

# The Socialist Correspondent

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**“torture and violence  
flourish in conditions of  
secrecy and impunity.”**

**Denis Goldberg**



**Discussion, debate and authors' opinions**

To encourage the broadest possible discussion and debate around the aims of exposing capitalism and promoting socialism, we hope our readers appreciate that not all the opinions expressed by individual authors are necessarily those of The Socialist Correspondent.

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The  
**Socialist**  
Correspondent  
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# The Socialist Correspondent

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## Torture

Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib are places of torture now known to millions. However, for a long time it was not known what went on in these prisons.



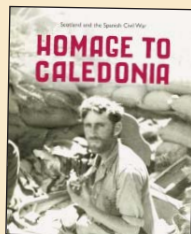
Denis Goldberg, in his article 'Torture and the Future' (based on a lecture he gave in Germany) states that "what is clear is that torture and violence flourish in conditions of secrecy and impunity".

There are still secret prisons and places of torture. In his article Professor Goldberg, who spent more than 22 years in an apartheid jail, discusses what we mean by torture and uses his own prison experience to illustrate his argument.

## Fascism in Spain

Understandably, torture is often associated with German fascism and the concentration camps of World War 2.

However, German Nazism's military support for Franco's rebellion against the democratically elected government of Spain in the 1930s in its preparation for the wider war is much less associated. Helen Christopher in her review of the book, 'Homage to Caledonia', writes "It has been said that the Spanish Civil War, was not so much a civil war but the first act of World War 2..."



Alongside the review are a poignant letter from an International Brigader to his wife and sons and the Farewell Address to the International Brigade by Dolores Ibarruri Gomez ("La Pasionaria"). The defeat of Republican Spain encouraged German fascism and brought world war closer.

## Two Germanies

World War 2 ended in 1945 with the defeat of German fascism and the occupation of Germany by the Allied countries. However, Churchill's

## Commentary

infamous Fulton, Missouri speech launched the Cold War and brought to an end the wartime alliance. Britain, America and France soon ignored the agreements made with the Soviet Union and began to re-build West Germany (using many former high-ranking Nazis) as a military ally with the aim of it annexing East Germany. Pat Turnbull traces the history which gave rise to the two Germanies and reflects on the positive developments in the German Democratic Republic in its comparatively short existence. In an associated article she outlines the reasons for the building of the Berlin Wall.

## The Berlin Wall

It is now 20 years since the wall was brought down and there is much being written and broadcast about 1989, which saw the defeat of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. It is being used to reinforce the claim that 'socialism does not work'. However, occasionally, amidst the anti-socialist clamour, some truths emerge.



Neal Ascherson, writing in the 'Observer' newspaper (2 August 2009) on the events in Eastern Europe in 1989, comments:

"What most ordinary people wanted, at the end of 1989, seemed to be something like social democracy. In other words, freedom, a regulated market economy, and a strong welfare state – the "European" model. Not unreasonably, the public thought that they could combine the freedom and prosperity of capitalism with the social benefits they had learned to expect under communism."

Ascherson then admits:  
"They were wrong. The countries in transition imported an undiluted version of Thatcherism, far stronger than the British would ever have tolerated. Price controls were abolished, subsidies cancelled, currencies left to find their own level. Many state industries and services were privatised, often bought over by western multinationals. Huge gaps appeared between rich and

poor: a new, predatory super-rich class on one hand, near-destitution for pensioners and the redundant on the other. Social services withered or vanished, like the elaborate network of free day nurseries for working mothers in East Germany."

It is for these reasons that attacks continue to be made on the former socialist countries because "Nobody shoots at the dead" (Turnbull quoting from the German journal, 'Rotfuchs').

The GDR and the other socialist countries in Eastern Europe may no longer exist but, socialism, despite the defeats and set-backs, is not dead. It remains the alternative to Capitalism, which, with its current financial and economic crisis and war-mongering, is increasingly exposed for what it is. The unceasing vitriolic attacks on socialism as was (Soviet Union, GDR etc), as is (Cuba), as aspires to be (Venezuela) indicate the fears of our rulers.



## Developing countries to pay

The global capitalist recession will have the most damaging effect on the world's poorest countries as Gail Hurley shows in her article, 'Global Recession and Developing Countries'.

She refers to the World Bank estimate that the global financial and economic crisis will increase poverty by 46 million people in 2009. And, with developing countries external debt predicted to rise, she concludes that unless policies are changed, "poor countries will in essence pay for the mistakes of the rich"

## Britain

James Thomson, in reviewing British politics, finds it difficult to see how the Labour Party can recover sufficiently to stop a Tory victory at the next General Election.

He raises the question: what will become of the Labour Party? That is a question which is likely to grow in significance.

# Murdoch does not back losers

So the *SUN* has set on New Labour. Rupert Murdoch's News International's reactionary newspaper, the *SUN*, which sells nearly 3 million copies a day and boasts a readership of nearly 8 million has stopped, after 12 years, supporting the Labour Party.

**JAMES THOMSON considers the prospects for New Labour and the Conservatives after their parties' annual conferences.**

Good riddance! The fact that such a right-wing paper, which rails every day against "hard left loonies", should support the Labour Party was for many in the Labour and trade union movement a mark of how embarrassingly far to the right Labour had journeyed under the New Labour leadership of Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson.

Does the right wing *SUN*'s ditching of New Labour in favour of the Conservatives mean Labour has now lurched to the left? Not a bit of it. Blair may have gone, forced out by Brown, but the other two architects of New Labour are still at the helm: one is the Prime Minister and the other is a Peer of the realm - Baron Mandelson. New Labour is still what it was when it won its first General Election in 1997.

So why abandon Labour now? Simple really. Murdoch and the *SUN* are only doing what they did 12 years ago when they ditched John Major and the Tories. They don't back losers.

An interesting account of how Murdoch arrives at his political judgments appeared in the *Scotland on Sunday* (4 October 2009) newspaper by columnist Kenny Farquharson. He recounts how, in 1999, when he was Scottish Political Editor of the Murdoch-owned *Times*, Les Hinton, "Murdoch's presence on earth" arranged lunch for Farquharson and a former Editor of the Scottish *SUN*, Steve Sampson.

Hinton's mission was to decide for Murdoch whether or not the Scottish *SUN* should back Labour or the Scottish National Party in the first-ever and upcoming Scottish Parliament elections in May 1999.

Farquharson writes, "Sampson was a strong supporter of The Sun's support for the SNP cause and was close to senior Nationalists. He argued passionately about the resurgence in national pride; the Braveheart factor; the Scots'



Rupert Murdoch Baron Mandelson

growing self-confidence; and, crucially, the seemingly inexorable rise of the SNP under a leader, Alex Salmond, who was one of the finest politicians of his generation.

"All of this was undoubtedly true, but it didn't mean the first devolved government of Scotland was going to be run by the SNP. Scots had spent a century trying to get a measure of home rule, I argued. Were they going to reject a devolved parliament without even giving it a try? Would they really jump straight to full independence? I suggested not."

Farquharson adds, "...Hinton's chauffeur-driven car was waiting outside the restaurant and after lunch he intended to go ... to tell the editor of The Scottish Sun what party his paper would be supporting in this landmark election. Murdoch had entrusted Hinton to suss out the lie of the land and make the right decision. A year or so later I met Hinton again and the subject of the lunch came up. I told him I was relieved my prediction had proved accurate. He laughed and said: "I was relieved too!" If the election had gone the other way, Murdoch would have wanted to know why."

The day before the *SUN* announced it was ditching Brown and Labour, an Ipsos MORI UK opinion poll put

Labour, for the first time in 27 years, third behind the Liberals. Ipsos MORI had the Conservatives on 36%, Lib-Dems 25% and Labour 24%.

This opinion poll trend for Labour has been relentless and began soon after Brown took over from Blair in June 2007. It is almost certain that the majority of the *SUN*'s readers will be among those who are deeply disenchanted with Gordon Brown. Keeping up with his readers is another reason why Murdoch will have decided that it was time to change sides again.

Murdoch's *SUN*'s announcement was deliberately timed to sabotage Brown's speech at Labour's 2009 annual conference in Brighton on 29 September. The *SUN*'s aim was to wreck the possibility of Brown repeating the post-conference opinion polls bounce of 7% he got in September 2008 in Manchester.

Such a gain would put Labour back to 31% and back in the race. But just six hours after Brown finished his Brighton speech the *SUN* captured most of the 10 o'clock TV news headlines with its "LABOUR'S LOST IT" front page. Brown was pretty much back where he was before the Labour conference began on 27 September.

Before the 2008 annual conference in Manchester, Brown was also trailing badly in the polls. He also had to contend with his Blairite enemies baying for his blood as well as pretenders to his throne like David Miliband.

He saw off all of them and even had the *SUN* praising his efforts for, "One of the biggest post-conference boosts in 20 years."

From Manchester, Labour went on to victory in the Glenrothes Westminster Parliamentary by-election in November 2008, less than five months after one of their worst defeats, to the Scottish National Party, in the Glasgow East by-election in July 2008.

Coincidentally, another Scottish Westminster Parliamentary by-election is being held on Thursday 12 November 2009. It is the Glasgow North East seat of the disgraced former Speaker of the House of Commons and former Labour MP, Michael Martin. Following a Tory and Liberal campaign he was forced to resign at the height of the MPs expenses scandals only months ago.

Brown will be relieved that his chief rivals in Glasgow North East and in Scotland as a whole are not the Tories but the Scottish Nationalists.

The nationalist Scottish Government's release of the so-called Lockerbie bomber, Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi was opposed in the Scottish Parliament by 73 votes to 50 with one abstention. Labour, Conservatives and Liberals voted against the SNP's decision to release the terminally ill al-Megrahi on compassionate grounds.

If a BBC-ICM poll is to be believed, the majority of the Scottish people, some 60%, also opposed the SNP Government's decision. (See Page 10: US-led conspiracy to conceal the truth.)

So Gordon Brown will feel optimistic about retaining Glasgow North East where the SNP are their biggest challengers and since the *SUN's* Scottish editorial policy is not as pro-Tory as it is in England: the Tories have trailed a bad third in Scottish elections for a generation or more. Murdoch does not back losers.

Nonetheless, the *SUN's* decision to ditch New Labour is indicative of the wider UK-wide slump that has been the Labour Party's lot since Brown took over.

At this year's conference in Brighton Brown had a much easier time than in Manchester last year. This was largely due to two things.

The first is that it is now too late to remove him and install a new and credible leader in time for a General Election which is now only months away. Brown has made it clear he would have to be forcibly removed and the divisiveness of such an inner party battle could render Labour even more unelectable than they currently are under Brown.

The second reason is largely down to one man, Baron Mandelson of Foy. In the run-up to and during Labour's disastrous 4 June 2009 European and Local Government elections, when it came fourth behind the UK Independence Party, Brown faced the most serious Blairite attempt yet to

remove him involving two Cabinet and one senior ministerial resignation. (See The Socialist Correspondent Issue No5, Summer 2009: Britain's ruling class want the Tories back).

On the 5 of June, in return for his help in quelling that Blairite revolt, Brown promoted Mandelson.

That's why in his post-elections reshuffle on 5 June 2009, Brown filled Mandelson's cup until it was full and running over. He made him First Secretary of State, he also made him Lord President of the Council and let him continue as Business Secretary with expanded powers. Mandelson's renowned vanity was sated.



David Cameron      General Dannatt

But it was much more than about Mandelson's vanity. A committee list published by Downing Street on 21 July 2009 revealed that Mandelson is a member of 35 of the 43 Cabinet committees and subcommittees.

This is the back-room environment in which Mandelson thrives and for the last four months the Baron of Foy has been in charge of Labour's domestic political strategy.

Safe in the knowledge that their standard bearer is now really at the heart of things, the Blairite rebels are content and quiescent.

Some, like former Home Secretary Charles Clarke who can never forgive Brown for forcing Blair out of office, will never be content nor quiescent.

Next to the Prime Minister, Mandelson is the most influential politician in the UK.

The Blairites in the party are following Mandelson's lead and leaving Brown alone and focusing on the big battle which is to try and save whatever they can of the New Labour project they began 15 years ago following the death of Labour leader, John Smith.

Brown and Mandelson's strategy can be seen in Brown's policy laden conference speech - a taster for Labour's 2010 General Election manifesto - which among other things promised:

- a free National Care Service, to go along with our National Health Service;
- the right of constituents to recall MPs;
- a referendum on the Alternative Voting system where MPs must gain 50% of the votes cast to be elected;
- a democratically elected second chamber to replace the House of Lords;
- a U-turn on compulsory ID cards;
- a new National Investment Corporation to help small and medium sized businesses;
- a new law to intervene on Bankers' Bonuses;
- a new Fiscal Responsibility Act to cut the national debt in half over four years while "maintaining and improving" front line public services;
- a new network of supervised homes for 16 and 17 year old parents who are on benefits;
- Family Intervention Projects for the "most chaotic" of families, and;
- new powers for local authorities to ban 24 hour drinking throughout a local community.

On tax and government spending, Brown promised to "raise tax at the very top" as well as seeking to achieve "realistic public sector pay settlements" and "cut costs" and "make savings."

On schools and education, Brown pledged to "invest more in schools and raise local school standards."

All of this programme of "if we are elected" promises went down pretty well with the Brighton conference delegates as it was intended. The mood of gloom at the start of the conference was lifted and delegates returned to their constituencies more confident than before. The first big electoral test of this strategy will come at Glasgow North East.

The following week in Manchester at the Conservatives' Party conference, the *SUN* also played a leading role with an exclusive interview with the recently retired head of the British army, General Sir Richard Dannatt.

The *SUN* splashed Dannatt's attack on the Labour government for not backing the troops in Afghanistan and leaving the army to fight the Taliban with "one arm tied behind its back." Two days later, David Cameron announced that Dannatt had agreed to join his Conservative Party team. Eton, Sandhurst and News International all working together again, just like old times.

If Brighton was about lifting Labour's gloom, Manchester was about the Conservatives presenting to the British people the gloomy terms on which they will become the next Government.

And it was a doom-laden set of terms with repeated dire warnings that if the Tories comeback we can expect years of austerity and serious cuts in public services and public sector pay. Not a good message to go to the country with at a General Election. So why are they doing so?

The Tory economic and fiscal manual is pretty straightforward: at its core is their determination to protect the right of the rich to keep as much of their wealth as possible. Huge state indebtedness - such as we have now - means higher taxes and given that we have a progressive percentage-based tax system, higher taxes hit the wealthy: that does not go down well in Tory heartlands.

To keep that support they must signal loud and clear that they will keep taxes down and cut public spending: that was the message from Manchester. It could be a gamble but it is a calculated one: they know they are ahead and as long as they can stay in front of Labour they have, under the Westminster first-past-the-post system, a good chance of winning a workable majority. Tory strategists believe Gordon Brown is their biggest asset and they believe he will lead Labour at the 2010 General Election.

But although the Tories are leading in the polls, their leader Cameron's popularity is fragile, even among Tories, and is threatened by new and not so progressive political forces.

The regard with which all British politicians are now held has reached an all time low.

The MPs' expenses scandal was reignited when Parliament returned after the summer and autumn conference recess. Both Tories and Labour MPs came under fire again from the Daily Telegraph and from the former civil servant, Sir Thomas Legg, who was appointed as the MPs' expenses auditor. Sir Thomas has asked scores of MPs to pay back expenses that may have been legitimate under the rules, but in his opinion were excessive.

Brown has to pay back thousands and Cameron a few hundred but whatever the amount, all of them have been hit with the mud of sleaze and self-serving and it has stuck fast.

Many MPs have shouted "foul" rekindling, as if it needed it, the public anger of a few months ago.

As a result of the deep disenchantment with all the main political parties, both Tories and Labour are facing serious challenges from the far right.

The anti-immigration and 'Get Britain out of Europe' UK

Independence Party (UKIP) is threatening the Tories in their south of England heartlands and elsewhere. The racist-fascist British National Party (BNP) is threatening Labour in their north of England heartlands.

UKIP got a real shot in the arm with Ireland's Yes vote of 67% in the referendum over the ratification of the European Union's Lisbon Treaty. This issue is now a real hot potato for Cameron who is trying to play both ends against the middle inside his own party.

The long-standing and bitter division among Conservatives over Britain's membership of the EU led to the creation of UKIP by hardline Tory Eurosceptics. UKIP is "committed to withdrawing Britain from the European Union." In the 4 June 2009 Euro Elections UKIP came second to the Tories.

UK parties' share of the EU vote:	
Conservative	27.7%
UKIP	16.5%
Labour	15.7%
Lib-Dems	13.7%
Green	8.6%
BNP	6.2%

A recent poll by a former Conservative, Lynton Crosby, suggests a surge in support for UKIP. In summer 2008, just 1% of people in marginal Tory seats said they would back UKIP at a general election. That figure, according to Crosby, is now 6%.

UKIP's strength is in Tory heartlands and although they have not made the breakthrough into Westminster that they have in Europe, Cameron is scared stiff that any escalation of the Lisbon Treaty issue will benefit UKIP and spill over into his own party and arouse old and bitter divisions

Cameron is hoping the only two remaining EU countries to ratify the Lisbon Treaty - Poland and the Czech Republic - will delay their decisions until after the UK General Election so that his policy of holding a British referendum on the treaty, "as long as it has not been ratified," will see him into the General Election.

What UKIP and many Tory Eurosceptics want from Cameron, but he is flatly refusing to give, is a pledge that he will hold a referendum - and give the British people their say like the Irish and many others - even if the Lisbon Treaty is ratified.

As for Labour, the MPs expenses scandal and the widespread disenchantment with Labour among SUN-reading white, working class Labour voters

could be benefitting the BNP.

Dagenham Labour MP Jon Cruddas said the BNP "have not really moved on" in terms of their share of the vote since 2004. Ominously, he added, that the BNP has benefited from the drop in Labour support.

BNP leader Nick Griffin's election in June to the European Parliament for North West England and the party's 6.2% national share of the Euro election vote is a very sinister and worrying trend. Like nature, politics abhors a vacuum. The 2010 General Election will give us all a clue as to who will fill that vacuum created by a divided right and the discredited and losing New Labour.

In their party conference rhetoric both Mandelson and Brown claim they can win the election. But the clue as to how far behind Labour is can be found in the self same Mandelsonian rhetoric both men employed.

"We need to fight back," said Mandelson.

"We need to fight, not bow out, not walk away, not give in, not give up but fight; fight to win for Britain," said Brown.

This is the language of desperate men, men who know they are miles behind and need to fight like fury to get back in the race.

Both men will know exactly how far behind they are because their private pollster, Philip Gould will be giving them enough private polling and focus groups research to kill a rain forest.

They will know in minute detail how Labour and especially how Brown is going down with ordinary voters. And the story won't be good.

Most probably the 2010 General Election will be held in May or June.

In May or June, despite the current talk of green shoots of economic recovery, we are still likely to be feeling the effects of the financial and economic crisis and recession. The UK jobless total keeps rising and although the rate of increase has slowed it looks likely to continue to rise for some time yet.

In May or June Britain's 'nationalised' banks will most likely still be where they are now and unable to pay back the billions they have received from the public purse.

In May or June there most likely will be less money in working people's pockets and with Britain's bank bail-out national debt going through the roof, austerity and cuts in public spending and public services will be on every

Continued on page 12

# Scotland and the Spanish Civil War

Coinciding with the 70th anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War a new book has been published which examines the contribution of Scots to the defence of the Spanish Republic.

**HELEN CHRISTOPHER reviews the book, HOMAGE TO CALEDONIA by Daniel Gray.**

Homage to Caledonia is a concise and highly readable account which covers many aspects of the war, not just the hostilities but the life and reflections of Scots volunteers.

Why Scotland? The Scottish contribution to the war was hugely disproportionate to the nation's size relative to the rest of Britain.

Although only 10% of the population, 23% of those who went from Britain to Spain were Scots - 549 men and women in all. On the home front too the contribution in aid for Spain was massive and the book quotes Harry Pollitt writing in the Daily Worker in 1937 as saying:

"Scotland does better than any other part of the country in its contribution to our fund."

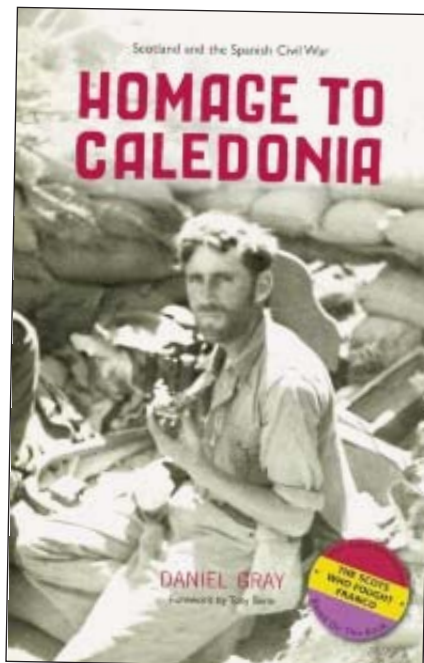
As well as the campaign to build political support for the Spanish Republic and the collections for aid, there are other efforts documented in the book.

For example, in 1936 activists from the National Unemployed Workers Movement took over a disused mill in Hawick as a workers collective producing clothing for the Spanish republican fighters.

It was so successful that it became self-sufficient with private orders enabling it to subsidise its efforts for Spain. The bombing of Guernica also inspired the opening of a home in Montrose for exiled Basque children.

The first half of the book is particularly strong, using the accounts of Brigaders after their return and through their letters home to bring to life the facets of the war that Gray deals with.

The difficulties faced by the British Battalion, the brutality of war and horrific casualties are not glossed over and the commitment and heroism of those



Homage to Caledonia by Daniel Gray is published by Luath Press [www.luath.co.uk](http://www.luath.co.uk)

who fought comes through all the more powerfully for that. Desertion from the ranks was rare but rather wounded comrades expressed a desire to return to the fight.

Here were men and women who knew what they were fighting for, were passionate about the cause and were absolutely dedicated. The volunteers were overwhelmingly working-class, with most coming from the industrial cities and centres of the country.

Striking aspects of the written and oral accounts represented are the vivid descriptions and power of the writing. When I reflected on this at a meeting where the author was speaking he said

that the Spanish Civil War has been described as a writers war, but that for him the writers were the many Brigaders from working-class backgrounds whose accounts he uses in the book.

It has been said that the Spanish Civil War, was not so much a civil war but the first act of World War 2 and there are accounts not only of the suffering of combatants but also of civilians. Spain was used as the testing ground for new forms of combat used in World War 2 including the bombing of civilians from the air, as at Guernica.

The horrors of war are only one aspect of the Brigaders accounts, however, and Gray dedicates space also to the daily aspects of life for the volunteers such as food, hygiene and the endless quest for cigarettes. There are also fascinating insights into the political meetings, libraries, celebrations, concerts, and fiestas which took place.

There are chapters on the campaign for aid for Spain and the role of women both at home and as volunteer nurses with the International Brigades. Gray probably over-emphasises the importance of this campaign as a vehicle for women's political involvement as there was a strong tradition of this in Scotland prior to the 1930s, through campaigns such as the rents strikes and involvement in organisations like the Co-operative Women's Guild.

There is also a chapter on the pro-fascist cause in Scotland, which was insignificant. Gray does, however, bring out the influence of the Catholic Church and anti-communism in the Labour Party and the Trades Unions blocking unity in support of the Spanish Republic.

By contrast, the Communist Party comes across as the powerhouse of activity in mobilising support for Spain at home and within the British Battalion itself; 60% of Volunteers from Scotland were members of the Party.

The book also establishes the historical context of the early 20th century, from which grew these heroes. It was a time of many hardships, of mass political activity and of a self-educated

## Letter from the front at Albacete

(1)

c/o S. R. 1.1  
Plaza Del Altozono 270  
Albacete  
Spain 1. 2. 38

Salud Camaradas

Dear Annie, George & Eric,  
Received your letters dated 14. 1. 38 on Saturday night. You have no idea how pleased I was to hear from you & I must say that the other lads think me very fortunate, but are consoling themselves in the knowledge that they will likely be having letters this weekend.

I started a special letter to the boys some days ago but was so interrupted that there was absolutely (no) continuity & I was forced to destroy it. This is pay day & the shower baths. I managed into the showers first, got paid and have time to finish this letter for the post tonight.

I will make no comment on your letter re the film show, but please do not let your friends get you down, try to view your work from the angle of the Party which is the immediate need of influence based on the needs of the working-class. The pin pricking and hesitancy of others, ultimately leading to opportunism has got to be fought. You will remember my advice, always avoid anything in the nature of gossip & small minded talk.

Last Wednesday we had a visit from Comrades Charlotte Haldane, Paul Robeson and his wife. Charlotte Haldane brought an enormous Christmas card, about the size of the "Daily" with pages full of names of people who subscribed money to Spanish Aid at the Daily Worker Bazaar. She also gave us news of the progress being made in Britain with Spanish Aid & of the new forces lining up in support of the Spanish Workers. Paul Robeson sung to us & I am sure he enjoyed the occasion as did the men. He sung "Ole Man River" to new words, words of struggle and hope instead of the old words of helplessness and despair. I managed to get a page of my note-book autographed by all of them and I am enclosing it.

(2)

You can use it a(s) best you can. Perhaps you could paste it in George's autograph book amongst his collection of revolutionaries.

Friday afternoon is usually the battalion political meeting but last Friday instead of the customary meeting the platform was occupied by a military tribunal & an individual charged with desertion tried and sentenced. The men formed the jury & put questions & finally pronounced the verdict. Everything in connection with the accused was brought before the court, his social background and political affiliations in civil life, his conduct since coming to Spain & even his recent correspondence with home. The whereabouts of & his arrest.

The prosecution brought out, to my mind a very strong point, & that is that before he could have left Republican Spain some assistance would be necessary. Such assistance would only be rendered by anti-Govt. & Fascist forces within. There is also one more point & that is that such an individual would in all probability get immense publicity in the capitalist and Fascist press of the world. The only answer to which is that the men here are all keen to come to grips with the Fascists & that one deserter does not in any way represent the outlook of the foreign anti-Fascist forces in Spain. The verdict of the court was duly pronounced & and although the extreme penalty could have been inflicted, he was given such a sentence as will enable him to rehabil(it)ate himself with his comrades.

Annie I must conclude this letter owing to time & with a few requests. When sending a letter try two single packets of woodbine in the envelope it seems to be fairly effective. Also I have great need of a diary & an elementary English Spanish grammar. I must learn Spanish & I believe that you could get me such a text book.

I will write my next letter to the boys. The weather here is grand but very cold at night.

Best Love  
Alex  
XXXXX

Alex Park was a member of the Communist Party and Secretary of the Glasgow Parkhead 5th Branch of the AEU. He died in Spain in March 1938.

working-class leadership.

These were men and women with a sound political education and understanding, combined with a passionate idealism which saw them take up the causes of anti-fascism and internationalism. Despite the Brigaders admiration for the Soviet Union, the author does from time to time try to qualify their views, although the Soviets are not demonised as they are in many accounts of the war in Spain.

It is unfortunate that the latter part of the book is dominated by chapters not only on the fascists but also on Scottish trotskyites and anarchists, including whole chapters on two particular individuals. This has the effect of dampening the truly inspirational

accounts of the first half of the book.

Although Gray is critical of their contributions and they are part of the history, the disproportionate space afforded them is somewhat at odds with his general approach which gives voice to the majority of relatively unknown and unsung heroes of the conflict.

That said, *Homage to Caledonia* is a good read and what comes over most powerfully is the political context in which ordinary men and women became conscious actors in history trying to shape a future for peace and progress in Europe. Their heroism and self-sacrifice was something that came naturally as they joined together with hundreds of thousands of others in the same cause.

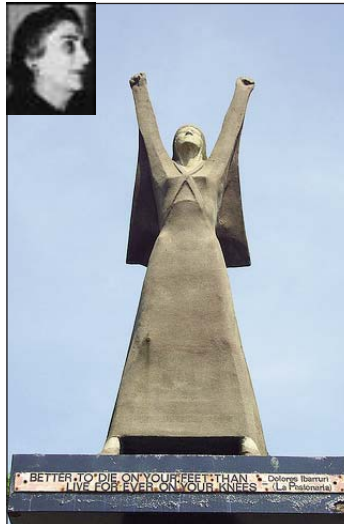
The Brigaders, most of whom would never have travelled abroad, embraced the new country they found themselves in and the different nationalities they met with a fascination and enthusiasm. There is no sense of superiority or paternalism here, but of equal comradeship. They went to Spain not only to aid the Spanish Republic, but because in the prescient slogan of the time, "Bombs on Madrid today means bombs on London tomorrow."

Thus they exemplified the very essence of internationalism.

For more information on Britain and the Spanish Civil War contact the International Brigades Memorial Trust [www.international-brigades.org.uk](http://www.international-brigades.org.uk)

# La Pasionaria's Farewell Address to the International Brigades

Dolores Ibárruri Gomez  
 "La Pasionaria"  
 Barcelona, November 1, 1938



Statue of La Pasionaria  
 by Arthur Dooley  
 Clyde Street, Glasgow.

the memory of the sad and bloody days dissipates in a present of liberty, of peace and of wellbeing; when the rancours have died out and pride in a free country is felt equally by all Spaniards, speak to your children. Tell them of these men of the International Brigades.

Recount for them how, coming over seas and mountains, crossing frontiers bristling with bayonets, sought by raving dogs thirsting to tear their flesh, these men reached our country as crusaders for freedom, to fight and die for Spain's liberty and independence threatened by German and Italian fascism. They gave up everything ... their loves, their countries, home and fortune, fathers, mothers, wives, brothers, sisters and children ... and they came and said to us: "We are here. Your cause, Spain's cause, is ours. It is the cause of all advanced and progressive mankind."

It is very difficult to say a few words in farewell to the heroes of the International Brigades, because of what they are and what they represent. A feeling of sorrow, an infinite grief catches our throat - sorrow for those who are going away, for the soldiers of the highest ideal of human redemption, exiles from their countries, persecuted by the tyrants of all peoples - grief for those who will stay here forever mingled with the Spanish soil, in the very depth of our heart, hallowed by our feeling of eternal gratitude.

From all peoples, from all races, you came to us like brothers, like sons of immortal Spain; and in the hardest days of the war, when the capital of the Spanish Republic was threatened, it was you, gallant comrades of the International Brigades, who helped save the city with your fighting enthusiasm, your heroism and your spirit of sacrifice. - And Jarama and Guadalajara, Brunete and Belchite, Levante and the Ebro, in immortal verses sing of the courage, the sacrifice, the daring, the discipline of the men of the International Brigades.

For the first time in the history of the peoples' struggles, there was the spectacle, breathtaking in its grandeur, of the formation of International Brigades to help save a threatened country's freedom and independence - the freedom and independence of our Spanish land.

Communists, Socialists, Anarchists, Republicans - men of different colours, differing ideology, antagonistic religions - yet all profoundly loving liberty and justice, they came and offered themselves to us unconditionally.

They gave us everything ... their youth or their maturity; their science or their experience; their blood and their lives; their hopes and aspirations ... and they asked us for nothing. But yes, it must be said, they did want a post in battle, they aspired to the honour of dying for us.

Banners of Spain! Salute these many heroes! Be lowered to honour so many martyrs! Mothers! Women! When the years pass by and the wounds of war are stanchd; when

Today many are departing. Thousands remain, shrouded in Spanish earth, profoundly remembered by all Spaniards. Comrades of the International Brigades: Political reasons, reasons of state, the welfare of that very cause for which you offered your blood with boundless generosity, are sending you back, some to your own countries and others to forced exile. You can go proudly. You are history. You are legend. You are the heroic example of democracy's solidarity and universality in the face of the vile and accommodating spirit of those who interpret democratic principles with their eyes on hoards of wealth or corporate shares which they want to safeguard from all risk.

We shall not forget you; and, when the olive tree of peace is in flower, entwined with the victory laurels of the Republic of Spain ... return!

Return to our side for here you will find a homeland ... those who have no country or friends, who must live deprived of friendship ... all, all will have the affection and gratitude of the Spanish people who today and tomorrow will shout with enthusiasm ...

Long live the heroes of the International Brigades!

In 2008, on the 70th anniversary of La Pasionaria's speech and the departure of the International Brigades from Spain the Spanish government honoured her pledge by announcing that it would grant Spanish citizenship to the remaining Brigadistas. This came only just in time for two Brigaders who died this year, Bob Doyle and Jack Jones.



# US-led conspiracy to conceal the truth

I'm convinced the occupants of the White House and No 10 Downing Street these past 21 years knew that Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi - the so-called Lockerbie bomber - is innocent. Go to - <http://www.megrahimystory.net/> - for al-Megrahi's own story.

**JAMES THOMSON analyses the US, British and Scottish governments' political manoeuvring over the release of the Libyan prisoner.**

Those occupants were:

#### US Presidents

Ronald Reagan (1981-89),  
George H.W. Bush (1989-93),  
Bill Clinton (1993-2001),  
George W. Bush (2001-09), and  
Barack Obama.

#### UK Prime Ministers

Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990),  
John Major (1990-97),  
Tony Blair (1997-2007), and  
Gordon Brown.

They will all have read the top secret files and been briefed by their secret services on who blew up Pan Am Flight 103 on 21 December 1988 some 30,000 feet above the small border town of Lockerbie in Scotland. 270 people from 21 different countries were killed: 190 of them were American, 31 British 11 of whom were residents of Lockerbie.

I'm also convinced that all the Presidents' and Prime Ministers' secret files and narratives will have come to roughly the same conclusion. Like many others, including Dr. Jim Swire, whose daughter died at Lockerbie, my conviction is that al-Megrahi is innocent of the crime for which he was found guilty on 31 January 2001 and sentenced to a lifetime in a Scottish prison.

To support my conviction I'll quote one source, one among many, who has been near to the events surrounding Lockerbie and Pan Am 103 for two decades. He is the former Labour MP for Livingston, Tam Dalyell who, along with Nelson Mandela, personally intervened with the Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi to get al-Megrahi to appear before the special court - a Scottish court of three voting judges - at Camp Zeist in the Netherlands.

Writing in the *TIMES*, 31 October 2008, Tam Dalyell said, "My deep



al-Megrahi's return to Libya on 20 August 2009.

conviction, as a "professor of Lockerbie studies" over a 20-year period is that neither al-Megrahi nor Libya had any role in the destruction of Pan Am 103. I believe they were made a scapegoat in 1990-91 by an American government that had decided to go to war with Iraq and did not want complications with Syria and Iran, which had harboured the real perpetrators of the terrible deed."

If Tam Dalyell and Dr. Swire are right, that there is a conspiracy to conceal the truth, then the actions of Barack Obama and Gordon Brown make sense.

Let's start at the White House.

Libya's economy is dominated by its oil industry. Some 80% of its domestic product and wealth is believed to derive from oil. Libya is ranked No17 in the oil producing states of the world.

In 1988 western imperialist powers, led by the US, regarded Libya as a pariah state that sponsored terrorism. Back then, Reagan was in the White House, Thatcher in Downing Street and Gorbachov was in the Kremlin.

Some 190 Americans lost their lives in this atrocity and the US state machine moved might and main to punish those who did it. They even bombed Libya, killing Muammar al-Gaddafi's daughter. It was the US who indicted al-Megrahi and placed him on their most wanted list of international

terrorists and demanded he and his co-accused be tried in the USA.

In the post-Soviet world of today, different imperatives now drive the geopolitical strategies and diplomacy of the US. Fast forward to 2007 and we have British Prime Minister, Tony Blair travelling to Libya to meet Muammar al-Gaddafi to talk about oil and trade and other issues of interest to both countries. Did they talk about al-Megrahi? I'll bet my mortgage they did. This was almost a year before al-Megrahi was diagnosed with prostate cancer.

No doubt Blair "consulted" George W. Bush before he met al-Gaddafi. This was the famous "deal in the desert" meeting that sought to bring oil-rich Libya "in from the cold." Blair was acting as Bush's secret envoy to the man that his father tried to bomb.

One of the outcomes of the deal was a Prisoner Transfer Agreement (PTA) between the UK and Libya. It is inconceivable that this PTA was not intended for al-Megrahi. It would be the means by which the UK would release him when the time and the political conditions were right.

It is also inconceivable that Blair would have entered into any PTA with al-Gaddafi without Bush's approval.

And it is also most unlikely that Gordon Brown did not know something of what was going on between Bush and Blair and Blair and al-Gaddafi.

And remember, I am working from the premise that the White House and No 10 knew al-Megrahi was innocent which makes a PTA a perfectly reasonable and diplomatic thing to do. If he did blow up Pan Am 103 then it is a much less reasonable thing to do.

Today, President Obama especially, is trying to improve relations with the Arab-Islamic world, including Libya, following the dark days of the George W. Bush presidency.

When al-Megrahi's prostate cancer was diagnosed as terminal it was clear that sooner or later he would have to be returned to his home in Tripoli to die.

Forcing a man who is dying of cancer - whom most of the Arab-Islamic world believe to be innocent - to a slow and painful death in a Scottish gaol, is not the outcome that today best suits the US and British imperialism's new approaches.

But for the new, liberal Democrat US government the problem was that the wound of Lockerbie was still open and sore. US public opinion was overwhelmingly opposed to al-Megrahi's release on any grounds. That's why Bush used Blair to talk to al-Gaddafi in the first place in 2007.

So the Obama administration had to be seen to talk tough on the theme of "there can be no compassion for a mass murdering terrorist." They may have talked tough but they took absolutely no sanctions to back it up.

In 10 Downing Street, Gordon Brown had a much more complicated set of circumstances with which to deal.

It was a Scottish Court - a compromise to suit the US - that convicted al-Megrahi, and since justice is devolved to the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government, now led by the Scottish National Party, it would be the Scottish Justice Secretary, the SNP's Kenny MacAskill who had the right to take the decision on al-Megrahi's release from Greenock Prison and decide on what basis he should be returned to his home in Tripoli.

To this day Gordon Brown has refused to say if he agrees with the SNP Scottish Government's release of al-Megrahi on compassionate grounds.

All Brown has said of any substance is that he was appalled at the hero's welcome al-Megrahi received on his return to Libya.

Like Obama, Brown took no actions following al-Megrahi's release despite the fact that his UK government has the right, under the Scotland Act, to challenge the Scottish Government if they believe the Scottish Government's actions harmed Britain's "international relations."

One can only conclude that Gordon Brown, Justice Secretary, Jack Straw



Tony Blair and George W. Bush in the White House.



Libyan leader, Muammar al-Gaddafi

and Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, who both said more than Brown on the subject, believe the SNP's actions did not breach nor harm Britain's international relations, despite all the tough talk from Washington.

Now we turn to Edinburgh and the occupant of Bute House and the other

key player in the release of al-Megrahi: SNP leader and Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond.

Officially it was the Scottish Justice Secretary, Kenny MacAskill who took the quasi-judicial decision to release al-Megrahi on compassionate grounds.

In his statement on 20 August 2009 in which he announced al-Megrahi's release, Kenny MacAskill called for an international inquiry into the whole Lockerbie bombing affair.

This is the clue to the fact that Salmond and the SNP Scottish Government also believe al-Megrahi to be innocent. But they can't publicly say he's innocent nor that they agree with Dr. Swire's conspiracy to conceal the truth theory. If they did they'd be openly challenging a decision of a Scottish court and the whole Scottish judicial system, something they would not do.

So one minute MacAskill says al-Megrahi was "justly convicted" and attacks him as a "terrorist" and lambasts him for not showing any compassion to his Lockerbie victims. The next minute, without pausing for breath, he calls for an inquiry to reveal the whole truth about the bombing. Why the need for an inquiry if al-Megrahi's conviction was just?

Then there is Blair's PTA. At the time this was made public, First Minister Salmond furiously attacked the UK Labour Government and warned them that the decision to release Megrahi would be the Scottish Government's and the Scottish Government's alone. Salmond said the UK's PTA with Libya was an attempt to usurp the right of the Scottish Parliament to decide on all matters of Justice within its borders.

When al-Megrahi became terminally ill, and when the time came to release him, the SNP's complete antipathy to the UK PTA played right into Brown's hands. Like Pontius Pilate Brown washed his hands of the decision, claiming it was a devolved matter over which he had no jurisdiction.

Salmond walked right into the trap. He totally rejected the PTA option and was left with only one other legal route, release on compassionate grounds. That in effect set al-Megrahi free

whereas prisoner transfer would have theoretically meant him having to spend the rest of his life in a Tripoli gaol. Once back in Libya it would have been impossible for any one to demand that the dying prisoner be kept in prison.

If the SNP had taken the PTA route they would have been seen to be both tough and compassionate and they would have achieved the same result without upsetting Scottish public opinion as much as they did.

However, their nationalism and their hatred of Blair, Brown and anything to do with a "London Labour Government" blinded them to a solution that would have been more acceptable to a confused and unwitting Scottish public who have been fed the lie for nearly two decades, even by the SNP, that the man responsible for the worst such atrocity ever committed on Scottish soil is Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi.

The PTA solution would also have mollified the Obama administration, and to a lesser extent US public opinion and the US families who all perceived al-Megrahi's compassionate release as something more akin to a pardon.

In fact Obama demanded that al-Megrahi be treated as a prisoner and be held under house arrest. Another clue to the fact that the PTA "deal in the desert" went through with US nods and

winks of approval and was designed for al-Megrahi to be transferred to Libya, when the time was right, as a prisoner.

Most regrettably the other main Scottish political parties, egged on by the tabloid press and following the public mood, opportunistically attacked the SNP Scottish Government's decision.

Scottish Labour leader Iain Gray even went so far as to condemn the decision and argue that Megrahi should have been left to die in Scotland: political opportunism at its worst especially

**Most regrettably the other main Scottish political parties, egged on by the tabloid press and following the dominant public mood, opportunistically attacked the SNP Scottish Government's decision.**

as Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair laid the grounds for a similar outcome in 2007.

Finally, it is no secret that Mr Salmond has had talks with investors from the oil- and gas-rich Arab State of Qatar which has the second highest GDP per capita in the world.

Billionaire Qatari financiers have cash to invest and Mr Salmond hopes they will regard Scotland, especially a future independent Scotland, as a good place in which to spend their billions.

As the gaolers of such a celebrated Arab-Islamic prisoner, the SNP government's handling of al-Megrahi's imprisonment and his release was of vital importance to those Qatari and other potential Arab investors. Another reason for the SNP to display compassion.

Like Nelson Mandela who welcomed the Scottish Government's decision, I also believe they did the right thing but their lack of honesty, under the cover of "Scottish compassion", whatever that is, has been as breathtaking as their opponents' opportunism.

Keeping an innocent man in prison is completely unacceptable no matter how well it fits your strategic and geo-political aims.

Al-Megrahi is certainly not the first person to be imprisoned for something he didn't do and I guess he won't be the last. That's US and British imperialism for you.

## Murdoch does not back losers

Continued from page 6

party's agenda, even New Labour, no matter what promises Brown made in Brighton.

In May or June British troops, and more than at present, will still be fighting in Afghanistan and no doubt more dead soldiers' coffins will be returning from that increasingly unpopular theatre of war.

So unless something politically earth-shattering occurs between now and then it is hard to see how things will change for the better between now and the General Election or how Brown and his party can come back from third place at the moment to first place in a matter of months.

That's the cold calculation behind Rupert Murdoch's decision to pull the plug after 12 years. He and his ilk, especially Britain's ruling classes, have called time on New Labour because

they foresee its electoral defeat in 2010, perhaps similar to that the party suffered in 1983 under Michael Foot.

They also know that Blair, Brown and Mandelson have done as much as they can to empty the Labour Party of every socialist tendency it ever had, without becoming the Tories. Their New Labour job is done and it is time for them to step aside and let the first party of British capitalism, the Conservative Party, take over once again.

This should give no-one on the side of progress in Britain any comfort. The sad reality is that if we don't have a Labour Government, even a New Labour one, we will most likely have a Conservative Government.

But let's think the unthinkable. If the sun is about to set on New Labour in government and if those sections of the British ruling classes who used to support it have now gone back to the Tories or the Liberals, what next for the Labour Party?

If Labour's electoral humiliation in 1983 was the genesis of New Labour, will another humiliation in 2010 lead to

the genesis of another new direction. And if so, which direction? Left, right or centre?

Is Mandelson right when he said at Brighton 2009 that Labour is "resolutely anchored in the progressive centre of British politics?"

Will that anchor hold fast in the storm of defeat? If New Labour is badly defeated as Murdoch anticipates, it is safe to assume that Brown will go and maybe also his fellow New Labour architect, Baron Mandelson.

Who then will carry the banner of New Labour? And will it move further to the right to compete with the Tories? Will there be a New Labour renewal? Will New Labour become old hat? Could there be a New New Labour?

More importantly, if the humiliation scenario does materialise, will there be any serious challenge from the left to the current New Labour dominance and orthodoxy? Will long-marginalised socialists, for example, be willing to fight for a place for socialism in the Labour Party? Or will they choose to abandon Labour altogether as a lost cause?

# 60th anniversary of the GDR's foundation

'Risen from ruins' were the opening words of the national anthem of the German Democratic Republic. It did rise, from the devastation of the Second World War, and twelve years of Nazism.

**PAT TURNBULL reflects on the foundation of the GDR 60 years ago and the pre and post-World War II events that led to its formation and the construction of the Berlin Wall.**

The Yalta joint declaration of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin in February 1945 is a testament to the powerful position of the Soviet Union at that point in history: 'We are determined to disarm and disband all German armed forces; break up for all time the German General Staff that has repeatedly contrived the resurgence of German militarism; remove or destroy all German military equipment; eliminate or control all German industry that could be used for military production; bring all war criminals to just and swift punishment, and exact reparations in kind for the destruction wrought by the Germans; wipe out the Nazi party, Nazi laws, organisations and institutions, remove all Nazi and militarist influences from public office and from the cultural and economic life of the German people; and take in harmony such other measures in Germany as may be necessary to the future peace and safety of the world.'

The Potsdam Conference of July – August 1945 made decisions to implement these aims. At the conference, the Soviet Union opposed the dismemberment of Germany proposed by the Western Powers; they also opposed the identification of the German people with the Nazis and any policy of revenge or national humiliation. Posters in post-war Berlin told the German people as much, quoting Stalin: 'Hitlers may come and go. Germany endures.'

In the Soviet occupied zone, the process of implementing the Potsdam Agreement began at once. The cartels, syndicates and trusts and all other monopolies were liquidated. These mighty firms had not only financed Nazism, but profited enormously in the process. With huge brutality, they had exploited the labour of twenty million slave workers from all over Europe.



In the Soviet zone: Berlin, May Day 1946.

However, on April 15, 1949, the Ferguson Committee, which had been appointed to investigate the results of decartelisation in the Western zones, reported that US occupation officials had failed to smash a single one of Germany's giant monopolies.

This was despite the evidence that working people in the west as in the east wanted the power of the big monopolies eliminated. The CDU (Christian Democratic Union) programme for the British zone, adopted in February 1947, demanded the socialisation of the mining industry and the major iron mills.

In the post-war situation a four-power Control Council was in charge of Germany, corresponding to the four zones (Soviet, US, British and French)

into which Germany had been split. All decisions were supposed to be by consensus.

The aim was supposed to be to implement the Potsdam Agreement and continue the process towards reuniting Germany as a democratic nation and concluding a peace treaty.

In defiance of this aim, on December 2, 1946 the US and Britain unified their occupation zones to form the so-called Bizonia, and from then on all important questions there were settled not by the Control Council, but by a bizonal Anglo-American agency.

In May 1947 a separate Anglo-American agreement established an economic council, an executive committee and other separate German administrative agencies for Bizonia. On

September 1947, the US and British representatives concluded a new separate agreement on joint Anglo-American control of the Ruhr collieries, and established a Supreme German Court and Bank Deutscher Laender for Bizonia. In 1948 the French zone was incorporated and Trizonia was born.

Early in 1948 the Control Council had reached agreement on the principles of all-German currency reform and all details on new bank notes. But on March 23, 1948 the US, British and French representatives refused to continue with the preparations.

On June 20, 1948 the Western Powers effected a separate currency reform which they had been preparing for a long time, using bank notes printed in the USA. Economic relations between the parts of Germany were disrupted and trade between the Eastern and Western zones became in effect trade between two different states.

The Western Powers obstructed preparatory measures for setting up an all-German government. They did not allow the unification of parties across Germany; in March 1947 some Liberal Democrat Party organisations asked the Control Council permission to unite in a nation-wide Democratic Party of Germany, but this was prevented by the negative stand of the west.

When, with huge membership support, the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Germany merged in the Soviet zone to form the Socialist Unity Party, no such unification was allowed in the western zones. More than once from 1945 onwards the Soviet representatives on the Control Council proposed that trade unions function over the whole of Germany; the western representatives blocked it. The west banned in their zones the democratic organisations which had been very quickly established in the Soviet zone.

In 1947 the USA introduced the Marshall Plan – dollar aid to Europe with strings attached. The Soviet Union turned it down and in the west crocodile tears were shed about poor Eastern Europe, which had thus been deprived of the Marshall riches.

Nevertheless, when the UN 'World Economic Report for 1948' produced an index of industrial production for various countries, comparing figures with those of 1937, the USSR, despite

massive war destruction, was 171. The USA, which had hugely profited from the war, was 170. Britain was 110, France 100, and Belgium 93. Marshall-deprived Poland showed 141 and Bulgaria 179.

The eastern, Soviet occupation zone of Germany was much smaller in area and population than 'Trizonia' and had been the least industrialized part of Germany. Nevertheless in 1949 the eastern zone had a cultivated area close to 100 per cent of the 1937 acreage. Food rations were steadily increasing.

Two million manual workers were getting low-priced off-the-ration hot lunches. In 1948 imports into the zone were covered 100 per cent by exports. The 1948 industrial output went up by



26 per cent and about 50 per cent of it was in publicly owned factories and mines. The Soviet zone mark was stable despite attempts by the Western zone press to undermine it by launching rumours about 'impending devaluation'

Meantime the Western zones were in the grip of crisis. There were nearly one and a half million unemployed, eight times as many bankruptcies in February – April 1949 as there had been a year before. Sixty-five per cent of exports from this industrial part of Germany in 1948 consisted of raw materials. Meat and bread rations were reduced in January 1949 and hunger strikes took place. Thirty per cent of the 1948 harvest went into the black market.

The New Statesman and Nation, May 7 1949, reported 'building operatives are standing idle while workers in the Ruhr and the Rhineland are still living in cellars ... Currency reform without a levy on physical capital assets has grossly accentuated maldistribution of wealth in Trizonia; it is now estimated that only 60 per cent of the population can afford to buy in full the official food ration.'

This was the situation in which the Western Powers took the final step to split Germany. On September 20, 1949, the first government of the Federal Republic of Germany was formed. It was the first Chancellor of the FRG, Konrad Adenauer, who said: 'Bismarck spoke of his nightmare of an anti-German coalition. I, too, have a nightmare of my own: it is called Potsdam.' The 'federal statute' had been worked out in private discussions between the British and US-sponsored political parties. The western assembly had refused to submit it to a popular vote, referring it instead to the regional 'parliaments'.

On October 7, 1949, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded. The draft constitution for a democratic republic, which had been worked out by a committee of the People's Congress, was submitted to the workers', farmers', women's and youth organisations for discussion at 9000 mass meetings, attended by many hundreds of thousands of people.

Forty one years later the West got its way – 'unification' on its own terms.

However, in its short years of existence this little country – population 16.7 million in 1985 – made a huge difference, not just to the lives of its citizens, but to the state of the world.

Today, twenty years after the GDR was swallowed up by the Federal Republic, and its industry and agriculture subjected to wholesale destruction, some of the facts in 'The GDR Today' (Verlag Zeit im Bild, June 1985) form a startling contrast, not just with East Germany today, but with 2009 Britain.

None of the 500 deputies elected five-yearly to the People's Chamber of the GDR (their parliament) were professional parliamentarians. All continued with their occupations. In 1985 the deputies were 47.2 per cent workers, 10.4 per cent cooperative farmers, 17.8 per cent office employees, 23 per cent intellectuals and professional people and 1.6 per cent others.

The country's net income in million marks had risen from 24,100 in 1949, to 117,400 in 1970 and 222,000 in 1984. Despite being poor in raw materials, the GDR generated 83 per cent of its own electricity from indigenous lignite, with 11 per cent coming from nuclear power stations.

Its system of agriculture was so effi-

cient that 90 per cent of domestic food requirements were covered from indigenous resources. 90 per cent of the 800,000 strong agricultural workforce had completed vocational training. Farmers had a secure income and a guaranteed right to annual vocations, sick pay and retirement pensions.

Unemployment did not exist in the GDR. There was a legal right to work for all. Of a workforce of over eight million (50 per cent of whom were women), more than 85 per cent had completed vocational training, including about 20 per cent who had graduated from university or technical college. Roughly 90 per cent of pupils completed the 10-year general polytechnical school and all received an apprenticeship or technical school place. Even the 10 per cent who failed still did an apprenticeship to get a skilled workers' certificate. Pupils who intended to go to university did a further two years' school, during which time they received a monthly allowance. Apprentices were paid, and students received grants, not loans. Everybody was guaranteed a job in keeping with their qualifications.

Real income per head of the population rose by four per cent in 1984 over the preceding year. Expenses for rent, gas, electricity, heating and water accounted for about five per cent of family income. The prices of staple food such as bread, potatoes, meat, fish, flour, sugar, fat and other goods, as well as fares and charges for services had for decades remained unchanged; everybody lived very well.

Young married couples could apply for an interest-free loan of 5000 marks to furnish their home. Repayment of the loan was partially or wholly remitted as children were born. A government grant of 1000 marks was paid on the birth of any child.

Maternity leave was generous – for example, after the birth of a second child, mothers could take advantage of a paid 'baby year' off work on 75 per cent of net earnings.

Crèches and kindergartens staffed by skilled personnel looked after all children who required them up to school age, with parents paying only a token amount. The health service was free and of a high standard. Pensioners were respected, looked after, and had enough to live on.

From 1971 to 1985, the housing conditions of more than seven million people had been improved as a result of a large-scale programme of building and renovation which covered 2.4 million dwellings. The five year plan to end in



1990 envisaged that every family should have a home of their own. Most housing was public property, ruling out speculation in building and land.

In their free time many people took advantage of the wide opportunities for adult education. There were also 1,084 houses of culture where people could pursue any number of hobbies free of charge. There were 17,152 libraries and 6000 book titles were published annually.

In 1984 five million holiday places were provided by the trade unions and

**From 1971 to 1985, the housing conditions of more than seven million people had been improved as a result of a large-scale programme of building and renovation which covered 2.4 million dwellings.**

by enterprises and firms, while another five million trips to destinations at home and abroad were arranged by the travel agencies. There were holiday camps for children during the eight week summer holidays. This was not fairyland – it was socialism in the German Democratic Republic.

This is the real reason why, although

the existence of the GDR as a state ended on 3 October 1990, capitalist Germany continues its campaign of hatred and slander against it. In the words of Klaus Steiniger, writing in German journal 'Rotfuchs': 'Nobody shoots at the dead.'

The end of the German Democratic Republic also means the end of the German peace state, the state which did not threaten its neighbours and had no revanchist designs to regain pieces of other countries which had once historically been part of Germany.

From the Constitution of the GDR:

'Article 6 (5) Militarist and revanchist propaganda in all forms, war-mongering and the manifestation of hatred against creeds, races and nations shall be punished as crimes.'

'Article 8 (2) The GDR shall never undertake a war of conquest, or employ its armed forces against the freedom of another nation.'

The Federal German Bundeswehr (army), having participated in numerous aggressive NATO military exercises while the GDR still existed, is now freed to participate in wars abroad – in Yugoslavia and now in Afghanistan, with 3,800 soldiers and officers. Unbounded weapons production and export – conducted by Rheinmetall, Mercedes, MAN and other firms of German capital – has made the FRG the third largest arms exporter in the world.

Revanchist politics thrive in the FRG. At the beginning of June 2009 the 60th Sudeten German Congress took place in Augsburg – as usual, there were vehement attacks on the Czech Republic.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's party, the Christian Democratic Union, has published its election manifesto. According to the Daily Telegraph (30.6.09) this states that Germans expelled from Poland after the second world war have a "right to a homeland" and that their deportations should be condemned under international law.

The article continues: 'Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the leader of Poland's main opposition party and a former prime minister, has condemned the CDU, saying that the German party was trying to revive territorial disputes and questioning the Polish-German border. Erika Steinbach, the leader of the movement for Germans expelled and an influential CDU politician, has become a hate figure in Poland, especially after it became known that her family had moved to Polish lands annexed by the Third Reich following its 1939 invasion.'

# The Berlin Wall

The German Democratic Republic referred to the Berlin Wall as the Anti-Fascist Protection Wall – with good reason.

**PAT TURNBULL continues her focus on the foundation of GDR and investigates the reasons for constructing the Berlin Wall**

The principles of the Potsdam Agreement, concluded at the end of the war by the USA, USSR and Britain and later by France, were that a demilitarised Germany should never again threaten its neighbours or the peace of the world, that the Nazi Party and its affiliated organisations should be completely rooted out to ensure that they were not revived in any form, that the German monopolies, which had financed Hitler, should be liquidated, and that a peace treaty with Germany should be prepared and concluded.

In the Soviet zone (the area which was to become the German Democratic Republic), in implementation of the Potsdam Agreement, the German armed forces and quasi-military organisations were completely abolished even before the end of 1945.

In the Western zones (which would become the Federal Republic of Germany), on the contrary, measures were taken to preserve intact the core of German military formations headed by former Hitler generals and officers of the Wehrmacht (Hitler's armed forces).

While in the Soviet zone practically all the military installations and war factories were destroyed, the vast majority in the Western zones still remained. All this was despite repeated warnings by the Soviet government about the restoration of German militarism.

The Paris Military Agreements were concluded on October 23, 1954. The signatories included the USA, Britain, France, the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) and Italy. The FRG was to be directly included in NATO and the West European Union with a half million strong West German army within these military blocs.

By the beginning of 1959 the Bundeswehr (Federal German armed forces) was 200,000 strong, with the aim that, on the basis of the 1956 conscription law, it would be the strongest armed force in Western Europe. In 1959, 71 generals and admirals of the Bundeswehr had been officers of the General Staff and High Command of the Hitler Wehrmacht.



‘The Truth about Western Policy on the German Question – Historical Survey’ published in 1959 by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the USSR and the GDR goes into further detail: ‘On January 24, 1957, the appointment was announced of the war criminal General Speidel, notorious for his bestial treatment of French patriots, as Commander-in-Chief of NATO ground forces in Central Europe. Another war criminal, General Foertsch, on whose order tens of thousands of Soviet citizens, including women and children, were shot, has been appointed Deputy Chief-of-Staff (Planning) of NATO forces in Europe.’

In 1959 two thirds of West German judges and public prosecutors, nearly 9000 people, were former members of the Nazi Party. Former Nazi diplomats were heading 54 embassies and diplomatic missions of the FRG. Half of the ministers of the government of the FRG had occupied leading posts in the Hitler state apparatus or carried out responsible functions in organs of the

SS, SA or the Nazi Party. In all these cases we are not talking about mere members of the Nazi Party.

At the same time, the government of the FRG attacked the Communist Party of Germany, the most determined and selfless opponent of the Hitler regime, and on August 17, 1956, the party was outlawed – just as in the time of Hitler, it was compelled to go underground. Then in June 1958 the inter-allied Law No. 5 on banning the National-Socialist (Nazi) Party was officially repealed in the FRG.

The FRG refused to recognise the German frontiers established at Potsdam. On February 6, 1959, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer said: ‘The Germans of Poland and the Sudetenland [part of Czechoslovakia] must return home.’

The Western Powers refused to recognise the GDR as a sovereign state and establish normal diplomatic relations with it. The FRG claimed to be the sole representative of the interests of the German people and proclaimed

its policy to be the annexation of the GDR. Berlin, the former German capital, was situated far inside the borders of the Soviet occupied zone, later the GDR, 180 km (112.5 miles) east of the border with what became the Federal Republic of Germany. By allied agreement after the war, the administration of Greater Berlin was to be headed by an Inter-Allied Commandership functioning under the Allied Control Council which was responsible for Germany as a whole.

The basis for the Four-Power administration of Berlin was that it was the residence of the Control Council. The statute of the Berlin Commandership stated: 'Only unanimous decisions, taken by the representatives of all Four Powers, are valid.'

However, in clear contravention of the Potsdam Agreement, soon after the Western Powers entered Berlin, German anti-fascists were relieved of their posts in the local self-government bodies in the Western sectors and replaced by former Nazi officials. The Western sectors established their own courts and police forces.

The key posts in the police of West Berlin fell into the hands of former Nazis. Even by 1959 33 Nazi judges presided over the West Berlin courts. More than half of those employed in the West Berlin judiciary and a third of the police were former Nazis and war criminals.

The Western Powers prevented democratic development. They very quickly dissolved the bloc of anti-fascist democratic parties in Berlin. They prevented the liquidation of the German monopolies. The Commandants of the Western sectors of Berlin vetoed the law 'On the Transfer of Concerns and Other Economic Enterprises to Public Ownership' passed by the Berlin City Council on February 13, 1947 and a law passed by the same body on March 27, 1947, on the confiscation of the property of war criminals and active Nazis – although both laws were in full agreement with the Potsdam principles.

By 1959 concerns active under Hitler were restored in West Berlin – firms like Kloeckner and Mannesmann which had dominated German heavy industry before the war and were notorious for their especially important part in arming Nazi Germany.

More than 70 old fascist and militarist organisations had been revived and were operating without hindrance. Over 20,000 West Berliners had been recruited into the West German Bundeswehr. A law passed by West Berlin City Council on February 25,

1957 stated that West Berlin must contribute to the 'fulfilment of the international law commitments' of West Germany and to her 'defence tasks'.

The western D-mark was admitted on 20 March 1949 in West Berlin by the three military governors 'as the sole legal method of payment in the western sectors'.

This was despite the written assurance given by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Three Powers that the West mark would not be introduced in West Berlin. Soon exchange offices in West Berlin were exchanging for GDR currency at rates of 1:4 or even 1:5.

By 1961 63,000 people were living in Berlin, GDR, but working in West Berlin. Because of the exchange rates, they were earning four or five times as much as West Berlin workers.

They were living in GDR Berlin,

**...the police of West Berlin fell into the hands of former Nazis. Even by 1959 33 Nazi judges presided over the West Berlin courts. More than half of those employed in the West Berlin judiciary and a third of the police were former Nazis and war criminals.**

paying low rents, food prices and fares without paying a penny in taxes to the state. In effect, 32,000 GDR workers fed the border-crossers with the surplus product of their labour for ten whole years.

Then there were the smugglers. 'The Wall and Humanity' (GDR, 1962) puts it like this: 'They, too, followed the same recipe for accumulating wealth: take, say, 100 west marks; go to the exchange office and change them into 500 east marks.'

Go shopping in Democratic Berlin and buy – let us say, a camera. Return to West Berlin and sell the camera there for some 400 west marks. Then start the whole dirty business all over again. Take the 400 west marks, change them into 2,000 east marks and become a rich man within a few months at the expense of the GDR!

'This was the loss to the GDR – 35 thousand million marks, 35 thousand million marks that might have been invested in the construction of schools,

hospitals, for the more rapid increase in living standards ...'

Workers trained and educated at the expense of the workers of the GDR – doctors, engineers and other skilled workers – were targeted by agents and induced to leave the GDR by promises of higher wages, interest-free loans and tempting accommodation. The agents received head money.

80 agencies were operating in West Berlin camouflaged as 'committees', bureaux' and so on. In 1957 almost 17 million copies of subversive books, pamphlets and leaflets had been infiltrated into the territory of the GDR.

But these organisations did not stop at printed matter: they instigated arson attacks and sabotage inside the GDR. Their spies operated inside the GDR, passing on information on military objects, important projects, GDR state investments and frontier security. One spy had been told to reconnoitre a landing-field for NATO paratroopers.

In 1953 Ernst Reuter, Mayor of West Berlin called it 'the cheapest atomic bomb' against the socialist countries and designated it as 'the door knob by which the door to the east can be opened'. Later Mayor Willy Brandt called it a 'thorn in the side of the GDR' and proclaimed: 'We want to be the disturber of the peace.'

We turn now to the situation in the months before the Berlin Wall was built in August 1961. A perception of heightened aggression on the part of the West was not imaginary. In April 1961 the US launched the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba which was only defeated by the determined and united resistance of the Cuban people.

Quaestor, in an article entitled 'Who in Europe Wants War?' in Labour Monthly of June 1961 asked: 'Is there a menace of war from West Germany?' While in 1958 two-thirds of the conventional weapons of the Bundeswehr had been imported, by 1961 two-thirds of the conventional weapons of the Bundeswehr were manufactured within the country. Eight of the 21 NATO divisions in Central Europe were West German.

Quaestor continued: 'The military manoeuvres of the Bundeswehr, since it completed the first phase of its training and conventional armament in the autumn of 1959, bear a special character ... The territory, methods and conditions chosen provided intensive training for a lightning surprise attack on the GDR, with massive sea landings along

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# China and the recent unrest in Xinjiang

The rioting in the north-west Chinese province of Xinjiang in early July this year left 184 dead and 1500 injured.

**SIMON KORNER provides the background to the unrest and analyses its causes.**

The majority of dead and wounded were Han Chinese, killed by separatist crowds of Uighurs – a Turkic, predominantly Sunni Muslim, people who form the bulk of the region’s population.

This was the second recent outbreak of unrest from a minority population in China, following the Tibetan disturbances, which took place just before the Beijing Olympics.

It appears that the Uighar separatists had learned from the Tibetans about how to gain maximum media coverage, with the protests taking place during a high profile G8 summit, attended by the Chinese president Hu Jintao, in the glare of the international media.

Like the Tibetans, they “phrased the issues in terms that would appeal to western sensibilities: religious freedom; cultural and linguistic preservation ...” according to one reporter, whose relatives live in Xinjiang, (New York Times website).

The Chinese authorities cracked down hard on the violence. They arrested over 1400 and threatened execution for the instigators. Most of the rioters had been provoked, according to the Chinese, and these people have been dealt with via persuasion and education rather than punitive measures.

To calm tensions immediately following the riots, police vans toured the streets calling on people to oppose ethnic separation and hatred. President Hu said that the important thing was to preserve and maintain the “overall stability of Xinjiang”.

This goal seems to have been achieved, with far fewer deaths than during the communal violence in



Gujarat in 2002, in which Hindu chauvinists rampaged virtually unchecked by the authorities.

What caused the violence? The immediate catalyst seems to have been an incident in Guangdong, far from Xinjiang, where migrant Uighur workers in a toy factory were killed in an incident involving a Han woman.

There had been a rape accusation against the Uighur migrants which the government played down in an effort to avoid a wider anti-Uighur backlash in China. The demonstration in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, was initially in protest at the Guangdong murders, but escalated into a full-blown anti-Han pogrom.

The vast majority of deaths were of Han Chinese, and hundreds of Han houses and businesses were burnt, with passers-by set upon and killed. The British media faithfully relayed the separatists’ claims of thousands of Uighar deaths during peaceful demonstrations, but there is no evidence for this.

The Chinese have put the blame for the violence on separatist forces outside China, the main one being the World Uighur Congress, led from Washington

by Rebiya Khadeer, formerly one of China’s wealthiest people before her exile a few years ago, since when her businesses in Urumqi have been dissolved.

Khadeer met George Bush and enjoyed his support. Khadeer’s organisation sent out a huge number of internet posts immediately before the violence, stirring up hatred and calling for the Uighar demonstration to remain in the main city square in support of Uighar separatists abroad.

At the same time, there were violent Uighar separatist attacks on the Chinese consulate in Munich and the embassy in the Netherlands, in what appears to have been a well-organised international campaign.

Another organisation fuelling the violence, according to Professor Rohan Gunaratna of the University of Singapore, has been the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), based in Waziristan, on the Afghan-Pakistan border.

This Al Qaida-linked group set off bombs in Xinjiang and China during the lead-up to the Olympics. Turkey quickly came forward to condemn

China for its administration of Xinjiang, calling for UN Security Council intervention.

This too may have been part of a co-ordinated campaign, following a recent visit to China by Turkey's President Gul, which included a visit to Xinjiang. Turkey has long promoted the Uighar separatist cause, claiming ethnic identity with the Turkic population.

The Uighar separatists complain of discrimination against their language and of being left out of the Chinese job market. They also claim they have been restricted in making the hajj to Mecca and are forced to eat during Ramadan.

The US based organisation Human Rights Watch says that China's relationship to Xinjiang is a colonial one. Yet the Chinese authorities have long had a policy of positive discrimination, in favour of minority populations such as the Uighars, based on the Bolshevik nationalities policy drafted by Stalin, which sought to quell big nation chauvinism and foster the development of minority languages and cultures.

The result in Xinjiang has been that many Uighurs have sent their children to Uighur-speaking schools, and watch Uighar-language TV. There are also over two thousand mosques in this Muslim region. Arabic, the language of religion for the Uighars, is taught in government schools though there are no separate private Arabic-speaking schools.

Moreover, the Uighars, like the Tibetans, enjoy certain rights over the majority population, as part of the government's effort to bring equality to the

fifty-five minority groups, comprising 130 million Chinese citizens. The one child policy, which applies to the majority of Chinese, does not apply to the Uighurs.

Uighur students, like Tibetans, are awarded positively weighted scores in

**... the Uighars, like the Tibetans, enjoy certain rights over the majority population, as part of the government's effort to bring equality to the 55 minority groups, comprising 130 million Chinese citizens.**

tests for university places to boost Uighur numbers in higher education.

But the fact remains that the Uighurs, like the Tibetans, inhabit a region far less developed than other parts of China. The Chinese government has tried to counter the imbalance with its 'develop the west' policy, which has boosted Xinjiang's economy hugely,

with living standards rising.

The footage of the capital Urumqi on the western news reports showed a modern city, with high-rise buildings and well-built roads.

And yet with the race towards a capitalist economy in China, these efforts are proving insufficient to offset regional economic disadvantages.

The rapid moves away from a planned economy have meant a flow of labour out of less developed areas. As capitalist competition for jobs favours Mandarin speakers, it has left minorities such as the Uighars, who are not sufficiently versed in Mandarin, at a disadvantage.

The 'develop the west' policy may, ironically, have increased a sense of Uighar beleaguerment. Along with the billions of dollars of subsidies into the region, there has been large-scale migration westwards.

Whereas in 1949 Han made up 6% of Xinjiang, now they number just below half. And in the capital Urumqi, with a population of 2.3 million, the majority are Han.

Two other factors have boosted Uighar separatist confidence. One is the breakup of the Soviet Union, with five predominantly Muslim central Soviet Asian republics gaining independence and fostering Uighar nationalism.

The second factor has been the growth of the internet, which has linked up Uighurs with Muslims and others elsewhere. It was posts on the internet from Washington that gave the signal for the start of the recent violence.

## The Berlin wall

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the Baltic coast and a tank breakthrough in the south, over the GDR-Czechoslovak frontier region – backed by crushing nuclear rocket attacks on Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Baltic ports.'

Andrew Rothstein's 'Notes of the Month' (Labour Monthly, August 1961) were entitled 'War Threat – Why?' From a long list of belligerent British newspaper headlines which Rothstein quotes, two may be representative: 'Berlin Test of Western Firmness. Plan for NATO Call-Up' (The Times, June 21) and 'Berlin: Kennedy Calls His "War Council"' (Daily Express, July 1). Rothstein continues: 'The Western Notes to the

USSR on July 17 threatened war almost in so many words.' Referring to the 'Wintershield II' military exercise of January 1961, he says: 'The West German press did not trouble to conceal that this was based on 'Day X' of an East-West war.'

On July 2, 1961 the Sunday Times reported 'the biggest ever West German naval manoeuvres' are to be held this month in the North Sea and the Baltic 'near the coast of East Germany'.

The Berlin Wall was constructed over night on 13 August 1961. The securing of the GDR border involved no action of any kind against West Berlin or the Western Powers.

Exactly 19 days after 13 August, the West German employers' newspaper, the *Industriekurier*, regretfully wrote: 'A reunification with the Bundeswehr marching victoriously through the

Brandenburg Gate to the beating of drums – such a reunification will not take place in the foreseeable future.'

'What You Should Know About the Wall' (GDR, 1962) says this: 'The measures we introduced on 13 August in conjunction with the Warsaw Treaty states have cooled off a number of hot-heads in Bonn and West Berlin. For the first time in German history the match which was to set fire to another war was extinguished before it had fulfilled its purpose.'

The building of the Berlin Wall forced the capitalist powers to recognise reality. The status of West Berlin was regularised in 1971, when its special political status was defined in a Quadripartite Agreement signed by the USSR, USA, France and Great Britain.

The GDR became a member of the United Nations Organisation in 1973.

# Global recession and developing countries

The media in the UK – and indeed across Europe – has focused extensively on the impact of the global financial and economic crisis at home.

**GAIL HURLEY of the European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD) asks who cares about the impact the global recession is having on developing countries?**

Everyday, we are confronted with fresh figures which confirm record new highs in the number of unemployed or in the number of homes which have been repossessed. In the UK, unemployment currently stands at almost 8%, the highest in over 10 years.

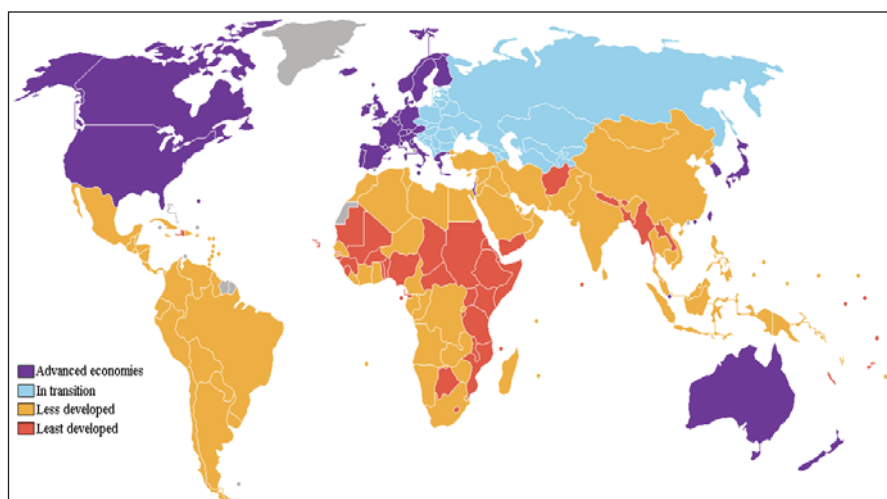
Elsewhere in Europe, the situation is even more critical; in Spain unemployment stands at over 18% and some analysts predict that house prices will decline by a further 20% over 2009 - 2010.

Across Europe, central governments have been forced to intervene to guarantee the deposits of major domestic banks in order to reassure concerned savers and prevent the collapse of the domestic financial system. The incomes of millions of pensioners have declined substantially as interest rates have plummeted and pension funds post large losses.

Rich-country governments have responded to these social and economic challenges with announcements of sizeable fiscal stimulus programmes. The largest announced so far are Spain (2.3% of GDP); USA (2.3%); Australia (2.1%) and the UK (2%). In the US alone, the bail-out of major banks and corporations combined with the fiscal stimulus package announced by the government will amount to some \$3 trillion, or about \$8,000 per person.

These proactive countercyclical spending programmes are to be paid for via the issuance of new sovereign bonds, i.e. increased levels of government debt. At the end of June 2009, UK public sector debt stood at £798.8 billion or almost 57% of GDP. This is well above the UK Government's target level of 40% of GDP.

In other advanced economies, the situation is worse; in Italy, public sector debt stands at over 100% of GDP and in Japan 194%.



The world's wealthier nations clearly face significant challenges. But it seems that very little has been said – at least in most mainstream media outlets in the UK and Europe – about the enormous impact the global economic downturn has had on the world's poorer nations.

Rich and poor countries alike are more closely integrated via international trade and investment, and the movement of people and capital than ever before. This means that most countries throughout the world can reasonably expect to be impacted by recent events. So concretely, how has the global financial and economic crisis played-out in the global south?

Economic activity in developing countries has slowed abruptly. GDP growth in developing countries will slow to just 0.6% in 2009. This represents a dramatic decline from average annual growth rates of between 5% - 7% over the last ten years. Two regions – Europe and Central Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean – are expected to face deep recessions in 2009. GDP is expected to contract by 4.7% in 2009 in the Europe and

Central Asia region and by 2.9% in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The World Bank estimates that the global financial and economic crisis will increase poverty by around 46 million people in 2009. This will mean a critical slowdown – if not reversal – of progress towards achievement of the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Even prior to the global downturn, the goals related to child and maternal mortality, primary school completion, nutrition and sanitation were all unlikely to be met.

Developing countries' external debt levels are predicted to rise again. The decline in global commodity prices, the fall in migrant remittances, cuts to official development assistance (ODA), the sharp contraction in international commercial bank loans and foreign direct investment, and increased spreads on developing country sovereign bonds have all combined to significantly worsen the budgetary position of many developing country governments.

For low-income countries (LICs), the largest source of pressure comes

from the sharp decline in global commodity prices. Many low-income country governments rely disproportionately on revenues from commodity exports.

Indeed, for some of the world's poorest countries, commodity-related revenues constitute more than 20% of total revenues. By December 2008, crude oil prices had dropped to US\$41 a barrel (a decline of 70% from its peak just six months earlier).

By December 2008, the prices of internationally traded non-energy commodities – such as food and metals – had fallen by 40%. Although by May 2009, these prices had recovered somewhat – by 6% and 7% respectively – the concern remains that commodity prices are historically volatile and tend to be procyclical.

This means that while the global economic downturn continues, prices cannot be expected to recover significantly and are unlikely to reach the high levels seen over the past few years. Government revenues from this source will therefore continue to be depressed for some time to come.

Moreover, the poorest countries are also heavily dependent on official development assistance and migrant remittances as important additional sources of income. Global ODA levels increased to US\$114bn in 2008 up from US\$103.5bn in 2007.

However fiscal pressures in donor countries may constrain further increases and indeed some countries such as Greece, Ireland, Italy and Latvia have announced cuts to previously announced aid levels. Previous pledges to increase aid levels were already insufficient to help poor countries reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Developing countries are also much more dependent on private capital flows than ever before. The decline in private capital flows to developing countries is expected to set a record.

Net private debt and equity flows are projected to decline from a record high of 8.6% of GDP in 2007 to just 2% of GDP in 2009. In 2007, net private inflows to developing countries totalled more than US\$1 trillion but this is projected to decline to just US\$360 billion in 2009.

Commercial banks have been at the forefront of the contraction in private financial flows; three quarters of the decline in private capital flows is due to a deterioration in net flows from commercial banks as major global banks have dramatically scaled back both domestic and international lending.

Moreover a home-country bias has

re-emerged in commercial bank lending; in advanced economies, measures to recapitalise commercial banks with public funds have led to pressures for banks to concentrate lending activities on the domestic market at the expense of international activities. This has hit middle-income and emerging market economies particularly hard. Commercial bank lending to emerging market economies is projected to contract by US\$92 million in 2009 and to remain subdued in 2010.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is falling, particularly in the natural resource sectors, as declining commodity prices and difficult financing conditions in the origin country reduce the attractiveness of these investments. In 2009, FDI flows to developing countries are projected to fall by 30% to US\$ 385 billion. It is the first fall of more than 10% since 1986.

**Many countries had double digit current account deficits and high levels of government debt even before the global financial and economic crisis struck.**

For those developing countries with access to international capital markets, spreads on sovereign bonds have increased substantially. Between September 2008 and March 2009, spreads on government bonds widened to unprecedented levels.

Rates have subsequently narrowed but nevertheless for many countries, they remain significantly above pre-crisis levels. This implies a heavy cost to new debt issuance which in turn has important implications for short and medium-term debt sustainability.

Not surprisingly, it has led several low-income countries to postpone their issuance plans, such as Albania, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Higher spreads on the sovereign bonds of both

low and middle-income countries have been driven in part by increased risk aversion among investors.

But at the same time, the dramatic increase in sovereign debt issuance by high-income advanced economies has crowded-out many developing country issuers.

In parallel, many developing country currencies have depreciated sharply against the major hard currencies. Indeed some have depreciated by more than 20%. This increases the local currency cost of external debt service and makes repaying debts denominated in hard currencies such as US\$ or EURO much more difficult.

In low-income countries, over 46% of external debts are denominated in US\$, 13% in the EURO and 12% in the yen. In middle-income countries the picture is similar: 66% of external debts are in US\$, 18% in the € and 9% in the yen.

In sum, developing countries face a dismal external financing climate. Some countries have been able to rely on foreign reserves accumulated over the past few years to help meet their external financing gap.

But some have already drawn-down their reserves significantly. Since September 2008, 16 countries have consumed 20% or more of their foreign reserves. In 18 countries, the current stock of reserves covers less than four months of imports.

In 22 low-income countries, reserves are expected to fall to below three months of imports. Moreover, official estimates of the sheer scale of the external financing gap facing developing countries means that for most poor countries, the availability of foreign reserves, private external finance and official support is unlikely to be able to cover their current account deficits and repayments on external debt. The World Bank has estimated that some 98 developing countries face a financing gap of between US\$268 billion and US\$700 billion in 2009.

For some countries and regions, 2009 and 2010 promise to be particularly tough since a significant percentage of corporate and government debt will mature over the next period.

This is the case for Europe and Central Asia. It is the region which has increased its external debt stock the most dramatically over the past four years. Total external debt stocks more than doubled between 2004 and 2008.

Many countries had double digit current account deficits and/or high levels of government debt even before the global financial and economic crisis struck. For example, Latvia and

Kazakhstan had government debt-to-GDP ratios of 150.3% and 103.7% respectively in 2008.

Approximately 21% of the region's external debt is in the form of short-term debt obligations and 55% of this debt is owed by private sector entities. Crucially, most of this borrowing has taken place in foreign currencies which places significant pressures on government and corporate borrowers should domestic currencies depreciate further against the currencies of the loans.

The World Bank estimates that, within the region, US\$283 billion in short-term debt will fall due this year. The predominance of foreign owned banks in the Central and Eastern Europe region increases these countries' vulnerabilities further; if parent banks in high-income countries scale back their lending activities in the region, local banks companies will face on-going challenges to refinance maturing debt.

A potential public sector liability arises if private borrowers, the bulk of whose debt is concentrated in short-term instruments, appeal to their governments for assistance. In fact, this has already happened in other regions: in Brazil, Mexico and Russia, central banks have used official foreign reserves to provide foreign currency lending facilities to local companies to enable them to reimburse maturing foreign currency credits.

For many countries, the shortfall in external finance is already being partially filled by a dramatic increase in the take-up of new official debt by international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

A lot of attention has focused on the US\$ 1.1 trillion that in April 2009 the G20 pledged to make available in new finance to developing countries to help them deal with the fall-out of the global recession.

This agreement funnelled an additional US\$500 billion in resources to the IMF with substantial increases in funds for the multilateral development banks also; the G20 endorsed a 200% general capital increase for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and agreed to review the need for capital increases at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

New IMF financing arrangements to

low-income countries jumped from 5 in 2007 to 23 in 2008. In July 2009, the IMF announced an unprecedented increase in financial support to low-income countries.

Concessional loans to low-income countries are expected to reach up to US\$4 billion per year in each of 2009 and 2010. This follows five years in which repayments to the institution exceeded new disbursements.

The World Bank has committed a total of US\$58.8 billion in 2009 to help countries cope with global financial and economic crisis, a 54% increase over the previous fiscal year and a record high for the global development institution. In sum, the response of the international community is aggressive levels of new loans from the official sector. Indeed the combination of stepped-up IMF, and other multilateral and bilateral official lending, has pushed the official sector back into its most prominent role in providing external financing in over a decade.

Europe & Central Asia	2000	2004	2006	2008
Total external debt stock (US\$mn)	440,432	662,155	911,413	1,367.018

Whereas official lenders had provided funding equivalent to 4% of that of private sources in 2007, this ratio will have risen almost ten-fold to 37% in 2009.

Some analysts will undoubtedly question the ethics of this approach: when we consider that developing countries were not responsible for the current global recession – the origins lie instead in the greed of rich country bankers – then it would appear profoundly unjust that the only way poor countries can secure the vital extra external finance they need is via the ratcheting-up of new debts.

Poor countries will in essence pay for the mistakes of the rich. This has led some civil society organisations such as the Brussels-based research NGO, EURODAD (European Network on Debt & Development) to propose alternative policy responses.

EURODAD suggests that instead of aggressive levels of new official sector debt, a more sensible and just approach should be a moratorium on debt service payments – without interest – between 2010 and 2015 for all those countries which are currently off-target towards achievement of the internationally-agreed Millennium Development Goals.

Lower external debt service levels will in effect act as a form of fiscal stimulus

for countries which have little space to implement countercyclical policies; in fact, reduced government revenues and limited access to external sources of affordable capital will constrain most countries' abilities to maintain current expenditure levels, let alone increase them.

In 2008, low-income countries reimbursed over US\$11.6 billion on public and publicly guaranteed debt to external creditors. The figure stands at US\$165.5 billion in external debt repayments made by middle-income countries in 2008. These are significant sums which could instead be made available to governments to spend on national social and economic development priorities.

Precedents do exist for such measures. Following the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004, affected countries such as Indonesia and Thailand were offered a temporary moratorium on debt service payments to some of their most important creditors. In this

case, a moratorium was offered for a period of two years and interest would continue to accrue on the loans.

But given the severity of the current global recession as well as international commitments to help countries achieve the MDGs by 2015, this five-year moratorium should include a freeze on the accrual of interest.

Rich-country banks have been bailed-out by rich-country governments with sums few of us understand. The costs to individual creditors of a five-year moratorium on debt service payments from some of the world's poorest countries will be, in comparison, much smaller.

Although an international agreement to implement a coordinated moratorium would be the preferred solution, this should not stop individual countries which agree with this simple proposal from stepping-forward to act unilaterally.

The consequences of inaction will be grave. If we take a recent historical example as an indicator, following the East Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, it took almost a decade for the poverty headcount to regain its pre-crisis level in affected countries.

The international community has the opportunity to prove that this is unacceptable and to extend its ambitious response to the current global crisis to some of the world's most poor and vulnerable people.

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# Torture and the future

**On 25 June, 2009, at the Heinrich Heine University in Dusseldorf in Germany, African National Congress veteran and Rivonia Trialist DENIS GOLDBERG presented a paper titled, "South Africa, the transition to democracy and the banning of torture."**

**Denis, along with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and others was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for conspiring to overthrow the apartheid state by armed force. Denis spent 22 years in prison. We are pleased to publish his paper in full.**



27 March 2009: Denis receiving, from former President, Kgalema Motlanthe, the South African National 'Order of Luthuli in Silver' award "for his commitment to the struggle against apartheid and service to the people of South Africa."

The title of this paper was suggested to me by Professor Goerling and I have approached it in the context of the title of this conference: Torture and the Future.

Torture has been in the news lately because of the revelations of the use of torture by the United States in its so-called 'war on terror.' Security forces say there is no future without torture!

Human rights activists say that with torture there is no future worth striving for, that torture by security forces destroys the very society we wish to protect. Therefore we who believe in the development of society to protect the rights of every human being, have to care about putting an end to torture and the general atmosphere of social violence that goes with it.

Turning now to South Africa: I am happy to report that South Africa has become a democracy and we have, in our Constitution, banned torture. All lives share the fact that they have a birth date and a date of death. It is what happens between those important dates that is interesting. And so it is with our history.

We brought an end to the dictatorship based on the racism by law of apartheid and the use of violence and torture to maintain the system. Our democracy was officially born in 1994 when Nelson Mandela became President so we have become a democracy and have just celebrated our fourth free democratic elections.

The election results came out and there were few complaints. Despite a

few minor incidents caused by undisciplined individuals, the elections went off peacefully.

Let me go back a bit to the past. I was arrested with others in 1963 and held under our infamous 90 days law (later 120 days) that allowed police to arrest people and hold them without contact with anyone except the security police for the purpose of providing information to the satisfaction of the head of police. The secrecy alone made this a 'licence to torture.'

Was I tortured? I don't know! It depends on the definition of torture. According to the Stanford University philosophers I was not tortured, merely put under psychological pressure. According to the UN Declaration I was tortured even though I was not physically beaten. It later appeared that there was to be a show trial, the famous Rivonia Trial in which Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and other great leaders and I were convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for conspiring to overthrow the apartheid state by armed force.

Therefore I had to be unmarked when shown to the world. Nevertheless 90 days of solitary confinement with the possibility of it being repeated for eternity, as the Police Minister said, provided a certain pressure. To have my interrogator sit opposite me pointing his revolver at me and playing with the trigger provided even greater pressure.

That is what the Stanford philosophers say: it was just pressure to give up my personal freedom. I can report that I thought they would kill me and this was reinforced when they told me that I could safely speak about Looksmart Ngudle because he was dead. Of course I accused them of murdering my comrade. They denied it, of course, but said they would be happy to hand me over to the interrogators who had dealt with him. The threat was clear.

Then they threatened to arrest my wife under the 90 days law if I did not speak. (They had in fact already arrested her.) Knowing what they were capable of doing, was that pressure or torture? When they threatened her with the removal of our children and putting them in separate government institutions, was she pressured or tortured?

In my case they had made a fundamental error. They had seriously informed me that I would be charged with offences that carried the death penalty and they would ensure that I was hanged.

Since I would die anyway, better to resist their torture, or was it merely pressure, and die with honour. In fact they removed me to an isolated prison where they expected me to be more vulnerable. However, I was able to engineer my escape.

Though they recaptured me almost immediately and I got a few broken ribs in the process, they gave up on the interrogations. They pretended to be hurt because they thought I was ready to cooperate and I had tricked them, they said. They implied that I was a really naughty dishonest person!

They had offered me money, new identification documents and help to settle anywhere in the world that I wished for, in exchange for information about every person and place I had met or used in years of resistance to apartheid. They were offended when I rejected their offer as dishonourable, silly and futile. The words I used were not as polite as that, however.

As early as 1960, during the State of Emergency called by the apartheid government after the Sharpeville Massacre, when thousands of political activists were arrested, torture was used against some of the detainees including some of the comrades I worked with.

Johnny, already more than 60 years old was forced to stand for days and nights on end until he was delirious. He was not allowed to use a toilet. He appeared at the doorway of the courtyard of the prison while we were on parade. He looked awful: unshaved, grey with exhaustion, and his clothes yellow with urine from above his waste downwards.

But more, he looked ashamed to be seen in such a state. I suspect too that he had been compelled to say more than he intended. My response was simply to defiantly break ranks and go to him and embrace him. He needed support and comfort and above all acceptance.

I took him to the shower bath and saw to it that he was cleaned up and dressed in spare clothes that I fortunately had with me. The guards new they could not easily stop me doing what had to be done and I demanded a bucket and hot water so that I could wash his clothes.

Bernard who was released after being tortured left the country. Stephanie's ankle was broken when her interrogator applied more pressure than he should have. In the end the state paid her compensation for the physical assault.

These are just a few of the cases

known to me personally.

After the commencement of our armed struggle in which I too was involved and as the resistance heightened in the 1970s and 1980s we know that many were tortured to death. We know that many were physically tortured and would never recover their health.

We know that many were psychologically tortured and would never become fully functional again. I have already mentioned Looksmart Ngudle, the first to be murdered under the new laws.

Steve Bantu Biko's case is notorious. A white newspaper editor, Donald Woods, broke the story and was himself hounded out of the country by violence and murder attempts on him and his children.

The case was notable for the role that the police doctors played. They covered up the seriousness of his condition and then signed a death certificate saying that he had died of natural causes when in fact he died from brain dam-



Abu Ghraib prison, Baghdad, Iraq.

age inflicted by his interrogators.

The doctors were eventually found guilty of professional misconduct by the Statutory Medical Council and given very mild punishment. Dr Neill Aggett, a trade union activist was murdered and became a cause celebre with thousands of all races marching in the streets of Johannesburg in protest, even though such a march was illegal.

These cases and others led to the formation of a new association of progressive doctors who opposed the use of violence and indeed opposed apartheid as the cause of the violence.

One of the more famous of these doctors was Dr Wendy Orr who as a police doctor kept detailed records of the torture suffered by the patients she

saw in police custody and published the information. Her life too became endangered but she acted out of conscience and would not retract. Eventually the Detainees Parents Support Committee emerged and much more information was recorded.

The University of Cape Town carried out a study showing that some 90 percent of detainees were physically mistreated by the police. The licence to torture was no mere figure of speech. Over the years at least a 1000 people were tortured or killed in police custody during the struggle against apartheid.

My comrade Issy was made to stand in 1964 for days and nights until he was so exhausted he simply and quietly betrayed the whereabouts of another comrade who was then arrested. Issy tried to commit suicide.

He bore thick scars around his ankles and wrists where he had slashed the arteries but before he could bleed to death a night guard saw what he had done and his life was saved. Issy was himself sentenced to five years imprisonment and the comrade he had given up was sentenced to life imprisonment and in fact died in prison from cancer that was not diagnosed in time.

Issy recovered and his comrades never once berated him, but Issy felt ashamed all the rest of his life. We were always gentle with him and on one occasion I had to take him in my arms while he wept about his sense of shame for the betrayal he had been forced into.

My comrade Joyce described at a book launch I participated in with her the life long consequences for her of having been tortured into a confession that involved others. While speaking about the book, a volume in a series, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, she suddenly started to talk with great emotion about the use of torture and stood weeping as she spoke. Oh, the cost of freedom and democracy ....

A good summary of relevant information appears in a paper presented to a conference in Mexico in April 2002 by Piers Pigou of the Centre for Violence and Reconciliation.

During the apartheid era and as the struggle for freedom intensified there was mounting police violence and torture in South Africa.

There were 21000 submissions made to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by victims of human rights contraventions mainly by the apartheid security forces.

300 submissions were made by mem-

bers of state security forces in the course of amnesty applications.

It was clear that there was support at the highest level for the use of torture

At least 78,000 people were detained between 1960 and 1990 when the negotiations between the apartheid government and the African National Congress began after the release of Nelson Mandela.

In 1986/87 alone, 25,000 were detained.

That long nightmare is over and it is just the families of the victims and some of the survivors who are never free of the nightmares.

In understanding our past it is necessary to know that the ANC in its exile years in its camps in Africa was faced with serious disciplinary problems and massive infiltration by the apartheid security forces. The ANC's internal security apparatus resorted to the use of violence and torture against its own members. It instituted its own inquiry and later an independent inquiry into these human rights abuses. It voluntarily submitted its findings to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (see below).

It is fair to say that many of us were shocked by these revelations and I have to conclude that the evidence from psychotherapists that victims often become perpetrators has great validity.

It is especially true where fear of betrayal by people who pose as comrades, leads to a despairing attempt to maintain unity and there are not the large state resources required for dealing with such issues. Besides being wrong in principle, these methods not only failed to maintain unity, they actively caused disunity. The ANC leadership under the Late OR Tambo and Chris Hani largely succeeded in bringing these abuses to an end.

What is clear is that torture and violence flourish in conditions of secrecy and impunity.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission established as part of the settlement agreed between the apartheid government and the ANC and its allies fulfilled a useful function. I am not sure that all the truth was told and that reconciliation can happen overnight.

Only 300 perpetrators came forward to tell their 'truths' and claim amnesty from prosecution by the new democratic post-apartheid state. The security forces had used the four years of negotiations before the first democratic elections in 1994 to destroy the evidence of their crimes against human rights.

Four years in which documents were

shredded and incinerated. So much 'had to be' destroyed that they used the blast furnaces of steel mills to do the work for them. They mostly felt safe enough to thumb their noses at the Commission.

The TRC enabled ordinary people who had suffered not merely the indignities of apartheid but specific acts of violence against persons to become a part of history. In doing so by telling the TRC their stories which were carried in the media many achieved some kind of catharsis.

Many achieved closure when the TRC's investigators were able to ascertain what had happened to those who had been made to 'disappear'. For some, however, the TRC was a kind of whitewashing of the perpetrators who, by appearing before the TRC, escaped prosecutions for crimes as serious as murder. This was part of the legislation enacted by the new Parliament that decided that getting at the truth was



more important than formal justice and the revenge by judicial punishment.

This was a tricky balancing act since the apartheid perpetrators were demanding total amnesty without evidence and the liberation movement which knew that we would not be able to hold a kind of 'Nuremburg Trial' of the perpetrators. Ultimately the judgement was that beginning the process of reconstruction was more important than court processes.

What was surprising was the general (anecdotal) indifference of the white population to the painful stories told. The denial of complicity in apartheid was evident. When pressed, the answer was often: "We did not know what was happening. It was all done in secret!"

Who then were the perpetrators? Just some ghosts? Who elected the white regime that turned our country into an imprisoned society? A society of daily indignity, violence and torture that just happened!

The TRC had a team of therapists at

hand to provide relief for victims of the apartheid crimes against their human rights, but the treatment was only at the hearings themselves and could not be long term therapy. As important was the need for counselling for the Commissioners who day after day were exposed to the harrowing tales of brutality and sorrow revealed by the witnesses.

Could the TRC fulfil its role of Reconciliation? I do not know if there is a conclusive answer. At the very least, we know from evidence led in public and subject to cross examination that our allegations of what was done to our people were true and not figments of our imagination as alleged by the apartheid state, its supporters that included governments of the great powers, and the media who always demanded that we produce evidence of what was done in secret!

The secret has been blown wide open. It seems to this observer that reconciliation requires the victims to accept that the nightmare is over and the perpetrators get away free of punishment and have no need even to apologise. They drew their pensions and golden handshakes and got on with their lives. The victims also have to get on with their lives and the pain and grief they suffered.

In the Constitutional Court established under our new constitution there is a wonderful art collection mainly organised by Judge Albie Sachs who was himself the victim of a booby trap bomb attached to his car in Maputo by apartheid agents. He miraculously survived.

He told me that he felt that having been blown up and having lost an arm and an eye justified his existence because he had spent his exile writing laws for the newly liberated Republic of Mozambique while I remained and spent 22 years in prison.

That I said was unacceptable self abnegation. Each of us contributes what we can to liberation. A victim of torture and terrorism by the state, he played a leading role in drafting our democratic constitution, which bans torture as illegal.

Among the exhibits in the art collection is a glass-fronted showcase in which there hang an evening gown, an elegant trouser suit and a frock, all made of blue plastic material. They were made to honour a young woman freedom fighter whose male interrogators, unable to break her will, had stripped her naked and we know what men can do to humiliate women.

She had covered her nakedness with

a panty made of a blue plastic shopping bag. One of her torturers forced her to kneel and put his revolver to the back of her head. The threat of death was supposed to make her talk. He executed her when he pulled the trigger, by accident, he told the TRC. He then buried her illegally on a farm.

He took the Commissioners to her burial place. Her skeleton, all that remained of her, was exhumed. He had buried her in a tiny hole in the ground, upright, in a crouching position. Uppermost was her skull with the bullet hole left by the shot that killed her.

Around her pelvis was the blue plastic bag. The artist, so moved by the story, made the clothes to restore her dignity and, I would say, the dignity of all the victims of such brutality.

Others were never recovered. Some were dropped into the deep Southern Ocean from helicopters, some were thrown into crocodile infested rivers to remove the evidence of the brutal illegality. Murder had become a sport for some 'protectors of the state.' We even heard stories of police officers celebrating a murder expedition at a barbecue organised by their superior officers.

How can one fail to be moved by the brutality used to maintain a dying system? What I do know is that to be human we have to find ways of stopping such things from happening because not only is the victim dehumanised, the perpetrators and the whole society lose our sense of the value of human life.

Since the end of apartheid and the achievement of our new democracy things have changed for the better. Yet it is true to say that police violence and torture have not yet ended.

Basic police training includes study of the Bill of Rights and human rights training. An Independent Complaints Directorate has been created. It has been limited in its efforts by the way the police report complaints against their own members, in the sense of the categories of offences that are used.

The South African Police Service adopted a Prevention of Torture Policy in 1998/1999.

Yet there were an average of 14000 cases a year between 1994 and 1997 and on average 1200 officers were convicted each year of violent abuse of prisoners. Not all were torture in terms of the definition which requires the intentional use of physical and psychological abuse for the purpose of extracting information from a person.

Deaths in custody range up to 700 a year. It is not clear how many are the result of police violence and how many

are caused by neglect of prisoners in ill health, drunk or under the influence of other substances.

It is worth noting that in apartheid times torture was not reserved for political opponents of the regime. It was used against petty thieves and other criminal accused. Judges would allow evidence obtained through such methods, asking merely if it was "true."

Just recently in 2009, a Judge in the Supreme Court of Appeal ruled that evidence obtained by torture of a witness could not be used to convict an accused person even in cases of serious crimes, and even if the evidence is reliable and necessary for conviction.

In the case in question it was not the accused but a key witness whose evidence was obtained by torture. The Judge ruled that section 35(c) of the Constitution prohibits the use of torture whether by official or private agencies. He said that the use of such violence was a violation of the human rights of the individual.

**Some were dropped into the deep Southern Ocean from helicopters, some were thrown into crocodile infested rivers to remove the evidence of the brutal illegality. Murder had become a sport for some 'protectors of the state.'**

Indeed Chapter 2 of the Constitution is South Africa's Bill of Rights and our courts have zealously upheld those rights against the government and others.

I do not think it is possible to legislate for the limited and controlled use of violence to protect the majority, the state or whatever. We have to legislate against the use of violence and torture and terror by the state and its agencies whether official or private.

And yet I know that we can dream up scenarios of ticking bombs and suffocating victims of abduction, where we can find some kind of rationale for the security of the many against the rights of the individual.

I am also sure, having lived through a few dark times, that there will be incidents where abuses occur and police officers and others will justify their actions in some way. Let our courts and an informed public decide on the merits of each individual case as we strive to overcome abuses and uphold respect for human life, freedom and dignity.

To return to my introductory remarks: it is right that we point to the misuse of violence against persons by governments such as that of the USA, but what about our individual and collective acquiescence in the silence of our own governments, in Europe for example, in the face of such widespread systematic abuse?

South Africa has played a leading role in the African Renaissance, especially during the Presidency of Thabo Mbeki. The concept of human rights and the adoption of African Regional Charters on such rights have been strongly promoted.

Among the developments has been the adoption on 23 October 2002 by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights of the 'Robben Island Guidelines' for the prevention of torture and degrading treatment of prisoners. The guidelines were decided upon in 2002 at a workshop held at the famous prison which is now a museum to the triumph of the human spirit.

Some of the elements of the Robben Island Guidelines are: The prohibition of torture; the criminalization of torture; to combat the use of torture; "necessity," "national emergency," or "public order" and "superior orders" are not to be invoked as justifications for the use of torture or degrading treatment.

Torture is to be prevented by basic procedural safeguards and pre-trial procedures are specifically mentioned. Secret detention centres are not to be permitted. An independent judiciary is essential and the state must respond to the needs of victims of torture and degrading treatment.

The Robben Island Guidelines are in full accordance with other international instruments but making concrete practical proposals for the achievement of the ending of these abuses.

In all countries we have to strive to ensure a future free of such abuses. It is essential that there is openness and transparency and a committed leadership that acts against those who abuse their power and position to deprive people of their rights as human beings.

A committed leadership can only come from us the masses, the electorate. We who have democratic rights must use them to make sure those rights are protected.

If we elect political representatives who are either indifferent to the issue or who support the use of torture and abuse of the rights of prisoners, who are the abusers? We then are the abusers, of course. We cannot escape our responsibility.

## READER'S LETTER to The Socialist Correspondent

### DARWIN AND COMPLEXITY FROM SIMPLICITY

I read with interest 'Darwin's magnum opus' published in issue 5 of The Socialist Correspondent and wish to draw attention to what I believe was Darwin's greatest contribution to human thinking.

A fundamental question throughout human history has been: how does complexity arise from simplicity? By what mechanism could complex life arise from simple molecules? Fred Hoyle likened it to a wind blowing through a scrapyard and creating a jumbo jet.

Evolution by natural selection provides the only rational mechanism anyone has ever come up with that explains this development of complexity. Genetics allows us actually to examine the history of that development, to look at both its successes and failures; these are written in the cell chemistry.

The traditional answer was of course a creator. When S Wordfish writes that even in Darwin's day not all Christians took the bible literally he is correct, but that is not the point. They believed in a creator. Belief in a creator doesn't answer the question; presumably god is complex so who/what made god? A recursive argument, yet throughout history it has been the prevalent idea in all human cultures and an important base for religious superstitions. Evolution has such a profound effect on how we view ourselves and the universe we live in that it is hard to take in. As Douglas Adams puts it "The thing about evolution is that if it hasn't turned your brain inside out – you haven't understood it". (Douglas Adams – 'The Salmon of Doubt' various writings published after the author's death as an audio book.)

Evolution and genetics tells us about our history all the way back to the beginnings of life, it tells us about our relationship with every known living thing on the planet. Is it not amazing that no living creature has been found that we are not related to, no matter how simple or bizarre that creature is? Genetics maps out how changes occur, how life adapts to new environments. When you see, as I have, hard pads on the feet of a fruit fly, pads which its recent ancestors did not have, pads which protect it from absorbing modern pesticides from the leaves it walks on - evolution ceases to be a simple theory.

Evolution/genetics is the base that provides the final part to a wholly materialistic understanding of the universe. It also finally, at least in the rational mind, removes any lingering need for a god. Darwin had no idea of genetics of course. That what to him was a theory, eventually would be mapped out in the chemistry of all living things, was beyond the imagination of anyone living in the 19th century. By publishing The Origin of Species, Darwin and later Mendel by developing genetics, opened the door not only to the myriad technological advances which underpin modern food production, medicine and much more, it also provided a tool to allow the human mind to free itself from religious superstition.

We owe a great debt to both of them.

A. B. Cairns