



**Iran's popular
revolt**

Professor Ervand
Abrahamian



**Liberation
heroes Cheddi
and Janet Jagan**

Indra Chandrapal

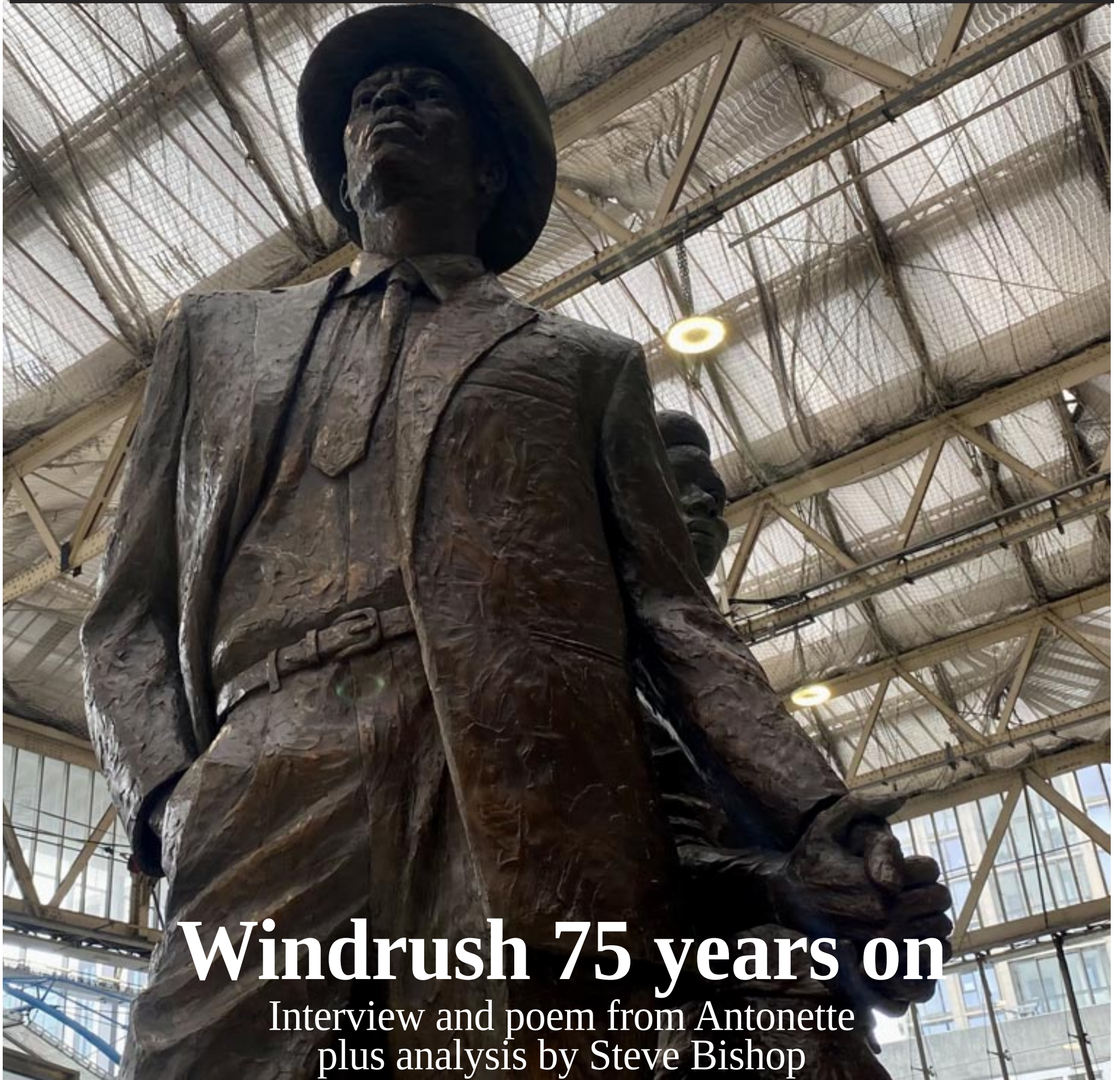


**Imperialism
in Africa**

Jonathan White
and Mary Davis

Liberation

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Windrush 75 years on

Interview and poem from Antonette
plus analysis by Steve Bishop

editorial/Liberation

This issue marks the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush and all subsequent injustice. It also calls for a radical change in Britain’s foreign policy as war poses a very real existential threat to the world and all its peoples.

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Time to change

This issue marks the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush and all subsequent injustice. It also calls for a radical change in Britain’s foreign policy as war poses a very real existential threat to the world and all its peoples. As Britain recovered from World War II, it was burdened with massive financial debt to the United States. Simultaneously, there was a huge labour shortage. On 22nd June 1948, the Empire Windrush, arrived with 802 volunteer workers from Caribbean countries. They went on to make a vital contribution to post-war reconstruction and included many with skills which were desperately needed.

Recently, the rights of the Windrush generation, and its massive contribution, have been denied by the current government, a policy facilitated by the creation of a hostile environment for today’s refugees and asylum seekers. In this atmosphere even the rights of the Windrush generation and their descendants to continue to live and work in Britain were questioned, despite their constitutional entitlement to do so. Liberation condemns the government’s treatment of the Windrush workers and their families and its failure to address the great injustice it has committed.

The world is once again seeing great changes as new international alignments emerge in Asia, the Far East, and Latin America, pushing US and British hegemony into further decline. As members of the BRICS coalition move rapidly to develop foreign policy and definitions of international relations based on mutual respect and independence, the imperialist powers are doing everything possible to preserve their global position by any means at their disposal.

This is the context in which the recent meeting of Rishi Sunak with US President Biden must be seen, with Britain once again hanging on the coattails of the US. The Atlantic Declaration which emerged, deliberately mirrored the Churchill/Roosevelt 1941 pact. It does little for trading relations between Britain and the US, being solely confined to the deepening of military alignment between the two powers. Nothing in it is in the interests of either British or American workers and their families. Rather it represents a further step in war preparations and a boost to the profit-hungry military/industrial complexes.

However, what the people of Britain need more than anything is economic cooperation, and above all, peace to help overcome the

country’s economic and social crisis and halt the potential of global conflict and nuclear catastrophe. To move in this direction, is impossible without a new non-aligned foreign policy to replace Global Britain. Britain in NATO, tied to US global ambitions (and weaponised desperation), remains disastrous.

The key role of the US and Britain in keeping the war in Ukraine going with the endless supplies of weapons and cash deliberately fuels escalation and with it the possibility of global war. This is underlined by the refusal of the US and British governments and Ukrainian Nationalists to support China’s call for an immediate ceasefire and peace talks.

Nonalignment, and an end to the war, offers not only the economic dividend of peace but also the very real opportunity of transforming Britain’s international role to one that builds mutual prosperity through trade and cooperation.

The persecution of refugees and continuing loss of migrant lives, as well as Britain’s interference in countries around the world, including in Sudan, are all evidence of a reactionary position set against independence, democracy and the self-determination. So too is Britain’s refusal to return its last colony in Africa, the occupied Chagos Islands (including Diego Garcia) to Mauritius.

It’s time for a new foreign policy! It’s time for non-alignment!

Jamshid Ahmadi Editor



Like the T-Shirt?
Available via liberationorg.co.uk

news/Liberation

Liberation is keen to continue deepening and widening our links with the trade union movement. If you are a trade union branch you can affiliate via at liberationorg.co.uk or by emailing us at info@liberationorg.co.uk If you would like a Liberation speaker, please get in touch by emailing in the first instance.



Liberation webinar calls for solidarity with the Iranian popular movement

Expert, prominent figures from the Iranian progressive movement and international trade union movement issued a call for solidarity with the popular movement in the country at a webinar hosted in May by Liberation. The speakers of this highly informative event, which was supported by our affiliate CODIR, were: Professor Ervand Abrahamian, historian and professor at Baruch College & Graduate Center of the City University of New York; Azar Sepehr a women's rights activist and member of the Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women in UK; Comrade Habib, member of the International Department of the Tudeh Party of Iran; Kemal Ozkan, Assistant General Secretary of IndustriALL; and Jeremy

Corbyn MP, Liberation joint President and founder of the Peace & Justice Project. Liberation supports the Iranian people and their demands for change and opposes any imperialist intervention in Iran. This webinar aimed to bolster understanding and support the struggle of the Iranian people to transition to a democratic, independent, peaceful, democratic and sovereign state where human and democratic rights of citizens are respected. Watch a video recording of the whole event or listen to some of the contributions to "The people vs. dictatorship, for peace and popular sovereignty" webinar at liberationorg.co.uk. See also an edited version of Professor Abrahamian's speech on page 10.



Liberation strengthens links with unions

Liberation was very pleased to meet and speak to delegates to Unison's National Delegate Conference in Liverpool in June and UCU Congress in Glasgow in May. Members of the UK's largest public sector union and the higher education union showed a great interest in Liberation's work. As well as financially supporting our work and helping us raise our profile by buying Liberation T-shirts, our journal and other items on our stall, a number of trade unionists pledged to join as individual members and also to seek agreement from their branch to affiliate. Liberation would like to put on record our thanks to Unison and UCU for hosting us. We'd also like to thank volunteers Helen, Regi and Liberation Education Committee member Liz for helping out on our stall, and our long-time affiliate CODIR for assisting in securing and subsequent management of our presence at the events. We are keen to continue deepening and widening our links with the trade union movement.

If you are a trade union branch you can affiliate via at liberationorg.co.uk or by emailing us at info@liberationorg.co.uk; if you would like a Liberation speaker, please get in touch by emailing in the first instance.

Listen, watch, read Liberation

In a bid to reach new audiences and meet the varying preferences of our members and supporters we are expanding the range of media we use to include audio, and have launched Spotify and Soundcloud accounts. As part of this effort we are experimenting with audio articles – articles we publish that are read out aloud, using Artificial Intelligence tools – in line with trends in the media industry. We also have a growing archive of video materials accessible on and via our website, and we also publish articles regularly in between issues of our print journal. Do let us know what you think by emailing info@liberationorg.co.uk



New Briefings

Find out about key issues
Liberation is focussing on by reading a new series of short briefings:

The need for a progressive UK foreign policy; For peace, democracy and human rights in Iran; For peace, freedom, social justice, civilian government and democracy in Sudan; the New Scramble for Africa.

Look for 'resources' at liberationorg.co.uk.

Liberation Webinar

Wednesday
12 July
18.30 BST

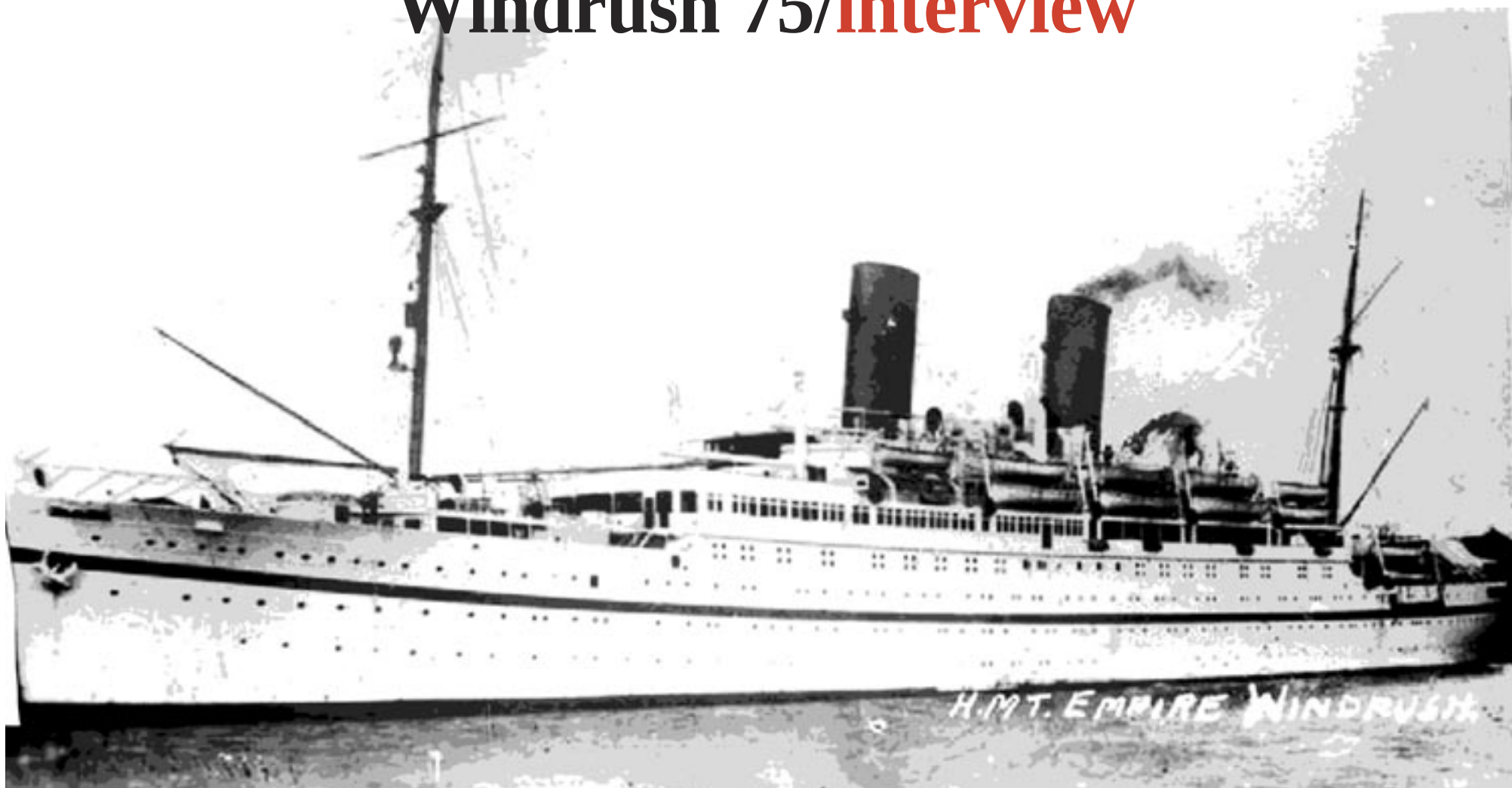
Solidarity with the people of Sudan End the proxy war!

For peace, social justice and democracy

Amira Osman, progressive Sudanese activist
Rashid Elsheik Sudanese Communist Party
Marc Botenga MEP Workers Party of Belgium PVDA/PTB
Jeremy Corbyn MP Liberation, Peace and Justice Project
register@www.liberationorg.co.uk



Windrush 75/interview



Antonette

Eulinda Antonette Clarke-Akalanne was born in Barbados and came to the UK as part of the Windrush Generation, having been invited along with other women and girls to train as nurses in England; she worked in this field throughout her career.

Antonette is also a poet, and published her first anthology of poems, *EUANCA*, in October 2021 to celebrate her 80th birthday.

Since her retirement, Antonette received a Bachelor of Arts honours degree in Anthropology in 2018 as well as a Master of Arts degree in Black Humanities from the University of Bristol in 2022.

Liberation: Could you tell me about what led you to make the decision to come to the UK from Barbados?

Antonette: I was 18 at the time, in my last year at school, when Enoch Powell invited girls and women to come to England to train as nurses. Now, I wanted to be a nursing nun because I went to a Catholic convent school, so I wanted to be a nun, but specifically a nursing nun. And I had actually applied during my last year at school to the General Hospital in Barbados. When I heard that invitation [to go to Britain], I thought, wow, what a wonderful experience, I can travel. I'd never travelled out of Barbados in my life. So, it was sort of like a wonderful experience coming to England. An adventure. Funny enough, after my first three months in England, the hospital in Barbados wrote to me and invited me for an interview. I was already in England by then, so I continued [to stay here].

Liberation: Can you tell me a bit about your personal experience of arriving in the UK? About the journey itself, your early impressions of Britain, or the response of the British public to the Windrush Generation's arrival?

Antonette: I've got a poem that I would like to share with you. I started writing poetry when I was seven years old in Barbados. But I had not been an avid writer until about four or five years ago. The poems that I write are usually narrative poems, so they tell a story. Now this poem was written on March 20th this year. It's called 'Journey to the Motherland'*

In her poem, 'Journey to the Motherland', Antonette recounts her journey to England and the excitement she felt about travelling and seeing the world. She had learned much about England through her schooling in Barbados, by reading about Oliver Cromwell, Henry the VIII, Shakespeare and performing poems by Wordsworth. 'Oooh! How British I did feel', she says. However, the English knew almost nothing of Barbados, asking if it was in South Africa or Jamaica. Racism was persistent: 'On the bus, people refused to sit beside me'. Throughout her life, Antonette has experienced racism and prejudice such as this, but notes that she has always managed to turn these experiences into sources of strengths. Today, in retirement, she is 'happy as can be'.

Liberation: Your poem 'Journey to the Motherland' sheds light on many of the surprises you faced when arriving. Would you say that your actual experiences when arriving in the UK differed quite strongly from your expectations of the country?

Antonette: Definitely. Because Barbados was an English colony and that is why I was taught [all things English, like Henry VIII and all that I mentioned in my poem; we were taught] only British things. I didn't know anything about Africa; I didn't even think I was an African at the time because we were we were indoctrinated with only British things. Obviously, the teachers that taught me were also English teachers, so I anticipated that coming here, people would know about Barbados as well. However, the people in England didn't have any knowledge about people like me at all. I think that was one of the shocks, because we were like total strangers. Nobody knew of the people in the Commonwealth, in the colonies. So, it was a different experience than what I thought it would be. Of course, I thought snow was a wonderful thing. You know, I was looking forward to snow and daffodils and all those things.

Liberation: Your poem also touches on the racism you faced when arriving, such as on the bus, where people did not sit next to you. How did that make you feel initially, and is it something that you expected in the UK or was that a surprise to you?

Antonette: That was a total surprise, because we have native Barbadians who are Black and white, but the [British] who came over to visit us were always very nice people. So, I didn't expect that type of treatment from the people who were living here. Looking back on it, many of the people that I encountered had never left the shores of England. They'd never even crossed the Channel. So, the [British] that I had had encountered in Barbados were well-travelled people and they behaved totally differently. It was quite a shock to experience that. But I've got this type of personality where I always tend to turn uncomfortable situations into positive things for myself. And that is why I don't suffer from depression or things like that because I use them as a learning experience to better things. For instance, when people didn't want to sit beside me

on the bus, of course I was upset at first, but later on I thought: this is great because with my heavy shopping, rather than put it on my dress, I now had a seat for it. And I sat there comfortably for months, until some wise person thought, why should she be sitting there with her shopping on that seat?

Liberation: In the poem, you also mentioned that you knew plenty about the UK through your schooling in Barbados, reading the classics and studying Britain. In Britain, however, most people knew almost nothing about the colonies and people asked you if Barbados was in South Africa or whether you lived in a tree. Why do you think there was such ignorance on the part of the British? How do you think the UK could work to better recognise and acknowledge its history of colonialism?

Antonette: I think to better acknowledge the history, we have to teach children these things in school. Obviously, the majority of people that I came across in those days up in Derby City where I trained as a nurse, were just local working class people who had never studied the classics. In fact, I was quite shocked that in Barbados we had learned all these things about Shakespeare and these beautiful poems, yet the patients I came across knew nothing. That was a big surprise. So again, it's education; the middle class are well educated. Nowadays, in grammar schools, they teach things like Shakespeare, but in ordinary and secondary modern schools, they don't teach those things. The children lack education even up to today; they don't even know the history of England. I didn't realise that until later because with coming from Barbados and having English teachers myself at school, I thought that English people would have known all these things. You know, but obviously it wasn't so.

Liberation: Moving on to the Windrush scandal that came to light in the UK a few years ago, can you tell me a little bit about the scandal and its effects generally?

Antonette: I've got that in a poem as well. I composed this poem originally on the 28 May 2018, but I update it regularly to reflect the current situation. I first performed it in the Houses of Parliament during Black History Month. It is called 'The Windrush Generation and the Hostile Environment Bill'.



The Windrush Generation and the Hostile Environment Bill

Let's look back in history
to find the origins of the Windrush mystery.
Three hundred and seventy-six years ago...
women, children and men of African origin
were captured and enslaved to work in the Caribbean.
These slaves became British West Indian citizens
who laboured for the British plantocracy in their thousands.
They tilled the Earth, fork, spaded and hoed
Harvesting coffee, cocoa, tobacco
and producing sugar which was called 'White Gold'
that enriched Britain's economy more than a hundredfold
financing her commercial and industrial Revolution
while strengthening and expanding her capitalism.
West Indians served in the two Great Wars
soldiering on with patriotism, pride and deep loyalty
to fight and to die for Britain, their Mother country.
Now, fast forward, 75 years ago, they were called to Britain to serve again
to fill job vacancies created by World War Two
that many local people deemed undesirable to do.
With no hesitation the migrants came to serve their king and country
They came to the motherland that they adored...
a land of hope and bounty.
The ship, 'Empire Windrush', brought the first four hundred and ninety-two...
in the year 1948, Tuesday, June twenty-two.
They filled job vacancies like Public Transport, National Health Service
(to which I belonged), and British Rail,
despite having their social and cultural lives curtailed...
by prejudice, racism, discrimination, hostility and attacks
like the 1958 and 1959 assaults in Notting Hill by white youths on blacks...
And bullied by Teddy boys and barred from private housing and flats
with signs which read, 'No Irish, No dogs, No blacks'
And the 1962 Immigration Act designed to close Britain's doors
Barring further entry of Coloureds to her shores.
Plus an election campaign slogan of 1964
That read 'If you want a NIGGER for a neighbour
VOTE LABOUR
And Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' prophecy of 1968,
That hasn't materialised up to today's date.
The Windrush migrants never questioned their residential state
because they believed their statuses were up to date.
These beliefs were reinforced by the Immigration Act 1971
that conferred Indefinite Leave of stay to them, each and everyone
The contributions and jobs these loyal citizens maintained
Helped to build a global and modern Britain
Theresa May's Hostile Environment Bill of 2013
Aimed to reduce net migration to tens of thousands, this was her dream.
It made life in Britain difficult for those without correct documentation
and caused some Windrush migrants hardships beyond expectation
because, they had lost their original passports and/or documentation
And to crown it all, in 2009 by Home Office instruction
their landing cards and records went to destruction.
This resulted in many of them being declared illegal immigrants
despite paying their taxes and National Insurances
The driving licence of some Windrush migrants were revoked
Others were sacked from their jobs and left destitute and broke
Some were evicted from home
and left on the streets to rough sleep and roam
Bank accounts were frozen and salaries denied
From these experiences some tragically died
all because of the Hostile Environment Bill
that psychologically maims and sometimes physically kill
Windrush migrants were deported
And others denied re-entry to Britain when at the airports they reported.
Some people's pensions were stopped
And others had health care suspended or completely dropped
Some families were split and separated
Other individuals were incarcerated or repatriated
The traumas of the Hostile Environment Bill are too numerous to mention here
But some include despair, depression, dread and fear
Suffice it to say, some experienced extreme calamity
Deep mental scars and total disharmony.
Thanks to pressure groups, the Windrush scandal is being addressed
By December 2018, more than 3000 Windrush migrants
Had their British citizenships reinstated
3rd April 2019 the Windrush compensation scheme was launched
But 12.8 per cent of the 11,500 eligible claimants have been reimbursed
Windrush compensation scheme fact sheet, October 2020, states
We are determined to put the good right,
the terrible injustices faced by some people from the Windrush generation
Windrush migrants, take heed of this declaration and ensure it is done
Fight on until the battle is won.

Liberation: How was it possible that people who had officially received indefinite leave to remain were all of a sudden targeted for deportation?
Antonette: That's right. It was the Conservative government who did that, and I think it's all to do with racism. I feel that had these people been white people, everything would have been fine. They had forgotten that Caribbean people, like my father, actually fought for Britain in the Second World War; my grandfather fought in the First World War, because Barbados was a British island at the time; it's a Republic now. They used us, and when they felt that they had gotten what they wanted out of us, we were just thrown on the scrap heap. I was fortunate because my late husband, he was a barrister. He made sure that when my Barbados passport expired, that we changed it to a British passport. So, I never experienced what a lot of Windrush people experienced, because I actually had a British passport.

Liberation: How did you feel personally when the Windrush scandal surfaced? You mentioned that you weren't quite as affected as some others, but was anybody that you knew affected or threatened with deportation?

Antonette: No, I didn't know any of the people who were affected. However, I did read a lot in the newspapers about different people who had committed suicide, people who were barred from coming back into the country. I read of people with terminal illnesses who were denied medical care.

Liberation: How does the UK Government's treatment of the Windrush generation and the Windrush scandal relate to a wider issue of racism in the UK?

Antonette: It does tie into it because like I said, I think that had these people been white Australians, New Zealanders, or white Canadians, then the issue would not have occurred. I think a lot of [Britons] that have no knowledge at all about the Caribbean and what the Caribbean contributed to this country had actually helped to instigate things through their MPs. Of course, the MPs want to hold their seats, so they push for this policy.

*Read and/or watch/listen to Antonette read Journey to the Motherland on our website : liberationorg.co.uk



▲ Graduation ceremony for Antonette's MA in Black humanities University of Bristol, November 2022
▲ Antonette, 7, with her 3 years old sister

Interview by Liberation volunteer
Adrian von Bonsdorff'

Read and/or watch/listen to Antonette read The Windrush Generation and the Hostile Environment Bill and another wonderful poem Journey to the Motherland on our website : liberationorg.co.uk

imperialism in Africa/Sylvia Pankhurst

It is clear that Sylvia not only had an understanding of the significance of Ethiopia for Black people, but that she also understood the importance of reasserting African values against the imperialist counterculture



Anti-imperialist and anti-racist

Sylvia's decision to take up the cause of a little-known (in England) African country might have seemed odd to contemporaries and has been largely ignored by British historians ever since. However, it was much appreciated by Black activists in Africa, the West Indies, Britain, and America - and can only be understood in the context of her anti-racism and anti-imperialism which had already surfaced earlier on, writes **Mary Davis**

ALTHOUGH WIDELY known as a socialist feminist champion of women's suffrage, the second half of Sylvia Pankhurst's life, from 1935 to her death in 1960, was devoted to the cause of the liberation of Ethiopia. Her decision to take up the cause of a little-known (in England) African country might have seemed odd to contemporaries and has been largely ignored by British historians ever since. However, it was much appreciated by Black activists in Africa, the West Indies, Britain, and America and can only be understood in the context of her anti-racism and anti-imperialism which had already surfaced earlier on. This was allied to her understanding of the dangers of fascism in general and Italian fascism in particular.

Thus, when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, Sylvia embarked upon a course drawing these strands of her thought and activity into a campaign which was to absorb her for the remainder of her life. In May 1936, she launched the first edition of the *New Times and Ethiopia News (NT&EN)*, a weekly paper whose aims were to champion the cause of Ethiopia, to combat fascist propaganda, to campaign for British aid, and to step-up and maintain the economic sanctions imposed on Italy by the League of Nations. The first issue went to press on the very day that Italian troops entered Addis Ababa. The paper reached a circulation of 10,000 by the end of the year, and at its height it sold 40,000 copies weekly. This included an extensive circulation throughout West Africa and the West Indies where "it was widely quoted in the emerging African nationalist press." The paper was also published (occasionally) in Amharic and clandestinely distributed in Ethiopia. It remained in circulation for 20 years.

Sylvia's decision to concentrate her energies on Ethiopia was taken because it would otherwise have been largely ignored. Ethiopia was very significant for Black people worldwide. It was, until 1935, the only African country to have escaped from the domination of European imperialism. As such, it was a beacon in the anti-colonial struggle. Ethiopia was, according to Ras Makonnen, the "Black man's last citadel."

This was clearly shown when, as a response to the Italian invasion, mass protests were organised in almost all Britain's West Indian colonies, provoking fear in the British Colonial Office that "native unrest"

would be stirred in colonial Africa. Tellingly, Hesketh Bell, a former governor of Uganda, expressed the issue thus:

"The fact that the coloured inhabitants of a distant West Indian island, remembering their African ancestry, should appear to feel so deeply this attack by a White power on the only remaining negro nation shows how widely spread and vigorous can be the influences of race and colour. While the rise of feeling of racial antagonism in the West Indies is unfortunate, the development of such an attitude among the teeming population of our vast African territories would be a misfortune of the first magnitude."

Ethiopia's role in galvanising "the influences of race and colour," was plainly apparent in the Black communities of Britain and the USA. In anticipation of the Italian invasion the International African Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA) was formed in 1935. Although this was a short-lived organisation, it involved many prominent Black activists including Jomo Kenyatta, C. L. R. James, Amy Ashwood Garvey (ex-wife of Marcus Garvey), and George Padmore.

It is clear that Sylvia not only had an understanding of the significance of Ethiopia for Black people, but that she also understood the importance of reasserting African values against the imperialist counterculture. As a result, she consistently supported efforts to challenge the White notion of Black racial inferiority. The paper ran a regular column entitled 'Africa for the Africans' which was very popular and was often reprinted together with many other *NT&EN* articles in such influential African papers as the *Comet* and the *West African Pilot*.

Sylvia's paper also gave space to anti-racist initiatives. As early as 1936 it carried an article on 'African education' which argued that "Historical books on Africa ought to be written by Africans and ought to aim at developing the 'national ego' of the African instead of dwelling on intertribal wars". Later in the same year the paper published a letter from Marcus Garvey, the Black American leader, protesting against films like *Sanders of the River*, *Emperor Jones*, and *Green Pastures* which, according to Garvey, were "calculated to create prejudice against the Negro Race."

The contribution made by the paper was noted by many Black people and can be summarised by Ras Makonnen who commented that it: "continued for many years to be the most authoritative single source on the Ethiopian question. In particular, it seldom failed to document the many pro-Ethiopian meetings in England and to note Black participation in them."

In 1937, Padmore and I.T.A. Wallace Johnson founded the International African Service Bureau (IASB). The IASB itself was a product of the Ethiopian solidarity movement, being an outgrowth of IAFA. The IASB lasted for seven years, until 1944. It was the longest surviving of all the Pan-African associations formed during this period. It merged, in 1944, with the Pan-African Federation, the organisation which was largely responsible for the convening of the 1945 Pan-African Congress. Thus, in a very real sense, Ethiopia was the theoretical and practical catalyst for the further development of the anti-racist and anti-colonial struggle. The motto of the IASB was "Educate, Co-operate, Emancipate – Neutral in nothing affecting the African people." Sylvia was a member of the IASB committee of associates for a time – the only woman among six men, who included Victor Gollancz (publisher and founder of the Left Book Club) and the lawyer, D. N. Pritt. The first issue of the IASB monthly journal, *International African Opinion*, singled out the Ethiopian struggle as the catalyst which has "awakened Black political consciousness." It argued that Ethiopia had shown that "all Negroes everywhere are beginning to see the necessity for international organisation and the unification of their scattered efforts."

Her activities on race and empire were not confined to Africa. Indian writers, for example S. N. Ghose, wrote for her paper, the *Workers' Dreadnought*. In 1926, Sylvia published a lengthy tome on India in which she identified with the growing struggle for Indian self-rule (Swaraj) in its revolutionary civil disobedience phase (1918–22) led by Gandhi, who had displaced the more moderate leadership of the Indian National Congress. The British government, fearful of losing the jewel in the imperial crown, attempted to restore their dominance first by coercion (in the form of the Amritsar Massacre 1919) and then by 'consent' via the Government of India Act of 1919. Sylvia sought to expose the 1919 Act as an undemocratic sham – a view unpopular at the time since it was widely perceived as a wise concession smoothing the way to "responsible" government.

When Sylvia Pankhurst died in 1960 in Ethiopia, she was given a state funeral. Accolades to Sylvia on her death show that although her work on Ethiopia, informed as it was by anti-racism and anti-imperialism, passed largely unnoticed in Britain, it was widely appreciated by Black people in Ethiopia, in Africa generally, and in the diaspora. W.E.B. DuBois, arguably one of the most important Black leaders of his day, expressed the view of Black radicals in the following tribute he paid to Sylvia following her death:

"I realised [...] that the great work of Sylvia Pankhurst was to introduce Black Ethiopia to White England [...] and to make the British people realise that Black folks had more and more to be recognised as human beings with the rights of women and men."

Professor Mary Davis is a Labour Historian. She has, from a Marxist perspective, written, broadcast and lectured widely on women's history, labour history, imperialism and racism. She was awarded the TUC Women's Gold Badge in 2010 for services to trade unionism. She currently serves on the *Morning Star* Management Committee, the Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial Committee and is Secretary of Marx Memorial Library.

imperialism in Africa/analysis

The solidarity shown by anti-imperialists and supporters of national liberation movements in Britain must also evolve beyond debt forgiveness and making poverty history to promoting the rebuilding of national sovereignty in African states



The long shadow of British imperialism in Africa

Its forms have shifted and developed but big capital in the imperial metropolises still exert a vice-like grip on Africa's economies and peoples but national liberation forces are developing a new agenda based on weakening the grip of the US dollar, creating new continent-wide financial institutions tasked with funding development and rebuilding the taxation capacities of African states, writes **Jonathan White**



FROM ITS earliest development, British capitalism has grown in tandem with the exploitation of Africa's resources. The original accumulation of capital in Britain and other parts of Europe was built in large part on the extraction of slave labour from the coastal trading towns of West Africa. Britain alone transported at least 3.4 million slaves out of West Africa between 1660 and 1807. As industry and trade in the European capitalist heartlands grew, so did rivalries between industrialising European states, generating competition that spilled over into their trading outposts in Africa. The urge to control Africa's wealth in primary commodities led to the formation of monopolistic companies struggling for control of coal, gas, oil, rubber and of course gold and diamonds. The late 19th century 'Scramble for Africa' was driven by these dynamics, bringing in its wake the formation of a bureaucratic, militarised and racist colonial state machinery across Africa. Resistance to this expansion the Ashanti peoples, the peoples of Natal and Southern Africa and in Sudan, for example, was brutally crushed.

With the growth of these primary industries came the growth of working classes in capitalist relations of production, a degree of urbanisation and the formation of small bourgeoisies, tied to state machinery and the colonial education system. Around these islands of capitalist development remained oceans of peasant subsistence farming, though these were subjected to the influx of White settlers, seizing the best lands and directing agriculture toward European markets for cash crops. On this fragile basis were formed the first national liberation movements in early 20th century.

National liberation

These movements were able to make big strides forward after the Second World War. Rising class struggles and increased activity by national liberation movements after 1945 were initially met with fierce repression. Strikes in the Gold Coast mining industries, interacting with the fledgling national liberation movement, were repressed by British troops in 1948-50. The failure of the Labour government to introduce political and land reform in Kenya led to campaigning from Kenyan trade unions and the formation of Mau Mau among the Kikuyu

peasantry, again meeting fierce repression. But these operations, coupled with the debacle at Suez, were economically costly to the British economy and repression began to increase support for anti-colonial struggles within the domestic labour movement. The Communist Party was active in exposing the repression in Ghana, while the formation of the Movement for Colonial Freedom represented a step change in support for national liberation struggles in Africa, bringing the arguments for decolonisation deeper into the labour movement.

Under the pressure of these developments, formal decolonisation followed quickly in large parts of West and East Africa in the early 1960s, (though not to southern Africa). However, British imperialism began to retrench on a new basis which was theorised by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and others as 'neocolonialism'.

In the capitalist metropolises monopolies continued to centralise their operations and grow in scale. In British-dominated Africa, companies like Anglo-American consolidated their grip over South African gold, coal and uranium. Unilever came to dominate West Africa's economies, employing wage workers directly and using its monopoly power to hold down prices paid to peasant producers. Subsistence farmers were driven off the land and African workers were incorporated into a global division of labour where they formed a low wage proletariat in mining and agricultural production. Dependent on imported manufactures and with monopolies holding down the prices of African exports, the terms of trade for these states deteriorated, draining their foreign exchange reserves (which in Africa, as in other colonies had to be held in sterling in the City of London) and forcing them into increased borrowing. Equally significantly, as British imperialism was forced into an increasingly subordinate position to the US, so US transnationals and the US state began to move across the continent.

Neo-colonialism

Politically liberated African states therefore inherited a vice of economic dependence operated by their former colonial overlords. With the only options for alternative development in closer relations with the socialist powers or the Non-Aligned Movement, which the US regarded as basically the same thing, none of these states could expect a quiet life from the imperialist powers. Ruth First analysed in 1970, the colonial inheritance of under-developed industry, the relative weakness of mass organisations of labour and the existence of centralised, militarised and authoritarian state structures made these African states vulnerable to Western-backed coups.

The influence of the US could be felt in the overthrow of Nkrumah in Ghana. In Southern Africa, US and British imperialism first tolerated then later actively supported the South African Apartheid state in its internal repression and its external activities against national liberation movements in Namibia and Angola. These reactionary forces were checked to a degree by support from the socialist states. US-backed South African intervention in Angola was defeated with massive military support from Cuba. Internal opposition also played a role, with British support for South Africa weakened by the campaigning of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The interaction of both these factors with the military struggles waged by the ANC's military wing UMKhonto weSizwe, ended Apartheid and National Party rule.

However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rolling out of financialisation and neoliberalism within the imperialist metropolises inaugurated a new wave of neocolonial

domination. From the late 1970s, multinational corporations and finance capital pressured the advanced capitalist states into a series of moves to increase the global mobility of capital. They also turned the multilateral financial institutions of the IMF and the World Bank into levers for further exploiting Africa.

Neo-liberalism

From the 1980s, the IMF and the World Bank made desperately-needed loans dependent on massive structural adjustment programmes, aimed at opening African economies up to greater penetration by multinationals and finance capital. African states had to shift the burden of taxation from corporations onto consumers, privatise state owned industries and utilities, cut government spending and create flexible labour markets. The effects were devastating: rising unemployment, falling wages, rising prices of basic goods, including utilities like newly privatised water and electricity and a massive growth of informal work. States saw tax revenue collapse weakening their redistributive or developmental capabilities and further trapping them in a lethal debt spiral.

Most recently, IMF and World Bank debt has been supplemented by new debt to private finance capital in the imperialist countries. Since 2011, at least 21 African countries have issued Eurobonds, typically listing them on the London Stock Exchange, creating in the process a new financial basis for imperialism.

Meanwhile Britain's multinationals remain highly active in extracting Africa's mineral resources. In 2016 War on Want counted 101 companies registered in Britain operating in oil, gas, gold diamonds and platinum extraction. A new generation of international security firms have embedded themselves in the weakened African state machinery, often with the active sponsorship of the US and British governments. The US government has now created 30 permanent and semi-permanent US military bases in Africa.

Liberalisation has also weakened national liberation movements. Cuts to public sector jobs, education budgets and national infrastructure have undermined the institutions on which ideas of national development could germinate, while highly uneven development has split fractions of African bourgeoisies off from working classes and peasantries. This has fuelled the resort to religious movements - most notably, but not solely, Islamic - as well as reinforcing ethnic divisions.

British imperialism is not just history. Its forms have shifted and developed but big capital in the imperial metropolises still exerts its grip on Africa's economies and peoples. National liberation forces are developing a new agenda based on weakening the grip of the US dollar, creating new continent-wide financial institutions tasked with funding development and rebuilding the taxation capacities of African states. All this will be met with fierce resistance by finance capital and multinationals, including those operating out of Britain. The solidarity shown by anti-imperialists and supporters of national liberation movements in Britain must also evolve, moving beyond debt forgiveness and making poverty history to promoting the rebuilding of national sovereignty in African states.

Jonathan White is assistant editor at *Theory and Struggle* and *Communist Review* and is the author of *Making Our Own History: A User's Guide to Marx's Historical Materialism*, published by Praxis Press.

Image: The 1884 Berlin Conference at which the colonial powers agreed a division of Africa. from the *Illustrierte Zeitung*. Creative Commons

Windrush 75/migration

If the British government's Stop the Boats policy were not inhumane enough, the collusion with the EU to 'stop them even getting to the boats' at all has even less to commend it

Don't stop the boats

The Windrush commemorations quite rightly must focus upon the experiences and the injustices suffered by the wave of migrants who came to Britain in 1948, and to look at ways to redress those injustices. However, if international solidarity is to have real meaning, the plight of the modern day migrants must also be part of the debate, in order to prevent them suffering the same fate, or worse, than those of the Windrush generation, writes **Steve Bishop**.



THIS YEAR marks the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the ship HMT Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks, on 22 June 1948, carrying over 800 passengers from the Caribbean, drawn across the Atlantic by the lure of employment, education and a bright future for their families. Not all of those dreams were realised, as dramatised in the late Andrea Levy's excellent novel, *Small Island*.

Others such as Zadie Smith, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Buchi Emecheta and many more have expressed through literature the struggles of black and minority ethnic families to survive the realities of post war Britain.

For many who arrived on the Windrush, the realities of life in Britain were overcrowded housing, low paid jobs and entrenched racism, from a white population raised on the illusion of Empire and implicit racial superiority, in spite of the recent involvement in the defeat of Nazism in World War II.

A recent report by think tank British Future, *Why Windrush Matters Today*, includes polling by Focalldata, with a large sample of Black Caribbean and other ethnic minority respondents, and highlights some interesting findings. For example, that 67% of ethnic minority respondents agree that "Black and Asian people face discrimination in their everyday lives in Britain today," while only 10% disagree. Also, that 80% of ethnic minorities and 66% of the public as a whole agree that "The UK needs to make much more progress on racial equality in the next 25 years."

On the positive side the report finds that 71% of the public and 68% of ethnic minorities agree that "The UK has made significant progress on racial equality in the last 25 years". However, more than half the public (57%) feels that "UK political and media debate has become more divisive on questions of race in the last 10 years".

Two-thirds (66%) say they would welcome a less heated debate on race, as do 61% of ethnic minority respondents. Two-thirds of the public (65%) and 7 in 10 ethnic minority Britons (71%) would support setting a Windrush 100 goal of 'net zero racism by 2048'.

While there are some signs of hope to build upon in these responses it should also be noted that Dr Wanda Wyporska, Chief Executive of the Black Equity Organisation, is clear that there is no room for complacency, stating,

"Being Black in the UK means being three times more likely to die in childbirth, nine times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police and three times more likely to be detained than White people.

"In education, housing, finance and healthcare the picture is the same. Being Black can mean ambitions are stymied, opportunities denied, treatments withheld, and citizenship stripped. So, although we rightly celebrate the contribution and resilience of the Windrush generation, the British Future report highlights the urgent need for current and future generations to take on the fight of dismantling structural racism once and for all."

The anniversary comes at a time when the political temperature around current migrants, many displaced from the Middle East and Africa as a result of Western military interventions in their countries, is being raised significantly. The Stop the Boats mantra beloved of British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, and his Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, is the direct progeny of the 'hostile environment' stance of one of their many recent predecessors, Theresa May.

Although no longer part of the European Union, there is no doubt that Britain is still actively engaged in backing the Fortress Europe mentality which is prevalent across the EU. Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick was recently on a mission to persuade European and North African countries to take a tougher line against asylum seekers crossing the Mediterranean.

Jenrick is simply following the pattern set by the EU almost a decade ago when the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa was established, essentially to pay African countries to keep potential migrants on the African continent, rather than let them find ways across to Europe. That NATO bombs in Libya, and the illegal intervention in Syria by Western forces, were largely the drivers behind these movements of migrants seems to have been of little concern to the EU.

The collapse into chaos and warring factions in Libya in particular, has resulted in the growth of detention centres for migrants on such a scale that even the EU, in a 2020 memo, had to acknowledge that, in relation to that country, capturing migrants was now "a profitable business model". Nonetheless, the EU continues to fund and train Libyan militias to capture migrants at sea and force them into detention.

A similar picture emerges in Sudan where the so-called Rapid Support Forces, the rebranded Janjaweed militia, draws down EU funding to hunt down potential migrants.

If the British government's Stop the Boats policy were not inhumane enough, the collusion with the EU to 'stop them even getting to the boats' at all has even less to commend it. The British government dress this up quite differently, with Robert Jenrick describing the policy as "taking the fight to the people smuggling gangs upstream".

It may be naivety on the part of Jenrick but, given the character of the forces being dealt with, it may just be possible that the gangs locking up the migrants are also the ones running the people smuggling operations. Far from preventing potential migrants making "dangerous and unnecessary journeys" as Jenrick claims, he may well be complicit in many being compelled to make those journeys twice.

It is certainly true that the political and economic instability forced upon much of the African continent has resulted in migration being one of the key issues shaping relations between European countries and Africa. Large numbers of young African migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean are lost through drowning. Even if they manage to reach the coastline of Europe, they are often subjected to inhumane treatment.

The issue of migration has resulted in a shift to the right in many parts of Europe, as the fortress mentality takes hold and migrants become easily scapegoated for home grown social and economic problems. The demand to Stop the Boats feeds directly into this mindset, treating migration as a criminal activity rather than a humanitarian crisis which needs to be addressed in humane terms.

The Windrush commemorations quite rightly must focus upon the experiences and the injustices suffered by the wave of migrants who came to Britain in 1948, and to look at ways to redress those injustices. However, if international solidarity is to have real meaning, the plight of the modern day migrants must also be part of the debate, in order to prevent them suffering the same fate, or worse, than those of the Windrush generation.

Steve Bishop is a member of Liberation, a writer and blogger.

liberation heroes/Janet and Cheddi Jagan

My hero and heroine were Dr Cheddi Jagan and Janet Jagan – two revolutionaries who provided leadership to the working class and the underprivileged in society. They were household names and it was because of the role they played when sugar workers were massacred at Enmore Estate which was considered as the cradle of resistance against the plantocracy.



Guyana's revolutionary leaders

Serving humanity gives the greatest satisfaction in life; and these two patriots were the best humanitarians that I have ever had the opportunity to interact with, writes **Indra Chandrapal**



WHY WOULD a young woman of 17 years choose to become involved in politics? Shouldn't she do the things all young women at her age would want to do? The answer is in the affirmative. However, the environment and the social consciousness of that particular young girl would not allow her to focus on the things young girls of her age desire.

It was the period in which the hippy movement, the bell bottom pants, the Beatles and the Vietnam war were very prominent. One particular photograph which hit all the newspapers were that of a small woman not more than 5" tall with a gun to the back of a very big American soldier. It was the struggle of Angela Davis and all those who chose not to go to war in Vietnam. It was a period of not only cultural rebellion but that of social upheaval. The status quo was that of the cold war and the gradual dislocation of colonialism in different corners of the world.

Guyana, was not spared in its quest to have its independence, if it could not be won with guns then it had to be won by political machinations. This was a recipe for the disintegration of a once proud nationalist movement to that of ethnic conflict and destruction which as stayed with the young nation since then.

These were the ideas which were spinning in the head of this 17-year-old who knew that different classes of people live differently. The ruling class lived in grand style while the working class, the peasants and all other groups lived in abject poverty. They were not brought from Africa and Asia to have a good life. Rather their task was to ensure that the



colonial interests were protected and enhanced. Their role was to produce wealth and if they could not endure then they were left to die in despair.

When the differences are so glaring it is only natural for you to have a rebellious spirit because you are reminded as long as you are awake that you do not matter because of your status in society.

Whether it is your race, religion or gender did not matter because everyone was in that melting pot. This was the reality in which we lived and I as part of that reality was not content to enjoy the things which girls of my age enjoyed. I wanted to be a part of any change which sought to end the status quo.

Being a member of the poor and powerless evoked a lot of anger in me because of the conditions in which we live. No electricity, a mud dam, poor housing, no proper health care, not enough resources to provide families and their offspring with much needed commodities for their well-being. Not having shoes or books or monies to buy sanitary were the realities of everyday living.

Was I justified in getting angry or wanting changes? Of course, yes! So based on what I have alluded to I felt it necessary to give of my time and energies to help in the struggle for change.

I knew others had made changes and I wanted to be in a movement that wanted to change the status quo for the betterment of the poor and powerless. So, I joined the Progressive Youth Organization where we taught the young people about the history of revolutionaries, we taught them patriotic songs and we encouraged them to educate themselves and to be disciplined in every aspect of their life. I was highly motivated and chose to join the People's Progressive Party and the Women's Progressive Organization at 19 years of age.

My hero and heroine were Dr Cheddi Jagan and Janet Jagan – two revolutionaries who provided leadership to the working class and the underprivileged in society. They were household names and it was because of the role they played when sugar workers were massacred at Enmore Estate which was considered as the cradle of resistance against the plantocracy.

This was the place where I grew up and from a very young age, I heard about what had taken place. How can you forget their story when everyday you have to pass next to the Estate to fetch a bucket water on your head from a Dutch well which was about half a mile? How can you forget when every year there was a commemoration organized by the PPP on June 16th in honor of the workers? Our parents will give us a rice bag and tell us to sit in front of the mass meeting so that we are in full view of our parents.

That was how I saw Dr. Jagan and Mrs. Jagan for the first time. The first time I spoke to Dr. Jagan personally was when I was asked to chair a public meeting where he was the main speaker. That was a terrifying moment for me because it was the first time, I was speaking at a mass gathering and it was no easy feat for me or for any one who has to do it for the first time. He made it so easy for me by

saying that he was terrified as well and that I will get over it.

It was around the same period that I met Mrs. Jagan as well. I was asked to organize a meeting of women by the Party Organizer and she came to our home to meet the women. After she finished speaking, I realized that this was my calling in life. I wanted to work with people especially women and help them to educate themselves so that they will ultimately improve themselves and that of their families.

Those two events which I have referred to were the precursor for what was to come. I was asked to go to the Party Headquarters to do a job interview. I passed the test and that was the beginning of my political journey.

I got my first job at 21 years of age and got jailed for 1 week along with 3 other sisters when I was 22 and left Guyana 3 weeks after I served my sentence. My offence was lying down on a bridge with other women including my sisters to prevent members of the then government from entering a school compound to have the meeting. A fierce fight took place where some of the officials were manhandled and they were forced to leave the venue because the meeting was called off.

I was sent overseas to study political science for 9 months because Dr. Jagan said "Indra you are wasted at the switchboard you need to go and study" Thus began my political life with my two mentors and my hero and heroine. Will I do it over again if I get a chance. The answer is YES! Serving humanity gives the greatest satisfaction in life; and these two patriots were the best humanitarians that I have ever had the opportunity to inter act with while they were alive.

This is a series Liberation is running to raise awareness of people, in history or active today, more or less well known who have made a significant contribution to popular struggles for freedom, against imperialism and for peace, social justice and human rights in the Global South. Who is your Liberation Hero? Get in touch with us at info@liberationorg.co.uk – and if you'd like, tell us a bit about this person, why you think they deserve recognition and their story told.

Indra Chandrapal is President of the Women's Progressive Organisation (WPO) of Guyana.

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education/decolonisation

There is already a raft of good books available on the subject of British colonialism, but more should be added for key stage 1, 2 and 3 children. There should be a targeted approach on the subject in trade union education, similar in treatment to the campaign against racism in the 70s and 80s.

The long shadow of British imperialism in Africa

Academic papers have been written and toolkits developed on decolonising the curriculum, but as Marx wrote when recognising the enormous contribution by philosophers who provided their own interpretation of the world at a given instant, “the point however is to change it”, writes **Harsev Bains**.



THERE ARE VARIOUS Debates taking place discussing how to decolonise the education curriculum and a campaign to teach British colonial history as an integral part of the national syllabus in schools. Both are trying to address the aberrations of the education system. The former in ex colonial countries and the latter to end British amnesia on its “global role” with an Empire on which it proudly boasted that the sun never sets. Liberation has a link to both and recognises the need to develop a simultaneous strategy for addressing the issues raised by both campaigns: external and internal to Britain.

Decolonising the education curriculum
When we consider decolonising, we do not subscribe to the notion that all previous science and history from the periods of colonial rule should be sanitised, revised and erased from text books, as is the case in India today. For Liberation, decolonising is closer to understanding the impact of colonialism on all aspects of the education system; to examine the education institutions, structures, training, recruitment and promotion of academics and historians equipped with a curriculum relevant and true to student needs in the contemporary world. A decolonised curriculum would be one that removes pure whiteness, racial prejudices, social injustice, the abhorrent caste system and gender bias that is built upon the foundation of discrimination which has for centuries sought to dehumanise civilisations and replaces it with the beautiful colour and majestic tapestry of humanity.

Academic papers have been written and tool kits developed on decolonising the curriculum, but as dear Marx has written when recognising the enormous contribution by philosophers who provided their own interpretation of the world at a given instant, “the point however is to change it”. The same can be said in this case. There is a need for dialogue, debate and decision to agree an implementation process that doesn’t only challenge but influences transformation.

Teaching British colonial history
In Britain, there has been some debate on the subject of teaching British colonial history with one Tory Education Minister bizarrely claiming it would lower standards. A petition on 30 July 2020, which attracted 268,772 signatures sought the compulsory teaching of colonialism in primary and secondary schools. The petitioners called for school children to be educated on Britain’s role in colonisation and the transatlantic slave trade. The demand was very clear “Now, more than ever, we must turn to education and history to guide us. But vital information has been withheld from the people by institutions meant to educate them. By educating on the events of the past, we can forge a better future. Colonial powers must own up to their pasts by raising awareness of the forced labour of Black people, past and present mistreatment of BAME people, and most importantly, how this contributes to the unfair systems of power at the foundation of our modern society.” The government response to the petition was to simply state that “at Key stage 3, children can be taught - ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain 1745-1901. With topics chosen by schools and teachers.” Or as one minister had suggested a soft version of colonial history only highlighting any positive aspects which remain uncritical of the past. The fact that many horrific events occurred after 1901 and up to the independence of Britain’s former colonies with the trail of mass destruction following in the wake of British departure from its imperial empire is deliberately omitted.

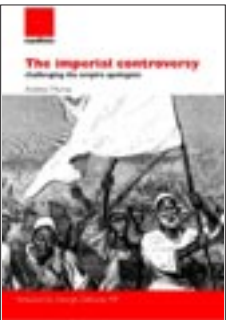
Challenging the hostile environment
In today’s conditions, with daily anti-immigrant rhetoric by successive Home Ministers which now includes the Prime Minister with their inhuman solution of floating barges and removal of vulnerable refugees to safe places outside Britain, requires all of us to understand the history of Britain’s colonial rule. The historical reasons behind the rise in number of refugees attempting to enter Britain and the continuous displacement of people from their homelands, facing arduous life-threatening journeys

across the seas is conveniently hidden as is the barbaric truth of imperialist colonial rule and unjustified wars of loot and plunder through the ages: the wars in Afghanistan, the illegal war against Iraq, regime change in Libya, in Syria destroying the rich cultural heritage from past civilisations; the continuing occupation of Palestine; the stripping of assets and raw materials from Africa and Latin America pauperising people in their own countries, leaving them with no option but to risk their very lives in the hope of survival.

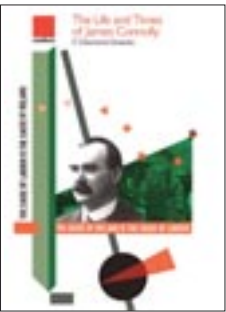
Resourcing education
The period that could be referenced and taught in schools is limited in scope and resource, with the horrors of the empire long forgotten and a fading distant memory. There is a distinct need to resource scholars to re-examine major events that changed the course of history and which have left a permanent imprint on people’s lives, such as, the slave trade, the holocaust, the near total annihilation of the first citizens of North America, the famines in Ireland and India, the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and the trail of death from imposed partitions of nations. There is already a raft of good books available on the subject of British colonialism, but more should be added for key stage 1, 2 and 3 children. The unconscious fear of broadening the national school’s curriculum, because of what future generations may learn or make of the wrongs of our past behaviours and values, cannot be an impediment to learning the truth.

Scope and strategy
The educational deficiency inherited by generations denied learning and only taught the virtues of colonialism - “successes of the empire” - will require a targeted approach on the subject in trade union education, similar in treatment to the campaign against racism in the 70’s and 80’s. Only when education penetrates the workplace at ground level and changes the unconscious and conscious bias about colonialism will we roll back the hostile environment. The Labour Party manifesto commitment of 2019 under Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell must be retained and implemented by a future Labour Government. To ensure that it meets the objectives and not pays mere lip service. Through education and an open mind about British colonial history in all its diversity, linked to the environmental and historical analysis of the time, we should be able to expose the distorted views based on scant knowledge depicting the empire, and create a safe place for learning for students and educators.

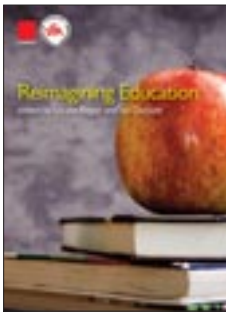
Harsev Bains is National Vice President, Indian Workers’ Association GB, and a Liberation Central Council Member and chair of Liberation’s Education Committee



The imperial controversy
Challenging the empire apologists
by Andrew Murray
Stop the War leader Andrew Murray analyses the new breed of apologists for imperialism



The Life and Times of James Connolly
edited by Anthony Coughlan and published in partnership with the Connolly Association



Reimagining education
edited by Louise Regan and Ian Duckett
The Socialist Educational Association takes a comprehensive look at the education system and offers an opportunity to reclaim education.

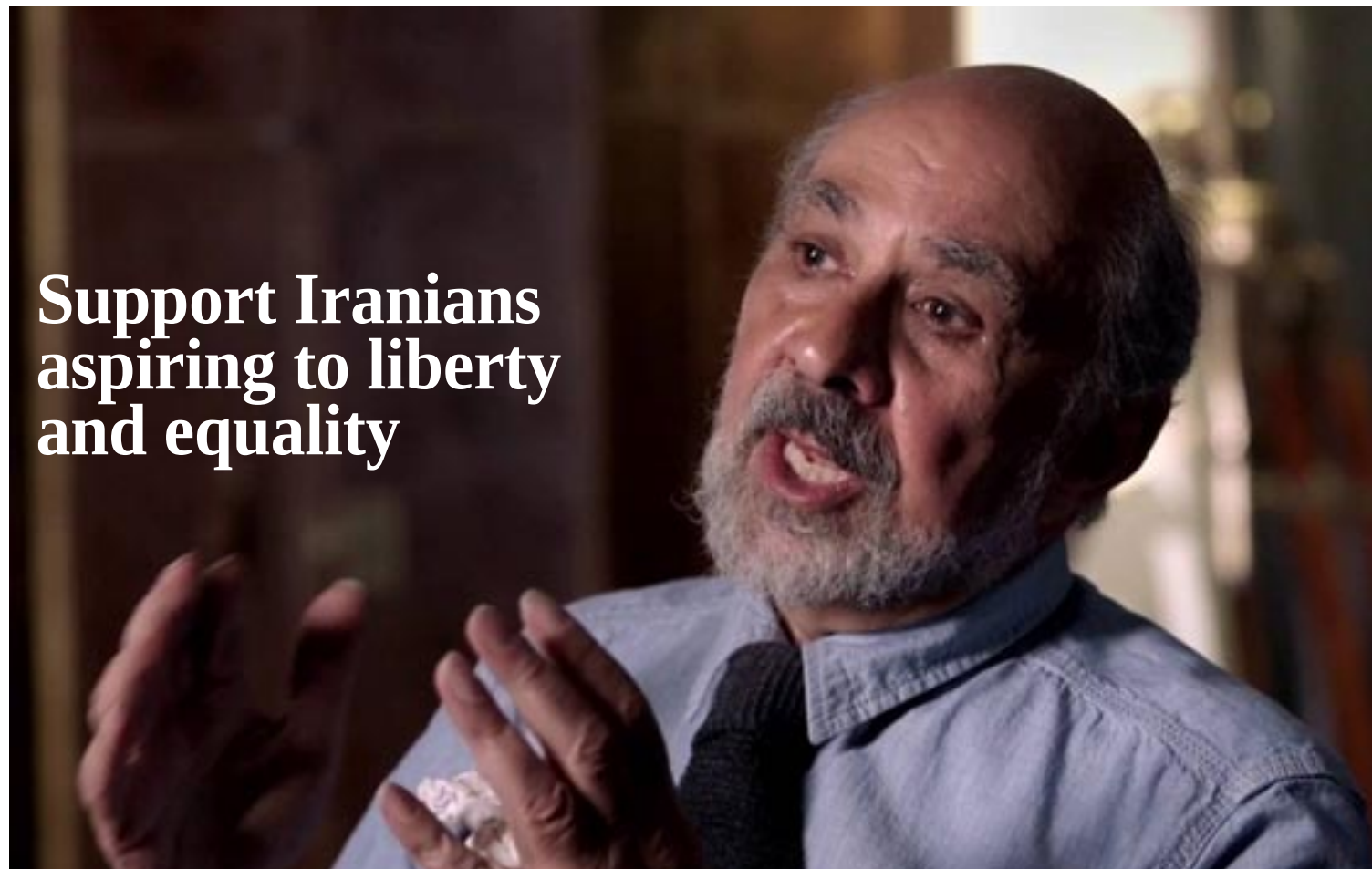


World War Two
A People's War
John Ellison interrogates accounts of World War Two to bring out the inadequacies in various mainstream historical narratives, and their imperial and anti-communist motives.

Iran revolt/analysis

There is a real disconnect and conflict of discourse between the regime and wider society in Iran. The regime itself talks in the language of divine rights and divine legitimacy. It claims to represent God on Earth and, therefore, anyone who opposes it is challenging God's will. However, when you look at the protests, religion is completely divorced and missing from them

Support Iranians aspiring to liberty and equality



Liberation and the Committee for the Defence of Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) were privileged to host in May a leading academic authority on the history and politics of modern Iran, Professor **Ervand Abrahamian**.

PS: How would you respond to the view expressed by many that Iran is currently entering a revolution?

EA: This question has become very prevalent, especially in the West. My answer is that Iran is not in a revolutionary stage at the moment. I will give two major reasons for this.

Firstly, if you look at history, revolutions are actually quite rare. The term is often thrown around for protests, revolts, and regime abdications. However, if you look at history since 1789, there are only a handful of events that you can call genuine revolutions and the 1979 Iranian Revolution is one of those.

Secondly, why I would argue that there is not a revolution in Iran yet relates to the support base of the ruling regime. The regime began in 1979, with a great deal of legitimacy and popularity but this popularity has drastically diminished over the years. Now, even though it has lost a great deal of its support, it still retains support among those groups that gained substantially during the Revolution, especially through property transfers from the old ruling class to the more middle-class groups that supported the Revolution.

Consequently, the regime, although faced by a great number of protests, has not suffered a crisis in terms of its continued rule yet, as the protests have been contained. On the whole, the ruling elite has managed to hold itself together.

There have been a few members of the elite that have expressed discontent, but the core of the regime has remained intact. So even though one could argue that a revolution is not imminent any day now, it can also be stressed – and I think this is the real interesting issue now – that the regime is facing a major crisis, one that is permanent and which it cannot resolve.

PS: How would you characterise the nature of this crisis for the regime?

EA: There is a real disconnect and conflict of discourse between the regime and wider society in Iran. The regime itself talks in the language of divine rights and divine legitimacy. It claims to

represent God on Earth and, therefore, anyone who opposes it is challenging God's will. However, when you look at the protests, religion is completely divorced and missing from them.

The people protesting are not interested in religion. They're talking about liberty, equality, choice, and individual rights – the right to protest, the right to speak and dress as they wish, and the right to organise, especially trade unions. These are seen as intricate human rights that are not given to them by God or representatives of God on Earth, but which by nature are given to human beings. So, what you're seeing, basically, is a clash of discourses. This is not something that the regime can overcome.

Interestingly, the people leading these protests are the young. These are people who went to Islamic kindergartens, as well as Islamic private primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, and universities.

PS: You referred earlier to the support base amongst the middle-class traders in the bazaar in Iran. How significant does this support continue to be?

There were general strikes throughout the bazaars during the Iranian Revolution. In the present crisis there is, among some sectors of the bazaar, discontent with the regime.

The currents in the bazaar that were at the forefront of support for the Revolution have become very much integrated into the regime. This is a capitalist regime and the main capitalists in the bazaar have been quite clever in attaching themselves to the regime. They were very important during the Revolution and, more recently, they were given the country's petrochemical industry to run. And I assure you that running the petrochemical industry is much more prosperous than running a butcher's shop or tailor's shop in the bazaar.

However, there are others who have not succeeded and that consider themselves as being cut off from the regime and centres of power. However, as far as we can see, there haven't been general strikes in the bazaars during the

recent protests. There were some strikes in the Kurdish areas and in the Baluchi areas, but when it comes to places like Tehran and Esfahan, the core bazaar areas, they've been pretty passive. That doesn't necessarily mean they actively support the regime, but they are not active against the regime either.

So, I would say, a good sign that there is a revolution coming in Iran is if the bazaaris actually begin to support the protests. And, so far, I haven't seen that.

PS: Regarding the recent détente between Iran and Saudi Arabia. What is the impact of the recent mediated normalisation, and what does it mean vis-à-vis Iran's foreign relations going forward?

EA: This agreement came as a surprise because at one time, the Saudis were telling the Americans that Iran was a serpent whose head had to be cut off, so they have obviously reversed their position. Iran has also toned down its rhetoric. Before, Iran was talking about how all monarchies are illegitimate – and, of course, the Saudis are ruled by a monarch.

I think that both sides are being quite pragmatic. The Saudis have decided – especially after the Trump administration – that the U.S. can't be depended on for protection. When Iran was able to launch a missile to do serious damage to their installations, they had second thoughts about relying on the United States for protection.

Iran has a different motive. Having decided to cut off its relations with America, but also Western Europe and becoming much more eastern oriented, Iran wants to have better relations in the Middle East as a way of relieving pressure. That makes it in their national interests to try to normalise relations with the Saudis.

PS: What role can those of us in solidarity organisation play to support the struggle inside Iran?

EA: As non-government organisations, we should support the grievances and indeed the aspirations of the Iranian people, which are for liberty and equality. These are the two issues that are facing Iran – not just women's rights or trade union rights, but the notion of liberty, equality, and the inalienable rights of individuals.

The support should come not from governments. Most of the Western governments have their own 'baggage' on these issues. When it comes to major powers such as the United States, it becomes hypocritical for the American government to talk about women's rights in Iran, when women don't actually have equal rights in the United States.

Instead, we as individuals and organisations should support the general aspirations of the people of Iran, which are basically the ideas of the radical enlightenment, and support anyone in Iran who carries those aspirations.

So, my basic message would be that we, as outsiders, should be supporting the aspirations of liberty and equality in Iran.

Professor Ervand Abrahamian is a Distinguished Professor of History at Baruch College and the Graduate Centre of the City University of New York and is one of the leading academic authorities on the history and politics of modern Iran.

This article is an edited version of **Professor Abrahamian's** speech at *The People vs. Dictatorship, for peace and popular sovereignty* webinar held in May 2023. Listen to the speech and watch the webinar in full: liberationorg.co.uk

book review/Haitian Revolution

Although Henry Christophe was seen by many as a ruthless dictator, this may be too simplistic a view. He succeeded in defending the Haitian revolution against many internal intrigues and changed strategic alliances many times to protect Haiti's independence against potential and real invasion attempts by France, Spain and Britain.

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Black Crown in the Caribbean's forgotten kingdom

As well as being an important contribution to the historiography of Haiti this book provides evidence of the appalling intrigues and crimes of European imperialist states in their efforts to maintain their looting of the Caribbean and exploitation of the Afro-Caribbean slaves and their descendants, writes **Bob Newland**

MAYA ANGELOU, renowned US poet and civil rights activist, is quoted as saying 'The more you know of your history the more liberated you are'. This book by Paul Clammer goes a long way to fill the enormous gap in material available to those who wish to learn more of the history of Haiti, the first country to overthrow slavery.

Based around the biography of Henry Christophe it provides a mass of detail of the achievements and setbacks of the Haitian revolution and the subsequent battle for independence.

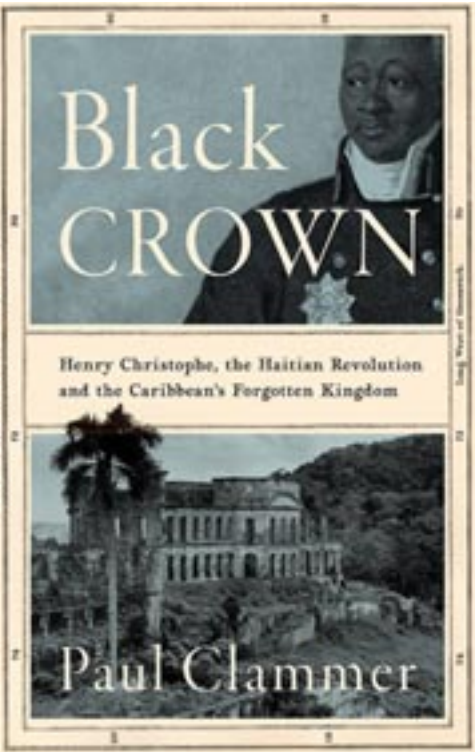
This adventure begins with the American War of Independence where Christophe, Toussaint Louverture and many other former African Caribbean slaves joined the colonists in their fight against Britain. This act is commemorated in Savannah, Georgia, where a statue shows five French soldiers confronting the British. The soldiers are black and the young drummer boy is Henry Christophe.

Returning to Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) Louverture, inspired by the French Revolution, led a series of slave revolts eventually succeeding in overthrowing French rule in 1801. Christophe was one of his top lieutenants.

Louverture died in captivity in France following a failed attempt to negotiate independence. This 'shameful act was commemorated shortly afterwards in a sonnet by William Wordsworth'. His successor Jean-Jacques Dessalines finally declared independence in 1804.

The constitution of the new republic states in Article 2: 'Slavery is forever abolished'. (something declared by the constitution of the French Republic but not carried out in its colonies). However, plantation workers were still required to remain and work on their plantations. It was not an easy path forward with divisions between north and south, revolts by maroons (escaped slaves who set up their own statelets from time to time) and power struggles amongst the leaders of the revolt.

All this took place against a background of attempts by former plantation owners to regain



control and re-establish slavery. The whole story is a reflection on colonial history of the world. As Britain, France and Spain fought in Europe they battled for dominance in the Caribbean. Over time all their armies were driven out of Haiti but there continued many attempts to re-invade.

Dessalines was assassinated in 1807 whereupon Christophe was elected President. Sadly not long after the country split in two. Christophe, ruling in the north declared himself King and set up a hereditary Kingdom claiming sovereignty over the whole of Haiti including the 'Republic' in the south.

According to Clammer, although Christophe was seen by many as a ruthless dictator, this may be too

simplistic a view. He succeeded in defending the Haitian revolution against many internal intrigues and changed strategic alliances many times to protect Haiti's independence against potential and real invasion attempts by France, Spain and Britain.

Christophe was also responsible for establishing a substantial educational system for his people and introduced a system of labour and small land ownership which successfully replaced the horrors of the former slave plantations. This regime was inspired by Dessalines' idea of freedom through national self-sufficiency. It regulated working hours, banned corporal punishment and provided for 25% of the income from the plantations being retained by the plantation workers. This Agricultural Code was praised at the time by Sir Joseph Banks, the President of the Royal Society, as a creation of 'the most moral association of men in existence; nothing that white men have been able to arrange is equal to it'.

Christophe's suicide in 1820, during an army coup supported by a popular revolt, brought an end to the short lived Kingdom of Haiti and the reign of its only king. The country was subsequently reunited as an independent republic.

The book is hard reading as it retells events in great detail, sometimes almost on a day to day basis, and at £25 may be beyond the means of some potential readers. It is, however, an excellent record of many different aspects of Haiti's little known history not just that of its ill-fated monarchy.

As well as being an important contribution to the historiography of Haiti it provides evidence of the appalling intrigues and crimes of European imperialist states in their efforts to maintain their looting of the Caribbean and exploitation of the Afro-Caribbean slaves and their descendants.

Black Crown, Henry Christophe, the Haitian Revolution and the Caribbean's Forgotten Kingdom by Paul Clammer. Hurst Publishers £25

Bob Newland is a member of Liberation and was a London Recruit



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