

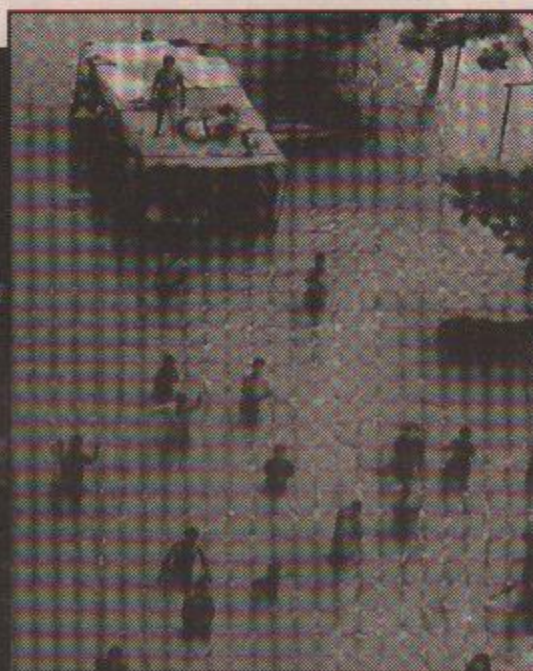
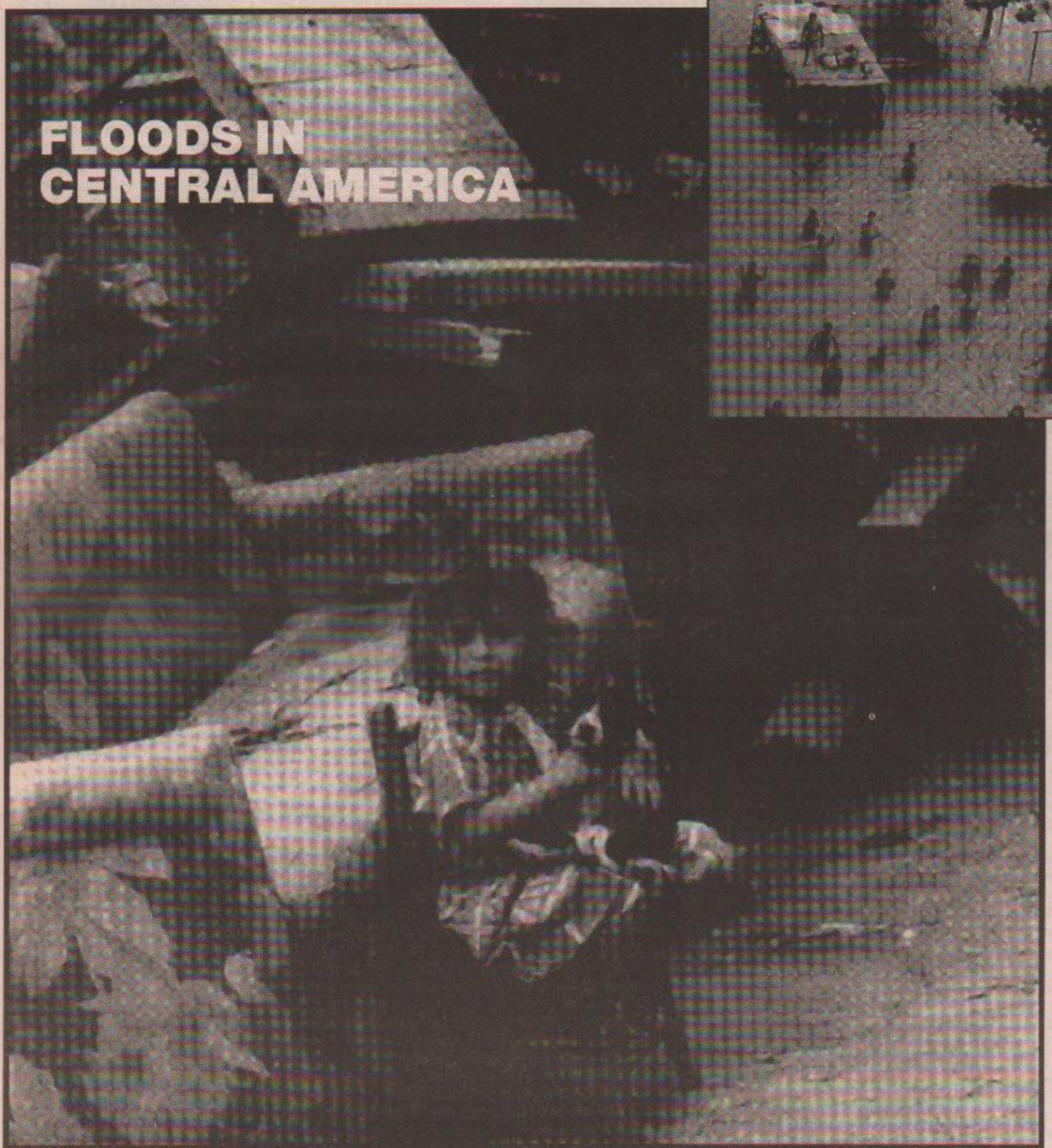
FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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DISASTER



FLOODS IN
CENTRAL AMERICA

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price
£1

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MADE BY IMPERIALISM

Iraq: warmongering Labour government

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Palestine

Wye Accord another sell-out

TREVOR RAYNE

The debasement of the Palestinian Authority under the leadership of Yasser Arafat and the shaming of the Palestinian people continues with the US-brokered Wye River Accord, signed in the USA between Israel, the USA and the Palestinian Authority in October. Long gone are the calls for the 'total liberation of Palestine'. What we have now is the Palestinian armed forces policing Palestinians in conjunction with the CIA and Israel - quite an achievement in the US plan to rule the entire Middle East.

Promoted as a land-for-security deal, the Wye Accord will leave 72% of the West Bank completely under Israeli control, 9.8% will be jointly patrolled and 18.2% will be under Palestinian control except for water, security and entrances and exits. The Palestinian areas will be fragmented, with no free passage between the separate enclaves. The Palestinian Authority is charged with ensuring the security of Israel, and the US CIA will judge issues such as extradition, combating 'terrorism' etc. Gaza airport has been opened, but all planes are to be searched by Israeli officers upon arrival and departure.

Under the Accord, 750 Palestinian prisoners are to be released. There are between 3,000 and 5,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails. Among the first batch of 250 prisoners released were 150 non-political prisoners, some of whom were due to be released anyway.

There are no safeguards against more Zionist settlements on the West Bank. Israeli Foreign Secretary Ariel Sharon declared: 'Everyone should take action, should run, should grab more hills. We'll expand the area. Whatever is seized will be ours.' Never mind that for over 50 years international law, as expressed in UN resolutions, has recognised the Palestinian right to a state, and for over 30 years Israel has been required to withdraw from the Occupied Territories.

Israel is a hired gun. It has asked the USA for \$1.25 billion to implement the Accord. This is on top of the \$1.8 billion it receives annually for weapons and \$1.2 billion for civil purposes. The USA now provides the Palestinian Authority with \$75 million a year - the Palestinian Authority hopes to raise this to \$300 million.

Since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, the PLO has done practically nothing for the 3.4 million Palestinian refugees and has sold the people remaining in Palestine out. The leadership of the PLO has the same class origins as the majority of the ruling elites in the Middle East. It has come to rely on 'clientelism', granting favours to those who show loyalty. The PLO now seeks favours in return for its loyalty to imperialism and its hideous offspring, Zionism.

Before the Remembrance poppies were removed from their button holes, Prime Minister Blair and his ministers were banging the war drums for another round of carnage in the Middle East. That so far, as in February, the attack on Iraq has been suspended should not blind anyone to the persistent violence of US and British policy against Iraq and throughout the Middle East. It is a violence inflicted in pursuit of power, profits and oil. The victims are Kurds, Palestinians, Arabs, Iranians and other working classes and peasantry of the Middle East - the oppressed. That is the reality of the Gulf, not the demon Saddam Hussein, not the search for 'weapons of mass destruction', not the mockery of a 'peace process' between Israel and the Palestinians, but war, class war, a war that is intensifying as the imperialist system slides into crisis.

'The region, from the US air base at Incirlik in Turkey, through the Middle East to the Caspian and the Gulf is becoming an American protectorate'. (Martin Walker, *The Guardian*, 16 November 1998)

Since 1983 the USA has bombed, shelled and missiled Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and Afghanistan. Its closest regional allies Israel and Turkey have killed many tens of thousands of people over the past two decades. In all of these murderous endeavours Britain has either taken part - as in stationing troops in Lebanon; providing the bases for the bombing of Libya, committing troops to the invasion of Iraq - or has given weapons, training, intelligence and diplomatic support, as with Turkey against the Kurds, so that the killings could be perpetrated. This November's mobilisation was the 29th British military intervention in the Middle East since 1945.

This constant use of violence is to control oil supplies. The Middle East contains 66.4% of the world's proven oil reserves, Iraq has 10%. Its significance has increased as Caspian Basin reserves have been brought within reach of the energy multinationals, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Control over oil gives great power to its possessor. Germany and Japan are far more dependent on Gulf oil imports than the USA. Within 12 years China is expected to become the world's biggest oil importer. US strategy in the Middle East is aimed at ensuring its pre-eminence among the capitalist powers, holding a claw on their wind-pipes, and containing China's potential. Britain seeks to preserve the regional status quo which suits its oil and arms companies, and to use its alliance with the USA to enhance its otherwise threatened global status.

With the world economy gripped by the worsening capitalist crisis, the possession of key raw materials becomes crit-

ical to intensifying inter-imperialist rivalry and the attempt to restore profitability to a level sufficient to sustain accumulation. World oil prices have fallen to about a third of the level they were during the 1990-91 Iraq crisis. BP, Shell etc are recording sharp falls in profits. The tendency for capital to over-produce relative to what can be produced profitably is affecting oil markets. In this circumstance US and British imperialism's need to strengthen their monopoly over energy supplies is increased. As the prospect of war in the Gulf grew so BP shares rose 13.5 pence on 12 November, those of Shell went up 11.25 pence and the main weapons producers British Aerospace and GEC also saw share price increases.

This is what the market, this modern deity that cannot be denied, comes down to - celebrating war!



The attack force returned to base

Outrageous Blair

In FRFI 142 in April 1998 we said that 'the USA must use violence, sooner rather than later, if its position as dominant imperial power is not to be undermined'. Leading US ruling class representatives have been straining impatiently since February to unleash an attack on Iraq. It is not so much the destruction of that country, which is already devastated, nor the removal of Saddam Hussein which primarily concerns them, but the demonstration of US power, unfettered by any other country, that is politically important and it conforms with the US and British attempt to stamp out all opposition and rivals in the region. The February build-up was treated coldly by the other European powers and the Arab states. They were seen as restraining US might.

In October the USA refused to accept a UN Security Council policy of lifting the oil embargo on Iraq, even if Iraq meets the requirement of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction. On 31 October Iraq banned weapons inspections. Eight Arab states signed a letter calling on Iraq to reach a settlement with the UN inspection team, but they did not endorse air

strikes. Even Saudi Arabia said that Iraq should be able to see an end to sanctions. On 8 November British defence secretary George Robertson visited Kuwait to get backing for an attack. Britain alone backed the USA in issuing military threats against Iraq.

Britain had three war ships in place in the Gulf for the attack, 18 Tornados and four Jaguars. The USA flew 12 B-52 bombers armed with cruise missiles and 12 F117A stealth fighters to the British island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean; an island leased to the USA and containing nuclear weapons. The stated purpose of the attack was to have been the elimination of Iraq's ability to use weapons of mass destruction. The attack would neither destroy the weapons nor the ability of Iraq to produce them. US military experts envisaged 10,000 dead civilians if the raids had been mounted.

Prime Minister Blair confirmed that he ordered the RAF to join the US bombing run on Iraq. Apparently, on 14 November, with only minutes to go before the attack force reached its target, the UN Secretary General received a faxed letter from the Iraqi government agreeing to a resumption of the inspections, with an appendix calling for an end to the embargo in return for compliance with the UN resolutions. The attack force returned to base.

Blair was outrageous in his arrogance and hypocrisy. From outside Downing Street he said, 'The Iraqi resumption of compliance must be immediate and unconditional, there can be no negotiations, no further deals, no more amendments... Our forces remain on alert to possible military action at any time without further warning.' By what license does this man speak, by what right can he attack another state without warning, without negotiations? By right of might, by the might of the USA and no other right whatsoever. Behind the claims to civilisation and democracy stands a barbarian, ruthless, vengeful, swaggering with contempt.

The war suspended, Foreign Secretary Cook called off his

planned tour of Arab states scheduled for 16 November and hosted a meeting of Iraqi opposition groups instead, conforming with the US policy of stepping up efforts to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

Blair and the Labour government are critical in defusing more vociferous European opposition to US bellicosity. Clinton and Blair repeatedly consulted each other in the period before the air strikes were launched and afterwards. Britain is central to US plans for the Middle East. Blair strikes the pose of the enthusiastic lieutenant.

Premeditated murder of a nation

The 1991 assault deposited the explosive equivalent of seven Hiroshima bombs on Iraq, killing a quarter of a million people. The World Health Organisation states that 1,211,285 children died in Iraq between August

1990 and August 1997 as a result of UN embargo-related causes; malnutrition, diarrhoea and unsafe water. Most recent estimates are that 5,700 Iraqi children die each month and one million Iraqi children are stunted from malnutrition and disease. Former Prime Minister Thatcher insisted that food and medicines be included in the UN sanctions.

The Economist, 21 November 1998, reports that food imports, agreed under the 1996 UN oil for food deal, were prevented from entering Iraq when Lloyds Register, which monitors the imports, was advised by the British government to remove its inspectors. Consequently, 75 trucks of wheat stayed at the Syrian border and 14,000 tonnes of rice sat at the docks in Umm Qasr, even though these sites were far removed from any possible military target. Perhaps, Blair felt a need to emulate Thatcher in attempting to starve a people to death.

After eight years of sanctions Iraqi annual per capita income has fallen from approximately \$4,000 to under \$330. Iraq has lost about \$120 billion in oil sales. Under the 1996 UN programme Iraq can sell limited amounts of oil for food. Some

\$3.2 billion worth has been sold in the past six months, of which \$1.1 billion has been taken in reparations for Kuwait and to pay for the UNSCOM weapons inspection team.

Former UNSCOM inspector Scott Ritter acknowledges Israel's role in the inspection process and admits that he is being investigated for spying for Israel. The US Pentagon confirmed that information provided by UNSCOM was used by the US military for target selection. Is it any wonder that Iraq keeps clashing with this UN body? It is in the name of the UN that Iraq is being murdered. The UN is being used as a mask for US and British imperial plans. How effective this mask is in stilling the consciences of those liberals and intellectuals privileged enough to be given slots in the capitalist media.

Now the US and British governments declare they are promoting groups in Iraq opposed to Saddam Hussein's regime. In September the US provided Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, and Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, with \$7.3 million to stop squabbling and attack the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party). These two wealthy feudal and capitalist warlords are now looking forward to some of the \$98 million earmarked for the Iraqi opposition by the US Iraq Liberation Act for weapons and training. The implementation of this act is under the control of the same assistant secretary of state who brokered the Barzani-Talabani deal. As they dine with British Foreign Secretary Cook, let this select band of opponents recollect the last time they were encouraged to rise up by their US and British hosts - they were blown to bits and sent running into the mountains and southern desert by the Iraqi army while the US and British governments looked on with folded arms.

The USA is left with its plans to dominate the Middle East and repel all rivals with its number one ally, Britain. Writing in the *Financial Times*, Philip Stevens remarks on Blair's stated commitment to a new European defence identity while remaining steadfastly loyal to the USA. 'Suffice it to say that had the cruise missiles and bombs rained down on Iraq, the rupture within NATO might have been as serious as any since De Gaulle expelled that organisation from Paris' (20 November 1998). Make no mistake about it, France, Italy and Germany have their own plans for the oil of the Middle East and they do not include being at the mercy of the USA and Britain.

Perfidious Albion will be stretched to greater connivance and treachery and even Blair's smile will crack. There, in all its savagery, stands a cruel and remorseless advocate of British imperialism, the war mongering British Labour Party.

Kurdistan/Turkey

Critical time for PKK

TREVOR RAYNE

Abdullah Ocalan, President of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) is seeking political asylum in Italy after arriving from Moscow on 12 November. But although Turkey has demanded his extradition, the Italian courts state that they cannot send him to a country that retains the death penalty.

With Turkish troops massing along its border, and confronted by the Israel-Turkey alliance, Syria agreed late in October to expel Ocalan and to declare the PKK a 'terrorist organisation'. Ocalan is reported to have said that he had two choices, 'going back to the mountains and fighting with the guerrillas or trying to initiate peace talks', adding in a statement 'we want to do as the Basques and the IRA. We ask for greater autonomy and freedom, respect for our language and culture and democracy as in the rest of Europe.'

The cost of 14 years of armed struggle against the Turkish state has been 37,000 people killed, 3,250 Kurdish villages

destroyed, three million Kurdish refugees driven from their homes. Thousands have been tortured, mutilated and imprisoned by a state that has rejected every suggestion of negotiation, criminalised every attempt at peaceful political organisation, imprisoned elected Kurdish MPs, attacked anyone in Turkey who suggests Kurds have rights that should be recognised and banned the Red Cross from Kurdish areas.

Turkey's war could not be sustained without the provision of credits and weapons from the USA and Europe. The British government supplies weapons and military training to the Turkish. Kurds in Britain are systematically targeted for criminalisation by police special branches. When the European spokesperson for the PKK, Kani Yilmaz, arrived in Britain in 1994 for a meeting at the Palace of Westminster, he was arrested and held first by the British government and then by the German government for 1,206 days.

The US state demands that Ocalan be sent to trial in Turkey. Italian Prime Minister



Thousands demonstrate for Ocalan in Rome

Massimo D'Alema plans to meet his British, German and French counterparts to discuss Ocalan's fate. The PKK are in the midst of a major struggle between rival imperialist interests. Sections of European capital do not accept the USA's dictate in the Middle East and are reluctant to foot Turkey's

war bill. But the Kurdish people cannot expect to be liberated from Rome or Berlin. Ocalan himself will be under pressure to retreat from the socialist positions that won the PKK the mass support of Kurdish workers and peasants.

Socialists demand an end to all military and economic sup-

port for the Turkish state, and self-determination for the Kurdish people.

Winter of TB death for Russian poor

In a cynical move, dressed in the slick garb of humanitarianism, Boris Yeltsin's government is to release prisoners suffering from tuberculosis in an attempt to control the epidemic in Russia's dilapidated prison system. According to Pavel Krashennikov, Yeltsin's Justice Minister, ten per cent of the prison population - almost 100,000 people, some still awaiting trial - have been infected while in custody of the state.

In a country wrecked by economic collapse and lacking a sufficiently-funded health service, where the working class can barely afford the essentials of life, the cynics in today's Kremlin are sentencing these prisoners - and whomever they infect - to death in the Russian winter! The poorest sections of the Russian working class cannot afford the luxuries of winter heating and a regular healthy diet, they are destitute and seen as a burden by the rulers of capitalist Russia. Now they are to be subjected to biological class warfare! Back to socialism and onward to communism!

Rory Beaton

(Source: Die Tageszeitung, 26 October 1998)

Letter from Zimbabwe

The maw of Leviathan

DAVID KITSON

Zimbabwe is lurching pell-mell into the maw of Leviathan. I thought that the Zim-dollar had really collapsed when it fell to over Z\$40 = £1 last Christmas. Now it has dropped to over Z\$60 = £1, following an oil price rise of 67%. The pundits blame the inept and corrupt government, the knock-on from the collapse of the Asian tiger economies, the caution demonstrated by foreign investors - whatever. The fact is that the decision makers here are helpless victims in the grip of social and economic forces they do not understand - to coin a phrase.

Tired of waiting for the implementation of the Land Acquisition Act, peasants everywhere are marching onto commercial farms and taking over land they regard as lands of their forefathers. Last week they took another ten farms which they shared out and succeeded in planting while the state dithered about incurring the displeasure of the IMF over violations of the sanctity of private property. The farm owners, whose forebears took the land by force a few generations back, have gone to court to stop these transgressions. Meanwhile the police have been instructed to take no action against the peasants, for fear of unleashing a real storm. The invasion by communal farmers around Goromonzi has seriously disrupted cropping programmes which will lose farmers millions of dollars' worth of investment. 300 families have settled on Chinviwa Farm alone. The owner, Mr Robert Brown (note the Mr), is in a state of shock.

When the present session of Parliament opened, the MPs voted themselves an increase of

22%. The ZCTU launched a campaign for an increase of 20% for all workers, declaring a general stoppage every Wednesday. Last week 80% of the workforce stopped in a remarkably orderly manner, although in Mutare, 250km to the east of Harare, demonstrations took place and police shot one worker dead. The Acting Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Comrade Nathan Shamurariya (the correct mode of address for all public dignitaries is 'Comrade' - once they were comrades, engaged in armed struggle) presided over a meeting of the ZCTU and various employers' organisations. He made it clear that there was no chance of a statutory wage increase.

There is also no intention to reduce oil prices. All oil has to be imported and the coffers of NOCZIM, (the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe, which controls all oil purchases) are empty. It is a hotbed of corruption and chicanery, under investigation by a commission of inquiry. Meanwhile the workers have stopped again this week, causing unimaginable damage to the economy. They have been joined by staff members of the *Herald*, the local government-controlled rag, who remain unpaid.

The coffers of the Harare municipality are also empty. Municipal employees are paid by cheque. Last month they all bounced. The workers demonstrated outside the town hall, known here as the Town House, overturning and burning a few municipal vehicles. The dustmen parked their rubbish lorries across the main central streets. They dumped mountainous heaps of rubbish in the most aggravating places. When the water reticulation contractor was owed nine million dol-

lars he ceased work, causing an absence of piped water in several suburbs for weeks. Not all is woe. The residence of the Executive Mayor, Comrade Tangwenwa, is still being built, currently reaching a cost of Z\$38 million. He certainly needs surcease from the execration to which he is universally subjected.

Comrade Mugabe is now also an object of wide execration. The independent, mainly con-

since 1964. He says he is a Pan-Africanist following the likes of Kwame Nkrumah, and also follows Heraclitus (an ancient Greek dialectical materialist), and Marx and Engels. Since coming to office he has been complaining that he has consistently got a bad press. No wonder, he must be doing something right.

Soon after the AFDL came to power, Mandela and Mbeki visited Kabila in Kinshasha to per-



Peasants everywhere are marching on to farms to take over land

servative press, is baying for his blood. But his attention is elsewhere. Zimbabwe has sent 6,000 troops to the Congo to help the Kabila-led government expel invading armies from Rwanda and Uganda. He has even engaged in public controversy with Mandela, who is rooting for immediate peace talks. Kabila, whose Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation (AFDL) overthrew Mobutu, has not sprung from the ground like a dragon's tooth; he has been engaged in armed struggle

since 1964. He says he is a Pan-Africanist following the likes of Kwame Nkrumah, and also follows Heraclitus (an ancient Greek dialectical materialist), and Marx and Engels. Since coming to office he has been complaining that he has consistently got a bad press. No wonder, he must be doing something right.

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Africans have sold R146m worth of arms to Rwanda. Nzo, the SA Foreign Minister and Modise, Minister of Defence, visited both these countries. Modise even appeared in Goma after it had been occupied by the Tutsis. Coincidentally, there are US troops and marines in Uganda and Rwanda, training the local military.

Immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, Mandela called for peace talks. Of course, negotiators from both sides would be included in a subsequent dispensation for ruling the Congo, just as Savimbi was in Angola. Governments supporting the AFDL, including Zimbabwe, want the foreign armies out. Meanwhile the South Africans are proposing to buy R40bn worth of arms. Looks like they are giving up on the 'peace talks' card. According to Nkrumah, who rules the Congo will eventually dominate Africa.

Now Catholic bishops from six dioceses in the Kivu region have asked the rebels to stop the war in the wake of signs of civil opposition. Elsewhere in the Congo, incautious rebels get torn to pieces. Like Castro, Kabila is talking of arming the people, while among the rebels dissension is arising.

So, not only is Zimbabwe going rapidly down the drain, but central and southern Africa, with imperialism acting behind the scenes, might go up in flames. Mugabe says that the cost of having Zimbabwean troops in the Congo is less than that of the 12,000 who guarded the Beira Corridor in the days of Renamo intransigence. This has done nothing for his popularity locally. Wild rumour-mongers have even given him only another two weeks in office. He celebrated his 75th birthday recently but shows no signs of retiring.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!
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Lawrence inquiry further exposes police racism

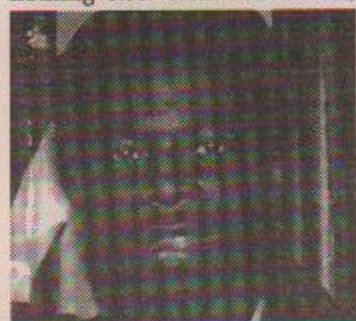
CAT WIENER

The second phase of the inquiry into police mishandling of the murder of Stephen Lawrence ended on 13 November. The report on the inquiry, led by Sir William Macpherson, will be published in February and he has already indicated that a central finding will be the 'collective failure' of the Metropolitan police to tackle racism. But as the second phase took the investigation to west London, Manchester, Bristol, Bradford and Birmingham - so-called 'racially sensitive areas' - it became clear that racism is not the preserve of the Met but penetrates to the core of every police force in the land.

Time after time, local groups representing ethnic minorities and refugees spoke of the underreporting of racial crime because black people have so little confidence in the police. In Southall, west London, police blame racial crime on 'conflicts between ethnic minorities.' Suresh Grover, of Southall Monitoring Group, complained that victims were all too often treated as the aggressor, or made to feel they were wasting police time. This was borne out by the testimony of Sukhdev Reel, whose son Ricky was found dead in the Thames last year after an altercation with white youths and Kwesi Menson, brother of Michael Menson who died after

being set alight in north London (see FRFI 145). In neither case did police accept there was a crime involved. Police refused to take Ricky's disappearance seriously. In Michael's case, Kwesi Menson said: 'On many occasions we were made to feel like we were on trial.'

All around the country, the same tale was told of police negligence, harassment and indifference to the plight of black people. It is not really surprising when, as an Asian police officer has told a Sheffield University researcher of his colleagues: 'With black people they saw them as troublemakers, drug dealers, robbers and nothing else. With the Asians,



Michael Menson

they saw them as fighting, streetwise wogs.'

A report published in November by the Crown Prosecution Service makes it clear that the police continue to refuse to acknowledge racist crime. Only 37% of incidents with a racial element are listed as such by the police - in 63% of 1,506 cases that went to court in 1997-1998, the identification



STEPHEN LAWRENCE

was made by the CPS, not the police. In the Greater Manchester area, the figure for police identification of racist incidents is only 15%. Meanwhile judges and magistrates are singularly failing to use powers to impose stiffer sentences in cases where race plays a part.

Small wonder, that racist incidents and crime have increased 42% since the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. As a representative from Stockport Victim Support said, 'The terrible thing about racial violence is that it never really stops.' What the second phase of the Lawrence inquiry has made plain is that the police are part and parcel of the problem, criminalising the black and Asian population and creating a climate of tolerance where racism can flourish. Quite rightly, and despite Home Office attempts to silence them, the Lawrence family continue to call on black people to shun a police force which is racist to the core and incapable of change. ■



Irish peace process stalls - loyalist terror intensifies

BOB SHEPHERD

The April 'peace agreement' set 31 October as the deadline for setting up the Northern Ireland Executive Council and various cross-border bodies. It was missed as David Trimble and the Ulster Unionist Party refused to sit with Sinn Fein in an executive of ministers until the IRA began to hand over its weapons. The Unionist stand has no basis in the Agreement, which separates the political from the decommissioning process, and sets May 2000 as the date by which the latter should be completed.

But even as the Unionists attempt to force a symbolic surrender on Sinn Fein and the IRA, loyalist gunmen continue their terror campaign. In the early hours of Saturday 31 October, Brian Service, a 35-year-old Catholic community worker from north Belfast, was shot in the head and back as he walked home after a night out. He died a short while later. A group calling itself the Red Hand Defenders claimed the murder. Earlier that night, the same group had fired on a Catholic-owned bar on the out-

skirts of west Belfast; luckily no one was injured. 24 hours later, again in north Belfast, three loyalists abducted a young nationalist man whose life was threatened before he managed to escape. When he reported the incident to the RUC they just told him to 'go home'.

In Ballymurphy on the evening of Saturday 9 November, a 60-strong RUC squad rampaged into the home of the McManus family. They smashed the front door off its hinges and ran over Mrs McManus who was trapped underneath. Whilst some officers threw seven-year-old Kieran to the floor and put a gun put to his head, others dragged 12-year-old Anne out of the house by her hair. James, 23, said 'The RUC were screaming "Lie down or you're dead!" ... They were like an assassination squad... Everyone was terrified, Anne was screaming as they dragged her out.' After just over an hour the RUC left, having shown no warrant nor made any arrests. The family later found that £585, saved up to buy Christmas presents, had been stolen from the house.

The RUC and the British army are also harassing and intimidating local nationalist

communities in border and rural areas. In West Tyrone, increased army patrols have been breaking down wire fences and vandalising farm equipment. On 29 October, a three-day operation by the RUC and army placed Cappagh, Co Tyrone under siege as they set up checkpoints and blocked off roads. Their purpose? To arrest James Hughes who had recently been released from Portlaoise under the terms of the Agreement. He was subsequently released without charge. A helicopter hovered over the rooftops from 3pm on the Sunday until the early hours of Monday morning. Local residents were prevented from filming the events. Eventually on Monday morning, after mounting confrontations with the local community, the RUC and army were forced out.

On the evening of Sunday 22 November, local people confronted a joint RUC-army patrol in Crossmaglen, South Armagh after it abused and harassed the local nationalist community. After firing at least two shots, the patrol retreated to its waiting helicopters.

In reporting the death of Brian Service and the rise of loyalist terror, *An Phoblacht*, the weekly paper of Sinn Fein, stated that 'what was agreed on Good Friday will count for nothing if it cannot deliver real change in the lives of ordinary people'. Its own pages show that the Good Friday 'peace agreement' has done nothing to end brutal attacks on the nationalist community.

As we have argued, 'the Peace Agreement will be judged by the nationalist working class by what happens on their estates and in their communities. There is nothing to indicate that their daily lives will change. As communists we recognise that the root cause of their problems is the Six County statelet and its occupation by the British army. The reformist settlement will not change this, and so the revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle will have to be rebuilt.' (FRFI 143). It is actions such as those of nationalist people in Cappagh and Crossmaglen which point the way forward for that new movement. ■

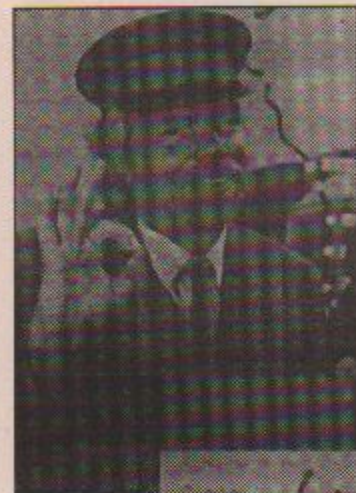
Labour's transport fiasco

ROBERT CLOUGH

The Labour government has ruled out any legislation to deal with the railways fiasco until the new millennium at the earliest. That means that a cornerstone of John Prescott's much-vaunted integrated transport policy - a strategic railway authority - will not be put in place for at least two years. The consequences will be that railway services will continue to deteriorate, whilst measures to exclude cars from city centres will not see the light of day for even longer.

The seven-year franchises given to the private railway operators required them to purchase 1,700 new vehicles. Their achievement after two years? Just 20 new coaches! This despite the fact that in the first year of operation, the subsidy to the privatised railway system as a whole was £2bn, double what it had been before it was flogged off. In the year to March 1998, 257,000 trains were delayed and 46,900 were cancelled.

The companies complain that their poor performance is a result of underinvestment by British Rail. No one whinges more about this than Richard Branson, whose Virgin Trains is amongst the worst performers. In September and October 1998, one Virgin Train service



Branson: quids in on rail subsidies

in seven was late (more than 10 minutes behind schedule). Virgin's best punctuality record since April 1997 has been only just over the 90%; during some four week periods it has been down to 70%. Yet when British Rail handed the West Coast line to Railtrack in 1994, there was not a single speed restriction in force. Virgin managed to plumb new depths of incompetence by leaving a train-load of Labour Party ministers and delegates on their way to the Blackpool Labour Party conference in sidings outside Crewe for two hours.

'We are the only show in town'

The fact is that Virgin has cut its

workforce from 5,000 to less than 4,000. It charges £1.05 for a small bag of crisps. Its coaches are often filthy, with toilets out of order. No one can understand their ticketing arrangements. None of this can be blamed on earlier under-investment, only on Branson's arrogance. But we are stuck with it: as Virgin Rail boss Chris Tibbitts says 'We are the only show in town'. In an effort to improve its image, Virgin has recruited Lew Adams, the former head of the train drivers' union ASLEF, to serve as a training consultant. Payment indeed for services rendered: Adams had been responsible for negotiating 'sweetheart' deals with private rail companies, in particular Virgin. Privatisation has already resulted in a loss of 30,000 jobs - a quarter of the total inherited from British Rail.

Between them, three bus monopolies, National Express, Stagecoach and First Group run 12 out of the 25 train operating companies. In addition, Stagecoach owns one of the three rolling stock operating companies. Stagecoach has strengthened its position by buying 49% of Virgin Trains. Each of them are using their combined bus and rail cartels to reduce service levels to passengers, and developing company-restricted ticketing policies to raise monopoly profits. ■

Crime and Disorder Act

Labour's penchant for buzz phrases such as 'modernisation' or 'joined-up working' may sound ridiculous until you look behind them and see what is going on. Firstly, Labour is certainly refashioning the state apparatus so that it is a more effective tool in the hands of the ruling class. Secondly, this involves every aspect of the state. The Crime and Disorder Act, for instance, imposes a statutory responsibility on both the police and local authorities to develop local strategies to reduce crime. What is little known is that health authorities also have been given a statutory responsibility to support them. This will inevitably require healthcare agencies to share confidential patient-related information with the police. Hitherto, A&E departments have been obliged by patient confidentiality not to inform police about patients. This is coming to an end: police will soon be able to go on 'fishing expeditions' in casualty departments.



Guess who?

In November David Shayler, former MI5 operative, was released from a Paris gaol when Britain's attempt at extradition failed. Much was heard about his sufferings in prison and about his championing of civil liberties for us all. This of course is only half the story. Yes, Shayler has divulged tit-bits about monitoring of Cabinet ministers...but what about the rest of us? Shayler was not on a fast-track up the MI5 ladder for nothing. What was Shayler doing in 1984-85, for instance? Our photo shows a thinner Shayler and partner posing beside our banner on a demonstration to support the striking miners. What about our civil liberties, David - or is that a difficult question?

BSE the making of a tragedy

In October Sir Kenneth Calman, Chief Medical Officer under the Tories, over the period of the BSE crisis, gave evidence to the independent inquiry, chaired by Lord Justice Philips. His evidence was a prelude to evidence from Keith Meldrum, Chief Vet 1988-97, and a range of Tory ministers who had a hand in the BSE affair. What became clear, very quickly, was that a mixture of ignorance, gross incompetence and self-interest ensured that a major crisis in the food industry became a severe threat to public health and has led to the deaths of 29 young people, so far, from new variant CJD. The dimensions of this scandal, and the extent of the tragedy are still unknown.

BSE was first publicly acknowledged by government scientists in November 1986 and is reckoned to have had a five-year incubation period. From the beginning, the government, under advice from scientists and its own Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), were anxious to downplay the danger. It was not until 1988 that the cattle feed containing potentially-infected, rendered meat was banned, amid assurances that specified offal would be removed from meat at the abattoirs.

For the next six years Calman and his predecessor, Sir Donald Acheson, assured the public that beef was safe, based on

MAFF's insistence that the ban on infected materials was working. Nothing could have been further from the truth - the suspect cattle feed was still contaminating other feed, there was no effective policing of the abattoirs, and above all, reassurances that the disease could not spread to human beings were little more than wishful thinking. Calman blamed MAFF.

Further evidence was given by a meat industry consultant, Peter Carrigan, who described how the rules were flouted: 'In my experience I was more likely to meet a Martian than a MAFF vet within an abattoir'. 'It was, and is, a source of constant amazement to me that decisions with regard to the functioning of abattoirs... could be written by people who, in the main, had never set foot in an abattoir.' When it became clear, in October 1995, that the rules were being broken, MAFF argued that this should be kept secret, and continued to do so until the admission that there was a link between BSE and nvCJD in March 1996.

Edwina Currie, a former minister who was forced to resign in December 1988 after telling the truth about widespread salmonella infection in eggs, also gave evidence to the Inquiry. She said that MAFF worked on the assumption that the public were stupid. MAFF were crass, incompetent, ignorant of good practice and effectively formed a trade union for producers.

This sounds like the truth.

Other ministers, including the stupid John Gummer who forced beefburgers to his young daughter while announcing that beef was 'perfectly safe', are due to give evidence. Since October, however, Keith Meldrum, the Chief Vet, has refused to hand over taped evidence to the inquiry, and MAFF has withheld a special report on the history of BSE.

It's business as usual for the food industry. The Labour government's proposed watchdog, the Food Standards Agency, has been shelved amid arguments about who will pay for it, the food industry or the tax payer. It should be noted that Lord Haskins, head of Northern Foods, is a major Labour donor and chairs a government Task Force. Likewise Lord Sainsbury (the supermarket) is both a donor and a Minister of Trade. Business as usual means that the European ban on the export of British beef will be lifted next spring amid yet more assurances about its safety and handouts to farmers; 30,000 people suffer salmonella infection each year, and 60 of them die; *e-coli* infection is a growing threat; and the victims of nvCJD and their families get no help.

Meanwhile back at the laboratory...

The genetically modified (GM) food producer, Monsanto, has come to the uncomfortable conclusion that the public in

Europe is opposed to its Frankenstein foods, and that opposition is 'skyrocketing' despite an intensive public relations campaign to reassure consumers that GM foods are good for you. Two internal Monsanto reports were leaked to Greenpeace, recommending that the company should now consider crisis management. 'At each point,' writes the author of the reports, 'we keep thinking that we have

Channel 4 was forced to apologise. Writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, Furedi rehearses his now familiar theme that the public is risk averse ('a veritable culture of fear of new technology has stimulated a cycle of panics' etc) and consequently anti-innovation - against progress in the shape of technological change. This, he says, is not Monsanto's fault; it is the fault of a hysterical mass of con-

polise profit. Despite the spin about feeding the world cheaply, Monsanto is not driven by altruism and does not sit quietly and do nothing in the face of opposition. In the USA it is suing farmers who keep back seed from their crops to replant; it prevented the labelling of milk produced with the use of its bovine growth hormone rBGH, implicated in mastitis and tumour growth; the GM food industry has mixed its GM soya into the general crop so that it is indistinguishable and unavoidable. In Britain, the threat of a Monsanto libel action forced the printers of the magazine *Ecologist* to pulp an entire issue devoted to GM foods; and activists who have taken action against GM crop tests are the subject of court injunctions which make them responsible for any direct action taken by anyone in Britain against GM crops. MAFF (soon to be renamed MADD, Ministry of Death and Destruction) have capitulated at the first hurdle by reducing the standards for GM crop trials under threat of legal action from the industry.

Whatever else Monsanto is up to, it certainly doesn't want anyone to know or have a choice about the food we eat - this cannot be progress. And whatever the consequences in the USA or Britain of Monsanto's bid to rule the world, the real harvest will be poverty and disease in poorer nations where food growers are forced to pay mounting bills annually for seed, for pesticides and for antibiotics. Frank Furedi, John Gummer, MAFF and the majority of Labour MPs may pour whatever crap they like down their own gullets, the rest of us will fight to have a choice.

Carol Brickley



reached the low point... but we apparently have not.'

Monsanto, however, have found a new spokesman in the shape of Frank Furedi (aka Richards), Sociology Professor at Kent University, guru of the erstwhile Revolutionary Communist Party, whose rightward propulsion has been almost as rapid as Monsanto's downward plunge. Furedi/Richards *et al* were the *eminences grises* behind the Channel 4 'Against Nature' series which attempted to trash the green movement using a myriad of dubious journalistic practices for which

sumer, green, vegetarian lobbyists and organisations. The genetic-food industry, he argues, kept quiet during a Luddite onslaught from the greens, misdirected its public relations to the political elite (Labour MPs), and 'never took on its opponents and hoped the problem would go away'.

Hold on, even the hope of a Monsanto consultancy cannot disguise the realities of Monsanto's corporate culture. However unthreatening GM foods may be (and their arguments on this are very dubious), we live in an imperialist world where multi-nationals strive to mono-



Unison attempts to stifle Tameside strike

ROB DERBYSHIRE

As the Tameside careworkers' strike heads towards Christmas, pressures on the remaining strikers are intensifying. On 14 December, their union, Unison, takes their case to an industrial tribunal hearing. Yet in the meantime, it is Unison itself which seems to be doing all it can to stifle their campaign.

As the careworkers' financial situation worsens, it turns out that Tameside Unison branch has no separate strikers' hardship fund. All money sent for the strikers has gone into general funds and, over seven months into the dispute, no account of how much has been received and where it has gone has been presented. Meanwhile, strikers have to wrangle with the branch just to receive expenses for meetings and travel.

The weekly support group meetings heard how a northwest regional meeting of Unison health branches protested that the Tameside strikers were 'nothing to do with them' and how, at northwest regional Unison meeting, two strikers were refused entry by

regional officer, Andy Goodhall who threatened to call the police! An emergency motion for financial support, passed by Tameside Trades Council, was defeated at the northwest TUC because, in the words of Unison regional official Brian Devine, 'It wasn't an emergency'!

The strikers continue to target Tameside council and the council leader Roy Oldham. In October, around 30 sacked careworkers were denied access to the council chamber by security guards who injured one striker's arm and knocked a supporter to the ground. Eventually three careworkers were let in and, as Roy Oldham was speaking, they donned false Hitler-style moustaches, mimicking the pathetic specimen Oldham has draped on his upper lip. Oldham was not amused and called the police.

Michael Greenwood, Tameside council's chief executive, who ordered the barring, is also the secretary of Tameside Community Care Trust, a company registered at Tameside council offices and the parent company of Tameside Care Group, which sacked the 200 careworkers.

Pressure from the police is



'It has been a hard struggle over the past seven months, but we are determined to carry on protesting.'

increasing. One leading striker has been charged with causing £200 worth of damage to a car full of scabs on a picket line outside a care home last April. She is bailed to appear at Tameside Magistrates' Court on 2 December.

But the strikers are determined. As careworker Pauline

Carmody said: 'It has been a hard struggle over the past seven months, but we are determined to carry on protesting. Roy Oldham has ruined our lives and we won't go away.'

Order Christmas cards via the RNCC, PO Box 14, Accrington, Lancs BB5 1GG or tel: 01254 679605

New Deal = forced labour

'They gave me a voucher for £2,300. I have to offer this to the employer when asking for a job and stress the fact that he does not have to pay me any wages' Rafiq Patel

23-year-old Rafiq (not his real name) is one of thousands of Labour's New Deal victims. He spoke to the Reinstate Nigel Cook Campaign.

'Having been out of full-time work for over six months I was told by the Employment Services (ES) I now had to go on New Deal. I was put on the Gateway programme, which involves interviews with my "client adviser" at Blackburn Jobcentre to determine which of the four options I would go onto.

'Although I already worked part-time delivering for a fast-food outlet, this did not exempt me, as anyone claiming JSA, even at a reduced rate, must still enter the scheme. I work two five-hour nights for £20, £2 an hour. I declared this to the dole and they reduced my Giro by £20! With other deductions this left only £58 a week for me, my wife and child.

'I was advised to accept the "voluntary sector" option of New Deal and was sent to Bootstrap Enterprises, an agency that acts as a go-between for the ES and would-be employers. I

was given a voucher worth £2,300 to give to the employer and sent to a Citizens Advice Bureau in a town 12 miles from my home. After only eight days training I will be expected to deal with the problems of the clients. I have never done this type of work before.

'When I asked about wages and travelling expenses I was told that I would only get my £58 benefits plus £7. I thought voluntary work was voluntary but I am being forced into this job.'

From April to July 128,000 people were forced onto New Deal. The vast majority of these will be enduring similar conditions to those recounted by Rafiq.

At particular risk are those who have nowhere secure to live. Centrepoint and Crisis have raised their concerns. 'These young people are more likely to experience the compulsory side to New Deal, and risk losing their hostel places if they are sanctioned and lose benefit. Youth homelessness is forecast to rise as a result.

New Deal will not do anything to address the serious issue of unemployment, especially for the youth. The real beneficiaries are the employers who are grabbing the generous subsidies.

The way we are and the way we want to be

voices from New Labour's education system

The education system under capitalism has always served the purposes of the ruling class, directly or indirectly. But as growing numbers of people are finding out, it is very bitter to work under the directives of a New Labour regime where servicing capitalism is hailed as the highest purpose of education. Below, we hear from a cross-section of both teachers and students ('service providers' and 'service users', in Labour Newspeak) involved in an education system rapidly falling apart at the seams and increasingly run in the interests of profit.

basis and depend on good enrolment figures for full pay (pay is reduced if class sizes fall, but not increased if they rise).

Limited resources and stressed staff do not make for the best learning environment. However, this could be the least of our problems. Recent figures show a dramatic drop in students applying for higher education courses this year, the most likely reason being the introduction of tuition fees. Increasingly those who can afford education will be a privileged minority.
Catherine

■ Mature student

As a mature student studying at university, I find my experiences within education dominated by the issue of finance. The maintenance grant I receive barely pays for my books and travel expenses. The student loan is there to top up my grant, but I am constantly aware of the increasing debt when I apply for it each year. Such debts for other working class prospective mature students are going to have a massive effect on their decision whether to enter higher education. I enjoy my course, but the spectre of debt constantly hangs over my head and threatens to stop me from studying, and force me to return to low paid, temporary employment.
Jason

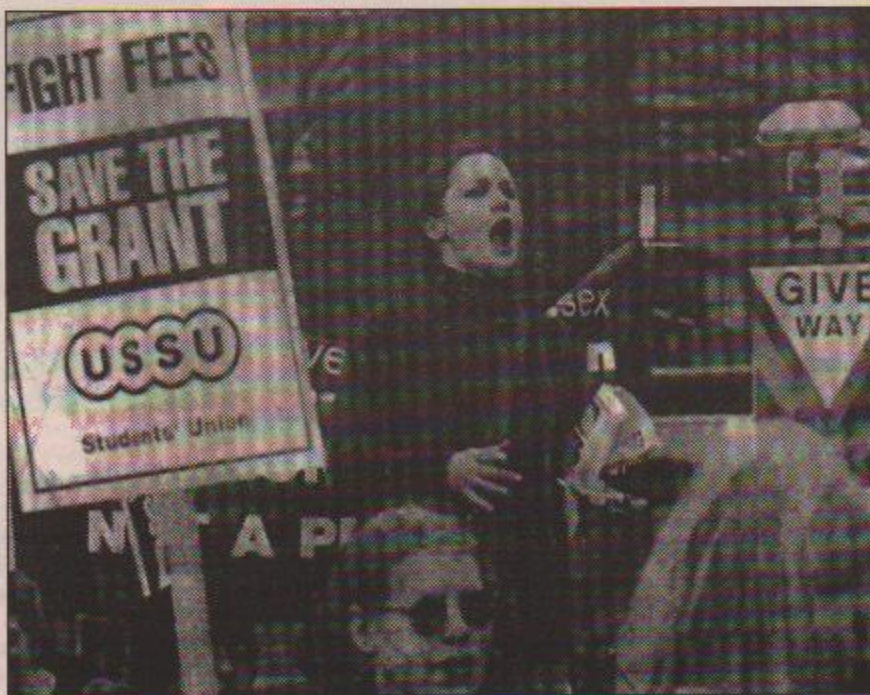
■ A parent speaks

As the parent of an eight-year-old, I have to pay for school trips and any extras. My son has gone his way happily through one set of SATS and is about to have more of these national exams. The teachers try to make sure that the children are not too worried about these tests, but the fact remains that the results are all being logged and will follow the kids right through their schooling. I hate to think that my happy child is facing a future where he will be streamed, grouped and labelled and directed to exam success more each year of his school life.
Nigel

■ Secondary school pupil

Mostly I do not like school. Although some of the teachers are OK and can be kind they are mostly very moany. We had SATS last year and have started GCSE this year and all the teachers can talk about is exams. My class was told that we are all below average when we got our SATS results, so that's not a very good feeling to start the GCSE with. What I do like about school is being with my mates. I like games and art and using the computers, but there are not enough of them.

I know that this is going to be printed in a communist newspaper. That's fine by me so long as the newspaper does not support any political party. Blair is a fool. Nothing has changed since Labour came in. At this school a youth club is being closed down and that is one of the other things I like about school. They are always saying there is not enough money but I can tell you that there are plenty of rich people around.
Ahmet



and their propaganda is everywhere.
Reds

■ Secondary school teacher

I began teaching in the 1960s, a time of optimism and the spread of ideas about love, protest and togetherness: it was an exciting time to be a teacher. We had an endless faith that working class children could become more than factory fodder, that they could write poetry, dance, sing, put on drama and get excited about the new technologies. We introduced Black Studies and working-class histories. Of course, we did not all do this and none of us did this all of the time but the spirit was there. The changes introduced by successive Tory governments and continued under Labour have produced the current narrow, punitive, harsh and boring secondary school system.
Susan Davidson

■ Primary school head

Being a head teacher is a cushy life compared with most. But what makes it miserable, what takes the joy out of teaching and working with kids, what makes it so frustrating and impossible to get any job satisfaction, is knowing you are supporting a crap system built on a pack of lies.

Take Labour's strategic educational propaganda: first, that national prosperity (whatever that might mean!) depends on matching the education performance of our 'competitors' - well, try telling that to all the highly educated, newly unemployed and destitute people of South Korea, Thailand, Japan, etc. Second, that if only young people knuckle down and get their qualifications, then the world would be their oyster - where are all those golden opportunities?

But the sickest joke of all is Labour's claim to end social exclusion. All sorts of gimmicks and threats - homework clubs, mentors, special measures, education action zones - anything except tackling the

fundamental causes of social exclusion - poverty and the class system.

Of course, schools have always been the prop of the state but there used to be small spaces for manoeuvre. Not any more. Labour's blanket determination to control the system for the needs of capitalism smothers all. Fortunately many brave sparks remain. Homework question - who said 'a single spark can start a prairie fire'?
Jim Craven

■ First-year undergraduate

'Education, education, education'. This was one of Tony Blair's infamous election-winning slogans. Barely a few months into power and New Labour announced its plans for every new student arriving at university to pay an annual £1,000 towards tuition. Although allowances will be made to the poorest students, the government finds huge, rising student debts acceptable!

Students in England should learn a lesson from their French counterparts. In recent demonstrations about educational standards, not only did university students take to the streets but so did school pupils. In contrast, many of my peers are highly apathetic towards political matters, merely accepting the proposals as a new hardship.
Tom

■ Further education lecturer

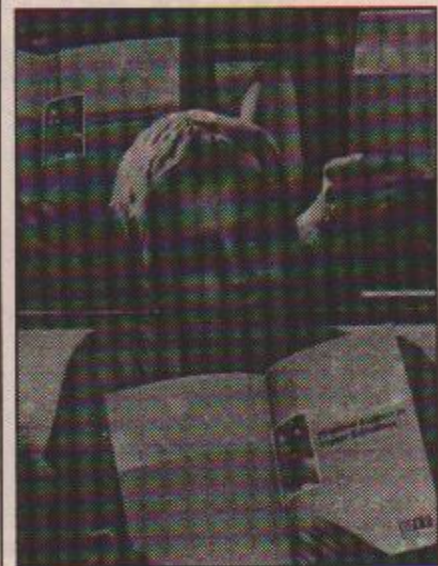
As a lecturer, starting my third year of work in further education, and with three student loans of my own deferred for the sixth year due to low earnings, my experience of education could be described as critical. Colleges are being run like businesses with emphasis on the three Rs - recruitment, retention, results.

Full-time staff are being offered early retirement and being replaced by part-time staff or not at all, increasing the workload of those who remain. Many of my colleagues are employed on a casual hourly-paid

always been like this. My vocational feelings began to crumble in 1988 and have been steadily eroded by each new government initiative. It is soul-destroying to watch the marginalisation of many of the real values in education, when you passionately believe in their importance. Once we encouraged pupils to strive towards ideals of creativity, independence, individuality and personal responsibility. Now there isn't the time or space. Today these values seem to have sunk without trace - victims of political doctrines and establishment dogmas.

Surely it is dangerous and short-sighted to allow politicians to be the sole arbiters of what children can learn? We cannot claim to be encouraging and developing the 'whole' child. Instead we teach subjects in boxes, towards targets which are demanded by faceless officials, on the basis that they are easy to test and manipulate for political purposes.

The stubborn part of me wants to stay, to fight for what I believe in but I'm bone-tired. I'm sick of watching supportive and excellent colleagues leave the profession. I don't blame them. You see when people ask me what I teach, I have to reply 'The National Curriculum, Key Stage 2'. Once I would have answered truthfully and proudly 'I teach children'.
Lesley Crawford



■ Sixth-form college student

I am at sixth-form college doing A levels. The mentality of the place is all about being 'realistic'. Everybody is studying for themselves and we are not encouraged to raise questions about the future of all young people. Many tutors are quick to ridicule any students who raise problems about the 'system'. In my time I have met only one tutor who has openly criticised the government's attack on education. Despite the fact that the amount of course work for all subjects is very heavy, most students have to do part-time work. Life for most students at my college is tough.

At first I asked permission to sell FRFI on the premises and put up posters. I never got permission - but I do these things anyway. I note that religious groups have got permission

■ Special needs support assistant
'Special needs support assistant' is a lengthy title for a £5.30 per hour job! We are the indispensable dogsbodies to overworked teachers in over-large classes. In fact, we are so useful that the government plans 20,000 more learning assistants over the next two years. The New Deal will be the entry point. More workers on the cheap and an excuse for not employing more teachers in schools. Special needs children are suffering as we are moved away from one-to-one work and become class helpers in overcrowded inner-city schools.
Irene

■ Teacher trainee

Teacher training is burdened by endless target setting. Inspections dominate the curriculum of the colleges. Instead of the lively, exciting prospect of teaching subjects and skills to children, trainee teachers are instructed to fulfil tasks and set unrealistic goals. We must obey the new ideology that achievement will be tested, measured, recorded and re-measured. Slogans are forced upon us: progression, continuity, evaluation and we must show these in all our plans. Teacher training is about becoming yet another robot delivering the government's latest buzzwords. I feel sorry for the pupils who are being taken further away from an inclusive education and being isolated into boxes with labels that they will carry for life.
Susie

■ Newly-qualified teacher

I started teaching in a London secondary school in September 1998. In the borough where I am working this school is 'the bottom of the pile', which means that we have places to fill and until we do we will not get the financing that is necessary to do our job properly. With only limited support, we cannot help the many children with special educational (and behavioural) needs, nor those with English as a second language. As a classroom teacher I am more or less just left to get on with it as best I can.

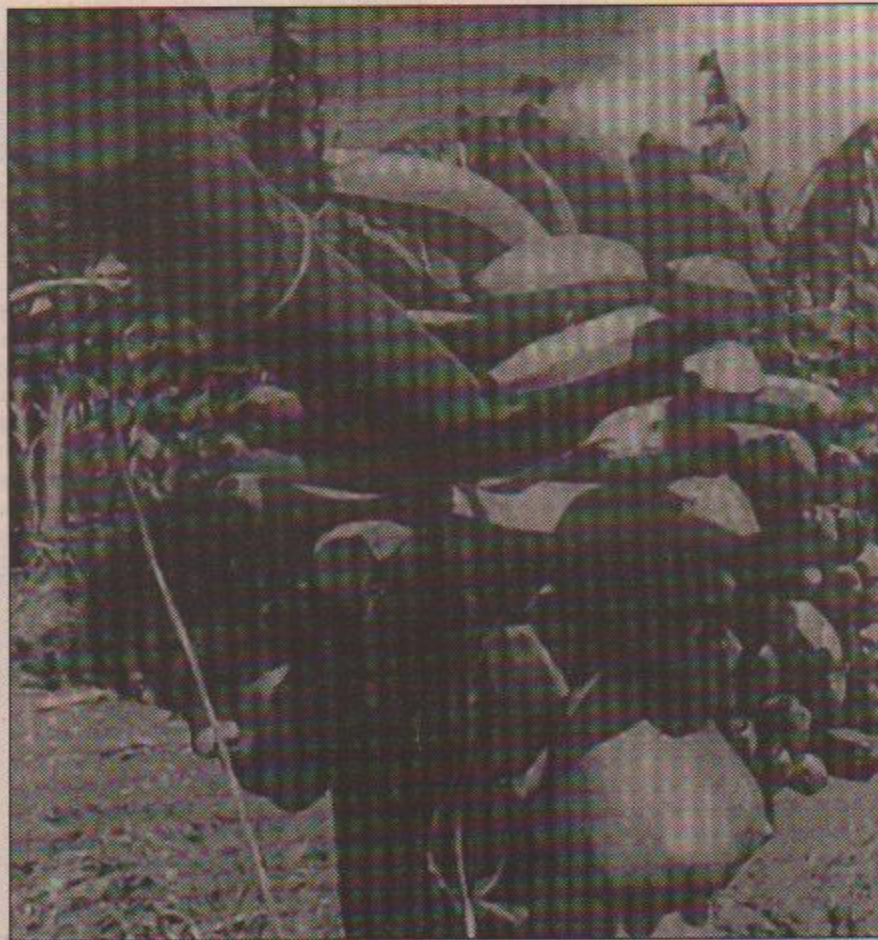
I find myself wondering whether I should be in another school where the pressures are less. This is the sort of school and these are the sorts of kids that I want to be able to help. However, the way the borough works to keep this as the 'bottom of the pile' school for disaffected kids excluded from other schools makes the job an uphill struggle. Next term I've got OFSTED to look forward to...More CRAP!
Leo

■ 30 years in primary school

What does it mean to be a primary teacher today? It means teaching the 'new' three Rs - rote-learning, reciting and revision - while suffering from the three Ds - despair, disillusionment and desperation. It hasn't

On a wing and and a prayer

The panic over the state of global capitalism which spread through the centres of imperialist capital some two months ago has subsided, only to be replaced by false optimism. Brazil has been bailed out, hedge funds are to be more closely regulated, Keynesianism is back in fashion, at least for the wealthy imperialist nations, interest rates have been cut and the US stockmarket has not only recovered but hit a new record high. Two months and everything has apparently changed. But, as DAVID YAFFE argues below, the global crisis is only simmering below the surface and, because the fundamental structural problems cannot be resolved, it will soon erupt again.



The US has threatened to impose a 100% tax on a range of EU imports, if the EU continues to give privileged access to exports of bananas from former British and French colonies

change of direction. There the current G7 chairman, British Labour Chancellor Gordon Brown, acted as a mouthpiece for the interests of imperialist capital, and primarily that of the United States. The US Federal Reserve had already helped to bail out wealthy investors and financial institutions in September, when it organised the \$3.5bn rescue of the hedge fund Long Term Capital Management.¹ This Keynesianism for the rich was now to be spread a little more liberally in the imperialist nations as the G7 summit agreed 'to create and sustain the conditions for strong domestic demand-led growth', so encouraging further interest rate cuts in those nations. It has been these interest rate cuts, especially in the US, which have helped, by aiding the process of credit expansion, to fuel the new stockmarket boom.

The US Congress finally agreed in mid-October to increase its quota

contribution to the IMF by \$17.9bn, and together with the contributions of other countries, the IMF now has access to an extra \$90bn of lendable funds for bailing out 'well-run emerging market economies' facing financial crisis. But it comes with a sting in its tail - extra provisions imposed by the US Congress for increasing its quota. The G7 summit took over these conditions in supporting a new IMF contingency fund. Debtor countries will have not only have to accept the usual IMF 'structural adjustment programme' of trade liberalisation and withdrawal of government subsidies but they must treat foreign debtors the same as domestic debtors. Bluntly, that means they must open up their economies fully to predator imperialist multinationals and banks. Capital controls and other regulations are out. Finally the IMF will stop lending money below market rates, and the new

Thousands queue for jobs in Russia



It took three cuts in US interest rates by the US Federal Reserve over a period of seven weeks (an overall decrease of 0.75%), a \$41.5bn IMF rescue package for Brazil, and a recognition by the Group of Seven (G7) main capitalist nations that the balance of risk lay with stagnating growth and not inflation to restore confidence to the markets and refuel a stockmarket boom. On 23 November the New York stockmarket rose 214.72 to reach a new record high of 9,374.27 - an increase of more than 24% on its August low. The UK market has risen by more than 25%, following interest cuts of 0.75% by the Bank of England; the German market has risen 28%, the Tokyo market 18% and the Brazilian market a massive 81% from their 1998 lows. Yet corporate profits and economic growth are falling. 40% of the world economy is in recession or on the brink of it. As inflation falls everywhere, the danger of deflation (falling prices) faces the world economy. Trade wars are threatened as protectionist pressures build up in the US following the dramatic increase in the US trade deficit.

Economic commentators are at a loss to explain what is happening. It is a wheel of Fortune. Typical is the *Financial Times*: 'The equity markets have proclaimed it; the UK Treasury has forecast it; and this week the Bank of England has cautiously endorsed the idea. The reefs and shoals of recession are past - with luck' (Editorial, 14 November 1998); and a week later, in another editorial 'Blowing hot and cold', 'according to the latest forecasts from the OECD... investors are well advised to keep their fingers crossed'. So what then is really happening and are there decisive developments which can determine the outcome?

Welfare for the rich and austerity for the poor

As has been argued consistently in FRFI since the crisis in southeast Asia broke out, the problem stems from an overaccumulation of capital in the heartlands of imperialism. Too much capital needs ever higher returns from a relatively smaller profitable productive base worldwide. The massive capital flows, backwards and forwards, to and from every corner of the world; the easy credit that has financed the global stockmarket boom; the ever greater monopolisation of capital through mergers, acquisitions and privatisations; the unprecedented autonomy of the financial system from real production, and the growing rivalry between the major imperialist powers, reflect capital's frenetic efforts to restructure its operations, both nationally and internationally, to find new outlets for profitable expansion. Neo-liberalism gave ideological expression to capital's brutal attempt to carry through this process at the expense of the vast majority of the world's population over a period of 20 years.

The dramatic collapse of the southeast Asian economies was the signal that it had failed. And as that crisis threatened to engulf the imperialist economies of North America and Europe, neo-liberalism has had to be ditched, at least for the imperialist countries and their financial institutions and rich investors, and credit expansion and Keynesian pump-priming are back in fashion again. For the crisis-ridden 'emerging economies' and the rest of the Third World, however, neo-liberalism remains and there will be no let-up as capital barbarically restructures those countries' economies, buying up their industries, banks and land to squeeze every last ounce of profit from them.

The recent G7 economic summit at the end of October signalled the

credit available would be short-term and have an interest rate 3-5 percentage points above the IMF's standard lending rate.

The rest of the G7 agreement was merely cosmetic. Hedge funds and investment banks will face more regulation and there was support for Gordon Brown's proposal for a standing committee for global financial regulation. But the real answer of the G7 summit to the turmoil sweeping the world economy was the old-fashioned programme of welfare for the rich and austerity for the poor.

The crisis deepens

Two months ago the global financial crisis seemed to be threatening a sharp contraction in the availability of credit which could have sent the US economy into recession and triggered a stockmarket crash. It was this fear that forced the US Federal Reserve in mid-November to cut US interest rates for the third time in seven weeks. These cuts have set off an explosion in credit and share prices. Consumer spending is racing ahead with consumers eating further into their savings.

Stockmarkets are booming

On 23 November, the US stockmarket, driven by a wave of mergers and acquisitions, hit a new record high. It was the biggest single day of mergers in stockmarket history worth nearly \$40bn. Multinational companies had seized the opportunity of their higher valued stock prices to renew the frantic drive of capital to rationalise and restructure its operations towards greater profitability, to cut costs and increase productivity through ever larger mergers and acquisitions. A few days later, news leaked of negotiations between Exxon and Mobil to bring about the largest industrial merger ever and create a company with a stockmarket value of more than \$240bn in a sector where low oil and energy prices are forcing down profits. The stockmarket and merger booms are signs not of an end to the crisis but of its postponement.

Profits and growth are falling

Growth of the US economy is predicted to fall to around 2% in 1999. It grew at an annual rate of 3.9% in the three months to September 1998. In the same three-month period profits after tax fell by 1.8%, 6.2% lower than a year ago. *Business Week* reports that earnings in the coal, oil and gas industry have fallen by 48%, semiconductor profits were down 45% due to overcapacity in computer chips and imports of cheap steel saw profits fall in that industry by 22%. A booming stockmarket in the face of falling corporate profits and economic growth cannot be sustained. Wall Street is valued at 33 times trailing earnings (last 4 quarters) - way above historic norms (*Financial Times* 25.11.1998). Little wonder comparisons with the Japanese 'bubble economy' of the late 1980s are being drawn.

The Japanese economy has been stagnating since that bubble burst with the stock market crash of 1990-92. It has not yet recovered. Growth has been falling since 1997. Predictions suggest further falls this year and next. Three years of negative growth would be worse than during the Great Depression for Japan. In an attempt to avoid this outcome, the Japanese government is throwing money into the economy, so far to little effect. Y60 trillion (£300bn) - equivalent to the GDP of Australia - is being made available to shore up the financial sector and protect investors. In addition, Y24 trillion (£120bn) in new spending and tax cuts has been pumped into the economy to kickstart economic growth. This includes Y700bn of 'shopping vouchers' of Y20,000 (£100) given to 35 million people, including everyone under 16 and over 64, to encourage spending, and which must be exchanged for goods in shops within six months. This is Keynesianism with a vengeance. The economic news, however, is still bad. Corporate bankruptcy and unemployment are at record levels. Consumer prices are falling (-1%). Household expenditure dropped 3.1% in the first half of the year, department store sales are down 6.7% on a year ago, company profits are down 35% and machinery orders 50%. The stockmarket is rising.

The latest forecast by the OECD predicts growth in the rich capitalist nations falling sharply in 1999 to 1.75%, with growth in Britain falling to 0.8%, well below the optimistic forecasts of Gordon Brown in his pre-budget report. In September the UK's trade deficit doubled to a record £2.5bn, with exports to the devastated southeast Asian economies down by a third. The OECD warns that there are significant risks worldwide which could make the outcome much worse. Still, the UK and other European stockmarkets are rising.

Austerity for the poor

The \$41.5bn IMF bailout of Brazil came tied to a severe austerity programme. Brazil must not devalue its currency. Interest rates of more than 40% have been put in place to ensure this. It has to introduce a stringent programme of tax increases and public spending cuts over the three years to reverse its massive government budget deficit of 7.8% of GDP into a surplus of 2.6%. The cuts necessary to do this will drive the Brazilian economy into recession. The IMF assumption of a 1% fall in GDP next year is far too optimistic. Social unrest is inevitable. The Brazilian stockmarket has risen 81% from its September low on the promise of this IMF bailout.

Southeast Asian economies bailed out by the IMF continue to languish in deep recession. GDP in Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand and Philippines will fall by an average of 8% this year and continue to fall in 1999. The Russian economy has been devastated, with growth expected to fall 6.9% this year and a further 6% in 1999. Almost half Russia's 1,500 banks face closure over the next few months. 79 million people now live in poverty. Such are the consequences of IMF 'structural adjustment programmes' imposed on these countries by imperialism.²

Trade wars are inevitable

Tensions are building up between the dominant imperialist powers as the global crisis takes its toll. The US trade deficit, already large in 1997 at \$155bn, is likely to expand to \$250bn this year and \$290bn in 1999. The European Union is running a trade surplus which will decline only slightly from \$123bn in 1997 to

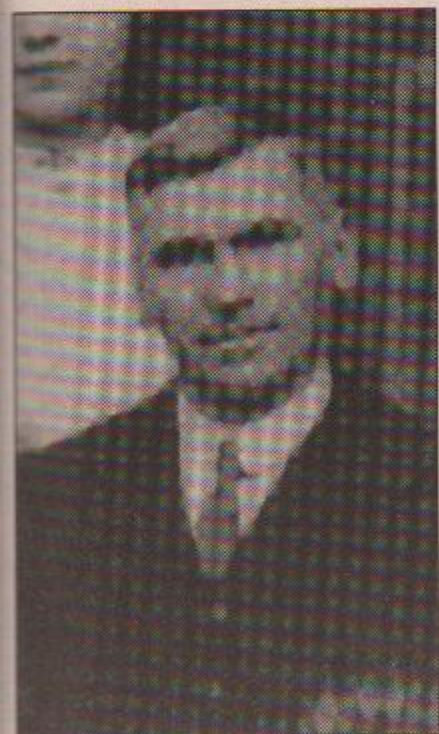
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30 November marked the 75th anniversary of the death of John Maclean (1879-1923), Glasgow schoolteacher, socialist and one of the leading figures in the history of the revolutionary working class. Maclean came from the same Marxist tradition as James Connolly, worked alongside James Larkin during the Belfast Dock Strike of 1907 and was often cited by Lenin – for his active condemnation of the 1914-18 imperialist war – as a revolutionary example.

Throughout his life, Maclean championed the causes of Irish self-determination, the unemployed and working-class Marxist education. In 1918, he was appointed as Honorary President of the first Congress of Soviets and Bolshevik Consul in Scotland, while campaigning tirelessly for the socialist revolution in Britain.

We will deal with Maclean's revolutionary activity during the war and its aftermath in forthcoming issues. Here we begin the story – and our assessment – of John Maclean and his consistently Marxist approach to class struggle by looking at his work in the period leading up to the war and his role as a Marxist educator.

Michael McGregor and Rory Beaton



75TH ANNIVERSARY

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JOHN MACLEAN REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST

The Classroom of Class War

'The millennium, if it is to come, must come from an educated working class. Today, you can be swayed by speeches and pamphlets. But the person who has studied Marx and has applied him to literature, to life in all its phases, can see things as they are.'
John Maclean, lecture 'Marx and his Message', 1913
(quoted in John Broom, *John Maclean*, Macdonald 1973, p.47)

That John Maclean is remembered by many primarily as a teacher of Marxian economics should in no way imply that this was the most important aspect of his activity within the working class movement, but it is testament to the fact that, in this role, Maclean was the most energetic, dedicated and innovative revolutionary of his generation and no one in Britain has, to date, achieved anything on a similar scale.

Maclean's earliest economics classes were part and parcel of the Marxist tradition of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) which he joined prior to 1904. By the winter of 1906 he was taking a Saturday evening class on economic and industrial history in Greenock and a Sunday afternoon session in advanced economics in central Glasgow alongside comrades teaching English, elementary economics and public-speaking.

In 1908, following pressure from the SDF, Eastwood School Board in Glasgow granted continuation classes in economics with John Maclean as tutor, assisted by fellow schoolteacher James Maxton. The set text for the class was Marx's *Capital* and it was discussed with such authority that *Forward*, the Scottish ILP newspaper, claimed, 'Even more will be gained in one session at this class than in a lifetime at Ruskin College...'

That winter saw the economics classes spread throughout the industrial Clyde valley. Classes under Maclean or his 'graduates' were established in Greenock, Paisley, Govan, Pollockshaws, Falkirk and the mining areas of Lanarkshire and, as well as teaching political economy, he now introduced the working class to dialectical materialism. By 1910, classes had also spread as far as the mining and industrial towns of West Fife. It is notable that the mining areas of Lanarkshire and West Fife were later to become electoral strongholds of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), returning both Scotland's first Communist MP, Walter Newbold, and Britain's longest-serving CPGB MP, Willie Gallagher, himself an early student of Maclean.

The formation, in 1909, of the Central Labour College in London led

Maclean to set his sights on a Scottish Labour College, something he regarded as vital for the independence of working-class education. At this time he also became active in the Workers' Education Association (WEA) which, although advancing the general educational standards of the working class, fell far short of the essentially political role Maclean envisaged for the Labour College. He would make this point a few years later by stating:



'I am specially interested in such education as will make revolutionists...'

'[The WEA] has for its object the creation of intelligent workers. Personally, I wish to see all opportunities for self-development opened up to the working class. But I am specially interested in such education as will make revolutionists...'
(*The Call*, 20 September 1917)

This last point is critical as it demonstrates a consciousness which, although developed independently, finds its parallel in Lenin's *What is to be done?*, written in 1902, when he stated that:

'[Attention must] be devoted principally to raising the workers to the level of revolutionaries... We can and must educate workers... so that we may be able to discuss these questions with them.'

It would have been easy for Maclean to have conducted his Marxist classes on a purely cerebral level, as an intellectual gymnasium for the workers. To Maclean, however, political education was another weapon in the revolutionary struggle and one which had to be used in conjunction with continual agitation and organisation. But it was later

obvious to Maclean that his arrests and imprisonment were due more to the threat he posed as a distributor of critical Marxist thought than the delivery of any individual speech, however inflammatory the subject: 'The greatest "crime" I have committed in the eyes of the British Government and the Scottish capitalist class has been the teaching of Marxian economics to Scottish workers. That was evident at my "trial"; that dictated Lord Strathclyde's sentence of three years.'
(*The Call*, 20 September 1917)

It is necessary to remember that Maclean, although certainly not acting in isolation, was very much the

workers because he lacked direct links with the trade unions. This does not bear up to the scrutiny of actual events. When, at the height of the 1915 Rent Strike, he was sacked by Govan School Board following his arrest for declaiming against conscription, a procession of striking shipyard workers carried Maclean shoulder-high from his classroom. They marched to Glasgow Sheriff Court where, on a platform constructed from boards placed across their shoulders, Maclean addressed a crowd of 10,000. The working class of Glasgow had chosen its leader!

A Scottish Labour College Committee was eventually formed from Maclean's Central Economics Class and an Inaugural Conference was called for mid-February 1916. In a pamphlet, written partly by his chief assistant, James D. McDougall, during Maclean's imprisonment, he stressed the importance of an independent Labour College 'in which workers must be trained for the industrial and political struggle which will become keener and sharper as time proceeds'.

Nan Milton described the Central Class – by 1917 numbering 500 – as 'like a large stone thrown into the centre of a pond. The ripples and eddies of its ideas reached out far and wide. It had an influence far disproportionate to its size'. This influence was the direct result of the quality of training received by each 'graduate' of Maclean's class; their firm foundation in Marxism as it related to the everyday class struggle. John Maclean clearly grasped – as had Lenin – that the success of a revolutionary working class movement had to be measured in quality and not just by the quantity of its revolutionaries.

The first publication of the Scottish Labour College was Maclean's pamphlet *The War After the War*, written over the period 1917-18, a digest of the Marxian economics taught at his Central class, demonstrating the contradictions of capitalism and the inevitability of imperialist war. It was an excellent introduction to Marx's theory of value and price in a style readily understood by the workers and illustrated with real examples. In the introduction to the pamphlet, Maclean outlined its purpose:

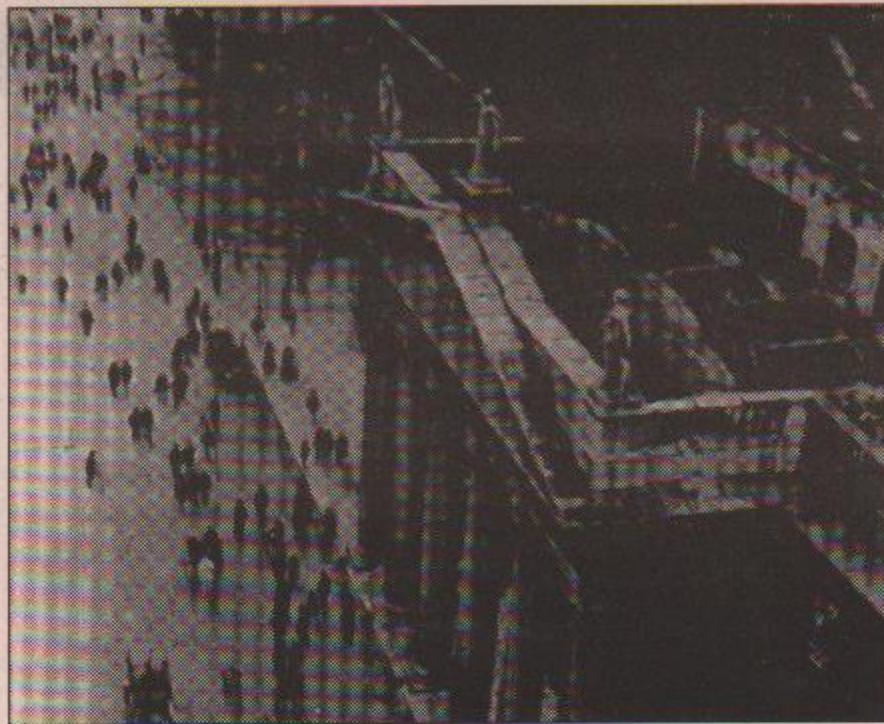
'...we make no apology for coming into the arena on the side of Marxism, in the hope that this brief sketch of the fundamentals of Marxian economics may get into the hands of hundreds of thousands of workers, and induce them to dig deeper... The fact that the capitalists and their government are deeply distressed over the growth of working-class students of Marx ought of itself to induce all workers to begin this fascinating study.'

Eighty years after the publication of his pamphlet, Maclean's words continue to ring loud and true!

Rory Beaton

1919-1923

AN COMMUNIST



Dublin GPO, Easter 1916: Maclean took the side of the Irish

John Maclean: Battlepost of the poor

Seventy-five years ago, on 30 November 1923, John Maclean died from pneumonia at his home in Pollockshaws, Glasgow. He was 44 years of age. He had been at liberty for only 11 months, having completed a one-year sentence for sedition in October 1922. The sentence had arisen from his advice to the unemployed, at a Gorbals street meeting, that they should not allow themselves or their families to starve. The year was 1921 and the unemployed were organising again, marching under the banner of '1914-Fight! 1921-Starve!'. Now it was a real question of fight or starve. Maclean had dedicated his life to the fight against the two evils of capitalism and imperialism. His six terms of imprisonment in the living tombs of the Scottish gaol system between 1916 and 1922 were earned by his steadfast and courageous opposition to war and poverty. This record, in itself, is a grim testament to the soulless determination and foul cynicism of a ruling class determined to crush this remarkable revolutionary communist.

Ireland and Scotland, Connolly and Maclean

Maclean was of the same generation as fellow Scot and comrade James Connolly who was to lead the Easter Rising of 1916 against British rule in Ireland. Connolly, born in Edinburgh of Irish immigrant parents, had been in the labour movement in Scotland and had been a member of the Social Democratic Federation, a Marxist organisation, in Glasgow at the same time as Maclean. Connolly was to remark before the Rising that British socialists would never understand what he was doing. Maclean's subsequent support for Ireland's struggle against British imperialism shows that he developed a clear understanding of the duty of communists in an imperialist country to oppose and organise against the oppression of other nations, to struggle to make a common cause between the Irish and British working class. The pamphlet *The Irish Tragedy; Scotland's Disgrace* is a searing indictment of Britain's rule of terror in Ireland. Published in 1920, it stated that:

'To any right-thinking person Britain's retention of Ireland is the world's most startling instance of a dictatorship by terrorists.'

But in April 1916, a fortnight before the Easter Rising, Maclean was sentenced at Edinburgh High Court to three years' penal servitude for mutiny and sedition, crimes punishable by death. The charges had arisen from a year of defiant anti-war activity as Maclean had declared 'War against the War-Mongers'. He alone in Britain, was equipped with the theoretical understanding and steel-

ed attitude necessary to begin the process of building working-class unity against imperialism. While Maclean was removed from the struggle at a critical moment, Connolly was executed. The hypocritical calculations of the British ruling class at that moment, the fateful combination of opportunism and state repression and the threatening struggles of the organised and unorganised working class on the Clyde prevented a similar outcome for Maclean.

Ireland and Scotland were critically different. In Ireland the British faced an organised and armed challenge to their rule; where a section of the working class, in alliance with revolutionary nationalists, went out to declare the Republic. In Scotland, history determined that no similar correlation of forces existed. Despite all the talk of Red Clydeside, the powerful efforts of Maclean to unite Marxism with the spontaneous movements of the working class in a revolutionary direction were frustrated. Why? Other accounts of Maclean's life and times basically blame Maclean for bad tactics, sectarianism, Scottish nationalism, heedless individualism or prison-induced paranoia. The truth is that, as he stated at one of his trials, he had squared his intellect with his conscience. It was a principled Marxist intellect and Maclean was going head-to-head against a murderous ruling class that could only offer the working class years of slaughter, misery and poverty.

What is unarguable is that Maclean was able to clear and secure a space on the Clyde and in Scotland for socialist education, agitation and struggle founded on Marxist principles. His political life and battles contain innumerable lessons for communists today.

Tribune of the people

At the beginning of the 20th Century, Lenin wrote in *What is to be done?*: '...the Social Democrat's ideal should not be the trade union secretary but the tribune of the people who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression...'

From the moment he joined the Social Democratic Federation in 1903 until his death 20 years later, Maclean was involved in a wide range of struggle; educating, agitating and organising. Maclean was inventive, audacious and creative in his approach to many questions. He could not only suggest an effective idea, a new tactic or angle on agitation but would lead it himself. In this period he would march with the unemployed to the churches of the 'good citizens' and shame or harangue the Christians into more than their usual pity - hard cash was collected and redistributed. On one

occasion, in 1907, he led a demonstration of the unemployed in central Glasgow directly into the Stock Exchange of the Empire's second city, marching right round the dealing floor and out onto the streets again! From then on the doors of the Stock Exchange were always firmly shut. Maclean wanted them that way permanently!

Maclean and the SDF took up every issue affecting the working class locally; issues of housing, health and hygiene. In 1904, he wrote a pamphlet called *The Greenock Jungle*, after Upton Sinclair's novel about the Chicago meat industry, in which he exposed the trade in diseased carcasses among Greenock butchers and the SDF stood municipal candidates calling for councils to directly build and provide housing. Recently a Scottish west-coast butcher was responsible for the world's worst outbreak of *E-Coli* and Glasgow's Labour Council is to dispose of all its council housing stock. New Labour - old capitalism.

In this period too, Maclean demonstrated his brave and audacious attitude to police interference and intimidation. The battle for democratic rights; to speak and to organise, to hold meetings, distribute leaflets and papers is entirely bound up with the battle for socialism. How familiar to socialists and activists is this situation from 1904? The police had refused permission for the SDF to use a central square in Greenock and suggested an alternative away from the crowds. Maclean was having none of it and went ahead in any case; attracting large numbers of folk. The police did nothing.

In 1909, at a conference of the Workers Educational Association, Maclean asked leave to move a motion registering protest at the murder in a Spanish jail of the anarchist, Francisco Ferrer. The chair ruled the motion beyond the scope of the conference but Maclean, undaunted and defiant, led a march of 100 delegates to the Spanish consulate and, from the steps, denounced both the murder and Spain's colonial war in Africa.

Maclean knew that the state would never tolerate his public speaking and organising against the war when it came. He was the driving force behind the Free Speech Committees, which united socialists, trades councils and progressive organisations in the campaigns for democratic rights during the war years.

Maclean and the working class - socialist organiser

The years leading up to the First World War saw the emergence of workers' struggles amongst the organised and unorganised sections of the working class in both Britain

and Ireland. As a socialist, Maclean threw himself into the struggle for union organisation and for the winning of the immediate demands of strikers, while pointing out consistently the wider aims of socialism. His first direct experience of a strike was, in fact, in Ireland. James Larkin had met Maclean in Glasgow in 1906 while organising the Clydeside dockers. He invited Maclean over the following year to address the Belfast dockers during their struggle for a union. On his return he learned that strikers had been killed and injured by British troops. Snowden, of the Independent Labour Party, defended the Liberal Government's actions but Maclean, in speeches and writings, called the shootings 'murder'. Later, Larkin and Connolly were to lead the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union during the Dublin strike and lockout of 1913. This revolutionary union spurned the 'moderation' and 'compromise' of the official British trade union movement. By contrast, the ITGWU was a fighting organisation with a political programme that included the demand for Irish self-determination. Writing in the *Vanguard* newspaper of June 1920, Maclean was to state: 'Ireland's fight started in 1907 during the Belfast dockers' strike.'

In Scotland and Britain, despite the traditions of organisation amongst the skilled sections of the working class and the recent waves of unionisation amongst unskilled and women workers, political class-consciousness was barely developed. Individuals and organisations like the Social Democratic Federation worked to get the masses behind them. Sometimes to little avail, as a

'To any right-thinking person Britain's retention of Ireland is the world's most startling instance of a "dictatorship by terrorists".'

writer in the first issue of the *Vanguard* in 1913 bemoaned:

'What's wrong with Scotland? Here have we socialists been preaching Socialism for twenty to thirty years till we have everyone converted, or nearly, and yet we can't get the converts to join themselves onto Socialist branches.'

The struggle for socialism is not an evangelical crusade based on the simple spread of conviction or faith. Every real step forward of the class struggle, which is much more than just a struggle over wages and conditions, depends upon the fusion of the spontaneous struggles of the working class with the revolutionary ideas of Marxism. Every struggle that a socialist gets involved in is towards this aim. Every aspect of organisation is towards this aim. Thirty years before, in 1879, the year of Maclean's birth, Engels described the British labour movement thus:

'One can speak of a labour movement here only insofar as strikes take place which, whether they are won or not, do not get the movement one step forward.'

This reality, the fundamental difference between trade union consciousness and revolutionary consciousness has been, and remains, a central issue for communists. It has a basis in material reality which Engels further recognises when he speaks of how 'the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies'. British imperialism had created an upper layer of the working class, a labour aristocracy, of skilled and relatively secure and privileged workers who directly benefited from the super-profits of imperialism. Though a numerical minority, this layer is able

through the trade unions and its Labour Party to dominate, confuse, sell out, scab, ignore and conspire against the interests of the mass of the working class.

Maclean was to confront this phenomenon and its manifestations over and over again. He represented the interests of the majority of the working class against this layer and a revolutionary challenge to the system which sustained it. Maclean recognised and condemned the traitors, the liars, the demagogues, the cowards, the corrupt rogues and clowns who make up the political representatives of the labour aristocracy. But, critically, he was unable to integrate this recognition into a set of principles and tactics with which to counteract and destroy the backward influence of this reactionary social force within the working class. If sheer energy, will-power and commitment could have done it, Maclean would have won through.

Lenin stated that the struggle against opportunism in the working class was central to the development of a revolutionary party and the victory of socialism. How was this to be done?

'It is our duty, if we wish to remain socialists, to go down lower and deeper, to the real masses; this is the real meaning and purport of the struggle against opportunism.'

Maclean's consistent political practice fulfilled the first part of this injunction. His work with the unemployed and the unorganised workers in unskilled and low-paid employment brought him, as a revolutionary socialist, into direct contact with the real masses.

In 1910 a strike broke out among the women workers at a thread mill at Neilston close by to Maclean. Not for these strikers the trade union respectability of the organised labour movement. With Maclean's assistance they joined a union and marched off to 'interview' the manager.

'The march, with a great banging of tin cans and shouting and singing, pursued its noisy way from Neilston to Pollockshields, where the respectable inhabitants were thoroughly disturbed.'

This was Maclean's territory. Further strikes of women and unskilled workers were to follow as living standards were attacked. In 1911 he was to express enormous optimism about the emerging industrial militancy:

'The times we are living in are so stirring and full of change that it is not impossible to believe that we are in the rapids of revolution.'

That year another strike of women workers took place at the huge Singer Factory on Clydebank. The unorganised men marched out in support but Maclean characterised the refusal of the orthodox trade union members to support the strikers as 'blacklegging'. The militancy continued. That summer, Maclean visited the miners of the Rhondda Valley in Wales, fighting against lockouts and for a minimum wage. In February 1912, over a million miners were to be involved in the biggest strike so far. Trade union membership had doubled but still only represented a minority of the working class. Militancy ebbed and flowed but hundreds of thousands of workers had experienced strike action during this period. The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 meant a sudden decline in the level of industrial militancy. On Clydeside new struggles and forms of union organisation were to emerge and revolutionaries like Maclean had to develop ways of relating to these developments in the conditions of imperialist war. Would the war and the Russian revolution of 1917 alter the balance of forces in favour of Maclean, allowing him to expose, challenge and defeat the opportunist leadership of the working class?

Michael McGregor

To be continued

'We cannot fill the country with police and the definitive solution cannot be repressive, but we're conscious that we've spent a lot of time persuading and there are symptoms of a certain disrespect, of mockery of the law, that we cannot permit. If we don't take measures, we will cause our people to stop being combative and see these things as something normal.'

DEFENDING SOCIALISM

Fighting prostitution in Cuba

Many visitors to Cuba in recent years have been shocked to see prostitutes touting for business in the tourist areas of La Rampa, the Malecon and Old Havana. One comrade was even accosted several times by pimps in a short early morning stroll outside his hotel, his lack of Spanish being no problem: the pimp's drawing in the air of the outline of a woman was clearly understandable. 'But we thought this was eradicated with the revolution!' visitors protest. It was. Unfortunately, prostitution, along with criminal and anti-social activity, has resurfaced during the special period, linked to the rapid escalation of tourism and the free circulation of hard currency; and since the prostitutes go to the main tourist areas, visitors get a misrepresentation of the rest of Havana and of Cuba. **TANIA JACKSON** reports from Havana on measures being adopted to tackle the problem.

This in-your-face prostitution shocks visitors, who forget about the semi-hidden red-light districts of their home towns that make no-go-zones for local residents, or the sexually explicit photos advertising prostitution placed in phone-booths that are visible to all, including children, and so common they're now not noticed or remarked upon. But prostitution has in reality become a problem in Cuba.

Juventud Rebelde, the weekly newspaper of the Union of Young Communists (UJC), recently featured an interview with a young woman, 'Magdalena', brought from Ciego de Avila to Havana with the promise of a job. Once here she was obliged to have sex with foreigners for the pimp's gain. Her life became a despairingly identical routine night after night, for nine hours at a time: disco-brothel-disco. The pimp would leave her at the entrance of the Hotel Comodoro disco with \$5 tucked in her cleavage to bribe the doorman. Once she'd picked up a foreigner, it was a short car ride (\$5 to the driver) to a nearby apartment (\$10 to the 'madam', Marina, and \$10 picked up later by the pimp) and then \$40 for a quick 'service' or \$60 if it went over half an hour (all taken later by the pimp).

The apartment was well set up. Prostitutes arrived at all hours night and day by motorbike, car or taxi. The two rooms were rented out 24 hours a day; Marina's daughter and grandson slept on the balcony. The rooms were well-equipped with air-conditioning, TV, music system, towels, mirror, box of condoms (at \$1 for three) and, for special 'friends' who brought up to four foreigners a day, room-service drinks. The pimp would stay outside with the duty driver and someone who indicated which room was free - three apartments in the same building were being rented out. Magdalena only escaped by throwing herself from a car to get away from her pimp, who was beating her.

That's unfortunately just one case among many. It is estimated that 70% of the prostitutes in Havana come from other provinces. I remember in the Hotel Ciego disco, in Magdalena's home town, how the pretty 15-year-old Cuban woman in our group was approached by a gold-encrusted Cuban man waving a wad of dollars at her, offering to buy her a scarf. His motives were obvious and I quickly asked her friend to intervene. How often does this happen? Far too often.

In recent months, there has been much talk about prostitution and crime, both on the street and in meetings, including in September at the 5th Congress of the CDR (Committee for the Defence of the Revolution, Cuba's neighbourhood-based mass organisation). Some called for increased numbers of police, others heavier sentencing or greater controls, but in particular greater collec-

tive vigilance in the neighbourhood: 'Not just more police, but a greater revolutionary offensive' was how one contributor put it in the plenary session.

Offences related to prostitution were the main theme of a meeting at the beginning of October of the National Commission for Prevention and Social Attention, headed by Vilma Espín, President of the FMC (the Federation of Cuban Women). Estebán Lazo, from the Political Bureau of the Communist Party and 1st Secretary of the Party in the City of Havana, spoke out strongly against shameless pimps who brought prostitutes from other provinces: exemplary and severe punishments should be used to stop them getting the better of the revolution and putting more young women and their families through such terrible ordeals - 'Exemplary measures are also preventative'. It was felt there was a need for greater integration of all relevant institutions to combat this and other criminal behaviour, which grow out of family tolerance and the community turning a blind eye, forgetting the enormous social cost they bring.

In Cuba, although prostitution is still relatively unorganised, the solution cannot be only through use of the police; it needs a greater involvement of revolutionaries to stop it happening in their neighbourhoods. Lazo stated: 'We cannot fill the country with police and the definitive solution cannot be repressive, but we're conscious that we've spent a



The rights of women and children are enshrined in the Cuban constitution

lot of time persuading and there are symptoms of a certain disrespect, of mockery of the law, that we cannot permit. If we don't take measures, we will cause our people to stop being combative and see these things as something normal.'

Now in Cuba there has been a sud-



Prostitutes in Havana: 'a person who sells his or her body will not be punished, but those making personal gain or benefiting in any way from acts of prostitution will face sanctions.'

den clampdown on the criminal and anti-social behaviour that has resurfaced during the special period, particularly that related to prostitution. Most dollar discos in Havana have been temporarily closed down, in a move also designed to curtail drug dealing, and there are now no prostitutes in tourist areas. Prostitution itself is not a crime in accordance with Decree Law 175 of the Council of State, effective from August 1997: 'a person who sells his or her body will not be punished, but those making personal gain or benefiting in any way from acts of prostitution will face sanctions.' A multi-sectored approach is being used to reduce prostitution, ranging from health controls, the search for alternative dignified work for prostitutes and their families, to the punishment of pimps and the analysis of the social impact of future tourist facilities.

In the case of those profiting from the exploitation of Magdalena and the no doubt many others, there are now at least 11 people detained and facing possible gaol sentences of up to 8 years (20 if minors are found to be involved) and confiscation of any goods obtained or used in the sexual exploitation, including their houses and cars.

In the past couple of months, prostitutes who have been found accosting foreign visitors in the

tourist zones of the capital have been taken to specialist multidisciplinary centres for at most 72 hours where they get any necessary medical treatment (and psychological if required) before they are returned to their families. In this way they are helped to escape from the pimps and reintegrate themselves in normal life. According to *Juventud Rebelde*, 70% of prostitutes come from other provinces, the majority without permission to reside in the City. Many arrive beaten or harassed by pimps, and even mutilated to satisfy the whims of deviant clients. Nearly always condoms have not been used, due to ignorance or machismo, or because the foreigner pays more for this. The pimps are often very promiscuous and don't use condoms; some even administer antibiotics to the prostitutes, as a pretence of protection.

At one centre on the outskirts of La Lisa in Havana, hundreds of women have been treated in the past few months since opening, among them two diagnosed with HIV, many with gonorrhoea and two out of every ten with syphilis. One woman, with advanced third-stage syphilis, had in the previous few months had relations with five Cubans and 106 foreigners. There have even been illnesses that the staff had only come across before in medical textbooks. But even worse than these symptoms, says one nurse, is that 'They're

very young, yet they seem old, outside and in. They're 17, 20 years old, with a vagina as though they've given birth ten times. They think of nothing else but money. How do you cure them of that illness?'

The main weapon Cuba can use to combat prostitution and its damaging effects is persuasion and education in social responsibility and ideology, aimed at the prostitutes, their families and the community in general. *Juventud Rebelde* is playing an important role in this, with articles virtually every week dealing with the subject, challenging readers to reflect on how they would react to the establishment of a brothel in their neighbourhood, whether they would let their daughters go through that experience.

Criminal and anti-social behaviour, if not tackled, is one of the greatest threats to the Cuban revolution: 'Criminality vs Revolution: that is the challenge', stated *Juventud Rebelde* on 11 October. The UJC, as the political organisation of young people, will play a decisive role in the fight against such behaviour. It has adopted this task as a new internationalist mission: 'Our major obligation to humanity is maintaining the continuity of the revolution'. The UJC is encouraging its members and other young people to enter the police force. This, combined with the implementation of legislation and appropriate sentencing alongside non-punitive measures such as prevention and education, as well as improvement in socio-economic factors, are seen as the first steps towards controlling the problem. ■

Thanks to *Juventud Rebelde*, and in particular to Rosa Miriam Elizalde, for the excellent informative articles.



Wear your politics on your sleeve ... with our popular campaign T-shirt, reissued to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Black and red on white, with a picture of Che Guevara and the words 'Viva Cuba' and '40th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution' on the front and a quote from Che 'A true revolutionary is motivated by great feelings of love' on the back.

... or your lapel with Rock around the Blockade's new campaign badge, 3cm diameter, red and black on white, 50p.

Please send me _____ T-shirts (specify XL, L, M, S) at £7 each and _____ badges at 50p each. I enclose a cheque for £ _____ payable to Rock around the Blockade

Name _____
Address _____

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



Boycott Bacardi

ROCK AROUND THE BLOCKADE

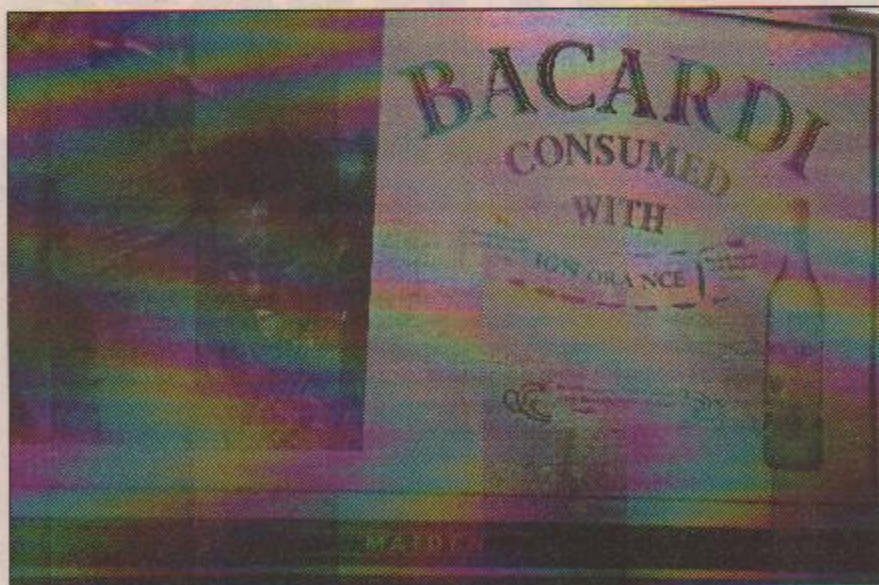
Brigade prepares to celebrate 40th anniversary of Cuban Revolution

You can hardly avoid the current advertising campaign by Bacardi, promoting its Cuban origin. However, Bacardi is not a friend of the Cuban people but, instead, a powerful force intent on destroying the Revolution.

Bacardi Rum, owned by Bacardi Ltd, is the top-selling spirit brand worldwide, and along with the rest of their portfolio, which includes Martini vermouth as well as spirits, wine and beer, accounted for sales of \$2.5bn in 1995, netting them a profit of \$250m. The Bacardi family fortune is estimated at \$1.8bn. Bacardi employs 10,000 people in 45 countries, with sales in 170 countries, and is ranked in the top ten of all world brands, along with Coca-Cola, Kodak and McDonald's. Bacardi Rum is produced in the Bahamas (where it has its headquarters and owns a private island), Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico and Spain, but not in Cuba.

Bacardi fled from Cuba in 1958 as the dictator Batista was failing in the war against revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro. In 1960 the Revolution expropriated Bacardi's property in Cuba, valued at \$67m [1960 prices] by Bacardi, to use for the benefit of all the Cuban people. Bacardi refused to negotiate compensation, preferring to join with US imperialism, the mafia and mercenary terrorists to overthrow the Revolution.

Bacardi's propaganda totally distorts the pre-revolutionary reality of Cuba. One recent billboard advert states '1898 Americans liberate Cubans - 1920 Cubans liberate Americans' [referring to the onset of Prohibition]. 1898 saw the culmination of a century-long desire of the US to control Cuba, as Cuban forces approached a successful conclusion to their war of independence against Spain. The US blew up its own ship, the USS *Maine*, in Havana harbour to start the Spanish-American war - in effect a war to control Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines, which the US won. The US nominally granted independence to Cuba, but installed a US military government, and kept troops on the island to 'pacify' the population. The US forced the Platt Amendment on the Cubans, providing for US military intervention at any time, US control of foreign policy and debt policy, and for the sale or lease of 'lands for coaling and naval stations' to the US. The US supervised the drawing up of the Cuban constitution, which excluded



Bacardi - consumed with ignorance

the franchise from black people, women, and those with less than \$250. Only the Cuban rich, including the Bacardi family, could vote. The US built a naval base at Guantanamo, which it still occupies today, and sent in military forces four times between 1906 and 1933 to preserve this social order.

Bacardi's website invites you to fantasise about 1950s Havana: 'Life in Havana was civilised beyond anything imaginable today. Among the well-to-do, art, literature, music, rich cuisine, fine wines, elegant social gatherings [were] the stuff of daily life... Cigars. BACARDI Rum. Beautiful women. Handsome passionate men. Elegant gambling casinos. Glamorous night-clubs with the world's most gorgeous show girls, dazzling parades of exotic dancers, night after night after night'.

In reality, in the 1950s the lives of Cuba's largely rural population were devoid of such extravagance: only 11% of them drank milk; 4% ate meat; 2.3% had running water and 9.1% had electricity. 36% had internal parasites; 14% had tuberculosis; 43% were illiterate and a third of the workforce were totally or semi-unemployed. In the 1950s, Batista's forces murdered 20,000. Such were the conditions in which Bacardi could accumulate property worth \$67m, whilst the average annual income per person was \$91.25.

The Cuban revolution set about eradicating this system of privilege for the few. Cuba, a poor developing country, now has education and health indices on par with (or exceeding) those of the imperialist countries but without the disparities between rich and poor areas there are in the US and Britain. Infant mortality was 60 per 1,000 live births in 1958 but only 7.2 per 1,000 in 1997. Illiteracy and discrimination have been eradicated and, despite the shortages and suffering caused by the US blockade, the Revolution still offers solidarity to poor nations. After the recent hurricanes effecting the Caribbean and Central America, Cuba sent a medical brigade to the Dominican Republic and cancelled the debt owed by the countries devastated by Hurricane Mitch. The Cubans proposed a plan to the UN to save 25,000 lives annually in Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, where, under the supervision of WHO, Cuba would provide doctors if

the rich nations provided medicine and equipment.

This is what Bacardi wants to destroy and they do not limit themselves to crude propaganda. Bacardi is one of the principal financial backers of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF - see FRFI 145) and Bacardi lawyer Igancio Sanchez, a CANF member, wrote sections of the Helms-Burton Act. The *New York Times* reported that it was referred to as the 'Helms-Bacardi Protection Law'. The blockade has been condemned year on year at the United Nations, most recently by a vote of 157 nations, with only the US and Israel voting to support it; yet the US has even attempted to attach the Helms-Burton Act to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) being discussed by the wealthy nations club, the OECD. MAI is in effect a charter to allow multinationals to exploit the labour and resources of nations without interference by any government, and to destroy socialist Cuba if the US has its way.

The choice is clear: privilege for the few or decent living standards for all - you are either on the side of Bacardi and imperialism or Cuba and socialism, there is no Third Way.

David Howarth

Rock around the Blockade's Boycott Bacardi campaign aims to use the issue to educate people about the blockade and Bacardi's involvement in it, and urge people to drink Havana Club, produced in Cuba in a joint venture with Pernod, instead. A number of Cuba Vive! college societies are attempting to get Bacardi banned at the student union bars. We are also producing leaflets, posters and stickers in the form of an action pack. For details contact Rock around the Blockade, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX. Tel 0171 837 1688

Flyposters' DNA ends up on police database

On Sunday 22 November two Rock around the Blockade activists were arrested for criminal damage while 'improving' a Bacardi billboard to better reflect the fact that Bacardi supports the US blockade of Cuba.

We were arrested (even though we took down the posters as requested), bundled into a van and taken to the police station. Four hours later, we were released with a caution - but not before being photographed, fingerprinted and having mouth swabs taken for DNA sampling. Such is the ever-increasing power of the British police under New Labour.

On 22 December, 15 Rock around the Blockade activists from all over Britain will arrive in Havana to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. The brigade will be based in the province of Sancti Spiritus and will participate in the coffee harvest alongside a mobilisation of pre-university students, visit local schools, hospitals, old people's homes and children's centres and discuss with trade unionists, representatives of the Federation of Cuban Women, local CDRs and the Union of Young Communists (UJC). Rock around the Blockade has donated some essential equipment to the mobile disco of neighbouring Santa Clara, where the most decisive battle of the Cuban Revolution was fought in December 1958, led by Che Guevara; to show their appreciation, the UJC of Santa Clara has invited the brigade to visit the town's memorial to Che and meet veterans of that campaign. The brigade also hopes to visit Che's hideout in the Escambray mountains and participate in a day of construction work alongside the UJC in Havana.

Over the past year, Rock around the Blockade has raised £5,000 for sound systems in Sancti Spiritus, to help the UJC in its revolutionary work with the young people of the province. This money has been raised by imaginative sponsored campaigns; by stalls held, whatever the weather, in towns all over the country, informing people about Cuba and the illegal US blockade; by lively salsa nights in colleges and clubs; by car boot sales, the most recent held by our youngest members, Ikamara (9) and Rebekka (8); by appeals, petitions, selling merchandise. All those whose hard work has contributed to this grand total will be delighted to know that not only are we able, this year, to support two music projects - Sancti Spiritus' mobile disco and a sound system for a rural youth centre - but also to donate £150 to the UJC nationally towards the costs of their Seventh Congress to be held in December. The brigade will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Revolution to the beat of those sound systems on 1 January. Below, some of the brigadistas explain the importance Cuba and the brigade has for them.

'Cuba is and should be an inspiration to us all. Even with the problems associated with the blockade, it has a society based not on greed and corruption, but on providing the best living standards possible for all the people. I want to see how human beings interact in a socialist society and how a true democracy works. I hope to come back politically educated and enthusiastic about changing our society to be more like the Cuban example.'

Chodd
student, north London

'As a socialist, actively involved in building a movement in this country, the brigade to Cuba gives me the opportunity to offer my political solidarity to the Cuban people. It also

enables me to recount my personal experiences of the island when I talk to people back in Britain and inform them of the terrific advantages of socialism from that perspective.'

Jason
student, Blackpool

'Why do I want to go on this brigade? Because, as Fidel Castro says, "In no country have the people fought harder against male chauvinism than in ours, and I don't think that any country has achieved greater tangible and practical results in this struggle than Cuba... I am absolutely opposed to any form of repression, contempt or scorn or discrimination with regard to homosexuals... I don't know what exactly you mean by free love, but interpreting it as the freedom to love, I don't have any objection to it".'

Neil
Cambridge

'How could I miss the 40th anniversary of the Revolution? The Cuban people love to party and they certainly have something to celebrate. In 40 years they have achieved what the first industrialised capitalist countries struggled to achieve in 150 years - and then only through the exploitation of the rest of the world.'

Helen
student, Bristol

'It was hearing about the example of the Cuban revolution that convinced me to become a communist. Now I want to see the reality of my inspiration. I think by going to Cuba I can gain the experience and education to make me a better person and a better communist and that will help me to build a movement in this country.'

Reds
student, north London

'Going to Cuba will enable me for a short time to live the dream of an equal and just society and serve as the inspiration I need, having grown up as one of Thatcher's children.'

Katherine
student, Canterbury

'Cuba has taken a formidable and unique stand which - unusually in this world - puts people before profit. This political stance is rendered even more socially relevant because it acknowledges and celebrates music, culture and spirituality. Cuba points its finger at the USA and says "We definitely don't want to end up like that". As such it represents an unprecedented example, worth investigating first-hand because the information we are usually exposed to is untruthfully filtered and twisted.'

Jim
Squall Collective

'The two previous Rock around the Blockade brigades I have been on were the most wonderful, inspiring experiences. I look forward to finding out more about Cuba. It is amazing how it has survived over the years when everybody predicted the Revolution would fall and socialism be wiped off the face of the earth.'

Richard
playwright, London

Black congressmen betray Assata Shakur

The United States has over recent months escalated its campaign to extradite revolutionary and former Black Panther Assata Shakur from Cuba to serve a life sentence for killing a New Jersey state trooper in 1973, a charge she has always denied (see FRFI 143). In this campaign it has, most shamefully, received the backing of the Congressional Black Caucus. On 14 September, presented with House Resolution 254 which calls on the government of Cuba to return Joanne Chesimard [Assata Shakur] and all other US political exiles living in Cuba, 23 CBC members, including the Reverend Jesse Jackson, voted for the resolution; 13 abstained or absented themselves and not one voted against.

Yesterday's opportunism

■ **Marxism Today, Nov/Dec 1998 Special Issue, £3.50**

As the world capitalist system stands on the precipice, ideologues of every description counsel its political leaders as to how they should act to prevent a global disaster, and the social unrest it will bring. Amongst these are some members of the former Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), who after eight years have just republished its theoretical journal *Marxism Today*. Not that it has anything to do with Marxism: all it offers is a rehash of aged social democratic dogma, replete with appeals for governments to regulate the global financial markets, and to reduce the inequalities that have been a product of the last 20 years of neo-liberalism. Tired stuff indeed.

FRFI dealt with this trend many years ago (see 'New Times, old opportunism', FRFI 94), showing that their politics 'codified the standpoint of a privileged stratum of the new petit bourgeoisie' which sought not to destroy imperialism, but to pacify it. What has changed over the last eight years? Only that the contributors to *Marxism Today* Mark II are a lot wealthier, and more openly part of the ruling class, running chat shows on TV (David Aaronovich) or editing national newspapers (Will Hutton, the *Observer*; Martin Jacques, *Independent* deputy editor), or writing regular newspaper columns (Suzanne Moore, Anatole Kaletsky), or even global strategists for insurance companies. Plus a few professors to lend a semblance of academic gravitas. Their role however is to act as a safety valve, transforming condemnation of the capitalist system into harmless criticism over its lesser aspects. While appearing to be radical opponents of New Labour, in reality they support it on anything that really matters.

Consider the arguments of the foremost contributor, Eric Hobsbawm. In January 1990 he argued that 'insofar as we envisage a change in the nature of capitalism, it will not, within the foreseeable future, be through a basic catastrophic crisis of the capitalist system, out of which the only thing that can be saved is by revolutionary means...certainly from the 1950s on it's been quite clear that, for instance, the argument that capitalism is no longer viable economically disappeared. It's more than viable.' His 'foreseeable future' was to be a matter of eight years; this year he has had to acknowledge that 'the crisis which began in southeast and east Asia turning into a global capitalist crisis has suddenly reminded us how badly capitalism can go wrong'.

But when he qualifies this by saying 'We unquestionably belong, and

will continue for the foreseeable future, to belong to the fortunate minority of countries whose inhabitants no longer have to worry about getting their daily bread', we have to ask who is this 'we'? Not the poor: Sir Donald Acheson, former government chief medical officer, reported recently that 'hunger is prevalent in some groups today, particularly single mothers', and that it is almost impossible for the poorest working class people to obtain cheap, varied food. He writes of 'food deserts', where people living in working class estates have no access to proper food because local shops have been forced out of business and they cannot afford to travel to out-of-town supermarkets.



Hobsbawm argues that 'the worst that is likely to happen economically to the British peoples is insignificant by the standards of what can happen, and is happening to two-thirds of the human race. This is also partly due to the fact that we belong to the region of strong and effective welfare states, ie states fundamentally concerned with matters of welfare and social redistribution.' Whilst it is true that the poverty that affects significant sections of the British working class does not begin to compare with that in Asia or Africa, the reason for this - imperialism - does not enter Hobsbawm's head, since this is the old-fashioned Marxism which he rejected so many years ago.

The problem, he concludes, is twofold: first, 'how to control and regulate the operations of a capitalist market economy' and second, 'how to distribute the enormous wealth generated and accumulated by our society properly to its inhabitants', since 'this the market visibly does not do either.' Hence, 'it is time for the Labour government to remember that its major objective is not national wealth but welfare and social fairness.' But Labour in government has only been interested in state welfare when it is politically essential.

Today it is not. Alistair Darling, Secretary of State, wants to cut benefit for single mothers who do not attend Jobcentre interviews - in other words, for those who are already going hungry. Such is the reality of Labour in 1998.

Eric Hobsbawm was once a noted Marxist historian. Nowadays, his sense of history has disappeared. The regulation of a capitalist economy has been the dream of social democrats for the whole of this century. It has proved possible only for the exceptional period that followed the end of the Second World War, and then in only a very limited fashion. Now crisis has become the norm, with the ever-increasing threat of complete collapse. There is no essential difference between what Hobsbawm argues and the other contributors to *Marxism Today* - only that they tend to be cruder. Anatole Kaletsky, for instance, develops Hobsbawm's theme: 'Capitalism is not about to collapse, because it is an incredibly robust and durable system', he writes. 'Capitalism is natural, because, unlike communism, it faithfully reflects human nature...The instinct to own private property, the propensity to truck and barter, as Adam Smith called it, and, above all, the urge to compete, have been the motive forces of economic activity in every society since Ancient Egypt and China. Capitalism, which gives full vent to these human characteristics, is as natural and irrepressible as sex or religion.'

The real worry of the contributors to *Marxism Today* is that unless there is some regulation of capitalism, some redistribution, the oppressed may rebel; because, in Hobsbawm's words, they 'rediscover the downside of capitalism not by reading the [Communist] Manifesto, but by observing what it does in practice.' That practice is epitomised by the actions of the Labour government. The contributors to *Marxism Today* are united in their belief that Blair's government is better than the Tories - it is 'competent, it is compassionate' (Martin Jacques, editor). Examples of this are supposed to include the Irish peace deal, welfare-to-work, the minimum wage and the adoption of the Social Chapter. As affluent and privileged media workers, they are not on the receiving end of the 'compassion' of British army terror, of welfare cuts, of the regimentation that is part and parcel of Labour's welfare policies. Eight years ago, they dismissed the idea that socialism is an 'enormous economic almshouse'. We can see why: they have already got theirs - modern-day capitalism. They may wish it to be more pleasant, less prone to crises, but they do not want rid of it, because it is the goose that lays the golden eggs of their privileges.

Robert Clough

DiY culture Party or protest?

■ **DiY culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain** George McKay (Ed), London, Verso, 1998

DiY culture is yet another in a nice little crop of books on the only two really new cultural commodities of the Nineties: dance music and direct action politics. In a society where increasingly large numbers of people make a living out of talking about increasingly less stuff, there is a remarkable dearth of new ideas and images to sell to the punters. Thus 'DiY culture' has been seized upon by academics and journalists attempting to interpret this phenomenon for the passive consumers of such pap.

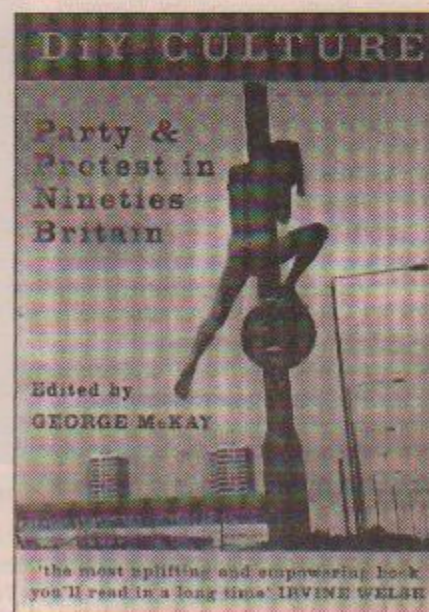
'DiY culture' describes various features of 1990s subcultures: anti-road protests; illegal raves in abandoned warehouses; direct action to stop environmental destruction, Reclaim The Streets parties filling the fast lane with music and laughter, and then digging up the tarmac to plant trees. There's been an explosion of vibrant resistance in the last few years and this book is one of many recently published attempting to explain it. DiY of course stands for Do-it-Yourself - capturing the ethos of autonomy and direct action.

DiY culture is written primarily by activists engaged in the action the book reports on and is thus a damn sight better than the majority of other such products on the market. McKay provides a lengthy introduction; then the book is given over to accounts of manifestations of the party and protest ethos over the last ten years or so, written by...ahem...activists and other key figures in DiY culture'.

Party and protest?

Despite the book's subtitle, 'Party and Protest', a sub-theme running through the individual contributions highlights the division and contradiction between the party and the protest. First a couple of chapters on DiY media: *Squall* and *Undercurrents*; then four chapters on DiY protest: Reclaim the Streets, The Land is Ours, EarthFirst! and the road protests; then four separate chapters on DiY parties: the free party scene, the Exodus collective in Luton, the northern warehouse parties of the late 1980s and early 1990s, ecstasy and the politics of dance music.

But actually how political is dancing? This question has arisen in practical terms as well. After the 12 April 1997 street party in Trafalgar Square, a spoof edition of the *SchNEWS* newsletter was produced criticising those who were content to dance while others fought the police to defend the space they were dancing in. There is also the famous occasion in summer 1995 when Luton-based DiY party collective Exodus 'stopped a riot' on the Marsh Farm estate in Luton by putting on a party. They were criticised for 'basically acting as unpaid auxiliaries to police crowd control methods' (p199). The issue comes up in almost all the contribu-



tions and is perhaps summed up in the slogan on a large banner produced for the April street party - 'They wanna fight, we wanna party'. The opposite is true. Surely if the whole campaign against the Criminal Justice Act showed anything it was that if we want to be able to have free parties at all, we're going to have to fight to defend the spaces in which they are held.

The issue is usually presented as if music and dancing defused the tension that might otherwise lead to violence, although it is by no means always as simple as that. Therefore, it was a revelation to discover in this book the history of the northern warehouse parties held around Blackburn in 1989-91. Violent police raids provoked a massive backlash which turned into a series of full-scale riots (including one in which 836 people were arrested), people storming the police station to get their PA back, and a whole culture of criminality in which PA equipment was quickly stolen to replace that seized by the police and cars were stolen to make up the convoy that drove people to the warehouse.

'DiY' or class struggle?

The book offers factual accounts of specific events but also presents a variety of different theoretical perspectives on 'DiY culture' as a whole. One chapter casts it all in terms of art theory - Dada, Surrealism etc; another in terms of environmental ethics. Admittedly, what we are presented with are essentially different varieties of radical liberalism, with the notable exception of a contribution from autonomist Marxist magazine *Aufheben* which is by far the best piece in terms of advancing an understanding of the events the book catalogues. It points, in particular, to the political limitations of the very book the article appears in: 'The very category around which this book is compiled - DiY culture - serves to obscure the connections and possibilities which our actions anticipate' (p128). Such a category operates to commodify our dissent and make it harmless. They argue that, instead, what is called 'DiY culture' should be seen as part of the class struggle.

Andrew

Kenny Carter — a decade of struggle

The British prison system routinely seeks to destroy those prisoners whom it labels as subversive or disruptive. The methods of abuse include repeated beatings, long periods in solitary confinement and constant movement around the system from one prison to another under the so-called 'Continuous Assessment Scheme' (CAS). This combination of physical and mental torture is overseen from Prison Service Headquarters by the Special Unit Selection Committee, which assumes complete control of the treatment and 'progress' of any prisoner who is in one of the Closed Supervision Centres at Woodhill, Hull or Durham, or on the Continuous Assessment Scheme, or has been subject to either of these during the past two years.

The treatment of life-sentence prisoner Kenny Carter both typifies this abuse and shows it at its most extreme. Aged 19, Kenny was convicted of killing his cellmate in Durham prison, where he was nearing the end of a short sentence. He has always strongly maintained his innocence and for nearly ten years has been subjected to constant aggression and abuse, which he has met with equally determined resistance.

In 1989, while still on remand for the murder charge, Kenny spent six months in total solitary confinement and was denied even the most basic 'privileges' and possessions. He received frequent beatings from prison officers. During this time his girlfriend died of cancer and his daughter was killed in a road accident. Kenny was heartlessly refused permission to attend either funeral.

Following his conviction and sentence to life imprisonment, he was moved to Aylesbury Young Offenders Institute where, having been informed that he had no grounds on

which to mount an appeal, he went into a state of shock and lashed out at the governor. This resulted in a further beating and his being placed in a body-belt for three days in a strip-cell, before being transferred to the notorious top-security Parkhurst psychiatric wing.

It was after his return from Parkhurst to Aylesbury that Kenny first wrote to FRFI. He was becoming increasingly politicised by his experiences and by contact with other long-term prisoners who had for many years been subjected to the treatment he was now experiencing. In 1991 he was moved from Gartree prison for allegedly trying to organise a Christmas Day rooftop protest by prisoners protesting their innocence and at Hull in 1992 was accused of attempting to organise a riot. In retaliation he was beaten by prison officers who strangled him to the point of unconsciousness.

In November 1993 Kenny was involved in a series of protests in Full Sutton segregation unit, where prisoners were being assaulted almost

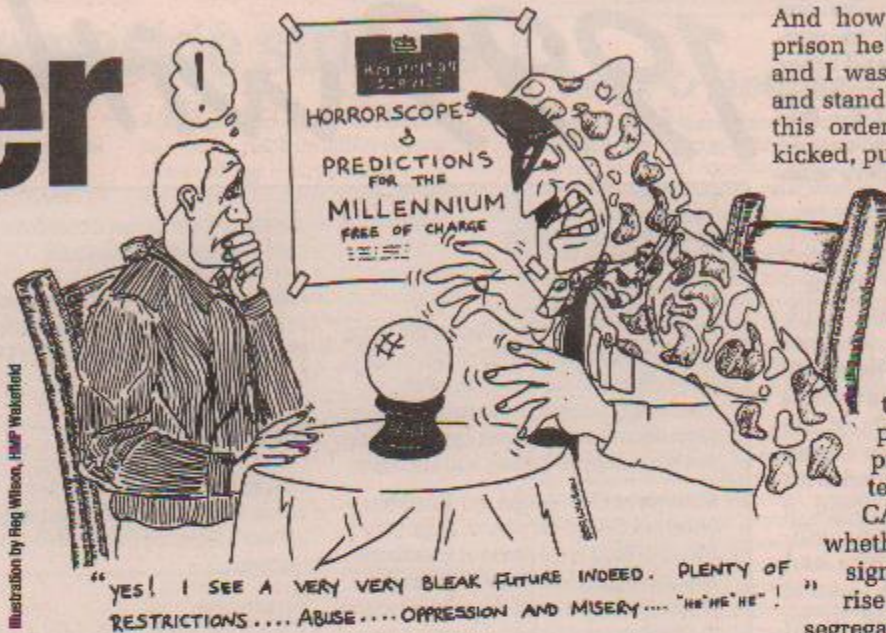
daily. As a consequence he was placed on the 'ghost-train' and sent to a succession of different prisons, ending up at Whitemoor. After a few weeks on 'normal location' he was moved to the Blue Spur C Wing control unit, lasting just three hours there, before being moved to the segregation unit. There he was involved in protests over conditions, resulting in frequent beatings: on one occasion he sustained a broken wrist and wounds requiring 27 stitches.

In 1995/6 Kenny's situation appeared to ease and he was allowed back into the mainstream prison population, spending time at Hull, Long Lartin and Belmarsh. However, in November 1996 he returned to Whitemoor where 'I was surrounded by a group of prison warders who threatened me that they had not forgotten events from 1994 and that if I so much as stepped out of line they would kill me'. Confronted by such an explicit threat, Kenny refused to go on an ordinary wing and so was placed in solitary confinement. He was subsequently told that the prison had made an administrative decision to segregate him because of *their* fear that he was too violent and disruptive for 'normal location'.

Kenny was returned to the CAS 'ghost-train': moved from prison to prison, deprived of exercise and held in cells with no natural daylight. Earlier this year he submitted a long dossier to the Prisons Ombudsman,

detailing the abuses he has suffered over the two years since being shipped out of Whitemoor.

He describes, for example, how at Winchester prison he was subjected to a humiliating obedience test, whereby in order to receive food he had to retreat to the back of the cell and kneel down facing the wall with his hands on either side, palms up.



And how in June 1997 at Armley prison he 'heard the cell door open and I was ordered to get out of bed and stand at the back wall. I ignored this order, I was then jumped on, kicked, punched and felt a key-chain around my neck... my body went limp from lack of oxygen. I was informed, "See how fucking easy it is, bastard. Carry on as you are and you'll get it".'

The Ombudsman partially upheld Kenny's complaint, although his report predictably concentrates on technical aspects of how CAS is implemented, eg whether the right form was signed at each prison to authorise Kenny's location in the segregation unit, rather than on challenging whether such a system is ever acceptable.

Kenny is currently in the segregation unit at Full Sutton. Any reader who can assist him by publicising his situation, campaigning on his behalf or offering any other form of solidarity or support, should write to him at: Kenny Carter (AD3434), HMP Full Sutton (segregation unit), Moor Lane, York YO4 1PS

Prisoners acquitted of attacks on screws

amid lots of depressing news, its always good to hear of someone beating the system — or at least not being beaten by it. It was cheering therefore to receive accounts from two prisoners who had been acquitted of alleged violence against prison officers. Frank Birley was accused of assaulting a Frankland screw who was beating a black prisoner. Steve Sleaford was charged with kidnapping a prison officer at Whitemoor.

Less cheering, however, is the realisation of just how high the stakes in these cases now are. The introduction of minimum sentences means that any prisoner already serving time for a violent crime will get an automatic life sentence if s/he is convicted of an assault on a prison officer. Steve Sleaford's co-accused Tony McCullagh, who is already doing life, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to another life sentence.

Steve Sleaford writes about his trial:

'The judge did his utmost to try and get the jury to deliver a guilty verdict but he didn't succeed. He also forgot to mention valuable facts when summing up which would have helped

my case and would have made the prosecution case look even more pathetic than it already was. He also allowed inadmissible evidence to be used, which was an interview I had with a governor after the incident had finished. I wasn't told the interview would be used in criminal proceedings, wasn't cautioned or asked if I would like legal assistance. Plus I was suffering from migraine and had been vomiting and was refused even a bucket in case I threw up.'

Frank Birley also wrote to FRFI about his acquittal:

'There was a fight in the TV room between black and white prisoners. Prison officers ran in but the only prisoner they got hold of was a black guy called Steven Tucker who had been slashed down his face. They started beating Tucker up, calling him a nigger and a black bastard. A prisoner who witnessed this told them to stop beating Tucker and, when they continued, assaulted senior officer Harris. Harris received a broken cheekbone.'

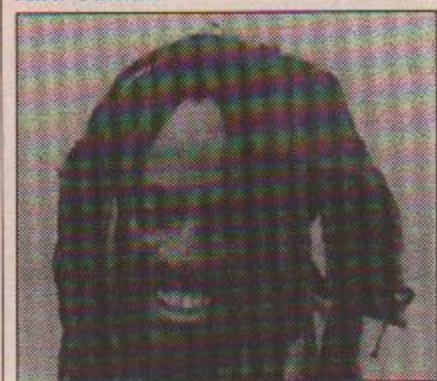
'Ten minutes later, I was taken down to solitary, where I was stripped naked and had a blanket put

round my head. I was beaten by eight or more prison officers, receiving a busted nose, black eye and bruises on my body. The next day I was put on adjudication for assault on SO Harris and pleaded not guilty. The Governor then put the adjudication off for a police investigation. I was returned to a dry cell with no toilet, sink or toilet paper and kept there for ten days until moved to Wakefield segregation unit. I was kept in solitary for the next 14 months.

'My trial lasted ten days and I was found not guilty after the jury had been out only half an hour. Seven prison officers gave evidence that I assaulted Harris while he was restraining Tucker. My witnesses all gave evidence that the prison officers were beating Tucker and calling him names and that another prisoner assaulted Tucker. They also gave evidence about my treatment by prison officers, but what got me the 'not guilty' was that a prison officer fabricated evidence by writing in the observation book that he had heard me bragging that I had assaulted Harris. He wrote this in the middle of another paragraph in his own writing, but added it in a different pen at a later date.'

Inside News

Stop the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal!



On 29 October the US Supreme Court ruled against the appeal of death-row prisoner and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal. Mumia was stitched up in 1982 for the murder of a Philadelphia cop and has been fighting for his life ever since. His campaign has massive worldwide support which in 1995 was enough to force the state to allow him a further appeal. Now this has been rejected international pressure is again vital. Send letters of protest to State Governor Tom Ridge, State Capital Building, Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120, USA. Further information on website www.mumia.org and details of protests in Britain from ABC on 0171 326 0353.

Free Winston Silcott!

The Criminal Cases Review Commission has rejected Winston Silcott's attempt to have his murder conviction for the 1984 death of Anthony Smith referred back to the Court of Appeal. Winston was acquitted on appeal in 1991 of the killing of PC Blakelock during the 1985 Tottenham uprising. The police and judiciary have never forgiven him for winning that appeal and the Smith conviction has been exploited to continue to punish him ever since.

Mothers in prison

A 24-year-old pregnant woman, who was denied a place in HMP Holloway Mother and Baby Unit because of her alleged 'unpredictable and violent behaviour', challenged the decision

through the courts as unfair and unlawful.

An admissions board (which includes prison governors, psychologists, social services, probation and a midwife) decides which women should be admitted to the Unit. Refusal means the baby is taken away at birth. The High Court refused to grant judicial review, but the woman appealed. The Prison Service backed down and offered to convene a new admissions board to reassess her case. She has since been told she that she and her baby daughter will be allowed into a similar unit at Styal or New Hall prison.



The court heard that the interests of the child had been completely overlooked and that the Unit's admission procedures were 'a complete misunderstanding of the Children's Act'.

Television in cells

Prison Service Instruction 58/98, introduced in mid-October, finally brings in the much talked-about 'in-cell television', making extremely clear that this is not something which will now be freely available to all prisoners (in fact, it's not free at all, so if you don't have the weekly rental fee — forget it). No, in-cell TV will be a 'key earnable privilege' linked to 'local strategies such as drug-free environments, anti-bullying and encouragement to work policies'.

Challenge to Basic regime

Still on the 'Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme', David Bowen, who is serving time for his alleged participation in the 1990 Strangeways revolt, recently failed in an attempt to judicially review a prison's right to put someone on Basic regime without giving them a proper opportunity to contest the decision before it is implemented. This is unlikely to be the last challenge to the blatantly divide-and-rule 'privileges' scheme.

First, some good news: we managed to raise our target of £5,000 to purchase new computers and other equipment to help our political work. We are very grateful for this magnificent effort, and we extend our thanks to all FRFI readers who contributed to it.

Up and down the country, supporters of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* have been active on the streets – in support of socialist Cuba and fighting poverty pay. On Friday 20 November supporters of the Reinstate Nigel Cook Campaign staged a protest at the northwest headquarters of the Transport & General Workers Union in Manchester. Protesters armed with banners and a megaphone held a three-hour occupation of regional official Dave McCall's plush office and forced the regional Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting to be abandoned. The committee had initially supported Nigel's entitlement to victimisation benefit, but when Bill Morris refused to pay up, it refused to challenge him. The actions of the

1999 with FRFI

Events

NORTHWEST

Preston FRFI Readers and Supporters Group meet in Room 129 in the Harrington Building, University of Central Lancashire. Next meetings: Wednesday 9 December at 7:30pm (discussion on the economic roots of racism), and Wednesday 27 January also at 7:30pm.

Manchester FRFI Readers and Supporters Group meet at the Beer House, Angel Street/Rochdale Road in the centre of Manchester. Next meetings: Wednesday 16 December (discussion on the economic roots of racism) and Wednesday 27 January, both at 7:30pm

Blackburn: Next meetings of the Reinstate Nigel Cook Campaign are at 7:30pm on Tuesday 15 December and Tuesday 19

January. Venue: Bangor Street Community Centre, Brookhouse, Blackburn.

Preston: Brigadista report back from Cuba 7:30pm Wednesday 3 February, Room 129, Harrington Building, University of Central Lancashire.

MIDLANDS

Leicester FRFI Readers and Supporters meet on Saturday 5 December, starting at 1:30pm. Venue: St Peter's Tenants Association, St Peter's Shopping Centre, Melbourne Road, Highfield.

LONDON

Brigadista report back from Cuba. 7:30pm, Wednesday 20 January. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1N (Holborn tube).

For further details tel: 0171 837 1666

union have forced Nigel to endure severe hardship. Dave McCall is now parroting the lies told by PolyGram in order to justify his scab position. Throughout the occupation, McCall claimed that there was nothing that they could do. However, the following Monday, Kenny Brindle, a national official of the TGWU, contacted Nigel and told him there was some money available for him in a local account, but to get it, Nigel has to write a letter detailing the causes of his hardship! This is in effect a means-tested bribe to get Nigel to concede his right to victimisation benefit.

Don't forget to visit our website: www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk. After the interruptions of the summer, when

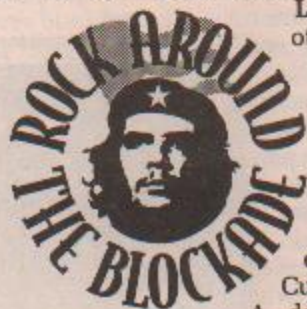
our webmaster was moving house and country, new material is now being added on a weekly basis. This includes, most recently, educational material on the Cuban revolution, and *The state and the capitalist crisis* by David Yaffe, published in the late 1970s. For those comrades who want to read some of John Maclean's writings, the Workers' Web section contains a number of his articles and pamphlets.



FRFI activists supported demonstrations against Pinochet

FIGHTING CAPITALIST LIES...

GETTING ACTIVE WITH ROCK AROUND THE BLOCKADE



I have been a member of Rock around the Blockade for a few weeks. I have been to a stall in Chesterfield where I sold about 30 copies of FRFI and got quite a few signatures on the petition [against the blockade]. I first found out about the group when I was shopping and bumped into Jim and Darren. They explained about the group and since then I have been to two stalls and a few meetings. I find everything really interesting and I have read a few books. At the moment, I am getting sponsors for a sponsored walk in Manchester. The money I raise will go to Cuba.' Kerry Wilcock, Doncaster, 18

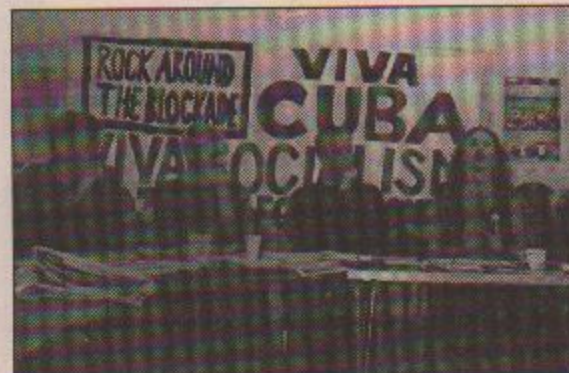
The last few months have seen an increase in the number of people all over the country, from Greenock in Scotland to Hastings in southeast England, who want to get active with Rock around the Blockade and who are drawn specifically to the socialist

perspective of our solidarity work with Cuba.

On 26 November, the Rock around the Blockade society at the University of Manchester held a fantastic salsa night jointly with the Spanish student society, which cleared a £500 profit. They also used the occasion to promote Havana Club as part of their Boycott Bacardi campaign (see p11 for details). A raffle raised £67 for the hurricane appeal in central America. Also in the northwest, the Rock around the Blockade society at the University of Central Lancashire showed the video *Inside Castro's Cuba*, which was followed by an interesting discussion. We also held a successful social evening – our ska/reggae/soul night went down well with all those who attended and we managed to raise £220 for the sound system for Cuba! A 10-mile sponsored walk, taking in the won-

derful scenery of the Peak District took place on 29 November and should raise even more funds.

London RATB organised another successful salsa night at Bar Cuba in Kensington, raising £250 and continues to hold lively discussions of material from the Cuban newspaper *Granma* at its regular, fortnightly campaign meetings. We have also recently donated 10 computers to Cuba, courtesy of IPC Magazines! A dayschool for brigade participants, held in the first week of November, had sessions on Cuba's liberation struggle over the centuries



and the Special Period, the legacy of Che Guevara, a speech by Professor Theodore MacDonald on socialist health and education in Cuba and lots of ideas on how to get active! The new Cuba Vive society at Queen

Mary and Westfield College is holding meetings, focusing in particular on a Boycott Bacardi campaign. Meanwhile, the salsa night held by the Cuba Vive society at University College, London on 27 November attracted 200 people.

At the end of November, new members of the Cuba Vive! society in Bristol organised a street stall in the city centre in Broadmead which drew lots of interest from the public and raised money for Rock around the Blockade. Members Tom, Ruth and Helen also presented Rock around the Blockade with a cheque for £100 from their society. Hastings activists have also been out petitioning against the US blockade.

In the Midlands, Rock around the Blockade has held successful stalls in Chesterfield, Doncaster and Horncastle and, at a recent meeting of Lincoln CSC, a number of new local people expressed interest in the politics of Rock around the Blockade and its linking of the struggle to support Cuba with the fight to build socialism.

Meanwhile, in Scotland, a Greenock activist has contributed an article on Cuba to the local newspaper and is planning to gather material while on the brigade for a feature article for the local *Big Issue*. In December Rock

around the Blockade will be speaking at meetings at Orpington sixth form college and Brunel University, and future plans include events in Cambridge, Bath and Oxford. So wherever you are, if you want to get active in support of Cuba, get involved in Rock around the Blockade, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 0171 837 1688 e-mail: rcgfrfi@easynet.co.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Brigade reportbacks from Cuba

LONDON: Weds 20 January, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

BRISTOL UNIVERSITY: Weds 3 February, exact venue to be confirmed

PRESTON: Weds 3 February, University of Central Lancashire, Room 129, Harrington Building

There will also be meetings in Oxford, Hastings, Cambridge, Greenock and Dundee (tel: campaign number above for details) and Chesterfield, Doncaster, Leicester and Lincoln (tel: 01400 230 151) in late Jan/early Feb.

Rock around the Blockade campaign meetings in London are held regularly on alternate Mondays at 8pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube). Next meetings: 14 December, 11 January, 25 January. All welcome.

Sinembargo salsa night for Cuba: Tuesday 19 January, 10pm-2am, Bar Cuba, 11 Kensington High Street, London. All proceeds to Rock around the Blockade

Global capitalist crisis On a wing and a prayer continued from page 7

\$97bn in 1998 and \$93bn in 1999. Japan's trade surplus is expected to increase by \$70bn between 1997 and 1999, and, significantly, in October this year its surplus with the US rose by 32% compared to a year ago. The language between the main imperialist powers in no longer diplomatic but threatening.

The US has accused the EU of not doing enough to boost growth by opening its markets to imports from Asia. It has warned the EU that if the situation does not change the US could revert to protectionism. The US has further threatened to impose a 100% tax on a range of EU imports to the US, if the EU continues to give privileged access to exports of bananas from former British and French colonies. In return the EU has accused the US of twisting World Trade Organisation (WTO) procedures to fit its own arbitrary and unilateral sanctions timetable. The US has attacked Japan for refusing to cut tariffs on

forestry and fisheries as part of voluntary trade liberalisation package in nine export sectors. Angry exchanges took place at the recent Asia-Pacific Summit. Japan said that US accusations that it was conducting cheque-book diplomacy were 'evil' and 'defamation'. The dispute has been passed on to the WTO for negotiations.

Overcapacity in the world steel industry of at least 250m tonnes is causing further angry conflict. US producers, backed by the steel trade unions, have filed demands for anti-dumping action against Brazil, Russia and Japan. The EU steel industry has filed for action against Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. Exports to Asia by European producers have fallen by 50%, and US exports to Asia have almost collapsed. On a recent visit to Japan, Clinton accused Japanese steelmakers of dumping their products in US market after a 500% increase of imports of Japanese steel into the US in one year. He warned Japan of a 'round of retaliatory protectionism' if Japan did not change its attitude to

trade liberalisation. Next year, as growth slows and the US deficit continues to rise, threats such as these could be translated into action and, by triggering a trade war, precipitate a global recession.

The global capitalist system rests on a knife-edge. The structural contradictions have not been resolved. A whole series of interrelated developments could trigger a recession – from a resurgence of class conflict internationally, a deepening crisis in Asia, the failure of the IMF bailout of Brazil, collapsing stockmarkets to protectionist threats precipitating a trade war. One thing is certain, the false optimism that the crisis is all but over will very soon be exposed.

1. See 'Global Capitalism: falling apart at the seams' in FRFI 145 October/November 1998. Recent information suggests that LTCM could have had an exposure to the markets of some \$900bn, more than 250 times its capital base. 2. For the background to these developments see the article in FRFI 145 and earlier articles on the global crisis in FRFI 140, 141 and 143.

Central American disaster – made by imperialism

More than 18,000 are dead and missing in the four countries of Central America devastated by Hurricane Mitch at the end of October. Millions are now destitute without any prospect of earning a living. The costs of rebuilding damaged infrastructure, houses, bridges, railways, flood defences and roads will run into billions of dollars. The devastation this time was far greater compared to hurricanes in the past. If nature produced the hurricane, then the disaster was made by imperialism.

These countries have massive, unpayable debts to imperialist institutions and banks. On average each country must pay one million dollars a day in debt repayment. Nicaragua spends twice as much on debt servicing than on health and education. 80% of Honduras's income goes to pay debt. IMF 'structural adjustment programmes' have channelled most investment over the past 20 years towards developing export industries like forestry and fruit to ensure these countries pay

back their debt. Governments are forced to cut public spending and slash subsidies, for example, to small-scale farmers. 30% of Honduras's forest has been lost since 1960. Lack of forest cover means more rapid runoff of rainfall and increased rates of erosion which lead to devastating flooding and mud slides after heavy rains. Every year the situation deteriorates. Hurricane Mitch has brutally driven this point home.

The debts of these countries must be written off. Cuba and France and a few other nations have given a lead by writing off the debts owed to them by Honduras and Nicaragua, the two countries worst affected. In contrast, British Labour Party Minister, Clare Short, sickened everyone when, in an instinctive defence of Britain's overseas investments, she said that writing off debts was not the issue. The embarrassment this caused was even too great for Labour and she was forced to back down. Imperialism must now be made to pay for the disaster it caused.

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign has started a Hurricane Appeal. Cheques should be made payable to 'NSC Hurricane' and sent to NSC 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QB. For credit card payments tel: 0171 272 9619.

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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!

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I would like to join an FRFI Readers & Supporters Group

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Left short-changes Tameside strikers

The left in Unison is sabotaging the struggle of the Tameside careworkers. They are distancing themselves from the strikers in order not to jeopardise the cosy relationship they have with council management who allow them to conduct union matters in work time. If they were to throw their weight behind the strikers, that cosy relationship would come to an end. It's nothing new for the left in Britain to put their own interests above those of the working class as a whole. During the miners' strike of 1984-85, Militant (now the Socialist Party) echoed the backward and privileged sections of the mining

industry - the Nottingham miners - in calling for a ballot. The Nottingham miners, who were privileged compared to miners in other areas, scabbed on the strike because they had better bonus and productivity systems, all introduced by Phony Benn when he was Minister for Energy in the Callaghan government. So the Nottingham miners were led to believe they had job security. They say a lie travels twice around the world before truth has time to put its shoes on. If the left is not leading a struggle, they don't want to know. Not only that, they distort and debase reality. For the left, real gains by the

working class, such as the Cuban Revolution, with its policy of putting human beings first, pale into insignificance compared to struggles in Britain's trade union conference or council chamber. They produce pamphlet after pamphlet denigrating Cuba but write science fiction novels about Liverpool city council and 'commandants' Derek Hatton, like *Liverpool: the city that dared to fight*. It just goes to show that while socialism is a life or death struggle for some, it's simply a hobby for others.

DARREN HEWITT
Doncaster

Media distorts truth about Ireland

On Saturday 31 October a 35-year-old Catholic man, Brian Service, was brutally gunned down by a Protestant splinter group. Whether this was done because of the refusal of Trimble and company to take the Good Friday Agreement the promised stage further, we do not know. One thing it certainly does show is that the people breaking the peace process are not republicans - they are standing firm in the face of great provocation and even killings. Little has been said by the British media about this outrageous act against a totally innocent man. All

they seem to want to talk about is the decommissioning issue. There was, for example, a disgraceful interview by John Humphreys on the Sunday after the murder (*On the Record*) where he asked Gerry Adams if he was not inviting violence over decommissioning. He completely ignored the fact, until Gerry Adams reminded him, that an innocent nationalist had just been assassinated by the 'Red Hand' group, which is closely associated with the Loyalist Volunteer Force. Wasn't that violence? This kind of behaviour by the

British media is insulting to the nationalist people of the north of Ireland and, indeed, any decent thinking people. As Adams pointed out to Humphreys, 'They [the Catholics] do not figure much on the Richter scale'. This is very similar, in fact, to the way black South Africans were treated until the overthrow of the racist white regime. When will the British media begin to show both sides of the situation in Ireland?

VAL CARDWELL
London

Black American prisoner appeals to be sent home

My name is Curtis Howard and I am a black American. I am presently incarcerated in prison in England. I was given a life sentence with a six-year tariff to serve for manslaughter. I have to date served a period of seven years and three months. I have become a forgotten political prisoner as the US embassy in London, with the assistance of the British government, has sought illegally to extend my term of imprisonment. The US embassy and the prison service have covered up the beatings I received by prison officers during the four years I was held at HMP Wormwood Scrubs. During the four-year period, the staff there also

sought to undermine my credibility by producing false documentation and subsequently attributing them to myself. I was subsequently sent to HMP Kingston, located in the southern part of England, in an attempt to cut off my contact with black MP Bernie Grant. Mr Grant has done his best to find out why I have been mistreated and why I have been denied my desire to return to Boston, Massachusetts. I have received the support of Lord Longford and Baroness Amos (the only black woman in the House of Lords). Unlike Louise Woodward, the white British nanny found guilty of murdering a baby in my home state of Boston, whom the British government

and nation rallied behind and who later returned to England for a hero's welcome, the British government has done everything to ignore my fundamental civil rights by continuing my unlawful imprisonment. I am urging the FRFI newspaper and its readers to highlight my plight as a black American in an English prison. I have not seen my family during the seven years and three months of my imprisonment. I am seeking your support for my release and deportation back to the United States. CURTIS HOWARD NJ2551 HMP Kingston, 122 Milton Rd, Portsmouth, Hants PO3 6AS

In memoriam

Terry O'Halloran 1 May 1952 - 23 January 1999

With each year that passes it becomes more difficult to write an In Memoriam for Terry O'Halloran, who died in 1999. Although a cliché, it is nevertheless true that we grow old, whilst those who die in the early part of their lives remain forever young in our minds. We remember them with a clarity - and sense of youthful dreams - that is sometimes denied to more recent years. And so the very act of remembering them calls to mind one's own younger self and earlier days of the political movement.

One is tempted to invent opinions on current developments that those who have died might hold. Or to invoke their fictional blessing on trends and events. And still after ten years, often one wonders what Terry would have thought about some new event. Still, after ten years of his absence, I can call to mind the sound of his laughter as clearly as ever. He would - of this I am fairly sure - have found much to giggle at - and attack - in the Labour government's pompous and rich man's arse-kissing antics. He would have found the idea of lavishing hundreds of millions of pounds on the disneyesque folly of the Dome whilst millions of children lacked the basics of a civilised life, a matter for withering scorn.

He would, I am sure, have retained his loyalty to the working class from which he came and to Irish roots which made him a firm supporter of Irish liberation. What he would have made of current developments on these fronts, we can only guess at.

Who can say how he would have responded to the collapse of the socialist countries and the gigantic task of rebuilding a progressive movement worldwide? Would he read about the Russian families whose survival is dependent on two sacks of home-grown potatoes, and feel the tragedy of what the world has lost? Or hear about the Armenian peasants who - only last month - re-erected the local statue of Lenin and feel hope?

Throughout the world, people are searching for solutions to the problems which arise in a world which could be peaceful and prosperous were it not for a system that symbolises all that is worst in human behaviour. Terry spent most of his life searching along with them and by doing so, gave his life meaning. That is why we still remember him. We also remember his son James tragically taken from his family in an accident. MW November 1998

In memoriam

Steven Kitson

4 January 1957-12 November 1997

It is a year since Steve died at the age of 40 after a brave struggle against cancer. He was the Secretary and Treasurer of City of London Anti-Apartheid Group and a mainstay of both nonstop pickets outside the South African Embassy. At the time of his death he was living in Amsterdam where he was active in the Azania Committee and the leader of a choir singing South African freedom songs. He was a brilliant mathematician and was working on a new computer programme. Our thoughts are with his mother and father, David and Norma, and his sister Amandla and her family. Richard Roques

In memoriam

Ray McLaughlin
IRA volunteer

Died 9 September 1985
He spent 10 years in British jails and lived his life, both in and outside prison as a committed Republican, socialist and internationalist. FRFI is proud to have known him.

Jim Reilly Luton Sinn Fein and Home Counties Organiser for Sinn Fein (Britain)

Died 26 September 1980
He devoted his life to the struggle to free Ireland from British imperialism.

London Socialist Film Co-Op

My love has been burning

(Kenji Mizoguchi, 1949)

Discussion led by film editor Roger Buck, with Mary Davis, feminist and labour historian

Saturday 16 January 1999

1.30pm for 2pm, The Lux Cinema, Hoxton Square, London N1 (nearest tube Old Street).

Admission: £5.50, concs £3.50. Discount to annual members £1. Annual membership £5, concs £3. Day membership £2.

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produced by prisoner Charles Bronson are now available. For details and prices contact Paul Raveillious, Flat 1, 17 Bayford Road, Littlehampton, BN17 5ER.

Justice for Mark Barnsley

The Mark Barnsley case, also known as 'the Pomona Incident' is yet another example of how the law consistently fails the working class. On 8 June 1994, Mark was provoked, abused and attacked by up to 15 drunken students who were also under the influence of drugs, but the corrupt offices of the state ensured that in July 1995 he was sent to prison for up to 12 years, whilst his attackers walked free. As a lifelong anarchist who had lived in Beirut and served time for an explosives charge on his return in 1979 while still in his teens, Mark was kept under close surveillance by the Sheffield Special Branch and was in fact harassed by South Yorkshire police to such an extent that he took out and won an injunction against them. They were not amused. During the numerous times Mark was vindictively picked up by the police (without any charges being made) there was never any occasion of him carrying an offensive weapon. Some of the officers involved in Mark's original detention all those years ago were now working out of the police station dealing with the Pomona incident. There can be little doubt

that a few past scores were going to be settled one way or another by the boys in blue!

In addition to dubious police practice, there are other elements to this case which will be familiar to readers of FRFI. The local paper, the *Sheffield Star*, took a typically partisan approach. Of course, to fit Mark up, the police had to invent an alternative scenario quite different from drunken middle-class students setting upon an innocent man who had gone out for a quiet drink with a family friend accompanied by his baby daughter. Their version was that Mark was a mad knifeman who 'went berserk' and attacked a group of 15 students celebrating the end of their exams. The *Star* dutifully printed this cockeyed version of events as fact, even though none of it was substantiated in court. Mark was pursued by a gang of students for some distance, being kicked and punched the whole way as he tried to get away - the *Star*, of course, had a truly imaginative explanation for this, spoon-fed to them by the police: the students were trying to make a citizen's arrest! Of course! That explains it beautifully... except that

in court they admitted they hadn't done anything of the kind and wouldn't even have known how to!

Mark, a man who despised all things military, was then portrayed by the police (backed up by the *Star*) as a 'Walter Mitty' type character with an evil alter ego, Jack Black 'who was some sort of Colonel Mustard figure'. An obscure ancient fighting handbook was produced to demonstrate how the knife wounds were 'text book' style.

The state was, as always, protecting its own, in this case the privileged middle-class brats who were taking over 'their' pub and flaunting their superiority as they always do. God help anyone who gets in their way - remember the South Wales students who kicked a vagrant to death for being in their neighbourhood when they too 'celebrated' their exams?

In addition, the Crown Prosecution Service withheld evidence which Mark's lawyers are still trying to obtain from them. There was an obvious conspiracy to agree a story by the students and their friends. Time and again during proceedings, witnesses agreed they hadn't actually seen what they claimed but had been

'told about it'. Often the information was provided by helpful policemen.

The judge refused to allow evidence that the students had been taking drugs - he clearly didn't want the jury to form a poor impression of them. Can you imagine his bewiggedness's attitude if this gang of young middle-class drunks had instead been working-class football supporters? There is one law for the middle classes and quite another for the rest of us.

The campaign to win Mark Barnsley's release grows by the day. We have held national phone-ins, bombarding the CPS and *Sheffield Star* and have organised local pickets. There are two new support groups, in London and in Leeds, and plans are afoot to hold mass vigils outside the County Court in Sheffield (from 10.30am) and the Court of Appeal in the Strand, London (from 11.30am) on 21 December. Please be there! Solidarity is strength (you told us so it must be true!) And write to: Mark Barnsley WA2897, HMP Full Sutton, York YO41 1PS. As always when writing to prisoners, enclose lots of stamps. This will allow Mark to reply and to continue writing other letters to draw more attention to his case.

PETER BROWN
PO Box 567, Sheffield S5 0YS

**FIGHT
RACISM**

FIGHT IMPERIALISM

Labour squirms

Butcher Pinochet faces justice

Ruling class dilemmas

The split decision of the Law Lords reflects real dilemmas facing the British ruling class. The US has leaned heavily on Labour to allow Pinochet to leave the country because a court case in Spain would reveal in all its detail US involvement in the 1973 coup (see *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* No 144), and its support for the brutal and bloody regime that Pinochet imposed. It would expose why the US took no action when the Chilean secret police, DINA, set off a car bomb in the middle of Washington in 1976, killing Orlando Letelier, the Chilean ambassador to the US during the Allende years. In addition, it would demonstrate the full extent of US support for the wave of military regimes that were established in Latin America during the late 1970s, since the Spanish case against Pinochet includes his participation in Operation Condor, a conspiracy between these regimes to co-operate in international state terrorism, kidnapping and torture. It has been an unspoken rule that imperialism's henchmen can retire to live in peace when their job is done.

Yet there are other considerations as well. Spain is not the only country seeking Pinochet's extradition; Switzerland, Sweden and Belgium are, and it is expected France and Germany will join the queue. Baltasar Garzon, the Spanish judge who has led the investigation into Pinochet, is also in charge of the case against Kenneth Noye, wanted in Britain for the 'road rage' murder of Stephen Cameron two years ago. Does Labour satisfy its European partners? Or will it concede to the US? In the end what will matter are British imperialism's global interests, which will be measured not in terms of legal niceties, but in sterling. On the debit side already is the likely loss of the sale of three surplus frigates to the Chilean navy, worth £60 million.

Ruling class hypocrisy

The whole Pinochet episode has revealed the utter hypocrisy of the British ruling class and its political representatives, whether Tory or Labour. Since stepping down as Chile's head of state in 1990, he has made at least five visits to Britain, mainly to buy arms. The most recent was in October 1997. The Labour Government was informed of his visit well in advance, but, despite Robin Cook's newly-announced 'ethical' foreign policy, made no attempt to stop him from entering the country. Nor did it make any attempt to prevent Pinochet's visit this time round, even though France had already refused him entry. Labour were quite happy with the status quo and the accompanying arms sales, until the Spaniards upset it.

Once Pinochet was detained, the imperialist lie machine swung into action. One of the first to condemn the move was Margaret Thatcher, a great friend and supporter of Pinochet. She contrasted Pinochet's treatment with that of Argentinian president Carlos Menem, who was due in Britain the following week. Pinochet, she said, had been a 'good friend' of Britain during the Falklands War, continuing 'it is disgraceful to preach reconciliation with one (Menem), while maintaining under arrest someone who during that conflict did so much to save so many British lives.' She went on to

The decision of the Law Lords to dismiss General Pinochet's claim to immunity from prosecution and hence from extradition to Spain has created a political crisis for the Labour government. Only those without a shred of humanity could fail to be delighted at the decision, particularly since it was so unexpected. The police were all ready to whisk him from his private hospital to a plane waiting at Brize Norton in Oxfordshire which would take him back to Chile. He himself was ready to go as the first two of five Law Lords who were ruling on his case announced their decision in his favour. All he needed was one more - but he never got it. The pity is of course that he will not have to sit inside a prison - he will be granted bail whatever happens to his case. Vile British neo-fascist friends of his are raising money to rent him a luxurious London home. But he will not escape the daily pickets wherever he stays, pickets that have tormented him since his arrest on 16 October.

justify Pinochet's brutality by asserting 'there were abuses of human rights in Chile and acts of violence on both sides of the divide'. Undoubtedly Chile did support British imperialism during the Malvinas war - it was an open secret at the time that it provided bases for SAS operations. But this was because Chile and Argentina had nearly been to war in the previous period over disputed territory in the South, in the potentially oil-rich Beagle Channel area. As to the 'human rights' abuses under Allende, these were a complete (if convenient) fiction.

Whitewashing Pinochet

However, for the Tories and the right-wing press, Pinochet had become a martyr, and any amount of lying was acceptable to press their case. Pinochet's detention was an unwarranted intrusion into the internal affairs of Chile. The people had democratically voted for the settlement which left him untouched in his own country as a senator for life. Despite some unfortunate 'excesses', he had given the country economic and political stability. All this is a complete whitewash.

25,000 people disappeared or were murdered under Pinochet - not just the 3-4,000 'proven' cases quoted in the press. The 'free market' experi-

ment that he supervised in the late 1970s resulted in near-bankruptcy by 1983. The previous year had seen Chilean GDP fall by nearly 20%, and unemployment reach 22%. Under the direction of Milton Friedman, arch exponent of neo-liberalism, and the so-called 'Chicago Boys', his Chilean disciples, the minimum wage was abolished, union bargaining outlawed, public employment slashed, 212 industries and 66 banks privatised. The conglomerates that took them over used them as collateral to obtain huge loans. In 1982, they collapsed. The Chilean people took to the streets as two-fifths of them faced starvation. Pinochet did a U-turn, re-nationalising industries, in particular copper, and embarking on a programme of public expenditure. What finally rescued the economy was the export-led boom of the late 1980s, itself dependent on a temporary upturn in world economic conditions creating a demand for Chilean copper and agricultural produce. The 1988 settlement which effectively gave Pinochet internal immunity was not the result of a free vote: it was the maximum the armed forces were prepared to concede at the time.

Even today, Chilean democracy remains a threadbare velvet glove over the mailed fist of the Chilean

armed forces. Detention and torture of socialists and communists continue, as does the persecution of the Mapuche aboriginal population. This is supervised by a coalition which includes Foreign Minister Ricardo Lagos, a Chilean Tony Blair; and touted as the first 'socialist' president since Allende. The idea that Pinochet's detention would undermine the Chilean settlement demonstrates its complete lack of popular support.

'International law' and 'sovereign states'

The original High Court judgement, which ruled that Pinochet had immunity for acts he committed as head of state, flew in the face of international law as it has developed since the Second World War. Lord Bingham, in passing judgement, stated that nothing invalidated the principle 'that one sovereign state will not impede another in relation to its sovereign acts.... The applicant is enti-

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tled to immunity as a former sovereign from the criminal and civil process of the English court.' In other words, all acts of a sovereign or head of state are 'official acts' and therefore covered by immunity. The willingness to use this approach of course reflected a deep desire by sections of British imperialism to show faith to a favoured butcher.

However, the judgement ignored the Nuremberg principle, that 'immunity did not apply to acts condemned as criminal by international law'. Pinochet would have immunity for acts undertaken whilst exercising the functions of a head of state. But international conventions, now part of English law, do not recognise kidnapping, torture or murder as functions or 'official acts' of a head of state. The three Law Lords who ruled against Pinochet were doing no more

than upholding international law as it currently stands, which overrides the doctrine of immunity for such acts.

In the end, of course, the attitude of imperialism towards international law is one of expediency. Britain sold arms to Saddam Hussein even as he was waging a war of genocide against the Kurds. It ignored demands for sanctions against apartheid South Africa, and condoned its illegal occupation of Namibia. It evicted the indigenous people from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and turned it into a military base for the US. All this was against 'international law'. However, the Law Lords' decision has opened a can of worms which Labour would far rather not deal with. It also offers the delightful prospect of Margaret Thatcher being arrested in relation to the sinking of the *Belgrano* if she is unfortunate in the choice of countries she tries to enter.

Straw's choice

Right from the outset there have been rumours that Straw would use his discretion as Home Secretary to release Pinochet. As a Christian, he can draw comfort from Archbishop Carey, who at an early stage urged that 'our government will pay attention to the personal aspects of this... and be compassionate in this situation.' The law allows him to send Pinochet back on the next plane to Chile, and there is no doubt he would dearly love to. At the minimum, it would prevent the loss of millions of pounds of arms orders. But it would create an enormous diplomatic row with European governments. It would render his political position untenable - tough on anti-social behaviour, tough on child criminals, tough on asylum seekers, soft on mass murderers. So, whilst we rejoice in Pinochet's discomfort, let us also celebrate Jack Straw's as well. In the end, he may send Pinochet back, but at least it will be the political equivalent of falling on his sword.

Robert Clough

