put former members of the INA on trial. Huge demonstrations in protest at the end of 1945 found Congress leaders alongside leaders of the Moslem League in Calcutta; subsequent rioting was put down with the loss of 33 lives. A further general strike on 11 February 1946 followed the sentencing of a former INA officer: this time 84 were killed. Suddenly it appeared that the entire communal edifice the British had prepared was in danger of collapsing.

Ten days after the second general strike in Calcutta, the Indian Navy mutinied on the other side of the country in Bombay. The following day there was a general strike throughout the city as it fell into the people's hands. The British called on both Congress and the Moslem League for support in ending the insurrection. Jinnah urged Moslem sailors to end their participation, but his communal appeal went unheard. It required the Congress leadership and Gandhi to urge surrender before the strike committee called a halt; Gandhi himself directly attacked the strikers saying that 'a combination between Hindus and Moslems and others for the purpose of violent action is unholy'. 228 people died at the hands of British troops.

By early summer 1946, India was becoming ungovernable. Viceroy Wavell urged the Labour government to form a central government with Congress support so that Congress 'would put down the communists and try to curb their own left wing'. But the division within the Indian ruling class was preventing any progress towards a negotiated solution, with Congress holding out against Moslem League demands for partition. In an effort to bolster their position vis-a-vis Congress, the League called for a Direct Action Day on 16 August 1946. With the British turning a blind eye to the inevitable consequences, communal riots broke out in Calcutta which turned into a mass blood-letting: 5,000 were killed in the space of three days.

The Calcutta killings were to prove a turning point. Communal riots started to spread throughout the country, and by early 1947 they had become endemic. This brief flowering of the revolutionary movement was destroyed, as the key political issue became how the rival ruling class interests would carve up the sub-continent between them. Partition had become inevitable, and the arrival of Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy in March 1947 with a brief to negotiate independence for August 1948 showed a complete under-estimation of the depth of antagonism that now existed.

In an effort to contain the situation, the Labour Government agreed to bring forward independence to 15 August 1947. The Princes were forced to make a choice between Pakistan and India. Two of the largest states held out: Kashmir and Hyderabad. A boundary commission was set up to decide the borders both to the east, in the Punjab in particular, and to the west in Bengal. It reported in six weeks: its ruling in relation to the Punjab resulted in the bloodiest massacres - perhaps half a million people died in the ensuing conflict. Both Kashmir and Hyderabad were swiftly incorporated into India. The sub-continent had been saved for imperialism, but at an appalling human cost both then and now. As we wrote at the end of our previous article, 'there is no more savage indictment of Labour than in its crushing of the Indian struggle of 1928-31...it destroyed any chance of the Indian working class playing a significant role in the Indian liberation movement. Its legacy lives with the people of the Indian sub-continent today. ■'

ORGANISE WITH

frfi

FRFI readers' groups are now taking place on a regular basis in Blackburn, Leicester, Lincoln and London. The first meeting in Edinburgh is planned (see ad) and a series is being organised for Manchester. We are also getting people together to launch them in Brighton and Bristol. Meetings have started to generate a lot of interest, with discussions on the fight against low pay and on the Labour Party featuring prominently. With supporters active in setting up support groups for Nigel Cook and Rock around the Blockade societies, there is a lot to discuss. As important is the need to ensure new comrades get a thorough understanding of the principles of Marxism, and groups have started to address this as well. So if you are in an area of the country where there is not yet a readers' group, write, e-mail or phone us and we will work with you to get one going.

Fighting capitalist lies...

Forthcoming Readers & Supporters Group Meetings

LEICESTER

FRFI Readers and Supporters Groups are held on Saturdays from 1.30-3.30pm at St Peter's Tenants Association, 112 Melbourne Road (in St Peter's Shopping Centre), Leicester. The next meetings will be 4 October (discussion on Che Guevara), 1 November, 15 November, 29 November.

BLACKBURN

Monday 6 October, 7.30pm
Central Library, Blackburn (Contact Manchester RCG at Dept 4, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW for further details)

LONDON

Wednesday 15 October: The politics of Che
Wednesday 29 October: Black people in Britain: race and class. Both at 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube)

EDINBURGH

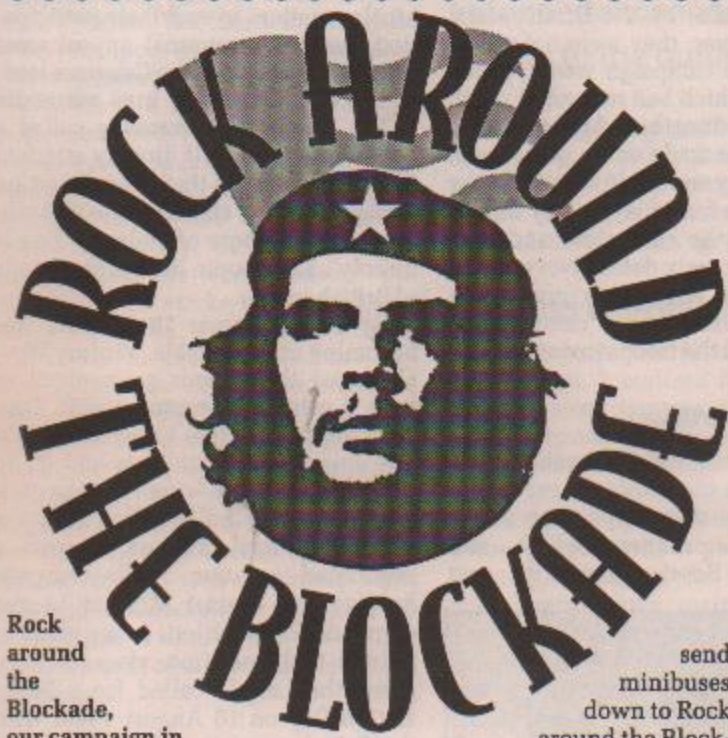
Thursday 30 October, 7.30pm Stewart's Bar, Burns Room, Drummond Street (off South Bridge), Edinburgh

For information on meetings in other cities or to help set one up in your area:

Write to us at BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

Phone us on 0171-837-1688

E-mail us at rcgfrfi@easynet.co.uk



Rock around the Blockade, our campaign in solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, is launching its new project for the coming period at colleges and meetings around the country. Over the next 18 months we will be raising funds for a sound system - our third - requested by the Cuban Union of Young Communists (UJC), to help them in their political and ideological work with the young people of Cuba. The details are yet to be finalised, but will target young Cubans in either the Escambray mountains around Sancti Spiritus or the Oriente region near the Sierra Maestra. We will send small groups of activists out there over the next 18 months - in particular to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution on 1 January, 1999. If you are interested in working hard in solidarity with Cuba and being part of this project - contact the campaign now!

The 11 Rock around the Blockade delegates to the World Festival in Cuba and three RCG members who attended the globalisation conference called by the Cuban Trade Union Congress this summer have returned with rekindled energy and commitment. We have held successful stalls at Freshers' Fayres at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston, Manchester University and Manchester Metropolitan, the University of Middlesex and University College, London, and Leicester University and activities continue in Bristol and Brighton.

Our student society at Manchester University now has 40 members, and is organising to

ently met Fidel Castro. There are also many active students at Manchester Met, who hope to set up a student society soon. A reportback meeting on the World Festival for the whole of the northwest region is planned.

The Bristol Cuba Vive Society, which sent two members to the World Festival, is continuing to work closely with hiphopjazzfunklatin band Up, Bustle and Out, including helping them arrange venues for their forthcoming tour, and has a benefit for Cuba planned for 24 October. Below, we review their new CD, dedicated to the memory of Che Guevara and produced with help from Helen and Hannah of Rock around the Blockade.

This year is the 30th anniversary of the death of Che Guevara. Rock around the Blockade is organising a torchlit commemoration on 8 October on the steps of St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London. With music from singer Ken Hughes and Brazilian samba group Batucada Mandela, speakers from the Cuban Embassy and struggles going on in Britain today, readings from Che's work and solidarity messages from those fighting imperialism around the

world, this will be an event not to be missed! A meeting, 'Che Guevara and the fight for socialism' with a speakers from the Socialist Labour Party who attended the World Festival and Trevor Rayne from the RCG, who attended the CTC conference, and a salsa evening to celebrate the life of Che are also being held in Leicester.

On 18 October, we will be marching on the demonstration called by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign against the US blockade. Our contingent will be highlighting the gains of Cuban socialism and the communist example of Che Guevara: bring whistles, banners, placards and friends and join us.

Rock around the Blockade will be continuing its work in support of the Cuban Revolution and actively opposing the US blockade and the intensifying US aggression against Cuba, and relating that to the struggles that face the working class here in Britain today. To give Cuba the solidarity it deserves, we need you to get involved. Join in the activities in your area - or set up your own Rock around the Blockade student society, organise a meeting or a street stall, get active, get involved. Contact: Rock around the Blockade c/o FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX or tel: 0171 837 1688 to find out what you can do to help Cuba.

Up, Bustle and Out: new release

■ EP Dream of Land and Freedom, Ninja Tune 1997, ZENCDS60

The CD opens with the voice of Che Guevara rising from behind the sounds of a tropical night and the pulsing of a helicopter, praising the ideals which drove the Cuban revolution. Latin drums entwined with melodic flute jazzed up by keyboard till the drums strum out the funk. The gritty voice of a woman revolutionary sails over the rhythms with a chorus of 'a dream of land and freedom'...the music fades, leaving Che vowing to defend the Revolution. Spanish guitar, a stomping dance beat, electronic waves. Once again, the woman's voice summons 'a dream of land and freedom'. The music fades to Che's condemnation of neo-colonialism and imperialism, then rises to the reproachful testament of a Bolivian woman denouncing US influence in her land. Dream of Land and Freedom takes you on an exploration of Latin America, feeding you the desolation and determination of its people, while the irresistible rhythms force you to move and stomp to the drums that carry them. This CD comes highly recommended.

Helen, Cuba Vive Society, Bristol

Cuba international workers' meeting attacks globalisation

In Havana, Cuba, from 6-8 August, 1,200 participants from over 300 trade union and organisations and 60 countries met to discuss the impact of neo-liberalism and globalisation on workers throughout the world with the intention of organising a co-ordinated programme of action against it. The RCG sent three delegates.

The main concern of the conference was to arrive at a co-ordinated, minimum international programme of action 'against the causes and the consequences of neo-liberal globalisation through a united and organised trade union struggle.' It was a task not without difficulties given the political divisions between trade unionists in all countries and, most significantly, the impact on the workers' movements and trade unions of the division of the world into imperialist and non-imperialist states. 29 amendments were made to a resolution, presented for discussion at the conference.

The anti-capitalist orientation of the final resolution is unmistakable but it fell short of a stronger socialist anti-imperialist position that many delegates sought. The co-sponsoring committee argued that this was necessary to 'preserve the pluralistic and open-minded spirit that should characterise our action.' The resolution was passed with an overwhelming consensus.

The programme of action had to take into account the diversity of the strongest contingents at the conference - the Latin American and Caribbean representatives. Brazilian workers, alone, were represented by nearly 100 organisations. Many workers' organisations in Latin America are emerging from a period of military dictatorship. They represent a bastion of opposition to neo-liberalism and a clear base of support for the Cuban revolution against US imperialism. The conference needed to mobilise these forces and felt this was possible through a minimum programme designed to create maximum support.

The trade unionists from Third World countries detailed the crimes of imperialism and the devastating impact that neo-liberal globalisation has on their people. The courage and determination of these workers' organisations, given the repression they face, was inspiring.

We had serious disagreements

with other British trade union delegates. In our contributions, RCG delegates pointed out the impact of Britain as an imperialist power on dividing the working class movement and its organisations. Other trade union delegates, who claimed to speak on behalf of British workers, totally submerged the reality of Britain as an imperialist power and the real record of the Labour and trade union movement in national and international matters. At times the British contribution was both dishonest and embarrassing. Bob Quick from Unison claimed to represent not only over 1m workers in Unison but, as trade union officer of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, the millions of workers in the 20 trade unions affiliated to that campaign. He did not mention the struggle of the Hillingdon hospital workers. He totally exaggerated the conditions that workers suffer in Britain... 'total destruction of workers' rights...', 'extreme right wing government', 'mass unemployment' etc. This was a common feature of contributions from delegates from imperialist countries and rather disingenuous when compared to the conditions of workers and peasants in much of the Third World. Most preposterous of all was a very indulgent contribution from Roxanne from the Scottish TUC who claimed that the new Scottish Assembly would put 'social justice and anti-imperialism' at the top of the agenda of a new devolved government.

The conference reinforced the need for communists in imperialist countries to engage in debate on the crucial question of the impact of imperialism on the working class in the imperialist countries, to point out the limited nature of trade union struggle and the complicity of many trade unions with the aims of imperialism in terms of jobs, living standards, investments, imperialist mobilisations and anti-socialist politics. This is important for the international movement if new alliances are to be built between workers and their organisations in imperialist and oppressed nations. The RCG will have the opportunity to make some of these points to a conference we have been invited to by the Communist Party of Cuba to pay homage to Che Guevara, 'Socialism towards the 21st Century', in Havana, 21-23 October 1997.

Coming events

LEICESTER

Saturday 11 October
Meeting: Che Guevara and the fight for socialism
The Rainbow and Dove, St Georges Way, Leicester, 7.30pm
Speakers: Trevor Rayne FRFI/RCG and Thea Hult (delegate to recent World Festival of Youth and Students) followed by
Social: Celebrate the life of Che
Cuban, Latino and salsa music at The Attik freehouse (off Halford St), Leicester. 10pm till late.
Entrance £2 (all proceeds to UJC Cuban youth project)
For further details tel: RCG 0171 837 1688 or SLP 0116 212 8266

LINCOLN

Monday 13 October
Visiting Cuban student Evaristo Sierra Utria addresses Lincoln Cuba Solidarity Campaign meeting at the University of Lincolnshire. Contact the campaign for further details.

PRESTON

University of Central Lancashire Student Society Public Meeting
Saturday 4 October, Vernon Gallery, Vernon Street 2.30-5.30pm
With Cuban student leader Evaristo Sierra Utria. Chair Father Geoffrey Bottoms, Preston & Blackburn CSC

University of Central Lancashire Student Society campaign meeting
Wednesday 15 October, 7.30pm, Adelphi Pub.

BRISTOL

Up, Bustle & Out benefit for Cuba Vive! Society Friday 24 October
Contact the campaign for details

LONDON

IN MEMORY OF CHE
Rock around the Blockade torchlit rally to mark the 30th anniversary of the death of Che Guevara
Wednesday 8 October, 6.30pm
Steps of St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square
Speeches * music * socialism

Hands off Cuba! Demonstration

called by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign
Saturday 18 October
Join the Rock around the Blockade contingent and march in defence of Cuban socialism! Meet 11.30am, Tea Pavilion, Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park.

Campaign meetings are held regularly in London on alternate Mondays at 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube: Holborn). Next meetings: 6 October, 20 October, 3 November,

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 trapped - women in particular - 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.

► 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 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. 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.

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LETTERS

write to FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX

e-mail: rcgrfi@easynet.co.uk

With friends like these...

I attended the Hillingdon Women Strikers Conference in July and was appalled to hear a motion put forward by the London Region Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Unison (CFDU) - essentially a Socialist Party (Militant Tendency, as was) front. In this motion, they first list the victories of the strikers against Pall Mall (the company who sacked the women and which has now lost the tender for the domestics at Hillingdon Hospital). They go on to condemn the withdrawal of official backing for the strike by Unison NEC in January, and the support given to the NEC position from the Unison National Delegate Conference.

So far so good, but they conclude from this that there is now 'no prospect of securing official backing from Unison for the dispute, and this will inevitably have a negative effect on fundraising and building solidarity for the dispute. There is currently no prospect of spreading industrial action against the

employers in order to secure the reinstatement of the strikers'. They would like us to remember the important lessons learned from the struggle and they call for a campaign to fight for the repeal of all anti-union legislation, and to lobby the TUC and Labour Party conferences to this end. They end by pledging to continue to support the women whether they choose to end the strike or not.

The Hillingdon Women are at the forefront of the fight against low pay and casualisation. They have stood firm for two years, fighting back against the sexist, racist and anti-working class establishment who want them to go quietly so that they can get on with their exploitation of workers, and the women have had to do this mostly without the support of Unison. If we took the attitude of the CFDU and argued that all struggles that do not have 'official' union recognition would be better wound up, we would be betraying the working class. If the Liverpool

dockers' campaign were not so big and well-known, perhaps the CFDU would be calling for the end of that struggle, too.

I call on all progressive people to support the Hillingdon Women on their day of action on 1 October to mark the second anniversary of their strike. We must make common cause with the multitude of struggles taking place around the country, and abroad for working class rights, decent working conditions and against poverty pay and exploitation. The unions must be involved in this struggle, and all those people working within unions must continue to support those struggles which their leadership chooses to ignore.

Victory to the Hillingdon Women!
Victory to the Liverpool Dockers!
Victory to the Reinstate Nigel Cook Campaign!

BERTHA MARSH
North London

No pasaran!

A former brigadista on Rock around the Blockade's *No Pasaran!* brigade last December, this summer during the World Youth Festival in Havana I had the privilege of hearing a group of octogenarian Cuban Internationalist Brigadistas speak to today's youth about their experience of international struggle. As they entered the hall, they were given a standing ovation that abated only when it was clear they needed to be allowed to sit down. Incredibly, they were as deeply moved by their reception as we were by their

modestly related accounts. One after another, they humbly claimed to have merely done their duty as internationalists.

Not only had they been involved in the clandestine struggle against Batista's dictatorship while in Cuba, they had also raised funds for the crossing, travelled by a roundabout route to France and either passed into Spain with forged passports or, if their skin colour meant they couldn't pass as Europeans, had had to cross the high passes of the Pyrenees by foot, a freezing five-day ordeal. Some were captured and sent to concentration camps, others were killed. If they managed to survive the war, they had to return by an even

more complicated route via Mexico and try to evade persecution by Batista once home. But all were proud of what they did.

One of them, aged 83, greeting the comrades, said: 'I won't tell you my story, I will only say that in that day the duty of any young person was to go to Spain to fight for the Republic. I will tell you, the young people of the world, that you are the ones who have to take the fight forward. We are almost in the 21st century: you are the ones who have the strength to face the struggles that are to come.'

ZOE GREEN
Havana, Cuba

Letter from death row

Zolo Agona Azania has been on death row in the USA since 1982 when he was convicted of murdering a Gary, Indiana, police officer during a bank robbery, a murder he did not commit. In 1993 the Indiana State Supreme Court found that there were violations in the way he was prosecuted. They set aside the sentence but not the conviction and referred him back to court for a new sentence hearing. He has sent FRFI this letter:

My name is Zolo Agona Azania. I am an accomplished artist, painter and self-published writer. I have more than 20 years experience as a freelance writer and visual artist, have illustrated books and my essays and articles have appeared in progressive magazines, newspapers and journals world-wide. While I was confined in the county jail the sheriff and his employees went to extreme lengths to jeopardise my safety. I am constantly subjected to invidious harassment and ethnic discrimination, even though I have never been disruptive, assaulted anyone or breached their so-called security.

An atmosphere of racial hostility made it impossible for me to have a

fair trial. The sheriff, also helped the prosecutors subvert my legal defence by exerting political pressure on my expert witnesses and made them abandon my case under the threat of losing their regular county jobs!

On 12 February 1996 the jury selection process started for my retrial on the sentence only. The trial judge had me shackled during the trial in the presence of the all-white jury. On 20 February the jury went out to deliberate. The judge improperly influenced them against me. The court bailiff spoke to the jurors in the deliberation room on the orders of the judge and said they should be ready to be asked individually to state that their verdict is death. They were then called back into the court room. I was fortunate to find out about this ex parte communication and the foreman of the jury gave a sworn affidavit confirming it. The jury were allowed to consume alcohol during the trial. African people were systematically excluded from selection; whole sections of Fort Wayne, where non-whites lived, were nixed. The director of Allen County Court and the prosecutor, among others, blamed the problem on a computer glitch but

racial discrimination is an integral part of the political process and it is very unlikely that this is a coincidence.

On 18 March 1996 the judge accepted the jury's recommendation and sentenced me to the death penalty again. My appeal process starts all over. My legal defence has been mishandled by court-appointed lawyers for 16 years. I am poor and without the necessary means to buy justice. I would like your help to get the word out about my plight. No matter how long it may take, I will continue to fight back until I prove my innocence.

I am asking all concerned for human rights to write to the following people on my behalf, demanding I am safe, unharmed and granted immediate release from imprisonment (refer to Case No. 02500-8808-PC-751): Randall T Shephard, Chief Judge, Supreme Court of Indiana, 217 State House, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204, USA; Frank O'Bannon, Governor, Office of the Governor of Indiana, State House, Room 206, State House, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204, USA; Senator William E Alexa, 14 Indiana Avenue, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383, USA.

Thank you,
ZOLO AGONA AZANIA (#4969), Indiana State Prison, PO Box 41, Michigan City, Indiana 46361-0041, USA

Release Josephine Hayden

I write to inform your readers about the plight of Josephine Hayden, who is the only woman political prisoner in the 26 Counties. Josephine, who is a member of the Republican women's organisation Cumann na mBan, suffered a heart attack in Limerick Prison on 7 June. Despite being seriously ill, she was removed from Limerick Regional Hospital back to Limerick Prison just seven days later. The decision to move her back to prison so soon is deplorable. Her cell

is on the third floor, and she is expected to walk up and down stairs. The expert medical advice given by the cardiologist at the hospital was that climbing stairs would be very bad for her and she needed to be on the ground floor. The weakness in her condition was indicated by the fact that she could not have a necessary angiogram for four weeks in order to build up her strength sufficiently.

Republican Sinn Fein calls on all concerned individuals and groups

outside of the 26 Counties to protest to the embassies and consuls of the 26 County state and call for the immediate release on humanitarian grounds of Josephine Hayden. Readers can also contact her by writing to the following address: Josephine Hayden, Republican prisoner, Limerick Prison, Mulgrave Street, Limerick, Ireland.

STEPHEN COYLE
Francis Hughes Cumann, Glasgow

CHOOSE THE

RCG

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

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

I would like to join an FRFI Readers & Supporters Group

Name _____

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Tel _____

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In FRFI 137 (June/July issue) the date given in the letter 'China and Afghanistan' by Jonathan Cohen on p15, the date given for the launch of war against Vietnam by China should have read 1979, not 1989.

MEETINGS AND EVENTS

FUASCALT - Irish Political Prisoners Campaign

- holds regular pickets of Downing Street in London to demand the immediate transfer and release of all Irish POWs on the first Sunday of every month from 12-1.30pm. Next picket Sunday 5 October. (Tubes: Westminster Charing Cross)

Anti-Fascist Action

RALLY AND PICKET

to protest against banning of AFA conference by Camden Irish Centre Sunday 5 October 4pm, Camden Irish Centre, Murray Street, London NW1

South Asia Solidarity Group

Conference: Identity, globalisation and people's movements Weekend 18/19 October, all day School of Oriental and African Studies, Malet Street, London WC1. £10 waged, £3 students, low waged and unwaged Tel/fax: 0171 713 7907 for further details.

London Socialist Film Co-Op

Sunday 19 October

Michael Chanan introduces a selection of films made by Cuban Santiago Alvarez

Now (Cuba 1965, 7 mins), Hanoi, Tuesday 13th (Cuba 1967, 38 minutes), LBJ (Cuba 1968, 18 minutes), Fidel Speaks (Cuba 1982, 18 minutes). Also present will be a representative of the FEU, the Cuban student movement.

Sunday 16 November

Black Athena (Britain 1991, 50 minutes) Discussion led by author Robert Young. Both at 1.30 for 2pm at the Lux Centre, Hoxton Square, London N1 (tube Old Street). £4.50, concessions £4.

For full details of the London Socialist Film Co-Op's 1997/98 season or to join the Co-Op contact Chris at 6, Cromer House, Cromer Street, London WC1H 8DB Tel/fax: 0171 278 8394 or mobile 0973 278 956

Prison Writing competition

Prison Writing is published work for original, unpublished work with prizes of £60, £40 and £20 in the following categories:

Short story (up to 3,500 words); non-fiction - opinion, anecdotal, autobiographical (up to 3,500 words); poetry (up to six poems of any length)

Entry is free to all prisoners in Britain and Ireland. Entries must be accompanied by an entry form from prison education departments or send an SAE to: The Editor, Prison Writing, PO Box 478, Sheffield S3 8YX. The closing date is 16 January 1998. Results and winning entries will be published in the spring edition of Prison Writing.

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**FIGHT
RACISM**

FIGHT IMPERIALISM

I was sacked by M&S Packaging (Blackburn) Ltd for organising a union. My legal right to have my case heard at an industrial tribunal was denied me because M&S is in administration. This allows insolvent companies to carry on trading so they can pay off their debts to other companies.

It was the same Judge Raskin who put the administration order on M&S Packaging and it was clear from the beginning of the hearing that I was onto a loser.

She opened my hearing by questioning whether I had the right to go to an industrial tribunal because I had not been employed for two years. When my barrister informed her that I did indeed qualify, as I was clearly sacked for trade union activities, she appeared to find it quite novel that someone employed for three months should have such a right.

I was not allowed to speak at the hearing as it was of an 'interlocutory nature' where only sworn affidavit evidence is taken.

Counsel representing the administrators submitted five affidavits, all of which contained distorted accounts of events, unproven allegations and lies. It is quite telling when we see exactly who wrote these statements.

David McCarthy: owner of M&S and UK Recruitment. Formerly employed by PolyGram and now production manager at M&S.

Christine Horridge: a notorious shift supervisor at M&S.

Shaun Donnelly: manager of UK Recruitment and McCarthy's chauffeur.

Barbara Leigh: UK Recruitment employee and partner of Donnelly.

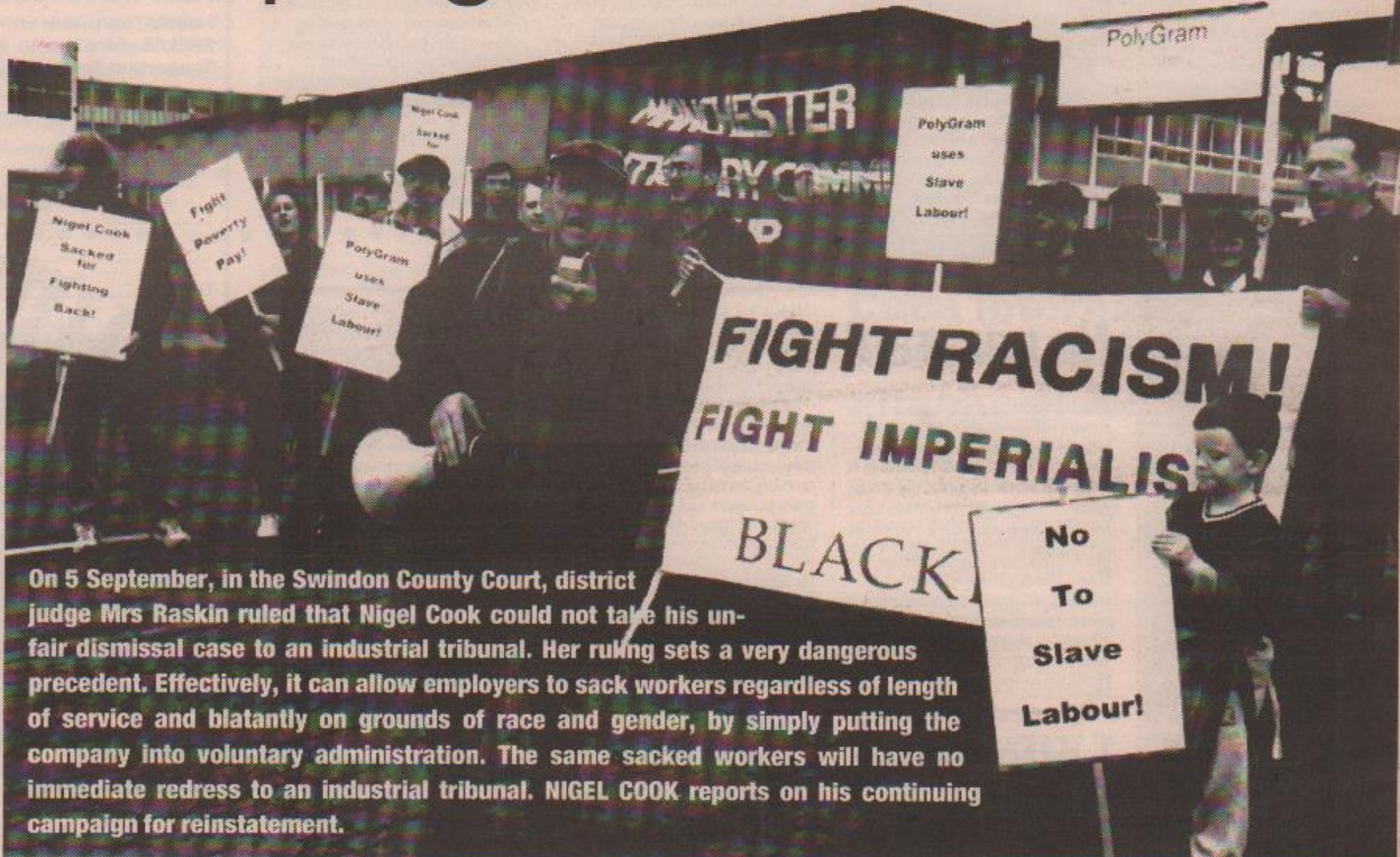
John Munn: court-appointed administrator, who boasted that current legislation allowed him to sack me without giving reasons.

All these statements were submitted late and left me only two days to reply. It was impossible to contact any of my former colleagues at M&S or UK Recruitment in order to get their statements on the true nature of events so as to refute the wild and untruthful accusations made against me.

PolyGram is the sole customer of M&S. Sited within yards of each other, M&S packs CDs for PolyGram. It was this cosy relationship that was used as the argument against me.

It was argued that if I were to get my job back, PolyGram might well find another outfit to do its packing. They even produced a letter (prompted by an article I had written about sweatshop conditions at M&S - see FRFI 137) from a PolyGram man-

Fighting poverty pay - the Nigel Cook campaign continues



On 5 September, in the Swindon County Court, district judge Mrs Raskin ruled that Nigel Cook could not take his unfair dismissal case to an industrial tribunal. Her ruling sets a very dangerous precedent. Effectively, it can allow employers to sack workers regardless of length of service and blatantly on grounds of race and gender, by simply putting the company into voluntary administration. The same sacked workers will have no immediate redress to an industrial tribunal. NIGEL COOK reports on his continuing campaign for reinstatement.

ager informing M&S that 'Mr Cook... will not be allowed on PolyGram premises.' Munn, the administrator, further reinforced this line in his sworn affidavit when he stated 'The mere presence of Mr Cook on the site is likely to antagonise PolyGram'. He also declared that 'if Mr Cook... is reinstated, the effects... will be catastrophic.' This belies the efforts of PolyGram to publicly distance itself from my sacking. In a recent letter, their head of corporate communications claims: 'PolyGram has no ownership or direction of M&S Packaging... so its employment and remuneration policies are not within our control... the welfare of workers at M&S Packaging is entirely the responsibility of the management there.'

So what is PolyGram's problem?

Perhaps they don't want the razzmatazz, glitzy image of the hip rich and fashionable music industry to be tarnished by the miserable slave conditions used to package their lucrative wares.

PolyGram is a multinational company operating in 40 countries. It is one of the three biggest record producers and music publishers and distributors in the world. Its list of artists reads like the attendance list at a royal funeral: Elton John, Luciano Pavarotti, Sting, Celine Dion, Spice Girls etc. It continues to make millions from artists now dead - Bob Marley, Marvin Gaye - and is currently producing 150,000 copies per day of Elton John's song for Princess Diana, *Candle in the Wind*, described as the 'best-selling song of all time'; *Candle in the Wind* is packaged by

M&S. Elton John's *Love Songs* album has sold over five million copies since 1995. PolyGram is the world's leading record company, with 34 albums selling over one million in 1996.

The UK record industry in total is worth \$2.6 billion a year. PolyGram has 25 per cent of that music market and approximately 20 per cent of worldwide music sales. Its sales for 1996 were £2.965 billion and its assets were worth £2.940 billion.

It has also moved into the film and video industry. *Sleepers* made over \$100 million in 1996. Other films include *Trainspotting*, *Dead Men Walking* and *The Eighth Day*. Its videos include *Lord of the Dance* and *Mr Bean*. Then it coins in millions on the film soundtracks of *Shine*, *Twister*, *Mission: Impossible*, *Braveheart*, *Grease* and many more.

In 1996 it paid £6.2 million to its current, and some former, board members. The same year it dispensed with 550 workers as part of a 'restructuring' of 'logistics and distribution'.

75 per cent of PolyGram's shares are owned by Philips, a multinational company that operates in over 60 countries. Its board of directors links it with other multinationals such as Unilever, Royal Dutch Shell, Total and KLM Royal Dutch Airlines.

Judge Raskin's message to these multinationals is quite clear: nothing should stop your companies amassing obscene amounts of wealth. Should workers stand up against slave labour conditions and poverty pay, the multinationals can rest assured that Raskin and her ilk can be relied upon, using a whole arsenal of laws and legal speak, to deny impoverished workers their most basic

employment rights.

While Elton John makes a song and dance about a dead princess, PolyGram continues to profit from the misery of the workers at M&S. At M&S there are still no written terms and conditions of employment. Workers have not yet received contracts promised by the administrator months ago. Casual workers are still used on 'zero-hour' contracts. One worker left and, amazingly, was overpaid. McCarthy is recouping this £120 by taking it out of the wages of the man's girlfriend. The supervisors can continue their deprived and degrading bullying with impunity. ■

The Reinstatement Nigel Cook Campaign continues to grow

Brian Dawson, a regional organiser of the Transport and General Workers Union, has told Nigel Cook that the union is considering appealing Judge Raskin's decision.

Meanwhile, supporters groups of the Reinstatement Nigel Cook Campaign (RNCC) have been set up in various parts of the country.

The London support group staged a successful picket inside PolyGram International's head office in St James's Square. The action was timed to coincide with the International Support Day for the sacked Liverpool dockers on 8 September, who are themselves fighting against victimisation and casual labour.

Campaign supporters are also leafletting outside CD outlets informing people of the appalling work conditions faced by the people who pack PolyGram's CDs and are encouraging people to send letters of protest to PolyGram management.

On 17 September, Brian Dooley, a sacked Liverpool docker, spoke alongside Nigel Cook at a public meeting in Blackburn, where PolyGram's CD-packaging plant is based. Nigel has since been invited to speak at a mass meeting of the Liverpool dockers.

The Blackburn RNCC organised a coach to the national demonstration in Liverpool for the second anniversary of the dockers' dispute on 27/28 September.

Nigel was the main speaker at a conference organised by the Bury Unemployed Workers' Centre, on casual labour and low pay.

Several trades councils have affiliated to the campaign. Branches of the TGWU, Unison and the CPSA are continuing to affiliate, as well as individuals, councillors, Preston priest Father Geoff Bottoms and many others.

Sectarian SWP

The SWP continue to refuse to support Nigel Cook's campaign, and paper sellers booed and hissed at him when he attempted to persuade them to attend the 17 September public meeting in Blackburn, making a mockery of their headline 'Fight for rights at work' in the issue they were selling at the time. They also declined the offer of seats on a coach to the 27 September demonstration for the Liverpool dockers, saying that they would be too tired to lobby the Labour Party conference the following day. In the event, there were no SWP banners on the 5,000-strong demo, and only a handful of paper sellers. With friends like these...

Mike Shnyder

**REINSTATE NIGEL COOK!
FIGHT POVERTY PAY!
NO TO SLAVE LABOUR!
END CASUALISATION!**

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Cheques payable to 'Reinstatement Nigel Cook Campaign' c/o RNCC 40-42 Abbey Street, Accrington, Lancs, BB5 1EB. Tel: 01254 679605.