

# Challenge

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*Inside this issue –*

## **Star Wars...a closer look**

**Also:- ● Militarisation of EU ● Palestine will be free  
● Musa Jeli's Moabit Notebooks**

**YOUNG COMMUNIST**  
**ycl**  
**LEAGUE**



## What We Stand For

The Young Communist League is the youth wing of the Communist Party of Britain and was founded in 1924.

It is organisationally autonomous and decides its own policies, priorities and activities.

The YCL is a democratic organisation based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. It is directed by a National Committee whose members are elected at the annual YCL Congress, and it is building branches across the country.

The YCL aims to develop the political consciousness of young people and to increase their involvement in politics both nationally and internationally.

The YCL seeks to become the communist wing of a wider youth movement.

The YCL seeks to defend and strengthen the welfare state, and campaign for its extension as a step towards creating an equal and just society.

We believe that public transport should be viewed as part of this system.

The YCL demands free and inclusive secular education for all, including nursery care, schools, universities, community colleges and adult education centres.

The YCL believes that a redistribution of wealth through progressive taxation can pay for this. The economic demands of big business are starving our welfare system, which Britain, one of the richest states on earth, could certainly otherwise afford.

The YCL opposes the overwhelming power of big business, and opposes the European Union because this is a vehicle for promoting the interests of big business at the expense of democracy and equality, and its institutions are undemocratic, corrupt and unaccountable.

The European Union also threatens to introduce ever more racist foreign policies, as shown by the Schengen agreements, which Britain has largely signed up to, and the moves to create a single European army.

The YCL aims to help establish a socialist society based on public ownership and democratic control. We believe that in Britain at the moment social change can be achieved by peaceful means. However, we defend the right of the oppressed to resort to armed struggle when this is the most practical way of liberating themselves.

The YCL believes that no one should be unfairly discriminated against in any way on any basis, including sex, race, sexuality, disability or religious beliefs.

The YCL supports the right of women to free and easily available abortion.

The YCL recognises the Irish people's right to self-determination.

The YCL supports the cancellation of all 'third world' debt.

The YCL works in solidarity with sister organisations throughout the world, and supports the struggle of people everywhere for socialism. The YCL declares its support for the world's socialist and progressive countries.

The YCL opposes all anti-trade union laws.

The YCL does not believe that Britain needs a nuclear arsenal, and campaigns for unilateral, immediate and unconditional nuclear disarmament.

The YCL recognises that religion has been used in the past to keep working people in drudgery and exploitation, but also acknowledges and works with progressive religious currents and all religious people prepared to fight for social change.

The YCL demands a secular state, and supports freedom of worship and of religious and atheist propaganda.

The YCL realises the urgency of protecting the natural environment. We hold that most environmental damage is caused by the wilful neglect of major corporations and governments, and that this can be changed through socialism.

The YCL supports the Morning Star as the only daily socialist newspaper in Britain and does its utmost to aid the circulation of the paper.

## CONTENTS

### 3. EDITORIAL & BATTLE OF IDEOLOGIES

### 4. IN THE NEWS

### 6. COVER STORY: the nuclear threat

Gawain Little

### 8. FEATURES: Internationalism and Peace Movements.

Rae Street

### 9. EUROPE: Militarisation of EU

Brian Denny

### 10. SOCIALIST CULTURE:

Musa Jelil's Moabit Notebooks

### 11. LETTERS

### 12. INTERNATIONAL: The Peace Process

John Lynn

### 13. INTERNATIONAL:

Palestine will be free Ghayur Bangash

### 14. INTERNATIONAL:

Contradictions Matthew van Rooyen

### 15. HISTORY/PREVIEW: Captain

Correlli's Mandolin Costas Pateras

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There are one or two points I'd like to clear up. First of all, Challenge is not an "independent" publication. (Let us know if you find one.) Most newspapers and magazines in Britain are owned and controlled by their shareholders and advertisers: you'd be unlikely to read a critique of Rupert Murdoch's business practices in the Sun, or an article on the true environmental and social impact of some burger chain, next to a large and well-paid advert for it, in any paper. It's fairly obvious that these shareholders and advertisers are drawn from the wealthy minority; it would take a while on an average wage to save up enough money to buy a controlling stake in the Guardian. A few publications are owned by their readers, organised in a co-operative – the Morning Star newspaper is the obvious example.

Challenge, as we proclaim on the cover, is the journal of the Young Communist League. (At least we're open about it – the Times doesn't exactly boast of being the voice of the middle-aged corporate league.) Of course, that doesn't mean that the YCL National Committee sits there voting on which articles we include; they've got better things to be doing. And it certainly doesn't mean that we'll ask to see your YCL membership card before we print your article – another point I want to stress is that we welcome pieces from our readers, whether they are communists or not.

But it does mean that Challenge cannot be neutral in the daily battle between exploiters and exploited. We hope this comes across clearly from the articles in this issue. Ghayur Bangash's important piece on the Middle East conflict cuts through the propaganda and euphemism which normally covers the subject, and Costas Pateras takes on the hype surrounding Captain Corelli's Mandolin

to show the reality of fascist occupation and communist-led resistance in 1940s Greece. We also print here Matthew van Rooyen's report from post-apartheid South Africa, and John Lynn of the Workers' Party in Northern Ireland explains their work. This edition coincides with the end of the UN's international Year for a Culture of Peace, and we have commissioned a number of articles on this theme: Gawain Little of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament's youth and student organisation has written a detailed study of the tasks facing the peace movement in the new century, while his colleague Rae Street, Vice-Chair of CND, examines the experience of peace campaigners around the world.

Brian Denny, from the Campaign against Euro-federalism, provides an analysis of the dangers posed by the ongoing militarisation of the European Union. We round off our coverage of this question with an introduction in our regular Socialist Culture section to the work of a Soviet poet who died in a nazi prison during the Second World War. Taken together, that makes this edition an important contribution to the debate within the peace movement, and in society as a whole. But if it's to make this contribution, you have to get involved as well.

Lenin remarked that a political journal should do more than just inform its readers: it should organise them to act. It's in our power to get together and change things – or to sit back, switch on the telly and wait for the newflash announcing the next war. Whether you're a YCL member or not, you should be out there trying to prevent the next war. There's probably a CND branch in your area – if in doubt, contact the YCL and we'll put you in touch – and joining that would be a good way of getting started. But if you read through this edition of Challenge, think, "Oh, the world's a terrible place," and reach for the remote control, you may as well not have read it.

Ed Griffiths.

## Battlefield of ideologies

★ It seems Billy Hague's karate is just part of a martial arts craze sweeping the world's right-wing tough guys. The latest thing in the sports sections of Russian bookshops is a volume entitled *Judo: Its History, Theory and Practice* one of whose three co-authors is none other than President Vladimir Putin.

★ As the US satirist Tom Lehrer remarked to explain why he was giving up after the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Henry Kissinger (catchphrase: "We weren't bombing Cambodia, we were bombing communists in Cambodia"), satire is obsolete. Some years have passed since Leon Rosselson ironically promised that however much Labour's right wing sold out, "Have no fear: we'll sing 'The Red Flag' once a year." Observers of the 2000 Labour Party Conference will notice that this is one more pledge the leadership has 'modernised.'

★ A Western vodka manufacturer's attempt to cash in on the popularity of socialism by using the famous picture of Che Guevara in their adverts was hurriedly abandoned when the photographer (and committed communist) Alberto Korda threatened a legal action for breach of copyright.



## IN THE NEWS...

**Sandinistas make a comeback in Nicaragua**

Nicaragua's left-wing Sandinista Party has won back control of the capital Managua in municipal elections. The Sandinista candidate, Herty Lewites, declared himself the winner with a clear 15% lead over his nearest rival.

President Arnoldo Aleman acknowledged that his Liberal Party had lost Managua, but predicted that it would win 90 of the country's more than 150 councils. This has been the Sandinistas' biggest boost since 1990.

Winning the capital has given the Sandinista opposition an excellent start for next year's presidential elections.

Declaring his victory, Herty Lewites – a 61-year-old businessman – called on his political adversaries to work for the benefit of the capital. Mr Lewites offered two seats on the city council to the private sector, traditionally antagonistic to the Sandinista Party. He also said the defeated candidate in the mayoral race could appoint an auditor to monitor the handling of the city's funds.

Analysts say the Sandinistas want to present themselves with a new face in the run-up to the presidential elections.

Mr Lewites himself was a minister in the former left-wing government under Daniel Ortega who led the Sandinista government after the fall of the former dictator Anastasio Somoza. Although Mr Ortega has lost two presidential elections, he says he wants to run again next year.

Most analysts view the outcome of Sunday's municipal vote as a key litmus test for the political future of the country.

The ruling Liberal party has been badly affected by a string of high-profile scandals and the feeling that its populist leader is

out of touch.

For the Sandinistas the vote is seen as a key opportunity for the party to restate its case for governing the country again.

It is over a decade since they lost power at the ballot-box, 11 years after they led the violent revolution that overthrew the Somoza dynasty.



Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista leader

**Unconvinced by Prescott's prattling**

Railtrack's recent negligence has been condemned by people of all political views, and rightly so. That privatisation has reduced safety to a low priority in the eyes of railway bosses, certainly when compared to profit, was obvious all along; but the tragic events of October 2000 proved critics glaringly right.

Even our Labour government, ordinarily supine when it comes to dealing with the capitalist elite, has been forced to make some criticism of Railtrack. Transport Secretary John Prescott remarked that Railtrack had only been given a licence to operate if it stuck to strict safety rules, and if these rules were violated, the licence would be withdrawn.

Yet the families of the dead have little reason to be reassured by these words. In fact, the same is true of all rail users. In three years there have been three major and fatal rail accidents, a figure which would have been inconceivable in the days of British Rail – is this sticking to strict safety precautions?

It is no coincidence that in 1994, British Rail employed 21,500

people in track maintenance, whereas in 1998, after privatisation, only 15,500 are employed in this. Prescott's prattling is unconvincing. Privatisation is reaping her harvest of death – it is paramount that it is reversed before more lives are lost.

**It's not over yet**

It's a persistent myth that Russian communists are all just a bunch of pensioners nostalgic for the days when the USSR was a great power (and, among other things, when you could live on the state pension).

This carefully-cultivated legend suffered another blow recently when the country's Communist Youth League held its second Congress in Moscow. Although the CYL was only set up recently, the 174 delegates at the Congress were representing a total membership of around 36,000 young people – making the League the only mass political youth organisation in Russia. More and more Russian young people are realising that the capitalist dream which was sold to the country in the late 1980s can only ever come true for a tiny minority: and then only at the price of widespread poverty and the disintegration of the once world-class Soviet healthcare and education systems.

The speakers at the CYL Congress made it clear that one of the organisation's key tasks is to oppose the de-politicisation and fatalism which makes many young people feel that trying to change things for the better is hopeless.

\*Alongside our Russian comrades we congratulate comrade Zhores Ivanovich Alfyorov, a communist member of the Russian parliament, on winning the Nobel Prize for Physics. In an article in Pravda, Zhores Ivanovich pointed out that the prize is a triumph for Soviet science, as the groundwork was all done in the 1960s and 1970s. He also used the attention which the award generated to make a speech to the parliament slamming Russia's ultra-Thatcherite budget for 2001 – the top rate of income tax has been slashed to 13% while millions live in desperate poverty, and the budget allocates more resources to building a new office complex for the deputies than it does to the whole scientific research sector.

**Red November a Stunning Success**

Young Communists and their allies met in force in London on the 18th November for their annual 'Red November' celebrations. From 9:30 a.m. until 5.00 p.m., the vanguard of Britain's working class youth assembled for a series of talks and discussion on relevant topics.

Speakers started with Mary Davis talking on the subjection of women and the nature of the family, followed by Nick Wright on the terrible absence of meaning and substance in 'modern art' and why this form of art is favoured by the capitalist class. Manuel Bueno from Trade Unions Against the Single Currency explained the economic motives of capital behind the Euro, and Leo Dreapir and Brian Denny from the Campaign Against Euro Federalism went on in detail about the latest developments in the creation of a European superstate – superpower, hope its leaders – and the best ways of combating it. After lunch, the issue of National Missile Defence and nuclear proliferation were addressed by Katie Beinart, editor of Now – the Youth CND magazine – and Gawain Little, the Young Communist League's student organiser.

As if this vast array of prestigious speakers were not enough, we finished the day with a look at the history of the struggle for Communism in Britain, given by Robert Griffiths, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Britain, and John Haylett, the Editor of the Morning Star. Heated debate continued for several hours in the nearest pub.



## Selling the Skies

Despite the gruesome warning that rail privatisation has given us of the dangers of leaving transport to capitalists, the Labour government has continued to press on with the privatisation of Air Traffic Control.

37 Labour MPs rebelled over the issue, and many more abstained from the vote, because of the abject lack of concern for the safety of our travelling people which the Blair clique has displayed is too much even for some of his own Party members. Labour whips engaged in base methods of distorting democracy, such as offering those MPs who might wish to vote against Mr Blair's plans holidays on the relevant dates.

The House of Lords has rejected this twice, but has agreed to let it go through this time, on the grounds that it is not an 'issue of conscience' like the bill they insist on rejecting again and again, the lowering of the age of consent for homosexual intercourse to 16. It is interesting to see what the Lords regard as matters of 'conscience' – they can on no grounds allow homosexuals the same rights as heterosexuals, but when it comes to putting their stamp on a bill jeopardising the health and even the lives of the tens and hundreds of thousands of people who use air travel in Great Britain, they are willing to allow it to go unimpeded.

## International Conference Against Depleted Uranium Weapons

Over the weekend of 4/5th November, CADU, (the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium Weapons formed under two years ago) organised an international conference in Manchester Town Hall, with the generous support of Manchester City Council to coincide with the declaration of Manchester as a nuclear weapon free zone city exactly 20 years before. CADU brought together activists from over 13 countries from across the world as well as many from Britain.

The latter were seriously reduced in number because of the extraordinary difficulties of transport – and, of course, the worst floods in living memory. Nonetheless about 200 delegates gathered to discuss a wide range of topics associated with depleted uranium munitions: the health effects after its use, the testing and manufacturing risks; the effects on health and the environment near the test sites; the whole politics of the development and use of the weapons. The audience heard of the work done on the links with life threatening health conditions from Gulf war veterans, medical scientists and scientists working on low level radiation.

They also heard directly from people who lived where munitions had been used (Iraq, Serbia and Albania) and from areas from where the munitions had been tested (the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, Korea). The presentations were balanced between the technical on the dangers of the material, particularly in weapons, and the political. In the political context, speakers addressed the development of DU weapons as an aspect of the domination of states which constantly search for the superior weapon irrespective of the harm done to either innocent civilians or their own military personnel.

Many speakers saw campaigning against the whole cycle of depleted uranium weapons, and civilian uses of DU, as part of the wider struggle for peace and social justice.

The conference looked at the ways forward for banning the production, manufacture, testing and use of the weapons. Workshops produced strategies for working on the law, for the health effects, the environment; scientific work and for the veterans. It is hoped to publish the papers and set in train many of the conference recommendations. The work ahead is considerable, but, the meeting together of so many people from such diverse backgrounds was energising. The campaigns across the world and here in Britain will be strengthened.

## Romanians Regret the Call of Capitalism

Opinion polls have firmly asserted that 60-65% of the Romanian people now regret following the beckoning of capitalism eleven years ago, when a group of military officers led a revolt which ended in the collapse of socialism and the execution of Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife, as was reported in the last issue of 'Challenge' (October/November, 2000.)

One mother of two, who works long hours to earn around £20 a month, remarked "Of course it was better under Communism. Everybody had a job; everybody had a flat. Now I share two rooms with my children and three of my brothers. . . this isn't a life."

A taxi driver affirmed her sentiments: "We lived better under socialism. Everybody could visit the mountains or the seaside once a year. Like many others, my family was very poor after the war and communism gave us a chance to make something of our lives."

## Putin plays on Soviet nostalgia

Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, recently pushed a bill re-instating the Soviet anthem as the national anthem of the Russian Federation.

Some communists have celebrated at this return to the Soviet model. Certainly it shows one encouraging thing – that a return to symbols of the USSR is popular, suggesting widespread recognition of the evils of capitalism which have been unleashed on Russia since the late 1980s. But the actual move is a shrewd play on Russian nostalgia for the Soviet Union which has anti-communist undertones.

Already the red flag has been restored for the Russian military, which now engages in brutal wars like the one in Chechnya, involving horrendous treatment of civilians. The introduction of the Soviet anthem will further this trend – the Russian army will pillage and slaughter while flying the red flag and singing the Soviet anthem. Will this do socialism's image any good?

The re-instatement of the anthem of the USSR – albeit with new words, leaving out such phrases as 'Lenin's Party' – will create the false impression that a loyal citizen of the Soviet Union should be a loyal citizen of Russia, and that essentially the role of the state has not changed. This will undermine any drive for the re-establishment of Socialism, which is currently still strong.

## Education 'reform' blunders on

Widespread criticism has begun to voice itself over the recent educational reforms of the Blair regime, which follow a general trend which is far older than our Labour government.

It is now widely recognised that education is becoming absurdly formal and statistical. Tests taken from increasingly young ages, and of increasing frequency (as is displayed by the new AS and A2 system, which requires pupils to undergo examination at the ages of 17 and 18 rather than just 18) have weakened the capacity of teachers to make their subjects interesting for the pupils.

As there is now much less time before a particular examination, pupils have less time to read around or develop their own interests outside the curriculum. Nationally membership of school orchestras and clubs is falling sharply. Within a subject all attention is concentrated on exactly what the exam requires, which reduces the breadth of learning which used to be available. Emphasis on being an 'all-round' candidate has undermined the ability of pupils to specialise.

In addition, the number of exams being taken each year will have nearly doubled due to the new AS exams, which raises the problem of whether there are enough qualified examiners to cope with the task. *We shall see.*



# Star Wars...a closer look

**GAWAIN LITTLE takes a look at the implications of a U.S. drive for SDI defence systems**

**Nuclear weapons have once again hit the news.** However, unsurprisingly in our "post-Cold War" world, it isn't the peace dividend we were promised by the bourgeois press that is making the headlines. Despite the "collapse of communism", no countries seem to be binning their nuclear arsenals and – surprise, surprise – the United States' National Missile Defence (NMD) has once again raised its ugly head.

NMD has its origins in a review of US strategic requirements ordered by Richard Nixon in 1968. This review recommended a missile system named Safeguard, to "protect US deterrent forces", ie, to protect America's nuclear weapons, not its citizens. This prompted negotiations between the US and USSR, leading to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (revised in 1974), which limits both the US and Russia (the USSR's successor to the treaty) to a single localised missile defence shield, for which all component parts must be on one site with a radius of less than 150km. The treaty also prohibits sea, air, space or mobile land-based components and the transfer or deployment of components on the territory of any other state.

Meanwhile, the Senate approved the deployment of Safeguard and, on 1 October 1975, the system became fully operational, protecting an area of North Dakota where most US nuclear missiles are stored. It lasted one day. On 2 October, the system was switched off because of its excessive cost and because it was unable to protect against ballistic missiles, its one and only purpose.

So funding was reduced to research levels and Safeguard continued to exist only in the collective paranoia of the US military-industrial complex.

That is, until President Ronald Reagan, on the advice of the joint chiefs of staff and with the backing of the then British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, made missile defence one of his priorities. In 1984, the US Defence Department set up the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), or "Star Wars" as it was known, to develop a National Missile Defence system. One year and \$70.7bn later, the US Office of Technology released a report which said:

- 1 the assured survival of the US population is not a realistic goal of the SDI programme;
- 2 the consequences of deploying an NMD system might adversely affect future arms control negotiations and security policy;
- 3 the US should carry out limited SDI funding only.

Again, NMD was dropped as a waste of money with unrealistic objectives. So the latest re-emergence of

NMD (the "Son of Star Wars" programme) should come as no real surprise. The US military-industrial complex, searching desperately for a valid reason for its continuing dominance of both federal funding and world politics, has now decided that so-called "rogue states" (now known as "states of concern") are a serious threat to the US because of the proliferation of long-range ballistic missile technology.

The lunacy of this argument is clear. The states named by the US as potential threats – for example, People's Korea, Iraq and Iran – have nothing to gain and everything to lose by launching a limited missile attack at a country with the nuclear capability of the US.

However, the true capabilities of a successful NMD programme can be seen by investigating the proposed programme a little more closely.

According to the US, an essential part of the NMD programme involves the upgrading of early-warning radar centres in Thule, Greenland and Fylingdales, Britain. Not only would this violate article ix of the ABM treaty, making Denmark and Britain complicit in the breaking of international agreements, but these proposed sites are of no strategic importance for monitoring either the Korean Peninsula or the Middle East. In fact, curiously enough, while being completely useless as part of a defence against "rogue states", they are perfectly placed to detect long-range missile launches from Russia. This is, needless to say, making the Russians very nervous. They have said that, if this system were deployed, Fylingdales in north Yorkshire would become a legitimate target for a Russian nuclear strike should war break out with the US. According to present plans, the system would be effective against only a limited nuclear strike, supporting the claim that it is only for protection against "rogue states"; however, it is easily upgradeable from a thin to a thick shield, which would protect against a full nuclear attack. This would have two immediate effects:

- 1 it would give the US an increased first-strike capability; it would be able to launch a nuclear attack anywhere in the world with no fear of retaliation;
- 2 the obvious course for Russia would be to increase its nuclear arsenal to a level that even an advanced NMD could not protect against, thereby starting a new arms race between Russia and the US.

So what will be the effects of NMD on the rest of the world? This question is far more difficult to answer, because it depends on a variety of factors. Most European countries have come out against NMD, with Britain being conspicuously silent on the issue. The US



needs permission to upgrade the early-warning radar system at Fylingdales and to install a satellite control system in Menwith Hill (also in Yorkshire). However, if the British government refuses the US request, it will jeopardise the "special relationship" between the two countries. On the other hand, if it allows the programme to go ahead, it will need to decide whether to push for extension of the defence shield to Britain, or the development of a similar ABM system for Europe, which would have further repercussions both for world disarmament and for Europe itself, pushing us towards an integrated European defence system and the

militarisation of the EU. Nuclear integration in Europe would make unilateral disarmament impossible for Britain, severely limiting the effectiveness of the British peace movement and other national disarmament campaigns in Europe.

The other major global effect of NMD would be in Asia. At present, China has only limited long-range nuclear capability. If NMD were developed, China would be forced into developing its long-range weapons programme to maintain its status as a world superpower. This would reinforce India's claims that it needs a nuclear deterrent to prevent the threat of an attack from China, which would have a destabilising effect on the region, potentially leading to increased nuclear testing in Pakistan.

India and Pakistan occupy an almost unique position in the nuclear world of being so-called "threshold states" (the only other example of such a state being Israel). While they are not officially nuclear-weapons states, they have both conducted nuclear tests and have nuclear weapons capabilities.

This special position has allowed the British government (which supplies both India and Pakistan with military hardware, including missile delivery systems to India) to use them to block the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. This treaty would prevent any nation signed up to it from conducting nuclear tests. It would, however, have little or no effect on countries, such as Britain, France and the US, that already possess nuclear weapons and have the computer technology to simulate nuclear tests. Because of this, there was an attempt, led by India, but supported by many non-nuclear states, to build into the treaty a series of specific disarmament obligations for nuclear weapons states.

When this failed (due to opposition from Britain and other such states), India refused to sign the treaty. Subsequently, Britain negotiated into the treaty a clause that lists 44 named states which must sign for the treaty to come into effect. This list includes both India and Pakistan. Because of this clause, the chances of the CBTB ever coming into force, without significant disarmament measures from the nuclear weapons states, are virtually zero.

The effects of NMD on this current state of world affairs would be devastating, and must be avoided at all costs. We must pressure the British government to

refuse the US's request as a first step to breaking the special relationship. However, we must not, in doing so, fall unwittingly into the trap of a nuclear Europe, exchanging one imperialist superstate for another.

It must be remembered that unilateral nuclear disarmament by Britain would be the most positive step possible in reducing world tension, and this should be our primary goal.



# Internationalism And Peace Movements

## Rae Street Vice Chair Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

One of the most important of the peace movement strands is the struggle against militarism and weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. This at the beginning of the twentieth century has to be seen in the context of the most powerful and wealthiest nations setting an agenda in foreign policy which ensures that they keep their wealth and their hold over resource, particularly energy resource. As Bob Aldridge, - author of 'First Strike - the Pentagon's Strategy for Nuclear War' and 'Nuclear Empire' 1- says in his introduction to the latter book, "The Pentagon boasts that the sun never sets on its military. That is a deplorable truth. The forces of the world's mightiest superpower stretch from pole to pole, from east to west and west to east. The US administers a nuclear empire which is global in scope. The policing and protection of that empire rests in the US military... this massive military distribution is needed to protect twentieth century colonialism." One of the severest critics and opponents of the Trident nuclear armed submarine programme, Aldridge later said, in commenting on the New World order, 'Increasingly tight security is needed to prevent an underdeveloped country from revolting and to prevent liberation movements from achieving political victories. of the US.'

An extract from his Trident Resisters' Handbook reads: 'It is clear that this doctrine (the 'Reed' panel report published on US post Cold War doctrine in 1992) of benevolent domination is aimed at keeping 'America' number one' so it can exploit the world of cheap labour, natural resources, and the best land in order to sustain the lavish US lifestyle. Even more to the point, this activity would sustain the profiteering behaviour of big business, its directors and shareholders it would continue to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. It would be benevolent as long as America gets its undisputed way.' Eight years later at the Hague environmental summit we can see those words as being as pertinent as ever. So what of the backing of the military?

War has been driven over the centuries by struggles for power and power over land, but no doubt there was always those who profited from war. Even back in the Middle Ages there were no doubt the sword forgers and the bow makers who seized their chances for increasing the family income. But in the latter part of the twentieth century, the profits of the military manufacturers and the proportion of resource expended on weapons has grown to gigantic and barely imaginable scale. The USA stands out way above over nations in spending nearly \$300 billion annually on the military. The incoming President, if it be Bush (not known at the time of writing!), though there is little difference in Gore's policies, is pledged to spend more and more on the military seeing nothing incompatible in that and speaking out on the moral condition of the nation.

To examine the forces behind the rising militarism in the world, let us look at NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. NATO is a military alliance dominated by the USA. It was formed before the Warsaw Pact and instead of disappearing at the end of the 'Cold War', it strove to justify itself and began to expand. Who was pushing expansion? Clearly the US hardliners who wanted military power extending, but they were in close collusion with the arms manufacturers - the Chair of the expansion committee in Washington was a director of the vast US Arms manufacturer, Lockheed Martin. To have new member states of NATO suits the US arms manufacturers down to the ground (or the dollar). NATO works on the principle of 'interoperability', so for new member states - the central European three of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland - it is a case of out with all that ancient rusty Soviet armoury and in with buying modern, mainly US but not overlooking the UK, France, and the other imperialist powers - military hardware.

When NATO held its 50th anniversary celebrations in New York, 12 large US corporations sponsored the 'celebrations' to the tune of \$250,000 each. They included Boeing, Honeywell, Nextel communications, and United Technologies. Why? Simply - they wanted new and lucrative markets. Never mind that in those countries spending on health and social welfare plummeted in the 90's, to be in the 'western club', the governments of those countries needed to spend more on armaments. And so it still is. For aspiring nations, NATO has helpfully worked out MAP Membership Action Plan. A key part of this is that any aspirant nations, for example Bulgaria or Rumania, can show that they have increased their defence spending.

The world had seen how the US would swing into action, with the help of its devoted ally the UK, to protect resource during the Gulf War. During 1999 we were to see how NATO would also be used to not only show which power was the superior military power, but also to protect routes for resource, particularly oil and gas. By the use of the media, donning the dress of the 'saviour of peoples', the NATO knights in shining armour rescuing the oppressed, they were able to build the new role for NATO. They were not war makers, but 'peace keepers', carrying out 'humanitarian' missions and, in the finest phase of all, 'humanitarian bombing'. Being the first large scale intervention 'out-of-area', it would then become accepted by the general public. In fact, rapporteurs to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly went so far as to say that this precedent should lead to a change in international humanitarian law to allow military intervention. Of course what was not said was that the US and its allies would define the humanitarian cause and dictate the rules of the intervention. If the United Nations was not compliant, then it would be bypassed.

It is important too to look at the example of NATO when looking at progress towards nuclear disarmament. NATO has had access to nuclear weapons from its inception; never has it taken a lead in nuclear disarmament. In the Strategic concept published for the 50th anniversary it retained the concept of nuclear deterrence and even went so far as to say that nuclear weapons 'preserve peace'. The Trident nuclear armed submarines are 'integrated' into NATO. The whole Trident nuclear missile system is US in design and manufacture. The current Labour government continued its predecessors' knee bending to the US by not rejecting but taking over the project for 4 Trident submarines to be operational. Their claim to disarmament is that in the Strategic Review they announced that they would reduce the number of warheads on Trident to 48 per submarine. But each Trident warhead is of the order of 100 kilotons of killing power - the bomb at Hiroshima was 15 kilotons. When we are looking at the effect of the global domination of the US, it is very important to understand the range of the Trident subs. Their missiles could go over 4,000 miles. The subs can, and do, go under any of the seas of the world. When there is tension in South Asia, for example, you could expect the Trident subs to be cruising under the South China Sea or under the Indian Ocean. There has been as yet no reduction in the fleet; the US has no fewer than 18 submarines operational. Now there are plans to further develop the Trident nuclear systems.

A fact often forgotten is that the US still has nuclear warheads at NATO bases in Western Europe, including here in Britain at the US base at Lakenheath in Suffolk. Why are there US military bases across the world?

Openly in their glossy brochures the US claim they have dominance of the world on land and sea, but now there is space 'the last frontier'. This is where National Missile Defense (NMD) comes into its own. The US wants to break the ABM Treaty agreed with the former USSR and expand its national missile defence so as to, supposedly, intercept incoming missiles to the US.

This would inevitably lead to nuclear weapons in space. To do this they want to use the US bases in Yorkshire - to expand the radar at Fylingdales and the tracking capabilities at Menwith Hill, both in Yorkshire. The whole project has been analysed as not so much for defence, but for surveillance and on this side of the globe for surveillance of Russia.

The implications for global security are chilling. Nations will no longer accept the policy of the US 'Do as I say, not as I do'. If the US and the nuclear weapon states continue to say that they need nuclear weapons for defence, then other states, as can be seen with India and Pakistan, will develop nuclear weapons capability. The US and their allies, while repeating frequently that they do not want to proliferation of nuclear weapons, themselves are busily proliferating by the back door. That is they 'modernise' and develop their nuclear weapon systems.

This can only be the briefest of sketches of the dangers of the new militarism and nuclear weapons development, but the question arises how can we struggle against these forces of oppression?

Internationally in our work we must focus on militarism and weapons of mass destruction. We must seek to influence public opinion by the clarity of the arguments and by exposing the hypocrisies and the hidden agenda of the dominating governments. We must too look to making links with those struggling in the anti nuclear movements across the world: those in areas where the development of the nuclear industry has brought death and suffering.

In the name of 'security' the indigenous peoples of Australia and Canada, for example, have died from uranium mining; children were born malformed, the 'jelly fish babies' to the women in islands in the Pacific as a consequence of the mainly French nuclear testing; the 'down-winders' who lived near Hanford in the US have died from cancer.

We must strengthen links between campaigners within the nuclear weapon states, the US, France and Israel in particular. Since we won't be hearing too much of any of these comrades much in the mainstream press, most especially those in the US, we must repeat and tell their stories. The Internet gives us wider scope for contact, but we have an uphill struggle with the mainstream press in present times. While there are individual and bold journalists; the major part of the press is controlled by the multinationals. All is in the hands of the publicity machines. NATO's war in the Balkans was conducted by PR. PR work is now an essential part of the military. We must work creatively to combat that.

We must work for peace and social justice through our media, the people's media, not the profit holders' press. We need to work in solidarity, support resisting groups, both nationally and internationally.

But it is in the hands of you the readers. I certainly do not have the answers. Let us open up the debate. We in the campaigning groups would like to hear from you of what we can do, what strategies we need, for building resistance.

Note: 1 'Nuclear Empire' by Robert Aldridge published by New Star Books Vancouver Canada 1989

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web site www.cadu.org.uk  
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# Militarisation of EU

Brian Denny

**MANY** years ago the renowned socialist author and political activist Desmond Greaves warned that European integration would lead to "fascism at home and war abroad."

This warning was dismissed by many at the time as alarmist, yet just twenty years later in 1999 European states, led by Germany's Luftwaffe, led the most criminal and destructive bombing of Yugoslavia since the defeat of the Third Reich in 1945.

German general Klaus Naumann, a NATO commander during these fascistic attacks, said: "German troops will be engaged for the maintenance of the free market and access, without hindrance, to the raw materials of the entire world."

Just before the bombing and soon after the launch of the single currency, Germany presented an action plan to EU states in the 10 nation Western European Union military alliance which insisted "Europe acquire its own defence capacity."

The document claimed "there is no point in building monetary union with the euro if Europe is incapable of guaranteeing peace, security and freedom for its citizens."

This set in motion the development of the common foreign and security policy enshrined in the Amsterdam Treaty. Article J4 of the treaty committed the EU to "the progressive framing of a common defence policy."

An EU "rapid-reaction force" of 60,000 troops is due to be created by 2003. There now exists a highly secretive EU Political and Security Committee, an EU Military Committee and EU arms industries to create a military-industrial complex to serve the EU and its lucrative arms trade.

At a recent meeting of EU defence ministers, French minister Alain Richard also demanded countries wishing to join the bloc, including Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Cyprus, Malta, Bulgaria, Romania and the Baltic states, must supply "substantial" amounts of troops or weaponry to the force.

Britain had reversed its official opposition to building a European army at a Franco-British summit back in December 1998 at St Malo in preparation for this with no consultation or support from the population whatsoever.

British prime minister Tony Blair backed French plans for the creation of an EU military identity, claiming that the EU "must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces in order for Europe to deal with future Kosovo's on our own."

Under these plans the WEU is to be folded into the EU to become Brussels armed wing to defend its economic and political interests. Former EU commission president Jacques Delors said that such a force was required to fight the "resource wars of the 21st century" – i.e. the battles for control of oil, water and other raw materials.

NATO's illegal attack on Yugoslavia in March 1999 massively accelerated the militarisation of the EU and extended the eurozone into the Balkans. Since the war, the German mark, effectively the euro, has been imposed on Kosovo and Montenegro, despite the fact that they remain Yugoslavian territory.

This has all been done despite the fact that four member states, Austria, Finland, Sweden and Ireland, are supposed to be "neutral." A stunning example of this arrogance was displayed by EU Commission President Romano Prodi when he told the "Independent" newspaper in February: "When I was talking about a European army, I was not joking. If you don't want to call it a European Army, don't call it a European army," he said. "You can call it 'Margaret', you can call it 'Mary-Anne', you can find any

name; but it is a joint effort for peacekeeping missions – the first time you have a joint, not bilateral, effort at European level."

Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt told the Liberal Democrat conference that after imposing EMU, Brussels' next task was to build "a truly common foreign and defence policy and a common approach of internal, migration and justice issues."

EU powers are using the bloc to re-launch their own empires and spheres of influences. For instance Spain clearly views Latin America as its own "backyard" and has paid billions into the United States so-called "Plan Colombia" to defeat left wing FARC rebels and privatise the Colombian economy. Britain has already launched military campaigns to recolonise parts of Africa, such as in Sierra Leone to control the diamond industry, while Berlin has launched a new "Drang nach Osten" – drive to the east.

German capital knows that without an "empire" in the east it cannot dominate Europe as well as withstand competition from the US and Japan so revanchism and the idea of a "German central Europe", like the one built by the Nazis, is an imperative.

In 1999 German Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping declared that a new 25,000 strong euro corps, made up of Polish, Danish and German troops, inaugurated in the Polish city of Szczecin would help a "new Europe" expand eastwards.

"It should not serve isolation but integration, Europe cannot end at the eastern border of Poland," he said.

Former German defence minister Volker Rühe has also declared that "war has once more become a method of politics."

In the light of these serious developments it is staggering that there remains support within the so-called left in Britain and in Europe for EU empire-building and the drive to war and EU mass privatisation policies.

Lenin was faced with calls for a United States of Europe way back in 1915. He famously declared that a United States of Europe was "impossible or reactionary." He did not mean that big capital would be unable to create such an entity. It is clear that the political will of corporate capital is a very powerful force. However, Lenin was very clear about the motives behind it which remain true today: "A United States of Europe is possible as an agreement between the European capitalists. . . but to what end? Only for the purpose of suppressing socialism in Europe" and to "jointly protect colonial booty against Japan and the US."

Democrats and socialists therefore raise the banner of internationalism – the need for solidarity and equal rights between nations and to defend the right to self-determination free from outside interference. The EU/US military alliance NATO has already declared that it no longer recognises the UN charter protecting such rights.

The European Union is a modern form of imperialism which will inevitably lead to dictatorship and war. The battle is on between those who back the financial feudalism of the EU and those who stand for national self-determination and democracy. Alliances must be built across all social classes to defend democracy against EU imperialism and only unity in action can alert people to these very real dangers.

## Suggested reading

"New Europe, New Century, Old Imperialism" Leo Drapier £1.50

"Politics of the Euro, Economics of the Madhouse" Brian Denny £1

Available from Campaign Against Euro Federalism

57 Green Lane, Merseyside CH45 8JQ



# The Voice of a Will of Steel

## Musa Jelil's *Moabit Notebooks*



**When Soviet soldiers entered Berlin's notorious Moabit prison in 1945,** they happened upon a couple of ragged notebooks filled with writing in Tatar (a Turkic minority language of the then USSR). A note was attached in Russian: "I, the famous poet Musa Jelil, have been locked up in the Moabit prison and accused of political crimes. I will probably soon be shot. If any Russian ever sees this note, please inform my fellow writers in Moscow." There was another note in the poet's native language: "To my friend who can read Tatar! This was written by the Tatar poet Musa Jelil. . . in 1942 he was captured on the front. He experienced all horrors and went through forty deaths, before being brought to Berlin. Here he was accused of participating in the underground organisation and spreading Soviet propaganda. He will be sentenced to death. He will be executed. But he has 115 poems he has written in captivity. . . If you ever find this notebook, copy them out carefully and accurately and after the war send them to Kazan [capital of the then Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic] to be published as the work of a deceased poet of the Tatar people. Musa Jelil, December 1943."

Jelil had indeed been shot in 1944. But, miraculously, most of his prison poems had survived – perhaps because none of his Nazi guards could understand Tatar. They were published under the title *Moabit Notebooks*, both in Tatar and in Russian translation. The *Notebooks* came to be counted among the great works of modern Tatar literature, not only for the circumstances of their composition but also for Jelil's skilful combination of elements from classical Tatar poetry, socialist realism, European as well as Oriental literature, and folklore. In 1956 the Praesidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet posthumously awarded Jelil the title Hero of the Soviet Union, and the following year the *Moabit Notebooks* received a Lenin Prize – making Jelil the only writer in Soviet history to have been given both these honours.

### 'In Germany'

And this is the land of Karl Marx? This was the home of stormy Schiller,  
Where the fascist drove me in a convoy, And said I was a slave?  
Don't the walls shudder at the Red Front? What about the Spartacists?  
You struck me, German boy, And struck me again. . . Why?  
In the last home of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, Torture won't open the mouth  
Of one who has loved free-thinking Heine, And his bold, soaring ideas.  
Answer someone who was thrilled by Goethe: Is this how I knew you?  
Why do the breaking waves of Beethoven's symphonies,  
Not shake the marble hall?  
Here black dust blocks out the sun, But I recognised the underground door,  
The locked cellar, the steps of the guards: It's where Thälmann suffered.  
Where I am now.  
Am I, like Rosa and Karl, To be killed by this pack of hounds?  
To be taken away, and smashed, And thrown off a bridge, like them?  
Who's Zetkin's son? Who's Thälmann's friend? Are they among you?  
Hear the voice of a will of steel: Open our prisons!  
Come with a song. Come exactly, As you did in 1919: With the cry of "Red  
Front!", in columns, marching, Clenched fists held to the sky!  
Show Germany the sun! Let the sunlight in on Germany!  
Let Thälmann speak from the tribune!  
Give Marx and Heine back to their homeland!  
Who's Zetkin's son? Who's Thälmann's friend? Are they among you?  
Hear the voice of the truth: Open our prisons!

19 December 1943.

### After my sickness

I'm well again. My exhausted mind  
Is cleansed of the oppressive darkness.  
My forehead is damp, as if with the dew  
Of the blossoming hour of dawn.  
I can see again how much light there is,  
I can hear the living breath of happiness.  
I'm glad to be alive, I feel these wonders  
As if I'd only just arrived in the world.  
And in a miraculous half-sleep I see  
Something of the radiance of youth, -  
The sick-nurse leans over me,  
And the touch of her hands seems gentle.

October 1943.

### To my executioner

I shan't bend the knee to you, hangman,  
Though I am a slave in your jail.  
When the time comes I'll die.  
But know this: I'll die standing upright  
Until you chop me down.  
Alas, that in battle I only annihilated  
A hundred, not a thousand, like you:  
If I return I will beg my country,  
On my knees, to forgive me that.

November 1943.

### NAMES KEY:

Schiller, Johann Friedrich (1759-1805); Heine, Heinrich (1797-1856); Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von (1749-1832); German writers.  
Liebknecht, Karl (1871-1919); Luxemburg, Rosa (1871-1919): leaders of the German communist (Spartacist) movement, both murdered.  
Zetkin, Clara (1857-1933): leading German communist.  
Beethoven, Ludwig van (1770-1827): German composer.  
Thälmann, Ernst (1886-1944): German communist leader from 1925, in the Moabit prison from 1933, then transferred to Buchenwald and shot.

# LETTERS

WE WELCOME LETTERS TO CHALLENGE. PLEASE SEND THEM TO CHALLENGE,  
UNIT 11, CAPE HOUSE, 787 COMMERCIAL ROAD, LONDON E14 7HG.



Y&L LETTERS

Dear Comrade,

I was glad to see plenty of material about the 'third world' countries in Challenge 1, but could we have a bit more about the existing socialist countries? Millions of people still live in socialist societies, and we can learn a lot from their experiences.

MARY HILL - GLASGOW

Dear Comrade,

Last issue you displayed my letter recommending changes in the Young Communist - and quite frankly you couldn't have done better! Challenge is a highly impressive magazine in all respects! Keep it up!

ROB JONES PLYMOUTH

Dear Comrade,

I was interested by your article about a 'socialist soul' (Challenge 1). The issue you're discussing is really that of alienation: working for a wage alienates the worker from the products of her labour, and hence from the labour process itself - which should be a creative experience. The result is an atomised society in which people find it difficult to relate to themselves and to one another, and it can only be overcome by returning the product of labour to the workers themselves and abolishing the wage system. Perhaps we could have some more articles on this question in Challenge?

J MACKIE - SWANSEA

Dear Comrades,

It was refreshing to see material on the environment taking prime position in issue 1 of Challenge. Nowhere is the simple expression of capitalist greed so well displayed as in the treatment of our own planet, as expressed beautifully in Brecht's poem 'Last Farewell' which you printed in that issue. The issue of oil shows how brazenly the capitalist class are prepared to hurtle us headlong into chaos and misery for short term gains in profits. The role of youth in combating this must be significant, for the older people are not going to see the day when oil runs out, but we are.

ALICE TAILOR DEVON

Dear Comrade,

I was disappointed to read in Challenge 1 a letter claiming that Robin Hood was a socialist. If one is true to the facts, he was merely bitter about having his castle stolen and is trying to gain sympathy for his cause by stealing money and giving it to the poor, who were being taxed too highly. He was also a feudal lord who believed the cause of the suffering to be that the true King sat not upon the throne, but actually the taxes were ordered by Richard I from abroad to pay for his crusade, and later for his ransom. If one wishes to search the distant past for 'socialists', then why not choose Chinese Emperor Huang Ti (reigned 220-210 B.C.) who compulsorily purchased huge amounts of land from the landlord class and re-distributed it amongst the peasantry?

ROY PORTLEY INVERNESS

Dear Comrade,

I was displeased by the article 'National Culture and the European Union' in issue 1 of 'Challenge'. This stressed Danish culture and appeared to me excessively nationalistic. History is the struggle between classes, not between nations, as Churchill claimed. Socialism will erode narrow petit bourgeois national consciousness, and lead to the growth of a planned 'world economy', as Emile Mann wrote many years ago now in his splendid book Introduction to Marxism.

CHRISTINE CHARLES MANCHESTER

Dear Comrade,

The article entitled 'Bursting the Boundaries of the World' presented an incomplete picture of the Spanish Civil War. As Western countries focus on the malign influence of Stalinism, this piece focuses on the heroism of the communists who went there to fight. It is true that they were helped by aid from the Soviet Union, but it is also true that sectarian tactics on Stalin's orders helped to divide the republican forces and make victory less likely.

ROBIN SAWSTER PETERSBOROUGH

Dear Comrade,

I was delighted to read in issue 1's In the News section a look at family values and why it is dangerous to see them promulgated in schools. I believe that it is too early to advocate the disintegration of the family, because in a capitalist society the institution is often beneficial to those who are in it, but I am one of those who sees that a communist revolution must mean the end of 'all existing conditions' socially, in the long term. This issue is often clouded over or viewed with embarrassment, but it should not be.

JOANNE DANIELS LONDON



## The crisis in the peace process over decommissioning and the draft programme for government agreed by all parties in the Executive show that sectarian politics are unable to meet the needs of young workers, writes JOHN LYNN of Workers' Party Youth (Ireland)

**This article is being written during yet another crisis that may lead to the fall of the Good Friday Agreement.** Workers' Party Youth (WPY) is strongly in favour of the agreement, and the Workers' Party's poster of two hands touching underneath the word "Yes" became the most identifiable symbol of the Yes campaign, both at home and abroad. WPY has been promoting the programme of peace, work, democracy and class politics for more than 25 years, and the agreement delivered a form of peace and democratic devolved government in Northern Ireland. Added to this was the promise of a Bill of Rights, another long-standing aim of WPY. Furthermore, it has been our analysis that the establishment of democratic devolved government in Northern Ireland would expose the reactionary nature of both unionism and nationalism in Northern Ireland, thus providing space for the development of class politics. For these reasons, we support the Good Friday Agreement.

However, it was clear at its inception that the agreement contains serious flaws. These include not only the ambiguity over decommissioning, but, more fundamentally, the underlying rationale of the political institutions established by the agreement. This is the two communities theory, the belief that within Northern Ireland there is not one community that has been divided by sectarianism, but two separate hostile communities with their own traditions, even their own languages. Furthermore, this theory has it that the role of politics should not be to unite the people, but to ensure that these two homogenous groups continue to oppose each other only by non-violent means. Within the Northern Ireland Assembly, those who declare themselves as neither nationalist nor unionist are disenfranchised, because important measures must receive the support of the majority of each "community", and the votes of others are not taken into account on these issues.

This system will perpetuate, not address, the sectarian division that makes Northern Ireland an apartheid-like society: 75 per cent of people in Belfast live in areas where 95 per cent of the people are of the same religion. More than 80 per cent of the vote goes to the four biggest parties, who define themselves as the more or less militant representatives of one religion or the other. The census literally requires you to state whether you are a Protestant atheist or a Catholic atheist. Less than 10 per cent of children go to integrated schools. These are the consequences of nearly 30 years of violence and the "two communities" theory. Even the Bill of Rights might give rights to the two communities, rather than to the individual citizen within society.

At the root of many of the problems of the Good Friday Agreement is that politicians must be seen to be standing up for "their" communities. If unionists are to win votes, they must prevent nationalists making gains. The same is true of nationalists – they must be seen to be tough on unionists or they will lose electoral support to those who are. Therefore, once a party declares that it represents one religion, it is always driven to oppose the other. Here we see the reason for the intransigence of moderate unionists over decommissioning and moderate nationalists over the name of the reformed Police Service of Northern Ireland.

If class politics are to flourish in Northern Ireland, the insidious ideology of two communities must be broken and replaced with the concept of active citizenship, of each and every person playing his or her role in improving the entire community. Sectarianism in post-agreement Northern Ireland is not just unwanted Orange marches or the burning of churches. The very act of defining one's politics by religion, or aiming to represent one religion in Northern Ireland, is a sectarian act in the sense that it refutes the idea that its citizens are all equally part of the same people. This is a reactionary position. The core goal for all progressives in Ireland must be working-class unity, not strengthening all-class alliances.

Workers' Party Youth has long believed that the establishment of local government in Northern Ireland would expose the gap between the major parties' socialist rhetoric and their conservative reality.

Unable to hide behind Westminster, the actions of local politicians in power and the recently published draft programme for government confirms this. Since the introduction of the Executive, we have seen the social-democratic Labour Party Minister for Higher Education break an electoral promise to scrap tuition fees, the Sinn Féin Minister for Education condemn teachers' unions for opposing yet more bureaucracy, the Ulster Unionist Party Trade and Enterprise Minister surrendering to the multinationals instead of initiating job creation schemes, and the Democratic Ulster Party seeking private finance initiative funds to improve transport. What's worse is that all these parties have just agreed an agenda that is, at best, mildly social democratic.

Northern Ireland has the third youngest population of all regions of the European Union. What do nationalist and unionist politicians offer working-class youth? More of the same sectarian division, more of the same educational oligarchy, more of the same Blairite talk of crackdowns on benefit fraud and hard choices, as well as a promise that our "transnational partners" will be able to test "innovative ways" of exploiting them.

Education, at all levels, is a key issue for the future of Northern Ireland. Education is divided along sectarian lines; the 11-plus is still in place; tuition fees exist. What are the nationalists and unionists doing to address these issues? To his credit, the Minister for Education has announced funding for several integrated schools. However, this goes nowhere near far enough. There are no plans for funds for additional integrated schools in the next few years, and even the integrated schools teach religion. Workers' Party Youth stands for a secular education system. The Executive parties, on the other hand, say they support integrated education, but chant the Tory mantra of parental choice to justify their support for the status quo and their failure to genuinely promote non-religious education. The 11-plus is under review. It should have been immediately abolished. It is likely to be replaced by selection at a different age to protect the grammar schools that perpetuate the bourgeoisie's educational privilege. On tuition fees, we might not even get the Cubie Compromise.<sup>1</sup> On the economy, we read in the Executive's programme of how it is too dependent on the state, of how the only answer is to make ourselves more competitive, to throw ourselves at the feet of the multinational corporations – then any prosperity we do get "may not initially benefit all equally". We read nothing of the ability of the state to create jobs and to improve the quality of life for all its citizens.

Workers' Party Youth believes that, despite all the problems with the Good Friday Agreement, it is imperative that it survives – it is better than terrorism. Should the institutions collapse, it is likely that they will return shortly. However, the flaws in the institutions will remain, as will the sectarianism that feeds nationalism and unionism. And we now know the agenda of nationalism and unionism in government. It is a right-wing programme offering no prospect of real change in young workers in front of international capital, of bending our education system and economy to its needs. And here lies the real possibility of the Good Friday Agreement for achieving real change in Ireland. When people see that under orange and green resides a Tory, then they will look for an alternative. *Marxism* is that alternative.<sup>2</sup>

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The Cubie Compromise, gained by campaigners in Scotland, states that students pay a total of £2,000 for a university course, which they may pay after graduation, rather than the £1,050 a year paid by students in the rest of the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> Workers' Party Youth, a member organisation of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), is an all-Ireland organisation of class conscious youth dedicated to the establishment of a democratic, secular, Socialist Republic. Our theory and practice are based on the revolutionary, internationalist principles of Wolfe Tone, Marx, Engels, Connolly and Lenin. We believe that for socialism to be established in Ireland, pan-class Protestant and Catholic sectarianism must be defeated by the unity of the entire working class. Our core principles are those of true revolutionary republicans since the time of Wolfe Tone – to build "the unity of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter" to establish an Irish Republic based on the "men of no property."

# Palestine will be free

Ghayur Bangash

Palestine is in the throes of a second intifada [uprising]. If we are to believe the bourgeois press, it arrived like a bolt from the blue. However, even a cursory glance at the mainstream Israeli press in the weeks running up to and immediately following the Camp David 'peace summit' is enough to demonstrate that this is nothing but a fiction.

This has been coming for many months. It is a myth that the cause of the present insurrection was the visit of Ariel Sharon to the Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary or Temple Mount). Sharon is certainly widely unpopular. He was involved in Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (and the subsequent massacres of Palestinian refugees) and has helped finance the establishment of "settlements" on the West Bank and Gaza, which make up occupied Palestine. And it is true that Sharon's visit was the spark that ignited the powder keg that Palestine had become. However, the present uprising is the result of Israel's persistent colonialist attitude towards Palestine and its people.

So what do the Israelis make of the situation, and what have the bourgeois press in the West to say on the matter? In the main, they have adopted the stance of the Israeli government. Broadly speaking, this is as follows: the present disturbances were started the day before Sharon's visit with a roadside bomb in Gaza that killed an Israeli soldier. The Palestinian leadership, it is claimed, is now orchestrating its people in their confrontations with Israeli security forces, cynically sending children to their deaths in order to win international sympathy for their cause; and the barbaric nature of the Palestinians has apparently been demonstrated by the lynching of Israeli 'reservists' who strayed into Palestinian territory. The Palestinian president, Yasser Arafat, has allegedly demonstrated that he is unwilling to pursue the path of peace with Israel, and has sought to escalate the trouble by 'internationalising' the problem. It is also claimed that the summit of Arab leaders has unduly added to the tension by indulging in 'a language of threats'. Where the capitalist press has strayed from this assessment, it has more or less adopted an attitude of apparent even-

handedness, seeking to add an air of artificial mutuality to the conflict.

Events in Palestine must be placed within their correct historical context to be properly understood. In 1967, Israel was responsible for a war between itself and its Arab neighbours, which resulted in the annexation and subsequent occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights. These actions were condemned by the Security Council of the United Nations, which denounced the acquisition of territory by armed force.

However, Israel then embarked upon a policy of establishing colonial settlements with the intention of changing irrevocably the demographics of what it misleadingly calls Judaea and Samaria, so that eventually there could be no arguing that the areas should come under Israeli sovereignty.

Despite the lip-service paid to the peace process by the Israeli Labour government led by Ehud Barak, settlement activity has reportedly tripled during his period in office. It is clear that many Israelis have yet to adopt a mindset that is willing to break with colonialist policies.

The intolerant, antagonistic attitude of many Israelis towards Palestinians and other Arab peoples was voiced by Barak himself in a recent interview with CNN, in which he said that the Israelis could expect nothing but violence from their neighbours because they were not living next to 'civilised countries' such as the United States (!).

Israel shows many of the features of an apartheid state; indeed, there was even high-handed military co-operation between it and South Africa when the latter was ruled by de Klerk's National Party. For those 'citizens' who are not Jewish (Druze, Bedouin, Palestinian - basically any Arabs) and even for some who are (for example, the Ethiopian Falash-Mura, the Sephardim and the Mizrahim), there is discrimination in front of the law, as well as widespread unofficial discrimination.

It is in such a context that the recent uprising must be placed. It is then unsurprising that so-called Israeli Arabs rose up with their brothers in the West Bank and Gaza. The attitudes of Western liberals, including our Blairite government, are shameful. On the one hand, they harp on about the necessity of maintaining a peace process and ensuring that 'Bill Clinton's eight years of hard work' are not jeopardised. On the other hand, they maintain a stony silence over the slaughter of Palestinians and pay mere lip-service to the notion of a free Palestine.

The Palestinian people deserve support in their ongoing struggle for liberation. They have sent the world a resounding message of defiance in the face of overwhelming adversity. This cry must not go unheeded. Their land has been stolen from them; they have lived with occupation; their friends and relatives have been murdered on the streets.

Israel, with its military superiority, may well crush the current intifada. However, ten years down the line, if Palestine is still denied independence, the streets of Gaza and the West Bank will erupt in violence once more.





# Contradictions

Matthew van Rooyen

**South Africa is truly a country of contradictions.** In the larger towns and sea-side resorts, huge houses tower into the sky, while mile upon mile of dilapidated shacks skirt the outer edges and cling on to the roads and railways.

At the parliament in Cape Town the South African Communist Party rules in a coalition with the ANC, but in the countryside you still see white farmers driving their pick-up trucks, the dog in the cab with him, and his black labourer on the back.

Visitors would, however, be very wrong to think that change has not been immense, as those within the Labour Movement know.

We could point out that parties which only a few years ago were illegal now hold power, whilst the more far-reaching process of "Black Empowerment" is well under way especially within the workforce, with many companies setting themselves targets for percentages of "non-white" workers within their upper levels. A system that was once, (and to an extent still remains), top-heavy with the white elite, is now being changed for the better.

This process does not only apply to the workplace, but also prevails at universities, and the wrongs in terms of education committed by the previous regime are busy being righted. The days are gone when an underprivileged majority had to settle for virtually no education.

What we can tell those who believe that nothing has changed, is that a whole people who were invisible, are becoming the country's future at all levels.

Recently, I was in South Africa and settled into life there. During my visit I was lucky enough to have a short meeting with Govan Mbeki. The man who brought us together was a courageous founder of one of the few liberal papers, which dared to speak out against the National Party, John Sutherland.

Govan Mbeki, is the President's father, and recently celebrated his 90th birthday. Mbeki spent 23 years on Robben Island, along with Mandela, and was only released in November 1987.

He was leader of the Eastern Cape African National Congress, and is a member of the SACP, belonging to the older generation of fighters, whose children and grandchildren will carry the country forward.

Mbeki spoke about a wide range of topics during the 30 minutes I was with him. One subject that appeared to be close to his heart was a place called Lovedale Training College. This was a teacher training college for "non-whites", and was an attempt to create good black teachers. They were, of course expected to work within the system and not cause any problems for the white elite. But, they followed their consciences and this led them into conflict with the status quo at times.

This was obviously contrary to what the National Party wanted, and attempts were made to subdue the college. Mbeki said that this was the best thing the Apartheid government ever did, because it simply strengthened the resolve of these teachers, resolve which was passed on to their pupils in turn.

Mbeki's grandson lives in England, and he mentioned how he wishes that he would come back to South Africa, he also asked me why I want to live in Europe. Europe, he said, was an old place, whereas South Africa was a young country. I couldn't help but agree about the vitality that greets you in this very special country.

Of course the conversation turned to much sadder topics, as often happens in South Africa. Steve Biko was mentioned, and Mbeki spoke with anger that such a thing was ever allowed to occur - I am sure that most people will remember the murder of Steve Biko while being transported to prison, and the arrogant lack of any guilt or blame that was attached to his murderers and those who covered up the circumstances of his death. It was this event, perhaps more than any others that brought home to ordinary, decent white South Africans just what kind of system they were living in.

Throughout the meeting you got the feeling of an incredibly strong personality, Mbeki is tall by Xhosa<sup>1</sup> standards - you would never know that he was 90, as during the meeting he spoke about going to the gym early in the morning. Most noticeable was his air of optimism, which filled even the saddest parts of our conversation.

Unfortunately just before I returned, we heard news that he had been taken ill, with a heart complaint, but I understand that he has since made a good recovery.

South Africa isn't a new country to me, but every time I go it has a different atmosphere. There is a sense of goodwill, and the wish to help others, that makes life there pleasant. The colossal obstacles in the ruling alliance's path are of great concern. On street corners the unemployed wait to pick up casual labour. Govan Mbeki during our meeting highlighted unemployment as a huge problem, especially for those coming straight from school. Tackling youth unemployment is crucial to South Africa's future.

The townships remain impoverished, but real movements forward have begun, especially in the SACP's<sup>2</sup> attempts to get amenities to the townships for free, and steps have been taken to rebuilding the shacks. The formal townships are improving, though electricity, running water etc., slow in coming. It is in the sprawling informal shanty towns that have spread near the towns, and their possible source of labour that are the worst. With poverty comes the usual array of illnesses, notably TB. The real threat now is HIV/AIDS, which is a menacing mountain on its own. As with many countries, privatisation has been forced here, in return for World Bank and IMF loans which are desperately needed, something which the SACP opposes.

But now the people of South Africa have a future, and as Govan Mbeki pointed out, a radical past to be proud of. New challenges, and problems now lie ahead.

Long live the National Democratic Revolution!

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Xhosa are a cluster of tribes living in Southern Africa and comprise one of the main ethnic groups in South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> SACP - South African Communist Party.

# Re-writing history - COSTAS PATERAS looks at the terrible distortions of the Communist role in the liberation of Greece from the Nazis in the book *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*.

Costas Pateras

**At the time of writing**, on the small Greek island of Cephalonia, a film is in production that seems set to be one of the box-office sensations of 2001. It is an adaptation of Louis de Bernières's novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* directed by John Madden (dubbed the rising star of British cinema), and stars Nicholas Cage and John Hurt. De Bernières's novel of the same title was one of the most successful publications of the 1990s, selling 1.5 million copies. However, despite the benefits to the local economy, the hype surrounding the film has infuriated many Greeks, for there is a sinister political subtext to this story.

Ostensibly, the central feature of the plot is the romance that develops between an Italian captain and a Greek girl in Cephalonia during the Nazi occupation. However, de Bernières launches a despicable attack on Greece's wartime anti-fascist movement, portraying the partisans as inhuman sadists in a terrifying barrage of misinformation and half-truths that completely distorts a period of history that the Greek working class are rightly proud of.

De Bernières makes two main charges against ELAS, the nationwide resistance movement that the Greek Communist Party and its allies created. The first accusation is that the partisans were lazy, parasitic and did nothing in the fight against the Nazis. In fact, by the time the German army withdrew 80 per cent of the countryside was in ELAS's hands and, according to the Germans' own figures, in 1943 the partisans killed 8,000 German soldiers. EDES, the right-wing splinter group from the resistance of which de Bernières approves, was motivated only by the desire for British gold and, in reality, confined its activity to a small part of western Greece and often collaborated with the Germans. So much for their "resistance". A British intelligence agent once said of their commander Napoleon Zervas that "as an organiser, his value is NIL", and likened him to a corrupt company director. This contrasts starkly to the thousands of ELAS fighters and their supporters who were murdered by the Nazis. Maybe de Bernières's sense of northern European superiority is offended because ELAS maintained a principled independence of the British.

The attitude of the partisans to British attempts to control the resistance was best summed up by Aris Velouchiotis, the leading communist in the resistance: "I made it clear to them, if these sovereigns meant that we were obliged to the British, I didn't want them, but would only accept them as the gift of one ally to another. We are poor and we give our blood; you are rich and you give your gold."

The role of the Greek CP in forming and leading ELAS is a shining example to the international communist movement. For it was they who, on 10 October 1941, founded EAM, the political wing of ELAS, and gave the movement political and practical leadership, uniting communists and non-communists in a non-sectarian manner against the Nazis. They thus formed a broad anti-fascist alliance that included 50,000 ELAS fighters and around a million members of the political wing of the resistance EAM.

The second slur on the resistance made by de Bernières is that they brutalised the Greek villagers, robbing, murdering and raping their way through Greece. There were, in fact, two instances of rape by members of the resistance, but the culprits were executed. Indeed, thousands of women fought alongside men in ELAS. Far from being at odds with the peasantry, ELAS was extremely popular. This is illustrated by German attempts to drive a wedge between the two by terrorising villages that supported ELAS: 70,000 civilians were butchered by the Wehrmacht during their anti-guerrilla operations, the most famous of which took place at Kalvryta on the 20 October 1943 - 696 men, women and children were shot in cold blood by German soldiers. De Bernières neglects to illustrate the brutal nature of the German occupation of mainland Greece, and portrays the Italian army - which was responsible for genocide in Libya and Ethiopia - as harmless rogues. In his excellent book *Inside Hitler's Greece*, Mark Mazower describes how ELAS activists saved the lives of thousands of Athenian Jews by sheltering them from the SS and spiriting them into the mountains. The Jews of Thessalonica were not so lucky: all 43,000 perished in the death camps. It is no coincidence that, at the time of the deportations, ELAS was in a nascent state. De Bernières does not see fit to mention this, nor that the communists and their allies were the first to introduce participatory democracy to the countryside through the formation of village councils

(this included the political emancipation of women). Support for the communists was so strong in the villages that, during the civil war (1946-49), the US General James Van Fleet advised the Greek army to remove thousands of Greeks from their homes in the countryside in order to isolate the partisans by removing their support base.

De Bernières remains silent on the "White Terror", the attacks made by the British and their lackeys on unarmed demonstrators in "liberated" Athens on the 3 December 1944, and their subsequent attacks on ELAS fighters. The "White Terror", which was launched against the partisans by the British- and US-backed government, was carried out by security battalions set up to fight ELAS by the pro-fascist wartime government of Greece. According to official Greek government records, between November 1944 and March 1946, 84,931 partisans were interned, 31,632 tortured, 6,671 wounded and 1,289 murdered. Their crime was opposing the United States as well as the Nazis.

Before the liberation in March 1944, the British sent 20,000 soldiers of the exiled Greek army to concentration camps in Libya for having left-leaning sympathies. In this context, the taking of hostages and the armed insurrection in 1946 by the Greek CP can be seen only as desperate defensive measures. For they had attempted to form a provisional national government with the right in December 1944 and had announced that they would not, at that juncture, launch a revolution, but aid the postwar rebuilding programme. Little did they know that the British and their Greek clients had been planning since 1943 to crush the Greek left - a policy that was ruthlessly carried out. It is a stain on the record of the British Labour Party that the Attlee government was an accomplice to this atrocity.

Thousands of Greek anti-fascist fighters spent the 1950s and 1960s in prison or in exile while the Nazi collaborators waxed fat.

It would be wrong to suggest that de Bernières's primary aim was to defame the communists and their allies. His main motive, like that of all capitalists, is profit. But ideologically, he is indeed a true son of the ruling class, and his political opinions reflect this. This explains his openly admitted anti-communism (see the prefaces to early editions of the book and his letter to the *Morning Star* in August 1999, responding to Andrew Murray's excellent denunciation of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*). The ruling class is an internationalist class that rushes to each other's support in the face of working-class resistance. This explains the fact that de Bernières's principal historical source is Alexander Rallis. The Rallis family has been one of the wealthiest in Greece for centuries, and Alexander's grandfather was Ioannis Rallis, the quisling prime minister of Greece under Nazi domination.

It is important to expose the anti-socialist propaganda that exists in our culture. As Hugh Macdiarmid, the great communist Scottish poet, said: "All art that is not pure propaganda is impure propaganda." For, as Marx rightly pointed out in *The German Ideology*, the ruling economic and political class is the dominant intellectual one. Their art reflects, directly or indirectly, their class perspective. Many people who know nothing of Greek history will go away from this book with a negative, prejudiced opinion of Greek communists in particular and communists in general. Therefore, the battle of ideas is crucial to our movement, as the ruthlessness and dishonesty of the class enemy must be confronted and exposed.

The *Morning Star* proved its importance over this issue. Initially, it was a lone voice, but recent articles in the *Guardian* illustrate that the message is getting across. The film-makers have disowned the politics of the novel due to the protests of the Greek people and the growing recognition in Britain of the bubble of distorted "history" on which de Bernières's writing rests. This is a real victory for the socialist cause, and a small tribute to the tens of thousands of Greek men and women who gave their lives opposing fascism and fighting for socialism.

## Further reading:

Greek Myth 1+2, Seamus Milne, *Guardian*, 29 July 2000

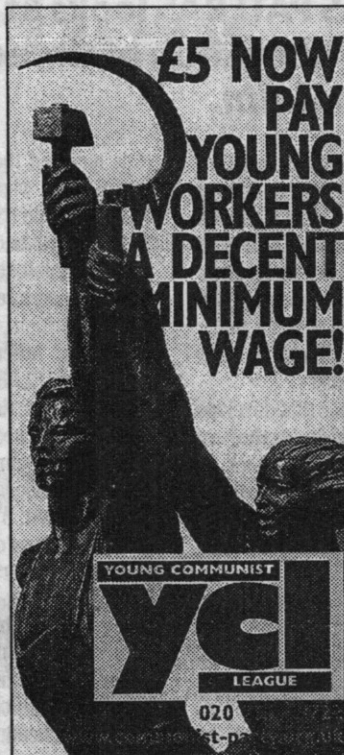
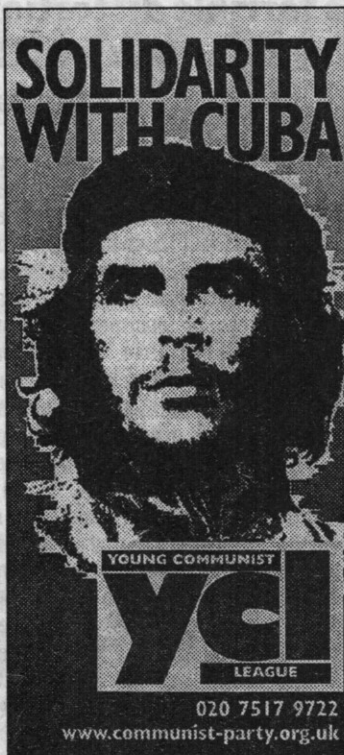
*Inside Hitler's Greece*, by Mark Mazower

*The Greek Tragedy*, by Constantine Tsoucalas

*The kapetanos; partisans and civil war in Greece 1943-49*, by D Eudes, on the *Morning Star* ([morning.star.org](http://morning.star.org)) and Communist Party of Greece websites ([www.kke.gr](http://www.kke.gr)).



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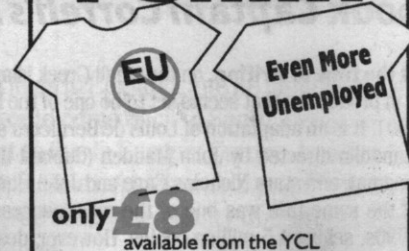
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**Searchlight the Anti-Fascist Magazine**

<http://www.searchlightmagazine.com/>

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