

International VIEWPOINT

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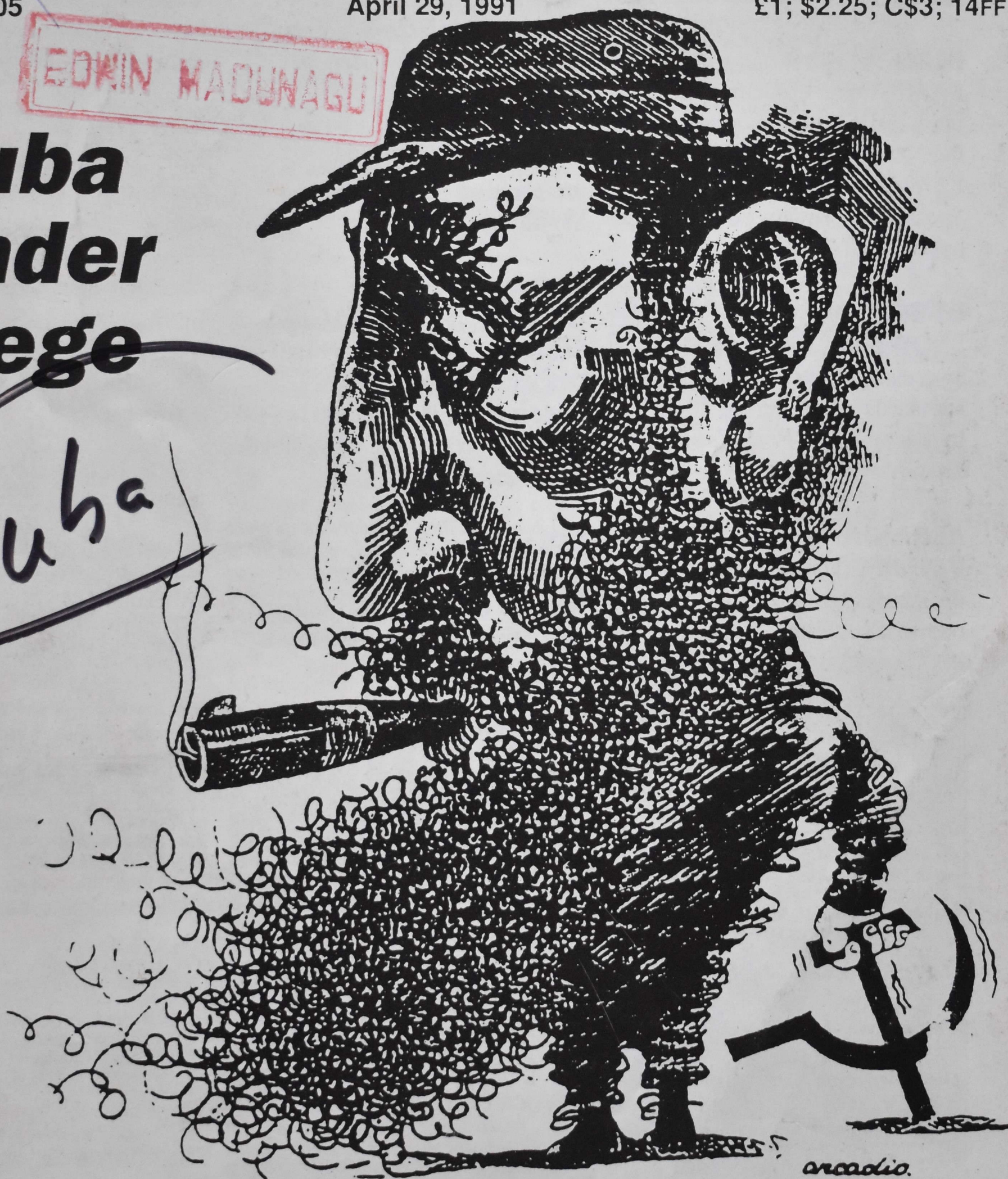
April 29, 1991

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EDWIN MADUNAGU

Cuba under siege

Cuba



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evant archives. Among its many signatures are those of prominent personalities including of the former Austrian chancellor, Bruno Kreisky.

As a first contribution to this research, a small book was published in October 1990 by Junius-Verlag which gave some examples of militants who went into the Gulag or died in Stalin's jails.

A typical case was that of a founder member and leader of the Austrian Communist Party, Franz Koritshoner (1892-1941). He was a friend of Bukharin, who he got to know during the latter's time in Vienna between 1911 and 1913.

He was a delegate to the Kienthal conference in April 1916, where he met Lenin and Radek and aligned himself with the Bolsheviks. Starting in 1930 he worked for the Red International of Trade Unions in Moscow before falling victim to the purges in 1936.

Sentenced to three years in prison and then ten years exile, he was handed over to the Gestapo at Lublin in April 1941 with 40 other prisoners. He died in Auschwitz on June 8, 1941. After the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 he was rehabilitated.

★

CONGO

Death of democratic leader

THE "democratization process" in the Congo is one of the most spectacular of the developments of this kind now underway in many countries in Black Africa. Dozens of parties and associations are coming into existence and putting forward their point of view.

The regime, weakened by the economic crisis and social pressures, is also under pressure from the dominant imperialist power in the Congo, France, which is pushing for a controlled democratization here as in most other African countries.

The various cliques that have succeeded each other in power over the past 20 years fitted out in "Marxist-Leninist" language a regime built on corruption, tribalism and in the end submission to imperialism and the oil companies.

The whole system is in crisis and a period of uncertainty has set in, which promises to be prolonged and difficult. There is no guarantee that this type of process will give rise to a new independent workers and popular movement.

Some indication of the state of play was provided by the national all-party conference held at the start of March, at which all the various political forces were able to show what they had to offer and confront the regime.

Among these forces *La Cause* ("association for social control and the emancipation of the people by themselves") appeared as the most radical current, particularly concerned that the process of democratization be indepen-

dent of bourgeois and neo-colonial forces. Unfortunately on the eve of the national conference, the main inspiration behind *La Cause*, Grégoire Mavounia, died. When his death was announced, students requested that classes be stopped for a week and more than a thousand people attended the funeral.

Young people of both sexes wanted to carry the coffin after demonstrating in Mavounia's honour on the campus where he taught. Trade unionists and religious figures also took part in the homage.

Mavounia's funeral was a sign of the immense hopes aroused in the population and the support that exists for the construction in the country, more than thirty years after independence, of a popular, radical and socialist movement free from the scourge of corruption.

★

BELGIUM

Conference on Third World debt

THE Belgian committees for the cancellation of the Third World debt organized a conference on the theme "Third World debt: a timebomb" in Brussels on March 16, 1991, with around a thousand attending.

Among the speakers were: Gilles Perault, one of the initial signatories of the appeal against the debt; Susan George, a United Nations and UNESCO expert on Africa; the agronomist René Dumont and Ernest Mandel.

According to UNICEF, 40,000 children die each day of malnutrition and curable diseases. Nine months of the Gulf War cost the coalition nearly \$100bn. It would cost an estimated \$2.5bn each year to save these children.

This Brussels initiative will be followed up by an international mobilization against the summit of the seven richest countries to take place in London on July 13, 1991 and by the organization in Paris on June 8, 1991 of an assembly around the theme "six hours for the cancellation of the debt." ★

EAST EUROPE / SOUTH AFRICA

Where are they now?

"WESTERN radio has announced that South Africa has given permanent residence to former police and secret service agents from eastern Europe. Is this true?" asks one K. Klimov in a letter to the mass circulation Soviet weekly *Argumenty i*

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Fakty (no. 10 (543), March, 1991).

The journal's S. Youriev replies:

"In the recent period a significant number of former secret service, army, intelligence and police officers from Poland, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the ex-GDR have received permission to go and live permanently in South Africa. Relieved of their former functions, they are being recruited there by police, army and intelligence units.

"According to the South African press, the 'eastern European officers' are more hardworking in their field than their white South African colleagues, they have a good professional experience and are even more 'resolute' when it comes to restoring order in the black areas.

"One should not overlook the material advantages of their new career. When they go to work for the South African state they receive a good house and a car; and after six months of irreproachable service they can become South African citizens." ★

ALGERIA

General strike

A general strike in protest against price rises was called by the principal Algerian trade union, the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA), on March 13 and 14 1991. The strike was widely supported and placed the Islamic trade union, which had not supported the strike call, in a difficult situation. Many workers observed the strike in enterprises where the Islamic union was dominant.

The success of this strike, going well beyond the base of the UGTA, has given a new confidence to the Algerian working class and marked a defeat for the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front a few months before Algeria's general elections. ★

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