

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 185 June/July 2005

(unwaged 50p) 80p



May Day in Havana, Cuba and in Caracas, Venezuela: the working class on the march for socialism

In Cuba and Venezuela the people are building socialism. This is the democracy of the masses in action, not the spectacle and deceit of an election in Britain that masquerades as democracy. A century of British general elections has left the levers of power as far as ever they were from the reach of the working class. The Cuban and Venezuelan people have taken hold of these levers to demonstrate another world is possible: socialism.



MARCHING FOR SOCIALISM

On May Day over one million workers marched through the streets of Caracas in defence of national sovereignty, workers' control and for socialism. President Chavez, just returned from Cuba after signing another 49 joint agreements between the two countries, stated his vision of a socialist future for Venezuela. He outlined the tasks ahead for the revolutionary process and to prepare the mass of workers for the struggles to be faced, stressing that more work had to be done to unite the revolutionary forces.

Sending revolutionary greetings to the people of the US, he declared that Venezuela was at the beginning of the process. 'We are just beginning to construct a new state, institutions and a new society... we are just taking the first few steps in the new economy, in production, in property relations and so we must not have any illusions and we must not yet shout that we have won.'

The new UNT (National Union of Workers) organised the celebration,

having supplanted the (CTV) Central Union of Workers, an actively pro-imperialist, anti-Chavez organisation. Francisco Torrealba a National Co-ordinator of the UNT said: 'It is clear from today's protest that the UNT firmly represents unity, workers' participation in management ('co-management') and socialism while the CTV is a bad memory of the past that has stained the union movement for the past 40 years'.

The UNT presented Chavez with a

proposal, 'Project for the law of participation of workers in the management of public and private enterprises', which is to be discussed in the National Assembly. Elias Jaua, Minister for the Popular Economy said that the cooperative method is a democratic and participatory method that aims to construct a socialism of the 21st century. 'We are aiming for equal distribution so that workers are part of deciding what, how and who should be producing products... we aim to democratise production and consumption of products in society.'

Noting the steps that had been taken to develop ABLA (Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America), Chavez spoke about Cuba. 'Our models of integration include liberty and equality... and they are incompatible with the laws of capitalism.' Developing an argument he began publicly at the end of last year, he stated that: 'The capitalist system does not allow us to implement our constitution or the political, economic or social project that we want.' He made it clear that there is no

third road. 'We need to march for a new socialism of the 21st century... so that we can build a new political and social socialist system.' 'We are in a transitional situation which has taken effect since 1998 and needs to be continuously planned... To construct socialism we need to break capitalist economic laws... the traditional economic orthodoxy is not compatible with a revolutionary economy.' Chavez noted that Cuba has now approved scholarships for up to 10,000 Venezuelan doctors to study in Cuba.

Discussing the building a new society, Chavez argued for open self-criticism. He stated that Venezuelans 'must work towards what Che defined as the building of a new human being in society'. 'Che was more than just a martyr, more than just a heroic guerrilla fighter, he was also a Minister in the Cuban government and developed many ideas on how to build the new socialist society... we must study and learn from his thoughts.'

Alvaro Michaels

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Welcome...

'Our models of integration include liberty and equality...and they are incompatible with the laws of capitalism', 'the capitalist system does not allow us to implement our constitution or the political, economic or social project we want', 'we need to march towards a new socialism of the 21st century', 'To construct socialism we need to break capitalist economic laws... the traditional economic orthodoxy is not compatible with a revolutionary economy.'

- Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, May Day 2005.



Castro and Chavez

Capitalism cannot provide liberty and equality – it is a system based on the exploitation of resources and of one class by another for profit. Imperialism imposes that system of exploitation overseas – plundering nations, oppressing their people and locking them into underdevelopment. The economic laws of capitalism lead necessarily to imperialism – capitalism is rampant, it must expand abroad. Racism at home reflects the brutality of imperialism overseas. As a system which divides society into exploiters and exploited, capitalism is incompatible with real democracy. Whom does the government represent?

The working class in Britain was gradually and begrudgingly conceded the right to vote. But voting itself is not a democratic act. Real democracy is about participating in our society, in our community. All we are offered when we vote is a choice of which member of the ruling class will misrepresent us. Whatever their origin, all members of parliament end up serving the ruling class, parading in their antiquated ceremonies, speaking in their pompous tones, swearing allegiance to Queen and her heirs.

And so the Labour Party returned to government. War and occupation continue in Iraq. Tony Blair remains our Prime Minister. Attacks on immigrants, asylum seekers and Travellers intensify. The Conservatives are still the opposition party. Tough on crime legislation penalises the working class and increases social control. The 'anti-war' Labour MPs return to Parliament to their script of sound and fury, signifying nothing. The armed apparatus of the state claims more victims. Ex-Labour MP Galloway is elected MP for Respect. There is still no real movement against war, racism or imperialism in this country.

Why is that? Why was the massive participation on anti-war demonstrations not translated into election victory for the Respect Coalition? More than 50% of the people in Britain did not vote in this election. Why should they? No-one represents them. They know this isn't real democracy, not real participation. What is needed in this country is deep structural change, a complete social transformation and, as Venezuelan President Chavez told a million marchers on May Day, a break with capitalist economic laws (see page 1). And you will not get that in Britain by putting a cross in a box once every four or five years.

What you do get after the election is more ASBOs, criminalising working class communities and a witch hunt against Travellers, both feeding a culture of intolerance (page 16). You get more scaremongering about the terrorist threat while asylum seekers are brutalised and deported (page 4). You get worsening conditions in health and education as universal provision is sold off to private investors (see pages 2 and 14). Deaths in custody continue, prisoners' human rights are trampled on and the mentally ill are subject to permanent confinement instead of care (see pages 13 and 15).

And you get more manipulation and hypocrisy from the imperialist warmongers who have the audacity to talk about human rights, democracy and freedom. They have stolen those words from us and poisoned their meanings. The European Union voted as a bloc against Cuba in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, but refused to support a Cuban motion condemning the institutionalised regime of torture in the US military base at Guantanamo – within wire and concrete built on land illegally occupied in Cuba (see page 10). Members of the Revolutionary

Communist Group, which produces *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* have organised a solidarity brigade to go to Guantanamo in Cuba to donate a sound system to Caimanera, a town of 5,000 Cubans who live under the shadow of Camp X-ray (see page 5).

Bush warned that any country that harbours terrorists would be considered a target, but his words came back to haunt him when President Fidel Castro announced that infamous terrorist Posada Carriles was sipping mojitos in Miami, no doubt with his friends in the CIA. This has set the revolutionary coals ablaze in Cuba – just as the kidnapping of Elian Gonzalez did five years ago. Socialist Cuba remains united and defiant. In mid-May the largest march ever in Cuba's history took place in Havana where 1.2 million people demanded that Carriles be tried for terrorism and Castro lashed out against US hypocrisy after 46 years of US state-sponsored terrorism. Just as the Cuban revolutionaries of the 1950s linked the struggle against tyrannical regimes with the need for national sovereignty, and political and economic independence from imperialism, today in Bolivia and Ecuador movements of the poor and oppressed have raised the flag of revolution (see page 11).

Change will not come with crosses in boxes, it will not come with reforms to sugar coat the bitter pill of capitalist exploitation. It will come with mass movements who can challenge the relationship of exploiter to exploited. It must happen, it is happening. Join with us and be part of a revolutionary vanguard committed to real social transformation!

Send contributions, written and financial to: BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

website: www.rcgfrfi.easynet.co.uk
www.revolutionarycommunist.com

25th anniversary £10,000 fund drive £11,050 raised thanks to you!

We have done it – and more! We have raised £11,050 – £1,050 over our target of £10,000 – and we know there is more money yet to come. This is a wonderful achievement. Many thanks to all our subscribers, readers and supporters for their generosity.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Metropolitan Police, who have had to pay damages to two *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* supporters they illegally arrested on 15 April 2004 during a picket outside Marks & Spencer. Detaining them for the 'crime' of using a megaphone under a section of the law that has nothing to do with megaphones.

We need to keep the money coming in to ensure the communist, anti-imperialist, anti-Labour position that FRFI puts forward continues to be heard loud and clear.

Send your donations payable to Larkin Publications to FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

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Education notes

'From millions to billions in eight years'

This *Financial Times* headline describes the continuous rise in payment to private businesses in the state education sector since Labour first came to power in 1997. Under the banner of 'modernising', this government is determined to sell off all but the core services for education.

State school outsourcing to the private sector so far totals £4.2 billion in 2004. This proportion is expected to rise at least 15% by 2006. On top of this are £4 billion in running costs (school meals, exams, information technology, cleaning contracts etc), and £800 million outgoings on Private Finance Initiatives (PFI).

These sums represent a dramatic transfer in the amount and proportion of state funds to companies offering education services. But although some of the government's most valued initiatives are now outsourced, including the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, the business world is in it for profit. They want guarantees of long-term markets before they invest. That is why PFI schools are unable to change school dinner provision, however vile, because firms have 30-year contracts to supply meals. All the companies want assurances that their niche market will not dry up as a result of changes in local authority decisions or central government fads.

Former schools minister Stephen Twigg, who lost his seat in the General Election relished his role of selling off the state education sector to private business and performed one last task (though he did not know it at the time) in the service of capital. In March of this year he told a meeting of the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) that competitive supply markets would have an important role in the future of England's education service, adding that the outsourcing experience was 'something that we want to build on, not blot out'.

Violent like you

Violence by both pupils and parents in schools has been in the news again. Being the most targeted and tested pupils in the world has evidently not been good for tempers. Big elements of current policy are going very wrong, in

particular league tables which lead to hierarchies of competing schools and a restrictive and outdated curriculum. Inevitably children are remorselessly and regularly labelled as failures. It's not surprising that pupils hate school when the message goes out, day after day, that if you do not achieve you are a liability to the league position and finances of the school. Nor is it surprising that young people are bereft of strategies to express their frustration at constant rejection other than by violence and despair. Our youth have seen the pictures of torture and humiliation at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. They know what the adults do. When the Prime Minister speaks of youngsters wearing hoods and loitering in public places, he says he wants the rule of law. This from the warmonger of the illegal offensive against the people of Iraq! Look no further to find the exemplar of violence – it is illustrated daily in the doings of the ruling class.

Lord Andrew Adonis

Andrew Adonis is on record (*Observer* 1998) supporting constitutional reform of the House of Lords as an elected second chamber. But then Blair made him a lord in a neat manoeuvre to promote his former head of the No 10 Policy Unit to government office. Adonis has been awarded the post of Junior Education Minister which has upset some in the Labour Party, including Education Minister Ruth Kelly who allegedly refused to accept Adonis as Minister of State for schools. Adonis is the author of some of the most neo-liberal education policies, including university top-up fees, private state-funded academies, and the fantasy notion of parents' power to choose which school to send their children. Adonis will support Blair's intention to establish another 200 city academies – new schools given to private businesses for a very little investment and a lot of taxpayer's money (see FRFI 183). Adonis is marginally less mad than ex-Ofsted Chief Chris Woodhead who recently stated that geography in the school curriculum is 'a toxic mix of new-age mysticism and political correctness'. Having, together with Adonis, been utterly destructive there may be more than a touch of visionary truth in Woodhead's predictions that he expects and 'looks forward to the collapse of the state education system'.

Susan Davidson

Harry Stanley killing Judge overturns verdict – killers go free

Sitting alone, High Court judge Mr Justice Leveson has overturned the inquest jury verdict of unlawful killing over the fatal shooting of Harry Stanley by cops on 22 September 1999 (see FRFI, *passim*). This judge also refused Harry's widow Irene leave to appeal. However, Irene is making a direct application to the court of appeal to overturn this decision.

Justice Leveson lives with Alice inside the looking glass and not in the real world like the ordinary men and women

on the inquest jury. He reasons that because it cannot be proved what the officers were thinking, it cannot be disproved that they believed they were acting in self defence. All the forensic evidence disproves the cops' story. Harry had his back to them and was unarmed.

Justice Leveson's verdict is particularly suspicious as in a few weeks a Crown Prosecution Service decision is due on whether Fagan and Sharman – Harry's killers – are to face criminal charges. Mind how you go when walking home from the pub.

Detention centre death

Asylum seeker Elmas Ozmico, her two children and a nephew arrived in Britain from Turkey, where she feared persecution, on 8 July 2003. While claiming asylum, she was arrested and moved to the Dover detention centre. Feeling unwell, she requested a doctor. These requests were ignored by the guards. It was only after she collapsed that she was rushed to hospital. Three days later she died of septi-

caemia. A sick animal would have received better medical attention than she was offered.

Since January 2000 there have been 226 deaths in police custody. In addition there have been 14 fatal shootings by police officers. These figures do not include untimely deaths in prisons, secure mental health establishments or detention centres.

Jim Wills

IRAQ End the occupation now!

After three months of wrangling, following the 30 January elections, Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari announced a new government on 28 April. Within a week 270 people had been killed in attacks by different organisations. Early in May US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice paid a visit to the country to tell the new government that the resistance can be beaten politically and that they must demonstrate that the political process works. She wanted to see a new draft constitution written by August and fresh elections thereafter. The very length of time it took to allocate ministerial posts demonstrates the weakness of this government. It is an amalgamation of privileged and sectarian interests more concerned with promoting their own privileges than the plight of the Iraqi people. The US and British military will remain in charge. **TREVOR RAYNE reports.**

Al Jaafari left Iraq in 1980 and spent part of his exile in Britain. His deputy is the proven crook, Ahmed Chalabi, formerly wanted in Jordan for financial crimes but now apparently pardoned. The Finance Minister is a former consultant to the World Bank, who heads a London investment firm and has Ahmed Chalabi as an uncle and the Prime Minister as a cousin. Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), is President. Within hours of the US allowing the Kurds in Iraq to form their own Parliament on 4 October 1992, the PUK thanked the US and Turkish states by attacking the revolutionary nationalist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq. The government is a reliable ally for the US and Britain.

Having boycotted the elections, the Sunni population is under-represented in the government and National Assembly. US and British officials are encouraging the government to open talks with the Sunni National Dialogue Council, which they believe is linked to the resistance. US Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld warned the Shia and Kurdish representatives in the government not to purge former predominantly Sunni Ba'athists from the security forces. The Sunni population provides the majority of the armed resistance and the coalition forces are sufficiently encouraged by the January elections to believe that another round of elections will draw the Sunni leadership in and isolate any resistance.

A lull then a storm

In the weeks following the election the number of attacks on the coalition

forces reportedly dropped from 60 a day to 40 a day. US forces admitted to 33 military deaths in March, the lowest monthly toll in over a year. On 5 April Britain's senior officer in Iraq, Lieutenant General Sir John Kiszley, said a series of setbacks had 'helped to take the wind out of the sails of parts of the insurgency'. Ordinary people 'increasingly see the pointlessness of it [resisting]'. This was two days after a force of 60 guerrillas attacked the US-run Abu Ghraib prison, wounding 44 US soldiers. US Joint Chief of Staff General Myers pronounced 'We're on track'. Talabani talked of a complete foreign troop withdrawal in two years. By 26 April General Myers had adjusted his message, 'In terms of the number of incidents, its right about where it was a year ago...I think we're definitely winning. I think we've been winning for some time'. In 2004 major attacks on the occupation armies increased three fold on the 2003 figure.

At the start of May a US report revealed that there had been 15,527 attacks on coalition forces in Iraq from July 2004 to March 2005; a daily average of 61 attacks. 2,404 attacks took place in Baghdad between 1 November 2004 and 12 March 2005; over 18 a day. This is intense guerrilla war. The US military is still unable to secure the main strategic road in Iraq from Baghdad to its international airport. With US military deaths rising over 1,600 and the wounded exceeding 12,000 the US general in charge of recruitment said he was facing 'the toughest recruitment climate ever faced by the all-volunteer army'. Tours of duty were reduced from four years to 15 months to encourage



recruits. Recruitment fell short of target by 42% in April. Recent Pentagon figures indicate 5,133 US troops missing from duty. GI Rights Hotline, that advises soldiers who want to get out of service, took over 30,000 calls in 2004.

There are divisions in the resistance. Sections of the resistance are opposed to kidnappings and the killing of Iraqi civilians. Some argue for attacks on the occupation forces only. The Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars called for Sunnis to join the army and police. Patrick Cockburn, in *The Independent*, reports that a powerful new Ba'ath Party is being formed.

The social conditions for mass popular resistance to the occupation forces and their allies are in place. Unemployment is approximately 50%, the number of children under five suffering malnutrition has doubled from 4% to 8% since the invasion. In Baghdad electricity, fuel and water shortages are as bad as they were two years ago. Medicines are in short supply. Amid these conditions 300,000 people demonstrated in Baghdad on 9 April. This was the largest anti-occupation force protest since the invasion. Demonstrators burned effigies of Bush, Blair and Saddam Hussein and demanded the release of prisoners, the withdrawal of the occupation forces and that Saddam Hussein be brought to trial quickly. The protest was called by the Shia cleric Muqtada al Sadr and joined by Sunni and Shia communities.

Corruption and impunity

Royal Dutch Shell has a chairman for Iraq who has not set foot in the country since 2002. Iraqi oil production stands at 1.5 million barrels per day, below the pre-invasion level. The target was 3.5 million barrels per day. The US says it has allocated \$21 billion for reconstruction, a sum equal to Iraq's entire economic output in 2004, but no cranes are reported visible on the Baghdad skyline. 30-40% of any project's costs are consumed in security payments and corruption accounts for 15-20% of the rest. According to the *Financial Times* only 10-20% of

funds are actually spent on the projects they were allocated for. The Inspector to the Iraq Provisional Assembly reported in March that \$9 billion had been spent on fantasy jobs. DynCorp had over-charged the Pentagon \$600,000 in gas bills and Halliburton made \$108 million from over-charging.

Massacre in Uzbekistan

The White House's instant response to news of the deaths of over 500 people killed by Uzbek troops in Andijan on 13 May was that they included 'Islamic terrorists'. It took the BBC a few more days to discover that those resisting the Karimov regime were 'Islamic militants'. This is consistent with a policy of support for this most vicious government, excusing everything it does for it is a member of 'the coalition of the willing'. Uzbekistan is a strategic ally with a large US military airbase used in 2001 to bomb Afghanistan. It has oil and gas reserves and is adjacent to existing and proposed oil pipelines from the Caspian Basin and Middle East to China and the Indian Ocean. Uzbekistan borders Afghanistan and is less than one hour's flight to Iran and China for US war planes. That is why the torture regime of Uzbekistan is supported by the US and British governments in their battle for global supremacy.

Just three days before the slaughter in Andijan President Bush was in Georgia praising a 'beacon of liberty in the region and the world...a free and democratic Georgia'. And what is more, 'You increased your troop commitment in Iraq five-fold'. US Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld, former Secretary of State Powell and numerous congressional delegations have visited Uzbekistan. None ever called for freedom and democracy in Uzbekistan. The United Nations says there is 'widespread systematic torture' in Uzbekistan. The US is the Karimov regime's chief financial backer.

The crowd that stormed the prison

While this plunder continues only a quarter of Fallujah's population of 300,000 has returned to the city. The US State Department gives the following assessment of Fallujah's buildings: 25% of houses rendered uninhabitable, 25% more with severe damage and 50% light to moderate damage. Add the percentages up to discover that no building is unscathed. US soldiers have re-named the streets: Mobil Road, Michigan Main Street and so on.

US soldiers who kill Iraqis go unpunished. There is nothing to restrain them from killing civilians and fighters as they please. A Pentagon inquiry into the shooting of a wounded, unarmed Iraqi in a Fallujah mosque that was filmed on video found the soldier not guilty. A US commission of inquiry into the shooting dead of the senior Italian secret agent Nicola Callipari protecting the released journalist Giuliana Sgrena, found the soldiers not culpable because they were 'inexperienced'. A Pentagon inquiry into the senior officer at Abu Ghraib, Lieutenant General Sanchez, exonerated him from responsibility for the torture. Brigadier Janis Karpinski, in charge of prisons in Iraq, was demoted to colonel, not because she failed to properly supervise the guards who abused the prisoners but for shoplifting and an unspecified dereliction of duty.

The US state has no intention of leaving Iraq. By the end of 2006 it intends to have an Iraqi army and police force of 300,000 which will allow US and British forces to deploy in key bases from which to stand guard over the country and the oil. However, this Iraqi force is based on sectarian militias and is unreliable. It has not demonstrated any ability to fight the resistance without the occupation forces.

In March, Italy announced that it was withdrawing its 2,700 soldiers from September. The following month Poland said its 1,700 troops would leave at the start of 2006. We demand British and all occupation armies out of Iraq.

in Andijan to free 23 businessmen awaiting trial for 'Islamic extremism' were protesting against poverty and the repression meted out to keep them poor. Britain's former ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, says that 60% of the population are based on state farms and paid poverty wages, \$2 a month; they are effectively serfs. Children as young as eight are conscripted into the cotton fields to work 16 hour days picking cotton. Farm gate prices of cotton are as little as 4% of the farm gate prices paid in neighbouring Kazakhstan.

The Uzbekistan regime assists the traffic in opium and heroin from Afghanistan to Europe and the US. It traffics women to the Middle East to serve as prostitutes. There is evidence that opponents are boiled alive in oil. Tashkent airport receives the planes that bring in the CIA's captives for torture, part of the process the US calls 'rendition'. For opposing this and the British government's use of information obtained in Uzbekistan through torture to gaoil suspects, Craig Murray was smeared by the Foreign Office and dismissed by the British government from his ambassadorship.

Labour's Foreign Secretary Straw has expressed 'grave international concern' and the United Nations' human rights chief has also said he is concerned about the reports of the killings. Both called for an investigation. This splendid word 'concerned' will, they hope, suffice to cover up any embarrassment that the massacre may cause them. Meanwhile, everywhere the US military sets foot is bursting into flames.



Uprising in Uzbekistan

The reality of capitalism's immigration policy

The British Labour government is in the process of fine-tuning a class-based immigration policy to suit the needs of the market. Home Secretary Charles Clarke's announcement in February of a four-tier work permit scheme was just the latest refinement in this plan. This 'modern', capitalist-friendly immigration system underpins all today's spin about keeping out 'unfounded' asylum seekers but letting in skilled economic migrants and is no less racist than the policies that preceded it. FRFI opposes all immigration controls. **NICKI JAMESON** reports.



In September 2000, then Immigration Minister Barbara Roche announced a fundamental change to Labour's immigration policy. Roche gave a speech entitled 'UK migration in a global economy' to a conference organised by the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) and sponsored by the British Bankers Association. She opened by congratulating the City of London on having the 'most diverse and international workforce in London'.

Prior to then Labour's sole policy on immigration had been based, like that of the previous Tory government, on restricting and reducing it, and in particular on attacking 'economic migrants', accusing those making asylum claims of secretly coming here to find work and improve their living standards.

However, the shortsightedness of this approach had begun to be pointed out to the government by its own supporters, and pro-Labour journalists had been preparing the ground for Roche's speech for several months. On 19 June 2000, the day after 58 Chinese people died a horrific death whilst being smuggled into Britain in a tomato lorry, *The Guardian's* Alan Travis used the focus on the dangers faced by would-be economic migrants to call for an 'immigration policy based on...economic needs rather than foreign policy objectives or asylum sympathies'. He dismissed as 'marginal importance' the argument against depriving poor countries of skilled workers so they can service the rich nations, citing the global value of remittances sent to poor nations by workers in rich ones as \$65 billion a year.

As we reported in FRFI at the time, the government now changed its stance in order to encourage the openly 'economic' migration of a cheap, skilled, middle class workforce. 'Workers who will earn enough to pay taxes and buy houses, who will not require council accommodation or state benefits; who can be paid relatively high wages but are cheap nonetheless, because this country has not had to invest in their education or training.' (*Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* 157 October/November 2000)

Highly skilled...

The Highly Skilled Migrants Programme (HSMP) came into operation in January 2002. Men and women with the requisite level of qualification and existing salary are recruited abroad to seek work in Britain. They are given visas for one year initially, which they can renew if they find jobs. The programme has spawned an entire industry of recruitment consultants and lawyers, who promise to smooth out the bureaucracy for applicants. However there is no actual guarantee of finding work, and even at the 'highly skilled' level, black and Asian migrants face racism. FRFI spoke to two men from India who

came here on the HSMP and remain unemployed (see box).

The IPPR, which hosted the conference at which Barbara Roche spoke, bills itself as 'Britain's leading progressive think tank'. Its direction is, however, firmly in tune with the drive of 'New Labourism'. Current director Nick Peace was formerly a Special Adviser to David Blunkett on migration, asylum and citizenship. It is therefore not surprising that the IPPR should now produce research that vindicates this aspect of current government policy by demonstrating that the widely held notion that immigrants are a drain on the public purse is untrue. The study *Paying their way: The fiscal contribution of immigrants in the UK*, published by the IPPR in April 2005, concludes that in fact the reverse is the case, and immigrants contribute more to the state per person than people born in this country.

The study is based on data from the Labour Force Survey and the Office of National Statistics and shows that total revenue from immigrants grew 22% in real terms from £33.8 billion in 1999-00 to £41.2 billion in 2003-04. This compares to a 6% increase for people born in the UK.

Skilled...

Of the almost 20,000 nurses who joined the medical register in 2003-04, more than 15,000 were from overseas. One third of the 212,000 doctors on the register qualified abroad. Home Office figures show the annual number of work permits issued to health-care staff from outside the European Union has risen 27-fold since 1993, to more than 40,000. The highest number of these workers come from the

Highly Skilled Migrants seek work

'The elation, the promise and the expectations last only until we arrive at Heathrow. The Home Office provides absolutely no support, understanding or help - no telephone calls are answered; e-mails and letters are not replied to, and visits in person are not entertained.'

We are told repeatedly before coming here that the UK of today is an equal opportunities country; they are 'investors in people', in fact we are even handed out an equal opportunities monitoring form, where we tick our origin. But it's all a trick - it's pseudo-racism, isn't it? Everyone is sickeningly polite, but the jobs never come our way. This is usually put down to 'lack of UK experience'. Yet I have met so many New Zealanders, Australians, South Africans, people of white origin, who don't have a shred of UK or London experience, are a lot less qualified, armed with CVs which have far weaker experience, not even relevant experience for the jobs that they are doing here, but they are the ones who have got the jobs. There is always some hurdle - if it's not 'London experience', or 'lack of UK network', it's that the job is in

Wimbledon and you stay in Wood Green, or you are overqualified and 'too senior' for the role.

Half the recruiters do not know about this programme. So they do not recognise it. They ask us who has sponsored your visa? They do not realise that no one needs to sponsor an HSMP visa. The staff in the REED office at Wood Green told me that they have never seen a HSMP visa; even though REED is currently in partnership with the government to increase employment for migrants. Even the government's own Job Centre initially refused to let me register because they did not know about HSMP.

So, how are we living here without jobs? We have brought our savings here and are spending them in this country. We cannot find any jobs - forget managerial ones, not even basic ones. And when the money finishes, we have to go back with shattered dreams and empty pockets. Maybe that is how we are making a difference - by spending our money here, so it adds to the net GDP of the UK. Could it be that it is the real reason why only senior managers and people with funds are targeted for this programme?

processed. CARA estimates that 'the skills and experience of up to 5,000 foreign academics seeking refuge in this country could be worth more than £100m to the economy.' Britain is short of 3,000 dentists, while an estimated 700 asylum seekers have qualifications in dentistry.

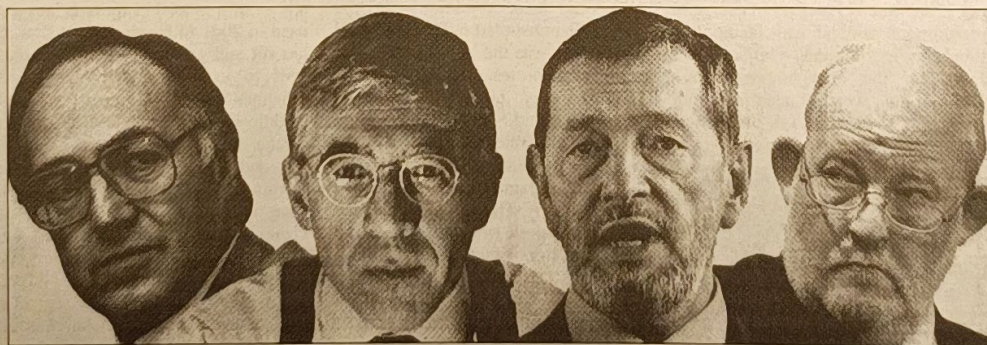
Less skilled...

Clarke's aim was to gather 'all our current schemes for work and student migrants into one simple points-based system' (*Hansard* 7 February 2005). As with the 'highly skilled migrants', the 'tourists, students and migrant workers' remain subject to endless controls, policing and changes in policy. The new system is designed so that permission to enter the country seeking work can be granted or withdrawn from whole sections of people with no warning or reason given. Just two months after the current version of the 'working holidaymaker visa scheme' was introduced, the Home Office began to restrict it. Of course, no Australian, New Zealander or white South African has been affected, but there was a sudden and total block put on any further applications, from Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Namibia and Botswana. This followed the announcement of a similarly sudden block on the issuing of visas to visitors aged 18 to 30 from Nigeria.

Unskilled...

Meanwhile the lowest paid workers from overseas continue to exist in the worst conditions, entering the country legally if they are from the 'newly incorporated' EU nations of eastern Europe, or illegally if they are from China or other poor nations, and doing the worst jobs for the lowest pay.

There is nothing progressive about the current policy simply because it involves the encouraging of some immigration, while the one it replaced openly discouraged all forms. This is not an offer of betterment to the workers of other nations, but the 'flexible market economy' drawing on the reserve army of labour of poorer countries to service the rich ones. In the 1950s the British economy needed an influx of low-paid workers and found them in its former colonies in the Caribbean and south Asia. As soon as enough were here, Enoch Powell shouted about 'rivers of blood' that would flow from a race war if immigration was not halted and all political parties unquestioningly united to ensure the door would begin to be closed. Today Britain needs certain types of skilled workers and is ensuring it obtains them at the lowest cost. If these gaps are filled, the policy will change again to fit the latest dictates of the market and Labour will dance to the tune of the City of London once again.



Philippines, followed by India and South Africa.

A campaign against this draining of skilled staff from oppressed nations to service rich ones forced the government in 2001 to impose a ban on recruitment from the hardest-hit countries. However, deals have since been struck with the Philippines, India and some other countries which claim to have a surplus of trained staff and are anxious to secure the remittances which such workers can send home from Britain and other wealthy nations.

In 2003, 5,560 work permits were issued to teachers from Commonwealth countries to work in the UK. Young teachers from Australia and New Zealand in particular teach in Britain to fund their travels in Europe. The largest single source of overseas teachers is South Africa, while Africa lacks five million teachers if universal primary education is to be achieved by 2015. Again there have been complaints and in autumn 2004 the British government was forced to agree to clamp down on the poaching of overseas teachers.

Ironically, while the government twists and turns to allow in the skilled workers it requires, and at the same time introduces yet more new measures to make it difficult to claim asylum in Britain, it is compelled to ignore the skills and qualifications of those 'highly skilled migrants' who have entered the country as asylum seekers. According to the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA), there are at least 1,000 asylum seeker doctors in Britain who are not allowed to work as their claims are still being

Terrorising Britain's immigrant community



The British state is engaged in a systematic policy of terrorising its ethnic minority population. At a time when British terrorists are looting, torturing and murdering their way through Iraq, this domestic terror is essential, now more than ever, to maintain social control at home. Four innocent men who had been arrested with maximum hype and media panic, stood accused of a 'ricin terror plot'. On 8 April they were acquitted of all charges at the Old Bailey.

A second trial against another four men was then quickly dropped. These eight innocent immigrants who had

spent over two years in Belmarsh high security prison, were alleged to be part of an Al Qaida 'terror network' who conspired to 'kill thousands of women and children'. A ninth man, Kamel Bourgass, who turned out to be armed to the teeth with nail-polish remover, cherry stones and castor beans, was then convicted of 'conspiracy to cause a public nuisance'. This was the only conviction to come out of this £20 million trial. Bourgass had already been sentenced to life imprisonment for the killing, during one of the 'anti-terror' raids on a flat in Manchester, of DC Stephen Oake.

The 'ricin arrests' were big news and used to instil huge fear in the pop-

ulation. When it finally transpired that apart from a few beans, no terror plot existed, there was no ricin and no 'ricin ring', the media was either silent or reported only that Bourgass was a 'failed asylum seeker'. This led the Tories to insist Labour should apologise to the family of Stephen Oake, which Minister Alan Milburn duly did, exploiting the opportunity to advertise the government's ID card plans.

All the other 'freed' men were re-arrested for immigration offences or given control orders. The government is now trying to deport three of those acquitted to Algeria despite the public protestations of members of the trial jury.

Terrorising children

In Bradford, November 2003, a Mr Q Hussain was driving home with his ten year old son, when he was stopped by police who searched his car, checking his tax disc, tyres, etc. They let him go after apologising for mixing him up with a Z Hussain. The next day on the same stretch of road they stopped him again, 'sorry Mr Hussain, but your name is still on our list of terrorist suspects. We'll take it off, on you go'. Five minutes later, further down the road, the Hussains were stopped again by an armed police unit, who pulled them out of the car, dragged them onto the pavement, shouting,

'Are you Mr Z Hussain?' He said he wasn't and tried unsuccessfully to explain he was a different Mr Hussain. Then one of the officers placed the nozzle of his gun in the mouth of Hussain's 10-year-old son and said: 'tell us it's you, or we'll shoot the fucker!' (Talk given by Kenny Glenaan, director of UK film *Yasmin*, 30 October 2004)

The British Gestapo

A British Muslim, Babar Ahmad, was repeatedly kicked, punched, stamped on, grabbed by the genitals and 'pulled all over like a dog on a lead' by police terrorists, in full view of his wife. Ahmad sustained over 50 separate injuries to his body after also being punched while handcuffed in a police van by police who wore gloves. Ahmad was released six days later without charge. The CPS refused to prosecute the police officers who assaulted him. He was then re-arrested on an extradition warrant from the US, on charges of running a support network for 'terrorists' from Chechnya and Afghanistan. The racist Labour government duly obliged and interned Ahmad under the Extradition Act 2003. On 17 May Bow Street Magistrates Court ruled he would be extradited. Further appeals are pending. See <http://www.freebabarahmad.com> for more details.

Terrorising disabled elderly women

Another 'anti-terror' police raid turned conveniently into a sweep for illegal immigrants when last November five black people were arrested on 'immigration offences' after terrifying raids on houses in Manchester. These included the homes of Asha Awad, a 65-year-old Somali woman in a wheel chair, her neighbour, a 64-year-old Somali pensioner and foster carer, Syl-

via Ramsay. Armed Greater Manchester Police (GMP) smashed down the doors, screaming and shouting for the whereabouts of non-existent 'terrorists' before dragging Asha Awad away to 'help her find accommodation while her home was searched'.

The Somali community protested vigorously against the despicable raids and confronted, jeered and jostled the racist GMP thugs as they interrogated the 'terrorist' in the wheel-chair. The repulsive GMP is known for its racist attitude towards black women - one of their number was caught (and exonerated) sending a colleague racist e-mails (a monkey's head on a black South African woman's body).

Terrorising the black community

Terrorising Muslims may be an extra perk for the police that Muslims should accept as a 'reality' (according to minister Hazel Blears), but it does not seem to stand in the way of that old favourite pastime - attacking black people.

In September 2004, Beverly Bryant, 56, died of a massive brain haemorrhage, two months after nearly 100 police raided her pub in west London, looking for 'drugs and prostitutes' (*The Voice*, 11 October 2004). They made the locals, mostly black men, some handcuffed, lie on the floor while they searched and videotaped them all. Some were strip-searched in the toilet. Even though the pub staff offered them the keys, the police smashed down the doors, smashed tables, chairs, computers and forced Ms Bryant, who suffered from high blood pressure, up against a wall. The Bryants lost thousands of pounds and Beverly sank into depression. The racist scum said they 'wouldn't rest until the pub was shut down'.

Charles Chinweizu

Hellhole Guantanamo - outpost of imperialism

In April, Britain, along with the rest of the EU, supported a US-led motion at the UN Commission for Human Rights condemning Cuba for so called 'human rights abuses', yet refused to support Cuba's motion demanding an investigation into the 'flagrant, systemic human rights violations' committed by the US in Guantanamo. We should not be surprised at Britain's role - any investigation of Guantanamo would reveal the sordid complicity of the British Foreign Office and MI5 in the atrocities being committed there. The 'deep, dark hole that is Guantanamo', as constitutional rights expert Michael Ratner, described it, exposes the US administration and its allies as hypocrites, war criminals and torturers.

Guantanamo Bay, in eastern Cuba, has been occupied by the United States since 1903, in a deal between the US government and its then stooge Cuban President Estrada, granting use of the deep water bay to the US in perpetuity. In November 2001 US President Bush declared a military order authorising the unlimited secret detention of any non-citizens (swiftly extended to citizens) on the grounds of mere 'suspicion' of involvement in terrorism and trials without the right to legal representation, using secret evidence and to be held by military tribunals. Secret execution would be possible and no right of appeal to civilian courts would be allowed. Meanwhile, those captured in imperialism's war on Afghanistan, or deemed in some way to be connected with Al Qaida - or, indeed, as it



appeared, any Muslim randomly selected by US security forces - were designated 'illegal combatants', a semantic trick designed to strip them of any protection offered under international treaties for the protection of prisoners of war.

And so the legal no-man's land of Guantanamo Bay became the site for the concentration camps X-Ray and Delta, where today up to 600 prisoners are held in a shadowy, Kafkaesque nightmare completely outside the reach of any national or international convention or treaty, without charge or release date, and where confessions of guilt are routinely extracted through brutal interrogations which the Red Cross has described as 'tantamount to torture'.

However, in another neat sleight of hand, the United States - which had already derogated from the Geneva Convention on torture, describing it as 'quaint' and outdated - has redefined torture. The Geneva Convention banned any act 'by which severe pain or suffering... physical or mental... is inflicted to obtain information'. Counsel for President Bush has declared torture will henceforth be: 'the intent to inflict suffering equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury such as organ failure, the impairment of bodily function or even death' - a torturer's charter.

So beating an inmate with blunt objects, standing him in water within sight of an electric switch and threat-

ening him with rape by trained dogs if he doesn't confess to being a member of Al Qaida, as happened to Australian Mamdouh Habib, is not torture.

Inflicting electric shocks on Omar Deghayes, sodomising him, smearing him with excrement? 'Hog-tying' British citizen Moazzam Begg, putting a hood over his head, punching him and leaving him lying that way for hours? Not torture.

'Strangulation, beatings, placement of lit cigarettes into detainees' ear openings and unauthorised interrogations' - as witnessed by FBI agents? Not torture either.

Beating a prisoner, smashing his head into the floor until he's unconscious, bending thumbs back, leaving inmates chained in a foetal position, letting them urinate or defecate on themselves and leaving them like that for 18-24 hours? Turning off ventilation so temperatures soar to 40C, or turning it up so inmates shiver in their underwear in freezing conditions, playing white noise or loud music non-stop, flashing strobe light, sleep deprivation, replacing prayer oil with caustic floor cleaner, sexual humiliation, gagging prisoners with duct tape, all this is not torture? Recently CIA agents have been given permission to use 'waterboarding' - tying an inmate to a board and submerging him in water until he thinks he is going to be drowned.

These methods are used throughout the US's extensive network of secret prisons. A leaked report has revealed that in 2003 at Bagram Airbase, Afghanistan, two detainees were literally beaten to a pulp by their US torturers. We can be sure their deaths are only the tip of an iceberg. By continuing to 'outsource' prisoners to countries such as Egypt, Syria and Uzbekistan, where torture is legal, the US clearly hopes to avoid such incrimination in future.

Let us be clear: this hideous suffering, this obscene trampling on human rights, is not about information. Even

the FBI and CIA admit that torture is an unreliable method of information-gathering. After all these years and all these 'interrogations', only four prisoners have been charged. As journalist Naomi Klein put it, 'torture is a machine designed to break the will to resist - the individual prisoner's will and the collective will'. It is about terror and control. As Klein points out, this involves just enough information getting out about what is happening in Guantanamo to terrorise others, in particular Muslims, but not to inflame further resistance. We can know about pain and fear - but allegations that the Koran had been dishonoured were swiftly quashed.

Now the Pentagon has announced it will be building a new \$25m prison at Guantanamo, including a \$1.7m psychiatric base. As US courts look into the 'legality' of the detention of Guantanamo's inmates, the US military has already declared some prisoners are so 'evil' they will continue to be held in Guantanamo whatever the courts decide. Guantanamo embodies the Orwellian vision of the future - 'a boot stamping on a human face, forever'.

The revolutionary Franz Fanon, writing of French brutality during the war with Algeria, described a man who came to him for psychiatric treatment because he could not stop hearing screaming; he would shut all the doors, stop up the windows, put his head under the pillow - still he could not sleep for the screaming. It turned out he had been involved in torturing Algerian prisoners of war and the screaming he could hear was now inside his own head - he could never shut it out. The British government has been complicit in the torture of prisoners at Guantanamo. We need to bring their crimes back to haunt them.

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**End the torture!
Close down Guantanamo!
US out of Cuba!**

Cat Wiener

PALESTINE: Zionists tighten the screw

The February Sharm el-Sheikh summit between Sharon and Abbas was supposed to deliver prisoner release and Israeli troop withdrawal from Palestinian cities in exchange for a Palestinian ceasefire. The ceasefire or 'calm-down' had been in place since before the summit and was ratified by all the main resistance groups in the 'Cairo Declaration' in March. Prisoner release and troop withdrawal have however not progressed further than the initial release of 500 Palestinian prisoners on 21 February and the nominal withdrawal of Israeli troops from Jericho and Tulkarm. The Israelis refuse to move on either of these issues until Abbas and the Palestinian Authority (PA) take further steps to disarm Hamas and the other resistance groups.

BOB SHEPHERD reports.

The PA have already begun to attempt to delegitimise the resistance groups and in the process disarm them. Militants who hand in their weapons are being given jobs in the PA security forces. The PA Interior Minister, Nasser Youssef, has stated that armed street patrols by resistance groups have to stop. 'We will allow no patrols in the Palestinian street except for those of the PA. In case dialogue with the factions fails, the PA will take the initiative and impose its control by force'. This followed Abbas's statement that those who break the 'calm-down' should be punished with an 'iron fist'. The response of Hamas was to state: 'We would like the PA to focus more on how to protect the Palestinian people from Israeli crimes, which do not stop, than on how to ensure calm'.

The occupation continues and with it the continued killing of Palestinian youth. On 9 April three teenagers were shot and killed in Rafah in the Gaza strip. They were playing football near houses that had been demolished by the Israelis by the border with Egypt; they clearly posed no threat to any Israel soldier, but all three were deliberately killed by single shots to their upper bodies by Israeli snipers. On 4 May two young teenagers, Jamal and Uday, were shot and killed in Beit Liqya on the West Bank while protesting against the construction of the apartheid wall. Both were shot at close range, one in the chest and one in the thigh. The ambulance taking them to hospital in Ramallah was stopped and

held up at the permanent Israeli checkpoint at the main entrance to the city. By the time the ambulance had been let through both boys had bled to death.

The construction of the apartheid wall in the West Bank continues apace alongside continuing protests and demonstrations by Palestinians from the villages whose land is being stolen. Villagers from Beit Liqya, Saffa and Bil'in have been engaged in daily demonstrations involving hundreds of people against the construction of the wall, at the forefront of this

resistance has been youngsters such as Jamal and Uday. The route of the wall will enclose Beit Liqya on three sides and annex 2,350 dunums of the village's most fertile land. The story of Beit Liqya is the story of Israeli colonisation of Palestinian land, in 1948 the village lost 2,000 dunums of land and in 1967 1,000 dunums were stolen from the village to allow the construction of an illegal Israeli 'settlement'.

The controversy over the proposed Israeli 'pullout' from their 21 settlements in the Gaza Strip has obscured

the continuing construction of the apartheid wall in the West Bank and the corresponding theft of Palestinian land. In March the Knesset voted down calls for a national referendum on the 'pull-out' by a wide margin. The settlers were given till the end of July to voluntarily leave Gaza; this has now been extended for three weeks till the end of August. The Settlers Council warned that the decision could lead to a 'civil war' and called for 'action in the streets' threatening to mobilise 100,000 supporters to stop the forced withdrawal from Gaza. Up to now their threats have not materialised, with the majority of Israelis backing the 'pull-out'. The settlers have instead increased their fascist attacks on Palestinian farmers. Figures released by the Israeli army show that reported settler attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank rose by 52% in the first four months of 2005. Amnesty International reports that Israeli settlers are using poison to contaminate Palestinian farmland in the Hebron region of the West Bank. The area is under Israeli military control and they have made no effort to remove the chemicals or investigate the poisonings.

The withdrawal from Gaza is seen by Sharon and his allies as the way to legitimise their settlements in the West Bank. Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz said that the withdrawal from Gaza would allow Israel to extend its borders into the West Bank and maintain Jerusalem as the unified capital of a Jewish state. 'The settlers of the West Bank and Gaza will be able to say in years to come that they helped establish the eastern frontiers of the state of Israel'.

As reported in FRFI 184, the route of the apartheid wall will include the largest Jewish settlement block on the West Bank, Ma'ale Adumin, on the Israeli side of it. At the end of March the Israeli government announced that it had approved plans for the construction of 3,500 housing units between Ma'ale Adumin and East Jerusalem.

The strategy of the Israelis is simple, to link up and expand the Jewish settlements to the east of Jerusalem up to the apartheid wall. The effect of this will be to surround Arab East Jerusalem and cut it off from its natural hinterland, the West Bank. This will have another effect in cutting the link between Palestinian cities to the south of Jerusalem, such as Bethlehem, from cities to the north, such as Ramallah, all cross routes will be controlled by Israel. Sharon is clear: 'the settlement blocks will remain in Israel's hands in any final status agreement no matter the repercussions entailed'.

The lack of any real progress for the Palestinians on the question of prisoners and troop withdrawal and a corresponding disillusionment with Fatah and Abbas was reflected in the latest round of local elections. Hamas won over 35% of the vote and won control of Rafah in Gaza and Qalqilya on the West Bank, winning all the 15 seats on the city council. Samir Nassar from Qalqilya said: 'All my life I voted for Fatah, but this time I voted for Hamas and it won the election because there is no competition. The people who ran things before were corrupt. Fatah is getting nowhere with Sharon. We will try the new people and judge how they do'.

The elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Palestinian parliament, take place on 17 July and Hamas seem set to make a big impression. The US and Israel, alongside sections of Fatah, are worried by the possible outcome and have been trying to get the election postponed; up to now Abbas is resisting the temptation knowing that any postponement would only strengthen Hamas's position.



Anti-Imperialist Bloc contingent on the Palestine Solidarity Campaign Free Palestine demonstration, London 21 May 2005

IRELAND: Election entrenches deadlock

The general election in the north of Ireland has served to further deepen the crisis in the Irish peace process.

Ian Paisley has cemented his position as the leading voice of Unionism, obtaining one in three of all votes cast in the Six Counties on the basis of his refusal to share power with Sinn Fein. Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) now has nine Westminster MPs compared to only one from the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). The UUP leader and former north of Ireland First Minister, David Trimble, lost his seat and has resigned as party leader. During his election acceptance speech Ian Paisley, occasionally breaking into hymns, declared that 'the old path of Unionism has returned. The Bible says "Look for the good way"'. This latest election has left the intransigent

Unionism of the DUP in the political ascendancy and has further served to entrench the deadlock in the political process in the north of Ireland.

On 12 April, Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams made a direct appeal to the IRA calling on the organisation to 'commit itself to purely political and democratic activity'. The next day the IRA responded in a short statement declaring that it will respond 'in due course'. As we have reported in previous issues of FRFI, it is the disbandment of the IRA which is at the top of the political agenda in Ireland. Until this issue is resolved there will be no movement in regard to the political process and the restoration of the devolved power which was suspended in October 2002. The reasons for the stalemate are clear; integral to the Good Friday Agreement is the right

for Unionism to veto political progress at a whim. It is the aim of Unionism, supported by British imperialism, to crush revolutionary nationalism in Ireland; this expresses itself today in the continued calls for the IRA to disband before 'progress' can be made.

On 18 May, the leaders of the DUP and Sinn Fein met with Prime Minister Tony Blair in London in separate meetings and further confirmed this point. Paisley restated the position of the DUP which refuses to share power with Sinn Fein, because the 'party cannot be trusted'. The IRA must decommission all of its weaponry to the DUP's full satisfaction and fully disband, and after that there would have to be a cooling off period before Sinn Fein could enter into government. Adams responded

by saying that there can be no alternative to the Good Friday Agreement.

In the context of a political process where Unionism has the right of veto, the election fortunes of the pro-agreement nationalist parties become a matter of irrelevant detail. Sinn Fein increased its number of MPs to five, gaining one from the fellow nationalist SDLP which now has three MPs. The nationalist vote fell from 345,257 in 2001 to 300,156 this time round, a fall of 13%. Sinn Fein increased its share of the vote by 2.6% to 24.3%, 174,530, the SDLP were down 3.5% to 125,626 or 17.5%. The DUP crushed its UUP rivals winning 33.7%, up 11.2% of the vote, compared to David Trimble's UUP at 17.7% which was down 9.1%.

The Labour government appointed Peter Hain as its fifth direct ruler from

Westminster since 1997. Hain will double up as Welsh Secretary in Blair's cabinet in an indication of the time he will spend actually attempting to resolve the stalemate. Hain's appointment will further serve to fuel illusions among those who imagine British imperialism, and in particular the remnants of the Labour left, playing some sort of progressive role in Ireland. The International Monitoring Commission, the body set up to oversee the disbandment of the IRA, is set to report once again in early June, which will further heap pressure on Republicans to disband. All eyes now return to the outcome of the internal debate within the IRA surrounding the appeal for its disbandment. The outcome of this next phase may well prove to be significant.

Paul Mallon

Socialist Register 2005

The Empire Reloaded

Edited by Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, Merlin Press 2004 £14.95.

'Let us rebel against poisonous academics and their preposterous claptrap of exclusion'

Robert Fisk *The Independent*
14 May 2005

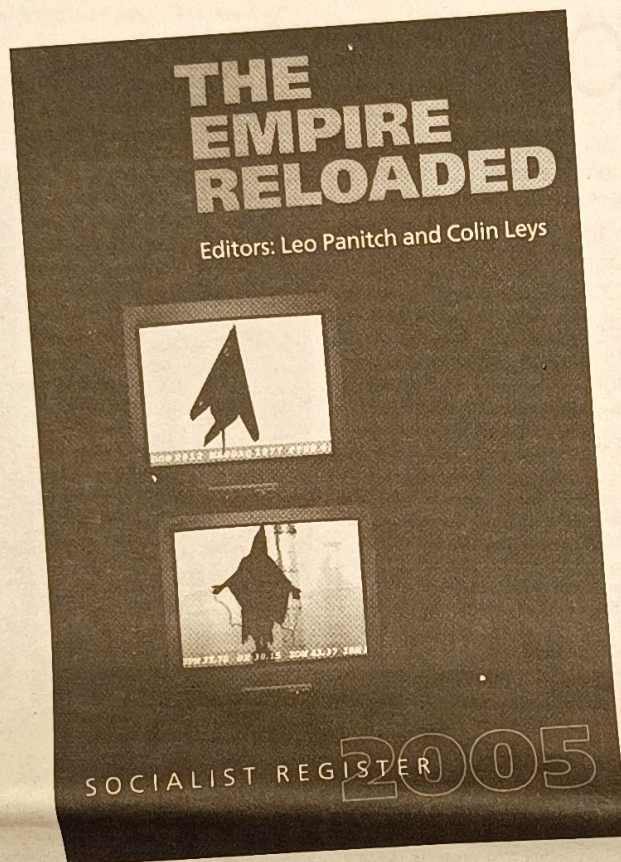
Imperialism has re-emerged in the common vocabulary of the left and progressive movement since the US-British war on Iraq. However there is a great deal of confusion over what the term means. The academic editors of *Socialist Register* set about addressing this in a series of articles, which extend over two issues of *Socialist Register*. The *New Imperial Challenge* (NIC) in *Socialist Register* 2004 deals with the overall nature of what the editors call the 'new imperial' order and *The Empire Reloaded* (ER) in *Socialist Register* 2005 offers an analysis of finance, culture and how the new imperialism is penetrating major regions of the world. What characterises both volumes is a rejection of classical theories of imperialism, with the articles by Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, academics at York University, Canada, creating the ideological framework for the analysis.

Their articles are written in modern jargon and lines of reasoning are difficult to follow. Typical is the following: capitalist imperialism has to be understood through an extension of the 'theory of the capitalist state, rather than derived directly from the theory of economic stages or crises'. To understand the relations between states over different historical periods we have to 'historicise the theory'. So 'the transition to the modern form of imperialism may be located in the British state's articulation of its old mercantile formal empire with the informal empire spawned in the mid-nineteenth century during the era of "free trade"'. Lenin failed to grasp this due to his 'too crude an understanding of the separation of the economic from the political under capitalism' (NIC p7).¹ I fail to grasp this because it is often impossible to understand. Many arguments throughout the two volumes are little more than descriptions and assertions masquerading as explanations.

How then can we judge them overall? As our review of the first volume showed, their 'new imperialism' analysis of the world, immediately after the US-British war on Iraq, is vastly inferior to one based on a classical Leninist understanding of imperialism.² More than a year later this has been reinforced by significant international developments throughout the world. So let us look at the second volume to see how it deals with this.

All the contributors to *The Empire Reloaded* see globalised capitalism and US imperialism as two dimensions of a single phenomenon. All recognise that US supremacy in the 'new imperial order' is not due to its military and surveillance power but to the penetration of the states, economies, and social orders of other leading capitalist countries by the US state, US corporations, and US values. The articles by Panitch and Gindin and Rude go further and argue that the US economy and the US-led global financial structure are inherently strong and stable, with the other 'leading capitalist states' and their ruling classes locked into this stability and having a crucial collective stake in it.³ Inter-imperialist rivalry is effectively

New imperialism – old opportunism



ruled out although two contributors, Cammack on Latin America and Kagarlitsky on Russia, suggest there is sufficient competition and rivalry between the US and Europe to put serious restraints on US supremacy. These two contributions are short commentaries (28 pages out of 333 in this volume), which suggest that recent economic developments in Latin America (where the EU lately overtook the US as the largest source of foreign direct investment in Latin America) and the differences between Europe and the US over Iraq, Eastern Europe and Russia run counter to the dominant ideological standpoint of the two volumes, at least on the issue of growing inter-imperialist rivalry.

In an article 'Finance and the American Empire' Panitch and Gindin attempt to explain the growing dominance of the US empire. Much of it is assertion and exaggeration and there is a total inability to understand the relationship between capital accumulation, imperialism and financial capital. They are keen to show that it was not the neo-liberal 'revolution' of the 1980s and 1990s that finally unleashed the forces that made Wall Street the central location of the world economy – whatever this means (ER p46). In their view the process began after World War II when New York took its place as the world's principal financial centre.

This is far too simple. Even by the end of the 1940s sterling still accounted for nearly half of all international transactions. The role of the City of London as a major, if not leading, financial centre for a great deal of the post-war period is hardly commented on other than to assert that its dominance of the Eurodollar market had the effect of moving 'the City – and through it, European finance in general – more closely into the American imperial embrace' (ER p54). This is simply not true. Even today the City

of London has a greater share of important financial markets than New York. London's share of the foreign exchange market at 31% – a trade of some \$1,900bn a day – is far larger than that of New York (19%). In 2002 London had the leading share of cross border banking with 20% of the market. Half of all global turnover in foreign equities is carried out in London (*Financial Times* 29 September 2004 and 6 November 2002). It also has major shares of the world derivatives and hedge funds market.

Unsurprisingly Panitch and Gindin do not discuss Britain's relationship to Europe and the impasse the British ruling class finds itself in over this question, whose resolution must have dramatic consequences for the rivalry between European and US imperialism, given the continuing importance of London as a major world financial centre. These facts underlie the Labour Party's commitment to the war on Iraq, its efforts to draw in the other European imperialist countries, and also the divisions in the British ruling class on the war.

Throughout the article Panitch and Gindin turn everything upside down. Surface phenomena become substance and cause. The expansion of finance – whatever that means! – is integral to the deepening of accumulation – whatever that means! – and the continuing strength of the US economy. The deepening of financial markets – whatever that means! – 'has become ever more fundamental to the reproduction and universalisation of American power'. For them finance, which is unproductive of surplus-value, could apparently lead to increased capital (!) productivity and profit rates through the power and role of institutions.⁴ For them the US empire is strengthened rather than weakened by its financialisation. All this makes a major run on the dollar less likely, and there is no evidence

that the euro is to replace the dollar as dominant currency (ER pp47, 67, 72, 73).

The classical Marxist view, in contrast to this, sees the massively increased role of financial capital, increasing speculation, and the ever-expanding credit bubble built on a relatively declining productive base, as a result of the overaccumulation of capital in the heartlands of capitalism. Fictitious capital careers round the world desperately searching for new sources of short-term profit. 'Financialisation', to use their awful terminology, is the product of a crisis of profitability in the capitalist system. Such a crisis will necessarily lead to economic, social and political developments similar to those which Lenin dealt with in his numerous articles on imperialism, written during the First Imperialist War.

Panitch and Gindin belong to a 'super-imperialist school' which assumes the unchallenged dominance of the US. Panitch in fact rejects the term 'superpower' to describe the role the US state plays in the world because this implies merely more power than others. For Panitch, US power is qualitatively different 'because of the way it penetrates and structures other states'. A 'super-duper' state then. But this only compounds the error. In fact there is much in common here with Kautsky's 'ultra-imperialism', the opportunist position that Lenin devastatingly dealt with in his writings on imperialism. Instead of the international capitalists negotiating away inter-imperialist rivalries as in Kautsky's position, we have the all-embracing US state and its institutions. Indeed Panitch and Gindin take Kautsky's side in the debate with Lenin but say that Kautsky made his case 'reductively' from 'a purely economic standpoint, rather than in terms of a theory of the state' (NIC p9). Lenin called Kautsky a renegade because he broke a solemn commitment to the Second International to hold a 'no defence of the fatherland' anti-imperialist position.

Totally neglected in their analysis is the role of the Soviet Union and national liberation struggles since World War II, which forced Europe and Japan to align with the US to prevent the rise of other areas of the world closed to rampant imperialist exploitation. This situation completely changed with the counter-revolution in the Soviet bloc.

A correct understanding of imperialism is not an academic exercise but critical in dealing with the rampant opportunism which exists in the left movement today. This can be seen by the decision of the editors to give space to a reactionary interview with Tony Benn, the 'foremost voice of the left in the British Labour Party' (ER pvi) in *Socialist Register* 2005. In this interview Benn tries to rationalise away Blair's support for the Iraq war and covers up for British imperialism's global interests. For Benn, British imperialism does not exist. Indeed, Benn tells us not only that 'we haven't got an empire' now but also that 'we are a colony of the United States'. We apparently have 'a puppet government in Britain' and need a 'liberation movement in Britain' to free us from the US. Britain, whose imperialist interests spread out all over the world, which still has some 13,000 troops in its oldest colony

Ireland and whose forces brutally occupy Iraq, is a colony! Little wonder that Benn was easily recruited by Blair to canvass disillusioned Labour voters, during the recent British General Election, for the imperialist Labour Party. The standpoint on imperialism in *Socialist Register* cannot combat Benn's reactionary position but rather tends to reinforce it.

Lenin argued that the essence of imperialism is the division of the world between oppressor and oppressed nations. Nationalism and national struggles increase under imperialism. 'Imperialism is the era of the oppression of nations on a new historical basis' (CW39 p736). However the standpoint of the new imperialism in *Socialist Register* is opposed to this. Articles by Chibber and Greenfield fail to see the vital significance of national struggles against imperialism by crudely associating nationalism with the 'myth of the national bourgeoisie' (ER pp144, 166). They attribute this standpoint to Lenin and the Third International and argue the world has moved on since then. They merely demonstrate their ignorance. Lenin, in fact, had already argued in 1920 that 'perhaps in most cases...the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie' (CW31 p242). That is why the Third International replaced the term 'bourgeois-democratic' with 'national-revolutionary' to describe the national movements supported by the Third International. Unsurprisingly, Chibber can brush aside Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian Revolution and fail to see the significance of the revolutionary national struggle that is taking place in Venezuela today.

Events have already overtaken *Socialist Register*. If it is to have any relevance to the newly developing international movements against imperialism it is surely time to have new editors, who understand the reality of imperialism and the tasks facing the socialist movement today.

David Yaffe

1 This point re Lenin on economics and politics is simply a distortion. As JM Blaut in 'Evaluating Imperialism' *Science and Society* Fall 1997 has so clearly argued, Lenin was attacking precisely 'the economic thesis that, since capitalism as an economic system "has become fully international," "has transcended the bounds of the national state" (much used expressions at the time), wars between states are no longer functional for capitalism.' He was attacking the standpoint of Kautsky, Hilferding and others who were arguing along such lines. Lenin's criticism could also be directed at Panitch and Gindin who clearly agree with Kautsky, although reaching their conclusions with an even more dubious line of reasoning.

2 For a review of *Socialist Register* 2004 see FRFI 177 February/March 2004.

3 See David Yaffe 'Globalisation: parasitic and decaying capitalism' in FRFI 158 December 2000/January 2001 for a totally different argument based on a Marxist and Leninist understanding of capitalism and imperialism.

4 In fact financial corporations can only take a greater share of surplus-value produced by productive labour elsewhere, for example, in the oppressed nations via measures imposed on those nations by the IMF, World Bank, and World Trade Organisation.

5 See *Monthly Review* Vol 54 No 2 June 2002 p16.

■ Labour wins again – the ruling class is still in power

Even by the banal standards of bourgeois democracy the May general election was bereft of political debate. This was no accident. It reflects the political climate in Britain. The two previous Labour governments consolidated the restructuring of British capital begun by the Tories that was necessary to restore the rate of profit and provide new opportunities for investment and expansion – privatisation, deregulation, a low-wage, flexible labour force, anti-union laws and repressive social legislation. Labour has been particularly successful in pushing this programme through, having sustained a thirteen-year period of uninterrupted growth in GDP begun under the John Major government. They have held down inflation and interest rates, while ensuring a strong pound and record profits for the banks. Consequently, Labour remains the preferred party of the ruling class. JIM CRAVEN explains.

Labour receives a rising proportion of its party funds from wealthy individuals and big companies; far more than the Tories or Liberal Democrats. Once again in this election Rupert Murdoch publicly supported Labour, which ensured the bulk of the media also backed the party. Labour used the high-profile millionaire businessman, Alan Sugar in its election advertising. Even Digby Jones, the director-general of the CBI, normally a Conservative organisation, publicly criticised Michael Howard.

Given this degree of satisfaction among the ruling class with Labour's programme, it is not surprising that the platforms of the three main parties were virtually identical and no significant debate ensued. Both Tories and the Liberal Democrats would have retained the right of the Bank of England to set interest rates and would have maintained Labour's fiscal framework, including Gordon Brown's rule of sustainable investment and his 'Golden Rule' of prudent spending. Both opposition parties would have continued the Private Finance Initiative, continued with anti-social behaviour orders and maintained spending on health and education at similar levels to Labour.

Imperialists at stalemate over Europe

One of the issues most conspicuous by its absence was that of the EU. There was virtually complete silence on the subject apart from Blair wearily conceding that it was most unlikely now that Britain would join the Euro. Yet Europe is a topic that has previously engendered fierce debate among the ruling class and the petit bourgeoisie, even leading to the formation of a

party, UKIP, that took 16% of the vote in the last European election and threatened to become a major alternative for Tory voters. This time round UKIP polled less than 2.5%.

The real issue behind the Europe debate is the role of British imperialism and whether it has any future as an independent power. British imperialism has huge investments in both Europe and the United States and depends on its alliance with US military power to protect its interests elsewhere in the world. Consequently British imperialism tries to keep a foot in both the European and US camps. By so doing it has managed to retain its position as the world's leading financial centre even though manufacturing capital is in constant decline.

The problem for the ruling class is that this situation cannot be sustained. As the crisis of capitalism deepens, the European and US imperialist camps are coming into greater and greater conflict. British imperialism will have to choose one side or the other. In any case British imperialism will lose any independent status it presently retains. The ruling class has no idea what to do. The contending wings are at stalemate. Hence the silence on the subject during the election.

Trade unions back imperialist Labour

Just as silent during the campaign was the trade union and labour movement. Representing predominantly the middle classes and most affluent sections of the working class as they now do, they too are worried about how to maintain their privileges in the developing climate of inter-imperialist rivalries. With no other credible party

yet to protect their interests, they are sticking with their traditional benefactors the Labour Party.

All those so-called radical trade union leaders who just a couple of years ago were loudly threatening to withdraw union dues from the party or even withdraw their allegiance altogether were struck dumb. Last autumn they signed the Warwick Agreement with Labour. In return for a wish list of minor concessions from Labour, with no guarantee of their implementation, the trade unions agreed to keep funding and supporting the party.

Four years ago, when BMW pulled out of Rover, the unions organised demonstrations and protests (even if they were sickeningly racist and chau-



'Hoodies' invade Downing Street to deliver a petition on behalf of the Rover workers

vinist) and called for the nationalisation of the company. When Rover collapsed at the beginning of this election campaign there was no significant union reaction despite dirty dealing by the Phoenix consortium that robbed workers of pensions and compensation.

Benn helps rescue Blair

The only issue that kept raising its head during the campaign was that of the war on Iraq. But the debate was not about the nature of the war itself, the atrocities being committed by the occupying forces, the suffering of the Iraqi people or the torture of prisoners. The only question was whether or not Tony Blair had lied about the war and whether this would damage his image and the Labour vote. Even here new revelations about Lord Goldsmith's legal advice and how Tony Blair and the US government might have leant on him to change his advice, failed to have much impact. The fact was that most people had already made up their minds about whether Blair was a liar. Furthermore, opinion polls showed that although Blair was the least trusted of the main party leaders he was also regarded as the best person to lead a government!

■ Respect: the ghost of Labour past

The victory of George Galloway as the Respect candidate in Bethnal Green and Bow has been seen by the left as a significant victory, and a new stage in building a radical movement in this country. This sense was reinforced when he went to the US and trounced the Senate investigations committee which had alleged he had personally profited from the Iraqi 'oil for food' programme. The sight of an MP belligerently attacking the US-British war on Iraq in the heart of the US monster was indeed heart-warming, but this one victory does not create a movement. Far from it: the sort of movement we need has to challenge rather than embrace the sham that is parliamentary politics. ROBERT CLOUGH reports.

Those organisations that celebrated Galloway's triumph also celebrated another electoral victory five years ago: that of Ken Livingstone as an independent in the London mayoral election in May 2000. Then the London Socialist Alliance supported Livingstone's campaign, and pretended it had something to do with building a 'socialist alternative to Blair and New Labour.' FRFI was quite clear at the time that Livingstone's aim was to secure a route back into the Labour Party; time has told who was right and who was wrong. Livingstone did nothing to promote socialism but toadied up to the City. By the end of 2003 he was back in the Labour Party ready to

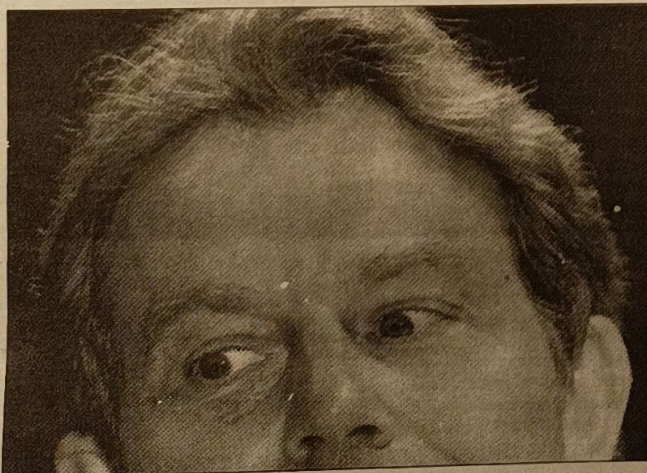
stand as its official candidate in 2004.

Although Respect has been presented as something new and different, in reality it does not represent anything other than another attempt by the left to build a parliamentary alternative. Gone are the days when the left would argue that Parliament is a sham, that it is not the locus for real working class politics. Now, at a time when power is more and more concentrated in the executive, and Parliament relegated to the position of an ever more irrelevant side-show, so the left seems to have redoubled its ambitions to join in the party. It is a betrayal of the anti-imperialist views of thousands of Muslims to be offered the illusion that one man in Parliament

is worth a movement on the ground challenging rather than promoting parliamentary politics.

The election campaign itself revealed the disarray of much of the left. Tariq Ali called for a vote for the Lib Dems. Stop the War Campaign supporter Harold Pinter did likewise. George Monbiot presented a hierarchy of choices in an article in *The Guardian*, with the conclusion that he too thought it was possible to support the Lib Dems where there was no Green, Respect or anti-war Labour candidate standing. *Socialist Worker* could not go that far, but nonetheless told its readers to 'vote Respect and for those clearly opposed to the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Let's punish Blair and all those New Labour MPs who meekly trailed after him into the lobby to vote for war and imperialism.' The fact is that voting for an anti-war Labour MP would still be a vote to return a war-mongering imperialist Labour government, and a vote for the Lib Dems was equally to express support for a patently pro-imperialist party. Tony Benn was recruited to telephone wavering Labour Party supporters, whilst Ken Livingstone paraded through the East End alongside Oona King to drum up support against Galloway.

The question now is what will Galloway do? We have no doubt that



Tony Blair: the Labour Party is the preferred party of the ruling class

So, the only question that remained for this fiasco of bourgeois democracy to answer was the extent by which Labour's majority would be cut. The Labour Party ridiculously warned that if just one in ten Labour voters abstained or defected to the Liberal Democrats then the Tories would win. Not even the Tory chairman was willing to predict a Tory victory. Still, Labour was seriously worried about a rebellion and called in its trusty stalwart Tony Benn to rally the troops. Benn spent three hours phoning round wavering Labour voters from a list provided by party headquarters. This so-called scourge of Blairism and 'New Labour', this 'tribune of the British left', later said 'To have them ring me to help them out shows this election means Labour is returning to what it was ... it is a trade union party and a socialist party. It has done good things. I am voting Labour'. That one phone call can swing such Labour 'rebels' back into line demonstrates how illusory their opposition really is.

Election irrelevant to working class

In the end Labour lost 47 seats and had its majority cut to 67. Labour's share of the vote fell to 36%, the lowest ever percentage for a winning party and the first time since universal suffrage began in the 1920s that a winning party had received fewer than 10 million votes. The turnout for the election was just 61% of the registered voters. This is two points up on the record low of the last election, but when a large increase in postal votes this time and the uncontested certainty of a big Labour majority in 2001 are taken into consideration, it probably represents a new low. The lowest turnout was just 41.5% in Nottingham East. There were 36 other constituencies where turnout was less than 50%, all of them in poor districts of the big cities, demonstrating once again the irrelevance of these elections to the concerns of the working class. They were even more irrelevant

to the black and minority ethnic population. Only 75% of them were registered. Of these, only 39% in pre-election polls said they were certain to vote.

The low turnout and Labour's low percentage of the vote means that just 22% of the electorate voted for Labour. In other words, taking into account those not registered to vote or denied a vote, just one in five adults have supported the new Labour government. This is the sort of 'democracy' the imperialists champion in order to invade other countries and massacre populations.

It was the Liberal Democrats who benefited most from Labour's decline. They gained 12 seats from Labour and moved into second place in more than 160 Labour seats. In some seats the swing from Labour to the Liberal Democrats was more than 10%. In the northeast as a whole the swing was 6.6% and in Scotland 8.4%. However, it is not at all clear that this swing was due to opposition to the war. For instance, seats in university constituencies showed an average swing from Labour to the Liberal Democrats of 8%, probably created more by opposition to university tuition fees than to the war. Also, the massive anti-war vote predicted in Muslim areas did not materialise. It accounted for Galloway's victory in Bethnal Green and possibly for the Liberal Democrat gain in Rochdale. Overall, in constituencies with a greater than 10% Muslim population, the Labour vote was down 11% and the Liberal Democrat vote up 9%. On the other hand no other Labour seat in a Muslim area changed hands. Jack Straw's majority in Blackburn fell by only 1,000 votes and Labour actually regained Leicester South. Four Muslim Labour MPs were elected, including Khalid Mahmood in Perry Barr who had only abstained on the Iraq war vote.

Two things are apparent. The Muslim vote is as much a class question as any other. The Muslim bour-

geoisie and petit bourgeois, who are entrenched in the Labour establishment, mobilised to neutralise the more radical anti-Labour Muslim youth. Secondly, the powerful anti-war sentiment that was demonstrated throughout the country in 2003 has been dissipated by the refusal of the SWP and other leaders of the anti-war movement to make a clear break with the Labour Party.

More repression as trouble looms for Labour

The new Labour government has already demonstrated that it will continue in the same way it has acted for the last eight years. Blair has brought back the fascist-minded David Blunk-

ett and rewarded another of his millionaire backers, Lord Paul Drayson, with a government post. Education privatiser Andrew Adonis has been ennobled to become minister of education and. There will be more privatisation, more repressive legislation, more racist hounding of asylum seekers, more prisons, more imperialist attacks on the poor people of the world and more of the poverty, insecurity and inequality that blights the lives of the majority of the working class in this country. The suggestion that the Labour left will create obstacles for the government's programme now Blair has a reduced majority is ludicrous given its spineless past record.

However, trouble could be looming for Labour. Its plans depend on continued economic growth. But the housing boom that has funded domestic spending is faltering. High street sales have been down for several successive months. Oil prices are at record highs. Domestic debt now totals over £1 trillion. If a recession occurs the poor will suffer most but millions of people presently enjoying a comfortable life could also find themselves in serious difficulties. Already personal bankruptcies have reached record levels. We could yet see a serious challenge to Labour and its ruling class backers – not at the polling station but on the streets of Britain.



Oona King and Ken Livingstone with a police guard go for a walk down Brick Lane. George Galloway was elected on an anti-Iraq War vote. Will the voters of Bethnal Green and Bow find the racism of Galloway's old Labour any more tolerable than the racism of New Labour? We don't think so.

he, as Livingstone did before him, will want to build a power base to enable his eventual return to the Labour Party. He certainly has not broken from it politically, choosing to describe Respect as the 'ghost of Labour past', and constantly invoked such spirits as George Lansbury, Clement Attlee and Harold Wilson. His nostalgia for 'Real Labour' enables him to ignore the real record of the party to which he retains a political allegiance. Just to remind ourselves 'Real Labour' or 'Old Labour' was responsible for the following achievements when in government between 1924 and 1979:

- It sanctioned the use of the RAF to bomb unarmed Kurdish villagers in 1925;
- It used the RAF once again in the brutal suppression of the Indian freedom struggle between 1929-31;
- It gave massive military support to Greek fascism in the war to destroy the democratic freedom movement between 1945 and 1947;
- It provided military aid to restore French rule in Vietnam in 1945-46 and Dutch rule in Indonesia during the same period;
- It saw no offence to its socialist principles in using head-hunters in a murderous war against Malayan freedom fighters in 1949-51;
- It gave slavish support for the US war against Vietnam from 1964-70 and to Zionist aggression against the Arab people in 1967;
- Under Tony Benn's guidance, it approved RTZ's illegal plunder of Namibian uranium in 1968;
- It continuously opposed UN sanctions against apartheid South Africa both in the 1960s and 1970s;
- In 1969 it sent troops into the north of Ireland to bolster the tottering Loyalist statelet, and then between

1975 and 1979 supervised a regime of torture and criminalisation directed against the nationalist minority;

- It supported the Shah of Iran right to the last days of his regime in 1979 because his regime was the biggest purchaser of British arms;
- In 1978 it sold Hawk jet fighters to the Indonesian Suharto dictatorship which were then used in the genocide of the people of East Timor.

Throughout its periods in government in the 1960s and 1970s it supported all forms of immigration controls. Whilst in opposition from 1979, 'Real Labour':

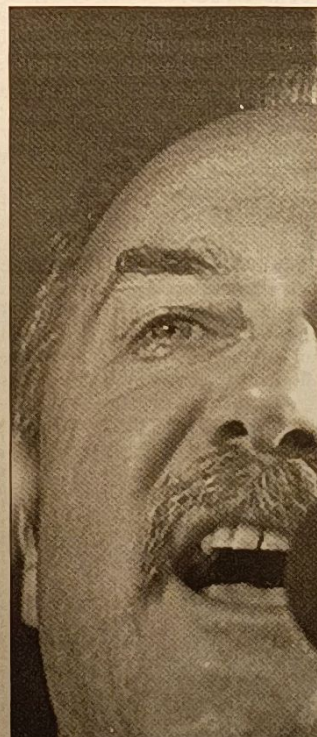
- Supported the Tories against the Irish hunger-strikers in 1981;
- In the same summer, it supported the racist police against the uprisings of black and white youth;
- The following year, it supported war against Argentina over the Malvinas;
- In 1984-85, it betrayed the struggle of the miners and helped destroy their communities;
- In 1990, tin pot generals such as Kaufman and Kinnock bayed for blood in the first war against Iraq.

As it is, Galloway has made a very 'Real Labour' announcement that 'no-one serious is advocating the scrapping of immigration controls.' What control is there over what he does in parliament? None whatsoever. He is beholden only to himself. Respect cannot disown him should he put one of his reactionary positions into practice, because without him, the organisation is absolutely nothing.

This is the tragedy. No movement has been created. There is no consistent anti-imperialist or anti-racist activity on the ground. All that we

who marched against the war have ended up with is an MP whose political trajectory in the end will take him back into the Labour Party, presumably hoping to take us in tow with a whole lot of illusions as to the nature of 'Real Labour'. If we are serious about challenging British imperialism, we have to build a movement out on the streets which has broken with Labour, whether 'New', 'Old' or 'Real' and which is therefore seriously

against imperialism. Such a movement will need educating about the sham of bourgeois parliamentary politics, where a vote is worthless, where individual careers come before the needs of the working class, and where there is a fiction of power but none of the reality. Such a movement will not drag people back to the ballot box, but will create a new democracy, one where the needs of the mass of the working class can be expressed and then acted on.



Galloway: back in Parliament

Respect election results

Respect stood in 26 constituencies and polled nearly 70,000 votes in all. Nearly 70% of that total, 47,000 in all, came from five constituencies, four of them in the East End of London:

- George Galloway, 15,807 votes, 38.9% in Bethnal Green and Bow
- Abdul Mian, 8,171 votes, 20.7% in East Ham
- Oliur Rahman, 6,573 votes, 17.2% in Poplar and Canning Town
- Lindsey German, 6,039, 19.5% in West Ham
- Salma Yaqoob, 10,498, 27.5% in Birmingham Spark Brook and Small Heath.

Four candidates received more than 2,000 votes (Mohammad Naseem in Birmingham Perry Barr, 2,173; Yvonne Ridley, 2,720 in Leicester South, Michael Lavalette, 2,318 in Preston and Janet Alder, 2,014 in Tottenham), but their shares ranged from 5.4% to 6.8%. In 12 constituencies, Respect polled less than 2%; in two, Dorset South and Neath, it received fewer votes than the Legalise Cannabis Alliance, and in one, Plymouth Davenport, fewer than the Socialist Labour Party.

Scottish Socialist Party

The Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) has been held up as an example of what the left can achieve with an electoral strategy. In the 2001 general election, it got 3.1% of the poll with 72,000 votes. In May 2003, it trumped that with 128,000 votes in the Scottish election, and found itself with six members of the Scottish parliament. The result was heralded across the world as an historic achievement. Two years later and it turned into a very different story: 44,000 votes in the general election, 1.9% of the poll. Hundreds of thousands had marched against the war on Iraq in early 2003, yet in a half-hour pre-election TV programme on 15 April, SSP convenor Colin Fox failed to mention the continuing occupation. It was a replay of the SSP's first TV election broadcast in 2001, when there was no reference to Labour's bombing of Yugoslavia.

The SSP has destroyed the movement on the ground; like Respect it has championed a parliamentary strategy when the real need is to build a movement that challenges such a charade. There is no alternative to building a movement on the streets; there is no parliamentary shortcut.

RASBOs – name them and shame them!

My nomination for a RASBO goes to McDonalds for descending on the Camden Town Clarence Way estate in north London to film a commercial, shutting off the estate and using bouncers to stop local kids getting the autographs of the three Premier League footballers featuring in the ad. More RASBOs to the two out of three players who went along with this (the exception being Joe Cole who grew up on that estate). And a big RASBO and raspberry to Camden Labour Council who were paid £900 for using the estate for the day, and are giving a whole £70 out of it to the estate's community association. *NR*

I would like to nominate PC Mark Milton of West Mercia Police Fire Arms Unit for a RASBO. He drove his police car at 159 mph on the M54, where the limit is 70 mph and he also drove at 84 mph in Telford, within a 30 mph limit. This hooligan was caught because he had left the car video switched on.

Magistrates dismissed charges against him on 18 May, accepting his excuse that he was honing his skills as an advanced police driver. Yet he had not radioed his control to inform them, nor had he made a note in his notebook.

Feel his collar, nick him, give him a RASBO. *JW*

**Let us know your nominations
NAME AND SHAME THE REAL
ENEMIES OF THE WORKING CLASS**

Yes, but he's *our* terrorist

'If someone protects a terrorist, if someone feeds a terrorist, then that person is just as guilty as the terrorists...'
(President George Bush, August 2003)

When is a terrorist not a terrorist? When he's a vicious counter-revolutionary Cuban on the CIA payroll who blows up a civilian aircraft in the name of imperialism. HANNAH CALLER and CAT WIENER report.



Posada Carriles in Miami

NEWS IN BRIEF

Human rights, imperialist wrongs

In April, at the 61st Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), the US resolution condemning Cuba for so-called 'human rights abuses' was passed by 21 votes (including Britain) to 17, with 15 abstentions. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque condemned the US's use of threats and bribes to force countries to vote with the US or abstain. The motion was co-sponsored en bloc by the European Union; given this unanimous concern for human rights, Cuba urged the EU to back its motion against the US's flagrant human rights abuses in Guantanamo. It refused and voted against the motion, in a shameful display of double standards and

hypocrisy. As Perez Roque pointed out: 'the countries that voted against the Cuban draft resolution today have been exposed and have become direct and public accomplices to the torture, humiliations and violations of the human rights of the persons illegally detained, including some of their own citizens, at the US Guantanamo Naval Base and elsewhere'.

US hounds Assata Shakur

Former Black Panther Assata Shakur, who was granted political asylum in Cuba in 1986 and has lived there since, continues to be harassed by the US administration, which has just raised the bounty on her to \$1 million. This is tantamount to incitement to her kidnap or murder. Since 1998, the US has also demanded her extradition. Throughout her political exile, Assata Shakur has written about and defended the gains of the Cuban Revolution and exposed the lies and hypocrisy of imperialism.



Support Cuba

Supporting Cuba's Union of Young Communists

Rock around the Blockade (RATB) members and supporters have been busy in the recent period raising money for the Union of Young Communists (UJC) in Cuba. The brigade going to Cuba in July will be taking, as material aid, sound system equipment for the UJC in Caimanera in the east of Cuba close to the illegally US-occupied Guantanamo Bay. Young people are valued in Cuba and are a huge resource for the future of their Revolution.

In April RATB held a successful fundraising dinner with a mouth-watering menu and a Rebel Music club night at Electrowerkz in London had the honour of hosting the L8 Collective from Liverpool for a night of Hip Hop, Break Beats and Reggae. RATB members are working for the Workers Beer Company with all proceeds for the sound system at festivals from May onwards and there is a sponsored bike ride in June. Always aware that keeping politics on the agenda is an important part of the fundraising, RATB is very pleased to have a presence in the performance tent at the Stoke Newington Festival in London mixing revolutionary politics with culture.

Fidel Castro said in his inspiring May Day speech, in front of 1.3 million people in Revolution Square in Havana, 'the main slogan of the mobilisation of this May Day has become: humanity has a yearning for justice'. The brigade from Cuba returns at the end of July when a series of report back meetings will happen up and down the country and the brigadistas will report back on what they have seen in a society prepared to confront the problems of their people with real solutions in order to be part of the process of creating a more just, dignified and democratic world.

For the past six weeks, Cuban-born bomber Luis Posada Carriles has been living in the United States with impunity, boasting that he would be granted political asylum, while Attorney General Noriega denied he knew the terrorist's whereabouts. But pressure from Venezuela and Cuba, where huge demonstrations have been organised to demand Posada Carriles' extradition – and Posada's own arrogance in giving a press conference in Miami – have forced the US administration to act, first arresting him on 'immigration status charges' on 17 May and, a few days later, charging him with illegal entry into the US. In October 1976, a Cubana Airlines civilian aircraft blew up off the coast of Barbados, killing all 73 people on board, in an atrocity masterminded by Posada Carriles. Even the FBI have admitted that he was involved 'up to his eyeballs' (*New York Times*, May 2005). Posada escaped from jail in the US while under arrest for the bombing; he was subsequently arrested and jailed for the crime in Venezuela but escaped again. The FBI is also certain that

Posada Carriles was involved in the car bomb that killed former Chilean Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier and an American aide in Washington, also in 1976. Although arrested and charged at the time, he mysteriously managed to escape, apparently disguised as a priest. Posada had been working for the CIA since 1961, when he took part in the failed US-organised Bay of Pigs invasion of revolutionary Cuba.

He also worked in counter-insurgency in Venezuela in the 1970s, supported the US-funded Contras in Nicaragua and, in the 1990s, ran a string of operatives on missions to plant bombs in public places in Cuba, as he admitted in a 1998 interview to the *New York Times*, following the 1997 bombing of a Havana hotel where an Italian tourist was killed.

In 2000, Posada Carriles plotted with other CIA operatives to assassinate Fidel Castro at the Ibero-American Summit in Panama; he was arrested while carrying 100lbs of explosives and sentenced to eight years in prison. However, in August 2004 he and his co-conspirators were freed by right-wing Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso, in a deal negotiated in Miami for \$4m, with the collusion

of Colin Powell, then Secretary of State and Otto Reich, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. Posada Carriles immediately made a triumphant visit to Miami in a private jet, while the administration turned a blind eye.

Both Cuba and Venezuela are demanding that Posada be returned to face charges. 'As the author or accomplice of homicide,' Venezuela's Supreme Court stated, 'he must be extradited and judged.' On the one hand, the US administration does not 'extradite to Cuba or those it believes to be acting on its behalf'. On the other, if it were to grant Posada asylum, its hypocrisy on the issue of 'sheltering terrorists' would be revealed for all to see. The 'illegal entry' charge, the US hopes, will provide them with a way out of the dilemma, allowing Posada Carriles to be deported to a third country, more friendly to the US and Posada's interests. As Democrat Senator Delahunt pointed out in *Newsweek*: 'There are mounds of...evidence, reportedly including US intelligence reports, that link Posada to numerous terrorist attacks. But he is an anti-Castro Cuban, not an Arab or a Muslim.' ■

On the march for justice and socialism Report from Cuba

On Tuesday 17 May the streets of Havana filled up with people, flags and placards as 1,200,000 Cubans participated in the biggest march in our history demanding the arrest of terrorists Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch. We carried placards saying 'Punish the terrorist', 'Down with terrorism' and 'Fascist Bush, arrest the terrorist'. The people were dressed in red, blue and white – the colours of the Cuban flag and carried photos of victims of terrorist attacks, including those killed in the Cubana Airlines flight in 1973, an attack orchestrated by Posada Carriles.

The demonstration lasted for six hours, and was addressed by international guests, including Daniel Ortega, Secretary General of the Sandinista National Liberation Front of Nicaragua, and Giustino Di Celmo, father of the Italian tourist, Fabio Di Celmo, killed in a hotel bomb in Havana, a crime which Posada Carriles has boasted of his responsibility for. Fidel marched with us to the Malecon, despite his recent knee operation, where there was a demonstration against terrorism outside the US Interests Section. Fidel is very proud of his people because this huge demonstration was organised in less

than one week.

Fidel told the crowd that Cuba has been the object of the most prolonged economic war in history and an incessant and vicious campaign of terrorism for more than 45 years. He said that terrorism was created and developed by the government of the US to destroy our Revolution and it has not stopped for an instant during four decades, from both within and outside the island. Orlando Bosch and Posada Carriles are the most bloody exponents of terrorism, said Fidel, adding that in its aggression against Cuba, imperialism has carried out dozens of atrocities in the numerous countries in this hemisphere, including the United States. The US institutions and services that trained the terrorists of Cuban origin are the same ones that carefully trained those who organised the brutal attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001, in which several thousand north Americans lost their lives.

Fidel pointed out that sinister personalities have been exonerated of all punishment, such as the pardon granted to Orlando Bosch by then

President George Bush Snr; or their presence in north American territories has been tolerated for weeks on end, as is the case with President George Bush Jnr regarding Posada Carriles. That constitutes a flagrant violation of the US's own laws by those who have the greatest responsibility to protect the north American people from terrorist attacks. Fidel emphasised that this was not a march against the people of the US, but rather a march against terrorism and in favour of life and peace for our people and our brothers in the US in whose ethical values we have trust.

Down with terrorism! Down with Nazi doctrines and methods! Down with genocide! Down with lies! Long live solidarity and peace between peoples! Long live the truth!

In the words of our comandante: Forward, courageous soldiers of noble ideas, scorn fear, scorn the immense power of the enemy, scorn the dangers facing a humanity that yearns for justice.

Daniesky Acosta Linares,
Havana, Cuba



May Day: on the march for socialism in Havana

Yes, I would like to join Rock around the Blockade

and enclose £10 waged/£4 low-waged/£2 concessions
(delete as appropriate) £ _____

I would like to donate £ _____ towards the sound system for the UJC in Caimanera

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Bolivia: on the march against imperialism

The Bolivian people are on the march again: in their hundreds of thousands they have once more taken on imperialism and the oil and gas multinationals which are plundering their natural resources. The showdown with President Mesa that was postponed in mid-March is now imminent, and the Bolivian ruling class is in turmoil. **ROBERT CLOUGH** reports.

FRFI 184 reported on the nationwide demonstrations and blockades that had taken place throughout January and February in support of the demand for the nationalisation of oil and gas resources. These had been suspended when Evo Morales, leader of the Movement towards Socialism (MAS), forced the Unity Pact (which includes many of the trades unions and indigenous movements) to back down in the face of a threat by President Mesa to resign, and to accept a decision by the Chamber of Deputies to tighten the Hydrocarbon Bill that Mesa had presented it in 2004. The Bill added a 32% tax to the 18% royalty payment that gas and oil companies had had to pay since 1997, and required the renegotiation of 72 contracts with 12 oil and gas multinationals to ensure the law was respected. However, Morales' decision was not a popular one, and as the bill approached the end of a tortuous journey through the Bolivian parliament, so the organisations that represent the poorest Bolivians started to plan mobilisations in favour of full nationalisation.

On 5 May the Chamber of Deputies approved the Bill by 59 votes to 48 (MAS deputies voted against) and passed the Bill back the following day to President Mesa; under the constitution he had ten days to give it final approval and sign it into law. His immediate response was to say he

would reject it; this served to inflame opposition. Abel Mamani, leader of the Federation of United Neighbours of El Alto (FEJUVE, the most influential social movement in Bolivia) said 'Our objective is the total recuperation of hydrocarbons, the major one being gas'. He continued 'We would be incoherent, irresponsible, and anti-patriotic if we said this law satisfied everyone... We don't recognise the approval of this Hydrocarbon Law'. Bolivian Workers' Central (COB) leader Jaime Solares declared that 'the only hope we have is that the people take to the streets', whilst anti-privatisation leader Oscar Oliveira announced that there would be street blockades in Cochabamba, and even seizures of refineries and oil wells. Other indigenous organisations such as CSUTCB announced a march along with MAS from Caracollo starting on Monday 16 May ending after 200km in La Paz on Monday 23 May.

Mesa prevaricated. The oil and gas multinationals made their position known. BG Group, formerly British Gas, second-largest holder of Bolivian gas reserves, threatened legal action. According to Raul Kieffer, president of the Bolivian Hydrocarbon Chamber, whose affiliates include BG, BP, Shell, Exxon, ChevronTexaco, Spain's Repsol and Brazil's Petrobras, there would be no further investment in Bolivia. Brazil's Energy and Mine Minister Dilma Rousseff said that

Petrobras would definitely cut back on planned investments. Other investments at risk include a \$5bn liquefied natural gas project run as a joint venture between BP, BG and Repsol. Meanwhile the Bolivian daily *La Razon* reported that before approving Bolivia's annual loan package, the IMF sought and secured a promise from Mesa that the government would not seek to renegotiate any of the contracts with the oil corporations, even though they had been forced through under great secrecy and to the benefit of a handful of corrupt politicians. However, the Chinese ambassador to Bolivia announced that 'Chinese businesses are interested in negotiating with Bolivia about the future of gas and oil.'

On 16 May, the people of El Alto in their tens of thousands marched down into the centre of La Paz to shut down parliament. Their demands were for the fulfilment of the 'October Agenda' – the slogans of the movement which had brought down the previous president Sanchez de Lozada in October 2003. These include the nationalisation of gas, a constituent assembly and the trial of politicians associated with the massacres of that October when 69 people were killed. Led by FEJUVE, participating organisations included COB, peasant organisation Tupaj Katari, teachers' unions and the Public University of El Alto. The following day, Mesa washed his hands of the bill by refusing either to approve or reject

and rather than nationalise hydrocarbon resources wants to see the Hydrocarbon Law changed to raise royalties from 18% to 50%. Already some MAS leaders are recognising that they are being outstripped by the pace of the movement; one, Roman Loayza told *La Razon* 'The bases are bypassing us. We want to march for more royalties, but the people want nationalisation. And for that we will struggle.'

Time will tell. In the meantime, miners marched on Parliament on Wednesday 18 May; on Thursday a



Demonstrators marched from El Alto down to La Paz on 16 May

it. As a consequence it fell to Congress president Horlando Vaca Díez, a member of the right-wing Santa Cruz oligarchy to sign it into law.

Meanwhile, the march from Caracollo started its lengthy journey to La Paz. Led by Morales and MAS, it included most of the organisations of the Unity Pact: the CSUTCB, and other indigenous and coca grower organisations. But although the roll-call is impressive, these organisations are being left behind by the revolutionary workers' movement in El Alto and La Paz. Morales has made it clear he does not want to destabilise Mesa; the march rejects road blockades and the seizure of parliament as tactics,

48-hour general strike started in the city of Potosí followed by a 24-hour general strike in El Alto on Friday. Blockades spread like wildfire across the country. Congress may relocate to another city, Sucre. The armed forces chief Admiral Luis Aranda has said they will only take orders from Congress, and rejected separatist calls emanating from the Santa Cruz ruling class. On Monday 23 May the march from Caracollo will arrive in La Paz to coincide with the start of a general strike. The Bolivian working class and the mass of the oppressed are throwing down the gauntlet to imperialism.

Victory to the Bolivian people!

Ecuador: protests threaten imperialism's plans

On 20 April, after a week of mass demonstrations during which two people were killed, corrupt President Lucio Gutiérrez fled to Brazil to be replaced by his deputy Alfredo Palacio. The US may now face obstacles in extracting interest payments, using Ecuador's troops and bases for Plan Colombia or imposing the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Caught between the demands of imperialism and the rage of the impoverished 70% of its 13.25 million people, who have seen off eight governments in nine years, Palacio has little space for manoeuvre. **ALVARO MICHAELS** reports.

Gutiérrez completely betrayed the peasant, indigenous and militant organisations which supported his coup against President Mahuad in January 2000, and who voted for him in 2002. In 2003, to reassure the US, he declared himself their 'best ally', rather than the anti-imperialist he pretended to be to his electorate. He offered a new military base, enthusiastically supported Plan Colombia and entered full negotiations over the FTAA. Oil prices rose, but none of that money reached the poor. Gutiérrez's election allies abandoned him. So he worked with the reactionary Social Christian Party (PSC), but bickering over tactics led the PSC to propose impeachment of Gutiérrez in November for interfering with the Supreme Court.

Gutiérrez then agreed an alliance with the exiled criminal ex-President Bucaram, head of the populist PRE (Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano). He packed the Supreme Court with allies to drop corruption charges against Bucaram, who then re-entered the country. This caused huge protests, uniting the middle and lowest social classes. Some twenty organisations, including the Left Democrats and NGOs, calling themselves the 'Quito Assembly', pleaded with congressional parties to restore the 'institutional status'. This achieved nothing, but the anger of the poor, the slum dwellers, the hungry unemployed and pensioners forced the Assembly to steward regular demonstrations. In mid-February a Quito demonstration of over 100,000 demanded that Gutiérrez go. On 15 April Gutiérrez

was forced to dissolve the Supreme Court as mass demonstrations intensified. He imposed a state of emergency in Quito and then reversed it as the army refused to intervene.

Los forajidos, workers and youth dismissed as outlaws by Gutiérrez, who included groups of young anarchists and communists, fought against police through the night of 16 April and broke through lines of police and pro-Gutiérrez groups to the Presidential Palace. They precipitated the President's flight to the Brazilian embassy. On 20 April, they surged past police to the Plaza Grande and then surrounded the International Centre for Communication Studies in Quito where 60 of the 100 Congress Deputies were meeting to replace Gutiérrez with Palacio. There the *forajidos* demanded that the whole political class be removed, a Constituent Assembly be established and a referendum held on Plan Colombia, the dollarisation of the economy, the US Base at Manta and the FTAA. They denounced Palacio, who had to run from them as they threatened to lynch the deputies.

On 3 May, Pablo Dávalos, the new Deputy Minister for the Economy revealed a secret agreement made by Gutiérrez with the IMF. Over 5,000 public sector workers were to be sacked, the petroleum sector, health and education privatised and workers'

limited rights removed. Without these actions the World Bank would refuse to provide \$200m to improve 'competitiveness'. Now Dávalos promises he will publicly renegotiate these agreements. He has no choice; workers are everywhere demanding an end to corruption. Thus technicians at the state electricity station Electroguyas seized the plant on 22 April demanding an opening of the accounts and dismissal of managers imposed by

Gutiérrez. To placate opposition, the new government has refused the US a new base, but will allow the existing base at Manta to remain.

The widespread demand to change the whole system has not yet found expression in a revolutionary anti-imperialist organisation. Imperialism's destruction of people and country must lead to the creation of such a leadership. The masses have nothing to lose but their chains. ■

Loan interest and oil

Oil accounts for nearly half Ecuador's exports. A new \$1.3 billion, 300-mile pipeline promises to make Ecuador one of the world's top ten suppliers of oil to the US. Its Amazon region reserves probably rival Middle Eastern oil fields. Net foreign direct investment in 2004 was \$1.2 billion, twice that in Venezuela, as corporations reacted to anti-privatisation measures there. Vast areas of rain forest and wildlife have vanished and indigenous cultures have been driven to the verge of collapse. A trans-Andean pipeline has leaked over half a million barrels of oil into the rain forest – more than twice the disastrous Exxon Valdez tanker spillage. In 2003, lawyers representing more than 30,000 indigenous Ecuadorian people filed a \$1 billion lawsuit against Chevron

Texaco for dumping over four million gallons per day of toxic wastewater into open holes and rivers between 1971 and 1992.

For every \$100 of crude taken out of the Ecuador, the oil companies receive \$75. Of the rest, three-quarters is used to pay foreign debt. For over 20 years between 40% and 50% of Ecuador's state budget has been consumed in interest payments to creditors. Once the rest of the budget has been used to fund the political class, 6% is left, and just 2% goes on the education and health of the poor.

Since 1995, imperialism has promoted the wholesale bribery of the political system, forced 'dollarisation' on the Ecuadorian economy in 2000 and pauperised the mass of the population. In the 1970s 50% of the population lived in poverty. Now it is 70%.

Left for dead

The history of the Stop the War Coalition

■ **Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement**
Andrew Murray and Lindsey German, with a foreword by Tony Benn.
Bookmarks, 2005, 276pp, £15.99

In post-modernist times the way to celebrate a political campaign is first to run it into the ground and then to publish a glossy book about how big it was. Remember the anti-globalisation campaign, a thriving mass movement until British 'socialists' parachuted in under the guise of Globalise Resistance and left it for dead? Well, this is the book for the Stop the War Coalition. Long before the occupation of Iraq is over, while the Iraqi resistance is still fighting on the streets, and Bush and Blair are lining up their future targets, the Stop the War leadership has switched to self-congratulation. For the record Andrew Murray writes for the Communist Party of Britain paper, *Morning Star*, and Lindsey German, formerly editor of the SWP's *Socialist Review*, was lately Respect candidate in West Ham. If you think this means either of them are socialist, read on.

The foreword by Tony Benn measures out this book's pretensions. In summary his argument is that all over the world peace campaigners of myriad political persuasions have come together to protest against 'America's war' in Iraq. In Britain this movement was a masterpiece of non-sectarianism. No mention here of the British imperialism's prosecution of the war, and certainly not a hint of the Labour Party's role in government.

This is not surprising from the old Labour stalwart Benn, who has pledged life-long loyalty to the Labour Party, having served as a Minister under Harold Wilson in the 1960s signing away the Namibian people's rights to their uranium in favour of Rio Tinto Zinc. Having accepted the imperialist shilling he is sticking with God and his pension. It is Benn who has proclaimed since the 1980s that Britain is now a colony of the US empire. For Benn it will always be an 'American war' on Iraq.

The 21st century leftists, however, have adopted new habits. Following the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre, they have rediscovered imperialism. Short of being hit in the face with a wet fish, they could not do otherwise as the US and Britain waged war on Afghanistan and Iraq for transparently imperialist ends. But what is this imperialism they have rediscovered, having poured scorn on its existence only a few years before? It is a 'new imperialism' and it is the policy of a New Labour Party. The severing of the connection between the old imperialism and the new, and the old Labour Party and the new is fundamental.

Above all, these new leftists, who are not socialists or communists, deliberately fail to locate imperialism as fundamental to capitalism: the means by which the economic, political and military relations between states are governed. For them imperialism is a choice that New Labour – personified by Tony Blair – has taken alongside Bush. They argue, however, that 'the doctrines of "liberal imperialism" have no great reservoir of support in contemporary Britain', and that 'New Labour has never sunk deep roots in the Labour Party'. Indeed



Tony Blair has 'no great reserves of political capital among Labour's members, MPs or affiliated trade unions to draw on in the event of a major crisis or controversy'. The political agenda which follows from this is that wresting the Labour movement from the grip of New Labour/Tony Blair will do the trick.

How is this to be done? This book tells us their strategy. The Coalition leadership worried that they had gone too far by calling for the ousting of the Prime Minister. But reassuringly: 'The Coalition itself was clear that "Blair must go" was not a call for overturning the government, (still less parliament)'. When the TUC Congress was 'deceived' into approving the occupation of Iraq, the STW Coalition were critical and actually said so(!). Breathe a sigh of relief, reader, despite this daring confrontation, the 'Coalition's trade union connection remained solid'. Of course the British trade union movement's connections with imperialism remained solid too. Far from wresting the Labour movement from the grip of New Labour, the Coalition was leading the Stop the War movement – a spontaneous and

mass anger against the war – into the arms of the warmongers and compromisers.

Since the massively successful Stop the War campaign, the Blairite Labour Party has managed to win the general election with a safe majority. By divorcing the old and the new, the British left can deceive itself that today's betrayals are not fundamental to the British Labour movement. As communists we know better. While the Stop the War Movement remorselessly congratulates itself on building the biggest demonstration ever, the best this and the most that, and for putting 'anti-imperialism at the heart of left-wing politics in Britain for the first time' (if you ignore John Maclean, James Connolly, Sylvia Pankhurst *et al*, that is), we know that imperialism is not a policy but the devastating core of all economic and social relations. We will not defeat it by uniting with Labour, by covering up its betrayals, but by exposing Labour's material relationship with imperialism and by uniting with all forces fighting against it.

We do not recommend this book.

Carol Brickley

China: the great leap backwards

■ **China and Socialism: Market Reforms and Class Struggle**
Martin Hart-Landsberg and Paul Burkett, 128pp, Monthly Review Press

The US socialist magazine *Monthly Review* last year produced a special feature-length issue on China (July-August edition), it has recently been reprinted in book form. Starting from the point that many on the left globally have seen recent economic developments in China as being progressive, the authors seek to dispel this myth once and for all and prove that 'market socialism' has inevitably opened up the way for the destruction of socialism and a complete restoration of capitalism.

The authors show with crystal clarity how China has been transformed from a socialist society into what it is today. In 1976, following the death of Mao Zedong, the 'rightists', led by Deng Xiaoping, waged an internal struggle to become the dominant force in the Chinese Communist Party. Deng, 'who had been criticized by Mao during the Cultural Revolution for being a "capitalist road", proved a wily strategist.' Deng's clique claimed 'that Mao had left the country in a dismal economic situation' and that the only way forward was 'market socialism,' ie the introduction of capitalist elements to, supposedly, forward socialism. However:

'In reality, the Chinese economy at the end of the 1970s was far from a disaster, especially in industry. For example, between 1952 and the end of the Mao era, industrial output increased at an average annual rate of 11.2 per cent. Despite disruptions to production during the Cultural Revolution decade (1966-76), industrial production still grew with an average rate of over 10 per cent.'

In 1983 the state ordered 'employment reforms' – now workers could be hired by state-owned enterprises on a temporary, contractual basis with no welfare benefits or job security. The right to strike was abolished and managers could fire workers not seen to be 'sufficiently productive.' And although state enterprises at this time remained dominant, by 1984 the original limits on private employment had

been scrapped. Decollectivisation and privatisation of agriculture were also introduced. Inflation rose, and real wages fell.

The communal system of government was undermined with its powers being handed to newly created township and village governments. 'These governments also took possession of the communes' industrial assets, which were restructured as township and village enterprises (TVEs)'. The TVEs are actually 'private operations in disguise' and 'in many cases individual government leaders run them, appointing managers and directing the allocation of earnings. Wages are "dirt cheap" and profits high. TVEs have played a big part in putting the means of production back into the hands of the few, in 1987 there were 1.5 million and by 1993 there were 25 million. Since the market reforms were introduced the situation has worsened for the vast majority of the Chinese population, with the gains of the revolution being rolled back. Healthcare and education, once universally free under socialism, became increasingly out of reach.

The view that 'market socialism' can lead to anything but capitalism is exposed by the authors: 'Progressive competitiveness thinking converts socialism and revolution from instruments of human development and liberation into preconditions for capitalist development and competitiveness. Often overlooked... is the fact that foreign investors' respect for the Chinese government, and their willingness to put up with "restrictive" terms on FDI, are largely due to the willingness of the Chinese government to deliver large supplies of cheap and productive labor power.'

And far from bringing stability: 'Its national competitiveness should not blind us to the fact that its rapid industrialization has been part and parcel of the uneven development and overproduction of capital on a world scale... The private sector enjoys especially favorable tax rates. As a result, while the private sector accounted for roughly 40 per cent of national economic activity, it contributed only 11.4 per cent of tax payments. As a consequence, fiscal revenue as a share of GDP fell from approximately 35 per cent in 1978 to less than 11 per cent in 1996. The state thus found itself with a growing budget deficit.'

The lessons for the international socialist movement are clear: 'Insofar as ["progressives"] continue to celebrate China as a "socialist" or even progressive development success story, they will find themselves taking an increasingly reactionary position vis-à-vis both Chinese politics and worker-community struggles.' Landsberg and Burkett emphasise that not only are market reforms regressive in terms of socialist development, but contrary to that sphere of left opinion that says otherwise, the socialist planned economy – as the Cuban experience shows – is extremely capable of meeting the needs of the working class.

Since this book was written, several Chinese communists have been arrested and imprisoned for opposing the Communist Party's destruction of its socialist achievements. The Zhengzhou Four were arrested in December for distributing revolutionary leaflets on the anniversary of Mao's death and two have been given three years in prison for the 'offence'. It is the duty of all socialists to support these, and any other revolutionary forces that emerge inside China.

Owen James

Louis Brehony

History from below

■ **Down With The Fences, South London Radical History Group, 2005**

Dotted across south London, as with many other places in Britain, is a network of parks, commons and woods, some mere patches hemmed in by houses, roads and railway lines, others extending over many square miles. This network is what remains of the great wilderness of uncultivated land which once covered huge swathes of the country, providing a valuable resource to the poor, affording grazing for livestock, a supply of firewood, a place to grow vegetables. Many people squatted on these commons. From the 16th century onward, however, landowners began enclosing the commons for intensive agriculture or building. As enclosure increased, so did resistance to it. Later, when the agricultural and industrial revolutions had forced hundreds of thousands into towns and cities, these commons came to provide a meeting place for the

lower orders to talk politics, to agitate and to air their grievances. As conditions for the urban poor worsened and agitation grew, so there was another impetus towards the regulation of public space, into fenced off, well-ordered public parks.

Down with the Fences is a short, very readable history of how and why the people fought, over a 400-year period, to protect the common land against encroachment. As the introduction states, 'Many, if not most, of the open spaces of any size that remain today... exist because they were preserved from development by collective action. Whether by rioting, tearing down fences and reopening enclosed land, or by legal agitation, much of the commons and parks that make life in the Smoke just about bearable wouldn't be there if they hadn't been actively defended'.

This pamphlet manages in 32 pages to cram in an impressive amount of research and offers a real sense of social forces at work. It details indi-

vidual fights to preserve particular commons, particularly in the early 19th and early 20th centuries. There are vivid descriptions of the battles of Plumstead, Wandsworth and Sydenham Commons as well as the riotous actions of the fence smashers who saved One Tree Hill in Honor Oak from becoming a private golf course just over 100 years ago. There are contemporary engravings, propaganda material and maps showing the locations of lost commons overlaid on the topography of modern London.

The pamphlet shows how local movements fed each other and came also to feed into more general, often law-abiding campaigning movements, such as the Commons Preservation Society, which often ran in parallel with more spontaneous, violent uprisings. Recent campaigns against the development of a multiplex cinema complex at Crystal Palace and against the destruction of the 8,000-year-old Oxleas Wood are cited as evidence of the continuing battle.

This history from below illuminates a neglected and fascinating area of the radical past and deserves a wide readership.

Detention centres: racist brutality against asylum seekers

In addition to four separate laws exclusively applying to immigrants, the racist British Labour government has created three types of detention centres: – 'reception', 'accommodation' and 'removal' centres. These are euphemisms for concentration camps for foreigners. Asylum seekers are subjected to extreme violence, especially during attempts to remove 'failed' refugees, including those fleeing rape and torture in Africa. The injuries sustained reveal a systematic pattern of torture including sexual assault. A report from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture documents the medical evidence of torture of 14 Africans including two women, held at Tinsley House, Yarl's Wood, Campsfield House and Harmondsworth removal centres between April and July 2004. This is only the tip of an iceberg of brutality. **CHARLES CHINWEIZU** reports.

Catalogue of brutality

Detainees revealed being 'dragged along the ground, being kicked, kneed, punched – including to the head and face, slapped, elbowed, having the thumb forcibly bent back, being repeatedly sat on (thorax and abdomen) – until they almost suffocated, and assault to the genitals including squeezing, pulling, punching and kicking'. Most of the assaults occurred after the removal attempt had been aborted; while the refugees were handcuffed with their hands behind their backs, out of sight in the back of escort vans. One was threatened with being injected with drugs.

Not only were they assaulted whilst handcuffed – one woman was dragged up the aircraft stairs by the handcuffs, one was held in a head lock, pushed and kneed, another kicked in the abdomen, chest, legs and mouth, and another had her head banged against a fire extinguisher – the handcuffs were also twisted and pulled apart to cause further deliberate injury to people whose only crime was to succeed in escaping poverty and despotic regimes armed and propped up by Britain. Additionally, the detainees were subjected to racist and verbal abuse: they were called 'dirty', 'you black bitch', 'black bastard', etc. In

one incident, an escort officer told fellow passengers a detainee was being deported 'because he has been selling weapons to children'. Medical treatment for the victims of this torture was routinely denied. (*Harm on Removal*, Medical Foundation, October 2004).

Another report into the state of four holding centres for asylum seekers, all run by Global Solutions Ltd (GSL), revealed there were no fire or health and safety policies or procedures, no child protection policies, inadequate training in self-harm and suicide prevention, little for detainees to do or read, no supervision or regu-

lar monitoring of the centres and a deliberate policy of denial of access to telephones to inform relatives, lawyers, etc. of their whereabouts. At Dallas Court, Manchester, a young woman who had miscarried was ignored and 'had not eaten for three days' (Athwal, Institute of Race Relations, 31 March 2005).

Racism rampant

Britain's treatment of asylum seekers is completely racist and inhuman, and the inhumanity is to be ratcheted up in the coming months. This was confirmed by a BBC documentary in March 2005, *Detention Undercover*, which secretly recorded staff at Oakington Immigration Removal Centre, near Cambridge and at Heathrow prison camp, both run by GSL (formerly Group 4), who are also responsible for transporting detainees around the country. Asylum seekers were daily, systematically racially, verbally and physically abused by staff who boasted about their exploits.

In a now antiquated PR exercise, an HM Prison Inspectorate report spoke, in June 2004, of the 'very good staff-detainee relations' and the 'caring approach of staff' at Oakington. In reality, staff admitted smashing a detainee's head onto a concrete floor, sexual assault and molestation of vulnerable female detainees. One advised, 'as long as you can't see any cameras, hit 'em'. Damage-limitation followed the broadcast, as 15 staff were suspended 'from frontline duties', ie not suspended at all, and the usual twaddle about a 'minority' being racist was

spewed out. Des Browne, immigration minister was 'committed to ensuring... effective immigration controls' were carried out with 'dignity and humanity'. He would consider what action to take once he was in possession of all the facts. Don't hold your breath.

Meanwhile, the Labour government has announced it is to 'fast-track' 30% of asylum applications by December and up to 40% by end 2006. 'Super fast-tracking', as applied in Harmondsworth camp, means cases are taken from application to appeal in 10 days or less. On the list of 56 'fast-track countries', 31 are African; the others are Latin American, east European and Middle Eastern. All are nations oppressed by centuries of colonialism and imperialism, including the 'safe' Iraq, Afghanistan and Cameroon where torture is endemic. 3.8 million people have died in Congo's profitable civil war since 1998, but that didn't stop Labour deporting 65 people to Congo in 2004 (many are raped and tortured on return), 105 to Zimbabwe, 150 to Somalia, 760 to Iraq (yes, Iraq) and 795 to 'democratic' Afghanistan.

Fightback

Some detainees are not just waiting patiently for the government to investigate the racism in detention centres or to be forcibly removed. At Colnbrook Removal Centre 16 detainees refused to return to their cells on May Day in protest at a detainee being beaten and their being prevented from contacting the national press. On 6 May at Yarl's Wood, 19 Chinese detainees refused food, barricaded themselves into their rooms and smashed the windows. On 10 May at Harmondsworth detainees refused food in protest against conditions at the centre. ■

Basque prisoners protest for political status



Demonstrations in support of Basque political prisoners

On 16 March, all 720 Basque political prisoners began a hunger strike in an effort to win political status. There are currently more Basque political prisoners than at any time since the Franco dictatorship, and they are spread over 82 different prisons, the majority in Spain, but some in France and elsewhere. This repression is aimed at crushing the resistance of those who fight for Basque self-determination.

The Basque nationalist coalition Batasuna was banned by the Spanish state in August 2002 – all Batasuna activity is proscribed and members face prosecution as 'supporters of terrorism'. This campaign of state repression involves the dispersal of prisoners across Spain and France far away from their home and relatives.

The hunger strike was launched by

the Basque Political Prisoners' Group (EPPK), and followed a series of protests since the turn of the year. In January prisoners associated with the EPPK began holding a series of sit-in protests. Following the increasingly repressive response by the prison authorities to these protests, the Basque political prisoners initiated their hunger strike to highlight their conditions.

The hunger strike ended after 12 days on 27 March with the prisoners stating that their struggle had moved into a new phase. The hunger strike itself endured severe media censorship here in Britain and internationally with few news agencies covering any information on the prisoners' struggle.

Iñigo Makazaga was among those prisoners who took part in the hunger strike; he is the only Basque political prisoner in Britain and has been incarcerated in Belmarsh prison for over

four years often in solitary confinement, pending extradition to Spain on fabricated evidence. His solicitor has warned that if extradited he would be likely to face torture in Spanish prisons. Iñigo's 'crime' has been his support of the Basque right to self-determination as an activist in the Basque student movement and a member of Batasuna.

Write to Iñigo Makazaga, FF7630, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, Thamesmead London SE28 0EB.

Protest at Iñigo's continued detention and mistreatment to Home Secretary Charles Clarke, Home Secretary, Peel Building, Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF *Paul Mallon*

Censorship in Belmarsh

At least two prisoners at Belmarsh high security prison in south London were stopped from receiving the last issue of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*

Initially, the prison prevented the papers from being given to our subscribers on the ridiculous grounds that FRFI is a racist publication. Iñigo Makazaga (see article on Basque prisoners) and Kevin Nevers, were handed empty envelopes, with the words 'racial paper, needs to be returned to sender or destroyed under 10 day rule'.

When Larkin Publications and the prisoners' legal advisers wrote and protested, the grounds for withholding the paper suddenly changed to some equally spurious nonsense about the

paper infringing the prison's 'Incentive and Earned Privileges Scheme' (IEPS), as it came from the publishers rather than being purchased through the prison canteen. This did not explain why the papers were marked 'racial paper and not for issue' and doesn't make sense in any case, as the IEPS refers to purchases made by prisoners and we send FRFI free of charge as an act of solidarity.

We always oppose any attempt to prevent prisoners from receiving FRFI, and are therefore asking readers to write and protest against this censorship. Please send letters to the governor Chris Hughes at HMP Belmarsh, Western Way Thamesmead LONDON SE28 0EB. ■

Rye Hill

Just what is going on in Rye Hill Prison? Two prisoners have died there in the last three months; six custody officers are currently suspended, one of whom has been arrested on suspicion of being involved in the supply of controlled drugs, and prisoners who have spoken to the police about the two deaths claim they are being victimised by staff.

On 24 March, Michael Bailey, 33, was found hanged in his cell in the segregation unit at Rye Hill, which is privately operated by Global Solution Ltd, formerly Group 4. Reports from prisoners at Rye Hill stated that Michael had been in good spirits when he was first segregated, but that he later became frightened.

Soon after that death, two custody officers at the prison were suspended. Global Solutions issued a statement saying that the suspensions were for 'irregularities in paperwork' and not



connected with the death of Michael Bailey.

On 13 April, Wayne Reid, a 44-year-old prisoner at Rye Hill, died after suffering chest wounds. Three men were later arrested and charged with his murder. Wayne Reid was from Birmingham, was serving a seven-year sentence and had been due to be released in a matter of days. Following his death, 36 Rye Hill prisoners were transferred to other gaols.

On 19 April, the homicide and major crime team from Northamptonshire police arrested a custody officer

at Rye Hill. He was questioned in connection with the supply of controlled drugs and later released on bail. It was later reported that a further four members of staff at Rye Hill had been suspended, bringing the total number of suspensions to six.

Aside from these dramatic incidents, prisoners at Rye Hill complain of general problems with the regime. Rules appear to be invented on a whim, there are difficulties with healthcare and immense obstacles are put in front of prisoners who want to move on to lower security category prisons. Getting decategorised to Category C, let alone Category D (open prison), seems to be immeasurably difficult, particularly for black prisoners, even when they have been well-behaved and completed all the offending behaviour courses available to them.

Quite clearly, something is amiss at this prison. Therefore, I am appealing to anyone who has anything to say about the regime at Rye Hill, to get in touch with me through this newspaper, so we can highlight the situation further. *Eric Allison*

Don't vote, organise!

Events

LONDON

Call: 020 7837 1688,
email office@ratb.org.uk,
or victoryintifada@hotmail.com
Write to BCM Box 5909,
London WC1N 3XX.

Every Thursday:
Picket of M&S, Oxford Street
(Marble Arch End), 6-8pm
Street stalls every
Saturday/Sunday,
12-3pm. Contact us for details.

Wednesday 15 June, 7pm
LSE FRFI society meeting
Film about Palestine
Room S75, St Clement's House,
Houghton Street, WC2.
Nearest tube Holborn.

Rock around the Blockade
Sunday 12 June:
Stoke Newington Festival
Come to the RATB marquee!

Sunday 19 June
Bike ride in Hertfordshire
Contact us for sponsorship forms
or pay £20 to come

Anti-imperialist Bloc events
Saturday 18 June 1-3pm:
Stand up for your rights!
Street event in Dalston
Meet at Dalston, Kingsland station

Saturday 2 July
Contingent from London to the
march/events in Edinburgh
against the G8

MANCHESTER

Thursday 2 June:
Rebel Music Night
at Jabez Clegg (opposite
Manchester University Union)
7pm till late.
Fundraiser for Cuban youth.

Picket of M&S, Market Street
Manchester City Centre
Saturday 4 June:
12-3pm
Remember al Naksa!

For more information on our work
on Palestine and Iraq email
victory_intifada@hotmail.com

Salford University FRFI society
To contact the society, email:
salfordfrfi@hotmail.com

Get active with Manchester RCG!
email
manchesterfrfi@
revolutionarycommunist.com
call: 07816 547 066, or visit
www.manchesterfrfi.5u.com

ROCHDALE

Regular Saturday pickets of
M&S: Rochdale town centre 12-3pm
For more information email:
victory_intifada@hotmail.com

MIDLANDS

For information on activities email:
midlandsrcg@hotmail.com

NORTH EAST

For information about **pickets of**
M&S in Silver Street, Durham and
other events in Newcastle
call: 07813 073 846

SCOTLAND

For information about **Regular**
Anti War Activities, meetings and
events in Glasgow and Dundee
email active_against_war@
yahoo.co.uk or call
07779 785 529

Palestinian Solidarity stall
every Saturday from 2-4pm at
the top of Buchanan Street,
Glasgow

Anti G8 protests, July 2-6 in
Edinburgh and Glenaeagles

For further details of other activities
in Scotland
phone: 07779 785 529 or email:
friscotland@yahoo.co.uk.

FRFI supporters were out on the streets of London, Greater Manchester, Newcastle and Glasgow in the lead up to the general election urging people not to participate in this fraudulent exercise in democracy. In London, supporters worked closely with other

organisations, mainly from the Kurdish and Turkish communities, in the Anti-imperialist Bloc (AIB). Four Saturday stalls were held in working class areas including Dalston and Wood Green where there are large Kurdish and Turkish communities. Joint activity on the election in Kurdish and Turkish working

class areas was a very important step since it involved these sections of the working class taking a stand on class questions in this country as well as on class questions in Kurdistan and Turkey.

The AIB also participated in a march for migrants' rights in April, and then organised a large

contingent on the annual May Day demonstration. The police paid special interest to our contingent, and tried to harass us. At the end of the march in Trafalgar Square the AIB held its own rally with an 'open mic' for all anti-imperialists. This democratic approach to politics was in sharp contrast to the official platform, made up as it was of social democrats urging support for the Labour Party. The following week, several Kurdish/Turkish community centres in Dalston, east London, received visits from the Metropolitan Police under the guise of discussing community relations. There was clear anxiety at the sight of joint organisation between Kurdish, Turkish and British communists and anti-imperialists.

The AIB will continue to organise monthly events over the summer. It will support the 21 May demonstration organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign against the apartheid wall. Continuing with work on questions of immediate interest to the British working class, it will hold a street stall in June exposing the government's repressive legislation such as ASBOs and immigration and asylum laws. It will also participate in the mobilisation for the protests surrounding the G8 summit in Scotland in early July.

Victory to the Intifada (VTI) continues to hold well-attended and lively weekly pickets of Marks & Spencer in London's Oxford Street. On 27 April the theme of the picket was the 11th anniversary of the end of apartheid in South Africa. The following Thursday, 5 May, picketers set up a polling booth to allow people to 'Vote for

Palestine' in opposition to the Zionist policies of all the major parties standing in the general election. A week later, whilst Zionist counter-demonstrators celebrated the 57th anniversary of the founding of their racist state, picketers exposed the human cost involved: 750,000 Palestinian people ethnically cleansed, and a terror campaign against them which has continued to this day.

Manchester FRFI supporters also held street stalls in working class areas in the run-up to the general election: in Longsight, Moss Side, Cheetham Hill, Salford and Rusholme, as well as the city centre and other areas. There was a mixed reaction: from some there was support for our anti-Labour standpoint, from others a complete lack of interest as if the election was happening on another planet. At Longsight Market some Labour canvassers, including Gorton MP Sir Gerald Kaufman, arrived and set up near us, unprepared for the opposition they were about to face. Our comrades used the opportunity to engage in a protest against Labour's war policy and opportunism; one of Kaufman's minders responded by lunging at one of our younger comrades.

We have also been holding regular pickets of Marks & Spencer in Preston and Rochdale in solidarity with the Palestinian people. On Saturday 4 June we will be holding a special picket outside M&S on Market Street, Manchester, to mark the anniversary of the mass expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in 1967. The 'M&S 9' arrested on a picket last

December for challenging a police ban (see FRFI 183 for full report), are awaiting news of their trial date. Meanwhile, a Muslim comrade, arrested on a picket on 9 April after being harassed by four Zionist thugs, has learned she will not be charged for putting these Zionists in fear or terror of their lives!

In County Durham, FRFI supporters helped to organise an hour-long blockade of Caterpillar's Peterlee site in the run up to a shareholders' meeting in Chicago which would discuss a resolution challenging the sale of armoured bulldozers to Israel. Over 20 people took part in the blockade, chaining the gates shut and forcing vehicles to queue up on both sides of the gates until the protest ended.

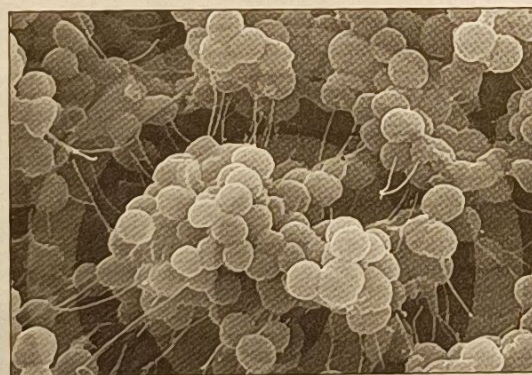
In Scotland, FRFI supporters have continued to work alongside other anti-war activists on the streets of Glasgow. On the Saturday before the general election we organised a street meeting in Sauchiehall Street, calling for 'No Vote For Labour Warmongers!' Some of those who stopped expressed hostility because they thought we were politicians touting for votes! Once we made its absolutely clear that we were specifically calling for people not to vote for the Labour war party, they were satisfied and went on their way. What was clear was that there were people who wanted to hear a clear and unequivocal anti-Labour message, and it was evident to us that they were not getting it from the Scottish Socialist Party. We will be continuing with our street meetings against the war in the run up to the G8 Summit.

Hospital acquired infections: Labour ignores warnings

In the 19th century, hospitals were dangerous places – little was understood about the transmission of infectious diseases and hygiene was poor. Vast improvements were made once the link between hygiene and infection was established and antiseptic use began in operating theatres. In the 21st century, hospital acquired infections (HAI) are a growing problem in Britain's health service, under pressure to increase throughput and activity, cut staffing and meet targets.

HAI lead to 14 days longer in hospital, an extra £3,154 spent on health care for the affected person, six extra days off work and a 10% increase in the chance of dying. It is estimated that in England and Wales, HAI lead to an extra £1 billion being spent per year. One in ten people leaving hospital are affected by HAI. The estimate of annual deaths from HAI in Britain is 5,000.

The human cost should be paramount, but the economic cost is what is of immediate importance for hospital management. With hospitals striving to meet targets related to star-



ing categories and collecting their financial bonuses, bed occupancy and hospital activity remain as high as possible. The waiting list target for surgical procedures is now set at six months. Financial penalties will be levied against hospitals with people on the list for longer. In order to urgently address the waiting list problem, consultant surgeons are currently being asked to operate on Saturdays. They are being paid hourly private sector rates to do this (presumably as a pay off for the fact that waiting list pressure is what contributes to

people seeing surgeons privately) – while the nurses, theatre technicians and domestics remain on their usual pay.

Reducing HAI

Best practice for reducing hospital acquired infections in general includes good hygiene in clinical practice (hand washing and disinfection), isolation of infected patients and use of barrier precautions (gloves and aprons), a clean environment and control of patient and staff movement within hospitals. Movement of patients within hospitals is related to high bed

occupancy rates and making use of every available bed. Understaffing means that nurses and doctors are dealing with more patients each, which, coupled with insufficient hand-washing, increases the risk of cross-infection. There are insufficient single rooms on wards and the practice of squeezing five beds into four-bedded bays is on the increase. Both add to the risk of cross infection and increasingly cramped conditions make effective cleaning more difficult.

Privatising cleaning, reducing numbers

Over the last 20 years, the number of cleaners in British hospitals has halved, from 100,000 in 1984 to 55,000 in 2004. In 1986 there were 67,000 full-time domestic posts and now there are 36,000. Since 1983, with the advent of Market Testing, the NHS name for competitive tendering, the cheapest bidder has won and cutting costs is always equivalent to cutting staff numbers. The low pay and poor conditions contribute to the increasingly high turnover in staff every year in the private companies. In January this

year, the Business Services Association, the representative body for the major private cleaning companies, said 'the point at issue is not how many cleaning staff are employed but how efficiently they carry out the tasks assigned to them'.

Bed occupancy

In 2000, the National Audit Office (NAO) identified high bed occupancy levels as a contributory factor in HAI. They recommended a reduction in occupancy rates to 82%. Four years later, the NAO report in 2004 showed that three quarters of all trusts were still operating above that level. Equally worrying in the 2004 report was the finding that 12% of Infection Control Teams reported that their chief executive had refused or discouraged a recommendation from them to control an outbreak by closing a ward or hospital to admissions.

This lack of priority to HAI given by the Labour government is significant in view of how MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus), the cause of most HAI, was used as party political point

scoring tool in the run up to the general election in May. In the Netherlands, screening for MRSA is routine with subsequent isolation of infected patients in hospital, bed occupancy rate is around 60% and they have particularly low rates of HAI.

The British government spent between £600 and £700 million on contracts with the private health care sector in 2003. They aspire to spend in excess of £10 billion in 2008. Health care ranks in the top three most active sectors in terms of British private equity transactions. Private companies are attracted to the health care market because of its wide-ranging opportunities for profit not health improvement.

The government is encouraging schemes such as payment by results for Foundation Hospitals, and overseeing a significant reduction in numbers of beds and staff in new hospitals built by Private Finance Initiatives.

Reducing hospital acquired infections by measures that include more beds, more staff, better pay and conditions for the domestics and more time and attention to people's care is not part of the Labour government's agenda.

Hannah Caller

CHOOSE THE RCG

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

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

I would like to join an FRFI Readers & Supporters Group ☐

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LETTERS

Some news from the BBC

As you know, our new director general Mark 'Slasher' Thompson has decided to do new Labour's bidding, by announcing up to 6,000 job losses and massive cuts across the BBC. Thompson is Labour's man: he is carrying out the punishment that Blair insists upon in the wake of the Hutton Inquiry. The Labour Party is frightened of a truly independent public service broad-casting system, so has appointed their man to keep the BBC 'on-message'.

At this point, the unions need to

meet Thompson head on. It is an unprecedented situation in that the unions can now carry out a corporation-wide ballot for industrial action across the entire BBC; we could be on the point of a mass strike. However, it seems that BECTU officials cannot be relied upon to break with Labour even when workers' livelihoods depend on it.

On the one hand they urge us to vote for industrial action; on the other to vote Labour in the general election! The leadership seems to

have missed the point that this is a political dispute in which we need to expose New Labour for what it is. Why on earth would we vote Labour and go on strike? But with Labour's re-election, the damage to public service broadcasting will be irreversible.

JON KEMPSTER
East London

This letter was written before the General Election. As we go to press the BBC faces a 24-hour strike.

Ireland: learning from the past

I would like to congratulate FRFI for their ongoing challenging and important analysis of the Irish struggle against British imperialism and occupation of the Six Counties. The kind of attention given to the situation today and assessment of the nationalist movement in the north of Ireland by Paul Mallon is desperately needed in the current climate which sees the extreme reactionary Ian Paisley elected as leader of the Loyalist community.

As the nationalist working class of the north of Ireland comes under increasing attack from the bolstered rightwing Unionists. Sinn Fein and the IRA will necessarily face criticism of their strategy and tactics in the recent period by a growing number of nationalists seeking to understand

the failings of their movement.

It is hard to believe that Gerry Adams who saw his contemporaries murdered by the British could have held illusions that a Labour government might broker a peace process that would benefit the nationalist struggle. We must never forget what happened in the past so I seek to remind readers of some important facts:

In 1981 when the British Tory government of Margaret Thatcher oversaw the slow and painful killing of ten Irish hunger strikers the Labour Party leader Michael Foot made clear his full support for the government. Don Concannon, shadow spokesman on Northern Ireland, was sent to tell Bobby Sands on his deathbed that Labour did not support the demands of the hunger strikers.

This was at a time when Labour was still considered to be left wing. It shows us that the imperialist policies of New Labour are but an extension and continuation of the imperialist actions of Old Labour.

As the nationalist Irish community reassesses its struggle for dignity and freedom from oppression and exploitation and seeks to learn the lessons of the past, it will undoubtedly rediscover the writings of James Connolly. Much of Connolly's words were penned more than a century ago and yet his struggles against opportunist elements within the nationalist movement remain relevant to the situation that faces the north of Ireland today.

FIONA DONOVAN
London

Why I didn't vote for Oona King

I licked the envelope and cycled to the letter box, but 'Have you heard the news? Oona King lost her seat!'

Blimey, the whole election breezed past like an adrenaline-packed action film. I was going to send a letter to 'my' MP to tell her about how useless she was, but it's too late now.

It's too late to tell her that I'm enraged by the fact that she voted for the military action against the people of Afghanistan. I'm enraged that she voted for the deaths of 100,000 Iraqi people.

I'm enraged that she voted in favour of Labour's 'anti-terrorism' laws and voted in favour of introducing ID cards and a national biometrics database. But why did she vote against freedom of information legislation?

If she had been truly

representing her constituency, she would have voted against the massacre of Afghanistan, the genocide of Iraq, all the 'anti-terrorism' laws and those bloody ID cards. But she didn't. Oona King had a fat pay cheque and supports police rights to raise their stop and search rate by 41% for Asians and 8% for whites.

The thing is, being bitter against a Labour fool like Oona King is easy; she loves Tony, loves her party and her salary. Unfortunately people like Islington North's Jeremy Corbyn seem harder to fault - in fact his voting record has been good AND he rides his bike to work, he's just a nice guy. But if we vote for Corbyn we vote for warmongering Labour imperialism. He won't leave Labour because he believes he can reform it. And that's the problem,



but I can't work out whether people are lazy or just mad enough to think that a good future lies in the hands of a few good politicians. This is utterly ridiculous, it slows down and destroys the movement.

But Labour is out of Bethnal Green and Bow! And the message will spread to all of London, and everyone else will vote for Respect in four years' time... I don't think!

ETHESHAM HAQUE
East London

Brilliant RASBOs

Thank you for the Real ASBO idea [FRFI 184]. It's brilliant. Ever since we read about Anti-Social Behaviour Orders we have been wondering who we would like to issue them to.

Young people have the major fault that they are younger than we are. But we cannot think of one we would like to ban from Finsbury.

First on our list is Lib Dem council leader Steve Hitchins. He has sold off Finsbury Town Hall to Urdang Dance Academy, evicted the Roger Casement Centre from its premises and sold off Lever Street Library and St John's Street

Citizens Advice Centre. The Arthur Simpson Library has gone. So has the Buttery in Amwell Street and Merlin Street swimming pool.

Second on our list is Urdang Dance Academy, which plans to rip out our town hall to make it suitable for dancing lessons - using public money.

Steve Hitchins should be banned from Islington Town Hall and Urdang should be banned from Finsbury Town Hall.

FLO & IVOR KENNA
London

Give prisoners the vote

I have never been all that interested in politics, but having read the latest issue of FRFI I am raring to start giving politicians a very hard time.

ASBOs should be challenged in the courts as being in direct breach of Article 11 of the Human Rights Act. These ASBOs are nothing more than outright oppression and criminalise people for no valid reason. Control Orders are even worse. If anything, these are blatant breaches of Articles 3, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act. All articles in the Act should be absolute and no interference with them should be tolerated.

The past 14 years have seen a

number of Criminal Justice Acts come into force. These now make it almost impossible for a prisoner to get a job and make good on release. Meanwhile under a ruling in Europe, prisoners are to be allowed to vote in elections, yet Blair and Howard are against it. Why? Could it be that they know it could see the end of their 'political games'?

It is about time that political power fell into the hands of a party that didn't treat the people with contempt. For far too long Labour and Tory have ruled the roost. Could giving prisoners the vote actually scare them?

A WAKEFIELD PRISONER

Prisoner fights wrongful conviction

I write to you to highlight my fight to prove my innocence of two Section 8 woundings and prison riot, which happened in November 1996 at HMP Cardiff. An inmate attacked two prison officers with a metal bar, causing serious injuries to both officers, but when he was overpowered by officers and put into a strip cell he told them I put him up to it. I was arrested and charged (along with him) and stood trial in July 1997 at Cardiff Crown Court.

The evidence against me was four inmates (who all had something to gain). I was found guilty and sentenced to 21 years' imprisonment. Now, eight years later, new evidence has come to light to prove I'm innocent, as the inmate who attacked the officer has been freed and wrote to my lawyers in London, stating the

evidence he gave against me during the trial was based on lies. He states the Prison Service and South Wales Police told him to lie against me. My family and solicitors have worked long and hard to prove my innocence.

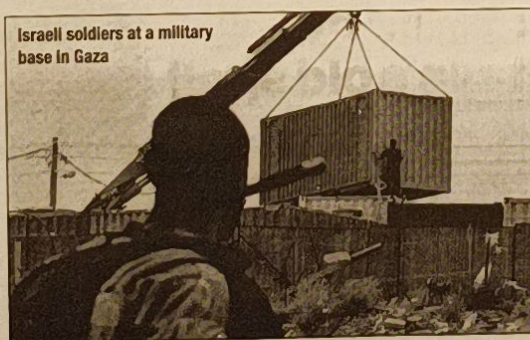
Because of this case, all prisons in South Wales have banned me so I cannot see my family or children as it's been 10 years since I set foot in Wales. My lawyer Jane Hickman of Hickman and Rose solicitors is fighting my miscarriage of justice and we (my family) have launched a campaign called the Cardiff One campaign, to free me. People can write to me to show support to the address below.

IDRIS ALI (RV3497)
Seg unit, HMP Dovegate,
Uttoxeter, Staffs ST14 8XR

Isolate the Zionist state

Congratulations on keeping up your weekly protest in London against British collusion with the Zionist settler state of Israel (demonstration outside M&S Oxford Street). The boycott of Israeli goods and shops/companies that have a special relationship with Israel are acts of solidarity with the Palestinians that people all over the world should and could be doing.

The Guardian (20 May) published an open letter from the International Advisory Board (IAB) for Academic Freedom, established to protect the academic freedom of Bar-Ilan University and other institutions of higher education. The letter was to members of the Association of University Teachers (AUT) on why an academic boycott of Israel is wrong. The IAB claims that the boycott 'can in no way be justified by a false analogy with the illegitimate and undemocratic regimes based on an ethos of



discrimination'. To say that Israel is not based on an ethos of discrimination is risible.

The counter picket on Oxford Street by members of Betar, a Zionist organisation linked to Likud, sports a banner that reads 'Israel = democracy'.

Let's redouble our efforts to raise the issue of the Palestinian

people's struggle for human rights and social justice and fight the Zionists' lies wherever they rear their ugly heads.

Isolate the Zionist state! Step up all forms of boycott!
Victory to the Intifada!

MANDY PITT
London

Mental Health Bill

On 22 March the government slipped out a press notice concerning the proposed new Mental Health Bill, which allows for the internment, potentially for life, of innocent citizens whose only 'crime' is that they may one day pose some kind of risk to society.

This is at the same time as Labour won the right in parliament to house arrest foreign and British citizens, potentially for life, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, on the basis that they may one day potentially pose some kind of risk to society.

The Mental Health Bill has in the past been beaten to the ropes by rebellions from mental health and human rights lobbies and a vociferous core of mental health experts. However it now looks set to become law in the next parliament.

The Bill broadens the definition of 'mental disorder' to allow the detention (imprisonment) of

anybody deemed by a government-appointed panel to be 'suffering' from any 'disorder' which may, at some point in the future, lead them to become a 'threat to society'. Such people would, when the Bill becomes law, be subject to indefinite detention with no appeal, save to the very authorities...

Furthermore in recent years a new 'disorder' has been invented on the back of the case of (probably innocent) Michael Stone - that of Severe Anti-Social Personality Disorder. Under the new legislation, anyone deemed to be suffering from said Disorder, Personality Disorder or 'Borderline' Personality Disorder would be liable to arrest and compulsory detention without limit of time, even if they had never in their lives committed an offence or posed a risk to anybody.

As generations of dictators, elected or self-appointed, have discovered, focusing on and

demonising sections of the community will always bring the public onto the rulers' side. But remember who the real criminals are and what their crimes throughout the world are, and how gullible they depend on you being.

Muslims, dissenters, lefties, foreigners, gypsies, mental health patients...and maybe you next.

COLIN M
For more info check out
www.mentalhealthalliance.co.uk

Thank you

I am writing to thank you for sending me FRFI free of charge for over two decades. My sentence has eventually come to an end and I am leaving the UK any day. Therefore please do not send the paper any more. Thanking you again and wishing you all well for the future.

QAYYUM RAJA
Kashmiri political prisoner

'Keep ya hood up'

When Labour came to power in 1997 it promised to tackle social exclusion and poverty, with Tony Blair claiming that this would be the main difference between Labour and the previous Tory government. However, the number of 15-16 year olds in custody is almost twice as many as a decade ago. Thousands of ASBOs (Anti-Social Behaviour Orders) have been imposed on working class youths – criminalising them, restricting their movement and even imprisoning them. Their aim is, on one hand, to exclude the poorest, most deprived sections of society, while on the other hand, to protect the privilege of the minority.

LOUIS BREHONY reports.

ASBOs, and the further powers provided by the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003, are designed to criminalise and punish working class youth, already excluded from decent education, social welfare and adequate living standards. The police now have power to issue on the spot fines for petty offences like littering, 'wasting police time' and alcohol consumption in public; small crowds of youths acting 'suspiciously' can be 'dispersed'; people can be banned from specific areas, and even their own homes; curfews can be imposed on entire areas. As well as working class youth, prostitutes, Travellers and homeless people are also the victims of these police state measures.

And at the same time the children of the ruling class live in comfort. In a country where Prince Harry can get away with smoking dope and brawling in nightclubs, and the Prime Minister's son can lie in the street in a drunken stupor, the vast majority of young people are cast aside and their culture repressed. A similar story can

be traced through the last 50 years – from teddy boys to mods and rockers, punk to warehouse parties – the attacks on hooded youth is the present manifestation in a long wave of attacks on working class youth culture.

The divide between rich and poor youth can be shown by comparing the statistics for the poor West Midlands (WM) with the affluent South East (SE). There are three times as many 15-16 year olds from WM in young offenders institutes as there are from SE; WM has a concentration of people on low incomes three times that of SE; WM has the worst infant mortality rate in the country, SE has the best. Nationally the number of school exclusions is three times that in 1990, with black students three times more likely to be excluded than whites.

Former Home Secretary David Blunkett started the witch-hunt by giving the media legal powers to 'name and shame' those found guilty of 'anti-social behaviour offences.' This draconian Labour policy has

been developed by Blunkett's successor, Charles Clarke. New government guidelines state that 'publicising should be the norm, not the exception. An individual who is subject to an ASBO should understand that the community is likely to learn about it.'

The media has jumped at the chance to help criminalise those oppressed sections of the working class who are targeted by ASBOs. More than one fifth of all Britain's ASBOs have been imposed in Manchester and the *Manchester Evening News* (MEN) has played as despicable a role as the police in attacking the working class victims of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act and ASBOs. Headlines such as 'War on street thugs starts here', 'Moss Side suspects shackled by new laws', and 'Yob is banned from the airport' are frequent. As are overblown front-page pictures of 'criminals' with articles pushing for 'grassing up' amongst communities.

Eddy Newman, the Labour councillor in charge of ASBOs, regularly boasts on the MEN's pages about how 'effective' the orders are in locking up 'yobs.' In the three months up to 15 September last year, 121 children under the age of 18 were gaoled for breaching ASBOs.

'Operation Breakthrough', publicised highly by the MEN, specifically targets the poor black and Asian communities of Moss Side, Longsight and Levenshulme. Supposedly aimed at 'gangs' and 'yob culture', the ridiculous ASBO conditions imposed on those charged include bans on wear-

ing balaclavas, hoods and 'body armour', and bans on riding bicycles. Superintendent Neil Wain said: 'Our intention is to disrupt gangsters and create a situation where we break the gang culture.' In reality they are associating poor, black communities with drugs and 'gangsterism', and criminalising and repressing the culture of alienated youth.

The war on 'hoodies' is a sign that this criminalisation is set to intensify. A number of shopping precincts are in the process of banning hooded jackets and caps – it's ironic that they will sell them to you but won't allow you to wear them. Blair and Labour are debating further crackdowns on 'street corner and shopping centre thugs' and are even thinking about bright orange uniforms for 'offenders' on community service.

The frenzy of fear being whipped up by the government and media about 'hooded thugs' – ie poor, socially excluded teenagers – is designed to give more credibility to Labour's police state measures. When Blair speaks about the lack of 'respect' amongst young people, what he really means is amongst working class youth, not the children of the ruling class he is so ready to protect. When the state, its police, and the media attack working class youth they are blaming them for the very conditions that the ruling class has created – they are the real criminals. Work must be done in local communities to organise the fight back against ASBOs and against criminalisation.

Defend Roma rights

In the run-up to the election *The Sun* newspaper produced a special supplement called 'Stamp on the camps'; the Conservative Party claimed Gypsy communities were flouting British law and called for more evictions; in some areas, the BNP campaigned on an anti-Gypsy platform; a campaign and website called Middle England in Revolt sprang up, claiming it aims to protect rural communities from illegal Traveller camps. The Labour government continues to make Travellers homeless by evicting them from their own land, and has drafted plans that will make this easier. All these attacks are a part of an organised nationwide racist campaign against the rights of Gypsy communities.

Like racism against asylum seekers, racism against Gypsies is socially accepted. In some parts of Britain you can still read signs declaring 'no Gypsies or Travellers'. If similar racist literature were produced against Jewish or black communities there would be uproar. In a recent case a 'bonfire society' burned a caravan effigy bearing the number plate 'pikey' (a racist term for Travellers)

and escaped prosecution.

It is estimated that there are 90,000 to 120,000 members of the 'Traveller' community in Britain, who can be divided into two groups – traditional and new. Traditional Travellers are either of Anglo-Roma Gypsy or Irish Traveller origin and have lived in Britain for centuries. Both groups are recognised in British law as distinct racial groups and should be protected by the 1976 Race Relations Act. It is estimated that in Britain there are 200,000 people who are descended from Travellers but no longer live in caravans. New Travellers are people who have more recently adopted the nomadic lifestyle. All of them are under attack.

One million Gypsies were murdered in the Nazi holocaust, and they remain the targets of persecution, racist attacks and murder in Europe today. An estimated 100,000 Roma were driven out of Kosovo in the ethnic cleansing of the 1990s, 50,000 of whom are in Germany and facing imminent deportation.

Gypsies are one of the most deprived ethnic groups in Britain with the highest rates of illiteracy and infant mortality and, according to a 1987 report, a life

expectancy 10 years shorter than that of the settled population. One third of the population has no lawful place to live. 50% of the population live on 'official' sites provided by local authorities. In the same way that the government has allowed council housing to fall into unacceptable disrepair and created a shortage of affordable housing, many sites are run down. Many sites are located in environmentally harmful environments such as beside motorways, sewage processing plants or industrial sites.

Under the 1968 Caravan Act, councils became duty bound to provide sites for Travellers. The 1994 Criminal Justice Act (CJA) removed this duty and resulted in the hounding of Travellers from their homes. Following the CJA, Traveller communities were encouraged to purchase their own land for permanent caravan sites. However, when it came to getting planning permission to install facilities, Travellers were refused and evicted from their own land. For Travellers the planning permission refusal rate is 90%, with an 80% acceptance rate for other communities.

Traveller groups are standing up for their rights, both by fighting the legal battle within the courts, and resisting police and bailiffs at evictions. On 16 March 2005 the court of appeal dismissed an appeal by the Maloney family that Leeds City Council had contravened their human rights by evicting them from their camp at Spinkwell Lane in Wakefield. However, the Court of Appeal referred the case to the House of Lords to decide whether the family can fight the eviction as an infringement of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which states that everyone has a right to respect for their private and family life, home and correspondence.

Dale Farm in Essex is the largest site in the country and is facing eviction due to lack of planning permission. If this goes ahead, 1,800 people will be made homeless. Residents and supporters are mounting a campaign to stop the local council in its tracks and counter the vicious racist propaganda being used against them.

Barnaby Mitchell

More information from
www.travellerssupport.org.uk

RACIST POLICE OFF OUR STREETS!

PC David Yates repeatedly swore at a Kurdish teenager he was arresting, racially abused him, called him a rapist and boasted about how he would fit him up. Teenagers who report this sort of

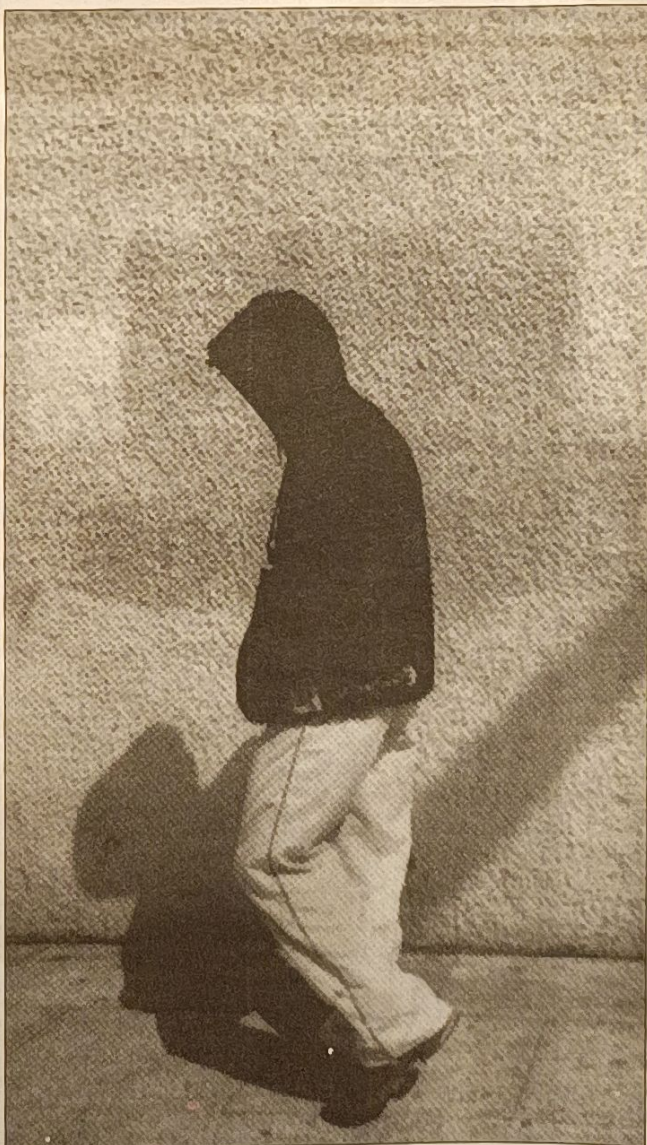
police behaviour are usually not believed; however the youth recorded the whole incident on his mobile phone and the attempt at prosecuting him on a public order offence was swiftly aborted after it was played to the court.

Yates has now been suspended. In the recording, he is alleged to have said: 'If you say one more fucking word, I'll smash your fucking Arab face in. Do you understand?' and 'You won't swear at me again, sunshine, and this is one that you won't fucking get off of at court, because I'll write it up properly.'

The media is saturated with stories young yobs who terrorise innocent members of the public in shopping centres. It is therefore all the more timely to witness the embarrassment of the police at this expose of the brutish racist intimidating attitude of the state and its law enforcers towards young people.

British police, racist police!

Hannah Caller



Youths in hooded tops are stigmatised and banned from shopping centres