VOTE

LABOUR!

Kick out the

TORIES!

Force a General Election now!
Labour right backs racist laws

By Bill MacKeith.

LABOUR right-wingers combined with the Tories on Oxford City Council to defeat - by one vote - a resolution calling for the closing down of Campfield detention centre.

Among those voting with the Tories was Val Smith, wife of Oxford Labour MP Andrew Smith. Mayor of Oxford John Power went on radio to insist that "we don't support universal immigration.

The council only agreed to call for a Public Enquiry into Campfield.

The actions of these right-wing councillors is consistent with Labour Front Bench policy which appears to be opposed to the closure of Campfield.

Their desperate search for "respectability" leads them to oppose measures which even the local Liberal democrats have no problems supporting. No doubt they will also fail to campaign against the building alongside Campfield of a proposed detention centre for 12-14 year olds, part of the Tories' 'Get Tough' policy.

Despite this reverse the campaign to close Campfield continues. This weekend (23-24 April) a two day 'Freedom Camp' with ten tents has been set up outside the detention centre.

Preparations are well in hand for a National Day of Vigil outside detention centres and prisons on 30th April. Pickets will take place outside Pentonville, Holloway, Harmondsworth, Haslar (Portsmouth), Winson Green, Canterbury, Winchester and elsewhere - including, of course, Campfield.

No-show fascists

DESPITE widely publicised threats that Blood and Honour were going to hold a St George's day concert in Brixton and "take Brixton back", helped by far-right paramilitaries Combat 18, not a single fascist dared to show themselves outside Brixton tube as advertised.

If they had over 200 anti-fascists including, ANL, YRE, Black Freedom and Unity party, Lambeth Union and many independents would have shown them they were not wanted anywhere near Brixton.

The fascists are not standing any candidates in the local elections in Lambeth and have never had a presence in Brixton but recently evidence of their activity has been found: stickers on bus stops and plastered all over the local college during the Easter break.

Defeat for rail strike vote

THE RECENT RMT ballot for strike action over PT&K (redundancy arrangements) was defeated 10,193 for 11,336 against. This major setback was seen as a result of the total lack of campaigning by the leadership. The only publicity material produced was at a local level. When the RMT Special General Meeting last week heard the result it agreed to call upon the General Grades Committee to examine what had led to the defeat.

Two hours - After a two hour session immediately after the close of the SGM the committee agreed by 10 votes to 9 to set up a special sub committee to investigate why nothing had been produced by head office and to take control of any publicity produced for any further ballots. This is a step in the right direction for a new RMT leader Knapp.

RMT leader Knapp no longer a move to recover from the defeat but angry reaction at special conferences this weekend were sceptical. They will be convinced of a change when they see something different. Balloting is about to take place for interim pay award for signalling grades and there is still a dispute with British Rail over negotiating machinery.

The left needs to put pressure on the special committee to reverse what is seen as a betrayals by the left.

Campaigning for the right to strike

DELEGATES from the NUT, NATFHE, NCU, RMT, UCW and T&G attended the small but productive 'Fight for the Right to Strike' Conference organised by Lambeth Trades Council on April 23. The conference focussed on the implications of the recent injunction against NATFHE for the trade union movement hearing about the Post Office's use of this precedent in seeking an injunction before the ballot of Royal Mail engineers.

Conference also heard from Patrick Sikorski from the RMT national executive, Stuart King from NATFHE London regional executive and Dominic Brown from the Socialist Lawyers Association. It was agreed that there needed to be a massive response from the trade union movement as a whole. To begin this process conference asked Lambeth Trades Council to organise a open planning meeting to plan the creation of the broadest possible campaign throughout the labour movement.

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Socialist OUTLOOK No.51, April 30, 1994, Page 2
MAY DAY, MAY 1, is internationally celebrated as an international workers' day, a time of special attention to solidarity with struggles at home and overseas.

At home, of course, the British workers' movement stands at a historic low point, bound into a vicious straightjacket of Tory legislation which effectively illegalizes strike action, and saddled with trade union and Labour leaders who almost to a person have distanced themselves from any concept of class struggle or socialism.

As the Major government turns the screw, freezing wages, raising taxes and attacking the foundations of the British welfare state, the workers' movement remains paralyzed.

But the word Mayday (from the French 'm'aidez' - help me) is also an international distress call. And May 1 this year finds possibly more workers and poor people than ever before in serious distress.

The need for practical and political solidarity, for genuine socialist internationalism, has never been greater.

Despite the fact that tens of millions already unemployed and hundreds of millions of men and women are condemned to miserably low-paid part-time work, there is a world-wide attack on jobs, pay, and working conditions.

**Competition**

Employers are being driven into this onslaught by the growing competition of the capitalist market system. The same pressures mean that the collapse of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe and the ex-SSSR has opened up a new offensive against the jobs and living standards of the working class, as the new ruling bureaucrats attempt to create conditions for a restoration of capitalism.

Competition for scarce resources creates increasingly obvious splits and conflicts within and between recession-ridden capitalist countries - increasingly dividing into mutually hostile trading blocs.

It also drives brutal wedges between the interlocking nations and peoples in the no-man's land of Eastern Europe, and spurs on equally bitter and bloody conflicts in the forgotten territories of other parts of the world.

After the scanty massacre of 100,000 Iraqis by US fire-power flying UN banners, we were told that a 'new world order' had been established, offering peace and stability.

This was always a lie, and beyond the headlines, and outside the spheres of influence of any of the imperialists, other wars were continued to take a human toll: in Mozambique, Angola and the vicious wars that have brought economic activity to a near standstill.

May Day 1994 takes place in the shadow of the brutal horror of rampant racism and nationalism triggering the slaughter of 100,000 in two weeks in Rwanda, and the continuing carnage unleashed by Serbian aggression as a measure to ailes Serbian regime seeks to complete the imperialist-sanctioned carve-up of Bosnia by blitzing helpless enclaves previously disarmed by the United Nations.

But while the European Union boasts hypocritical protests against Serbian 'ethnic cleansing', its own government are implementing the scandalous Schengen agreement, aimed at slamming the door on potential immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Vincent Marchetti

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**Vote Labour - and step up the fight!**

MILLIONS of people will get the chance to give John Major's government and local Tories a bloody nose in the council elections on May 5.

A strong Labour vote can remove These Tories and stoke up the internal crisis within Major's party. That's why Socialist Outlook says vote Labour on May 5 - and in the Euro-elections on June 2.

We have no illusions in the witched right-wing programme put forward by John Smith. His fumbling and ineffective leadership.

But we know that every blow that weakens the main party to the ruling class must strengthen the rest of the working class, increasing the chances of action against the public sector pay freeze and a defence of jobs and threatened services.

Smith's team has made it as hard as possible to rally support for Labour. Nationally, Smith appears to have been doing a job-share with the Invisible Man, while side-kicks like Jack Straw try to make a virtue out of having no defined policies.

**No fight**

Labour has let in opposition to the anti-union laws, or to cuts in the NHS and the welfare state. Smith has not even pussed the case for an immediate general election as it becomes ever more clear that Major has lost his mandate.

On a local level, too, Labour has a dismal record. Sectors of trade unionists and socialists will need to clench their teeth before voting for right wing Labour councils which have acted as enforcers for Tory laws and cutbacks, slashing services, attacking union rights and piling the stinging parts they were not obliged to touch.

There are political scores to settle within the Labour Party, but these cannot be resolved by abstention or by voting for parties which have no connection with the workers' movement.

To change the policies and leadership of the Labour Party, a class struggle left wing must be built, based on a socialist platform, and linking up Labour's left wing with militants in the unions and mass campaigns who want to fight back.

The June 11 Conference on Socialism and Full Employment, called by the Socialist Campaign Group Network (see page 14) offers an opportunity to advance this process. Vote Labour, get active, and step up the fight.

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**EDITORIAL**

**Doing a job share with the Invisible Man? Smith offers little to enthuse voters**

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**SOCIALIST OUTLOOK No.61, April 30, 1994, Page 3**
What’s Left in Local Government?

ON THE EVE of the local government elections Helen Shaw spoke to expelled Labour councillors and Socialist Outlook supporters STEVE FRENCH and GREG TUCKER about their eight years on Lambeth council.

SO: You came onto the council after the surcharge of the Lambeth 31 following ratecapping in 1986 – what’s your assessment of the last eight years?
SF: In 1986 Labour candidates in Lambeth were selected on the basis of willingness to fight the Tories. People got through by giving gawdy answers; with the first budget, cuts were made. We’ve never supported a single Labour budget because every one contained cuts.

I didn’t think we expected things to go downhill so rapidly but after the ratecapping defeat, even 49 councillors refusing to implement Tory cuts would have meant nothing without a better balance of forces nationally.

GT: When we came into office the party was linked to the council through the local government committee (LGC) with an expectation that councillors would follow party strategy rather than act on individual whims.

Now, there’s no real communication between the council leadership, the Labour Group and the party. Our biggest political failure is our inability to maintain that link.

GT: The rot really set in with the suspension of the LGC, the witch-hunt and the suspension of 13 councillors. The party bureaucracy came in so crudely that we lost support in the council.

GT: The amount of effort and number of hours put in by leading officers of the Labour Party nationally to stop our infighting, indicate some level of success. Its not entirely negative.

Even in the last year we have been able to lead successful local campaigns. Despite the witch-hunt and the influx of rightwingers we still have a strong left in the Borough.

SO: Have there been attempts to co-ordinate with other left councillors? What’s happened to the left that it was the case?
SF: We tried to launch national initiatives – councillors against the cuts and then councillors against the poll tax – with some degree of success. It was impossible, after the ratecapping defeat, to organise a diminishing band of left wing councillors.

GT: There are some beginnings, through the SGNF, of working around a national forum of councillors willing to work with us. This indicates the party purge wasn’t completely successful but also shows that once confronted with the same issues, some of these mainly new councillors end up coming towards us.

SO: What do you think will happen after May 5? What prospect is there for a fight for left policies in local government?
SF: The idea of Labour councillors playing a significant role in the council chamber to support struggles outside is hardly on the agenda. In Lambeth the new Labour Group will be more anti-trade union and will be consciously planning attacks.

Labour’s manifesto is incredibly uninspiring. Local issues like housing, a bold policy for house building could have a dramatic effect in mobilising voters and support for left wing ideas. This has been completely wasted. We’ll see some significant Labour gains but pyrrhic victories.

GT: When we started there was still an idea that you could act locally. Not ‘islands of socialism’, which we never agreed with, but at least pockets of issues on which one could concentrate.

That no longer exists and certainly won’t after this election. Everything is reduced to waiting for a general election and ‘don’t rock the boat’ until it takes place. This affects the broader labour movement as much as the Labour Party and Labour councils.

GT: People used to say the Labour party leadership was way to the right of the membership: now it’s way to the right of society. A recent example is the new housing legislation which will make it no longer necessary for councils to house the homeless. There’s been such anger from Labour in terms of any national campaign. You’re left with the housing lobby – Shelter and other campaigning organisations making the running.

High profile

GT: Before, we had high profile campaigning around defending local services including highlighting what services existed. Now we’ve lost the whole idea of a social service in the broad sense.

Public expectation and expectation of their council’s role has changed. People aren’t sure what it does other than collect their rubbish and cost them lots of money.

GT: It’s criminal the way Jack Straw MP has entered this debate about whether Labour or Tory councils are cheaper? He ignores the central question of local government funding and unequal distribution of grants from central government. Labour councillors are more expensive and Straw shouldn’t be embarrassed to say so.

Boroughs like Wandsworth and Westminster got incredibly high grant assessments. Labour councils with massive social needs have had their grant cut with the burden falling on working class people through local taxation.

SO: Its a very negative assessment. So why should people vote Labour?
SF: It’s a class vote, and come election time we’re in a united front with Labour for all their faults. We don’t agree with their programme – it’s a bourgeois programme but its a class vote.

We’ve always argued for people campaigning against the Labour council’s actions to take that fight into the party and unite with those willing to fight.

GT: Militant Labour are standing in Lambeth. While we agree with a large part of their policies locally, in the longer term they don’t present an alternative around which you can build a campaign against Tory attacks. The best terrain to do that is with a labour council.

SO: Many on the left believe it’s all over in the local government area. Should we be struggling to get left candidates on the council in four years?
GT: Being on the council is not a task of managing the local state – its a political forum. Local parties have to campaign and fight around broad political issues including international, national and local issues, and local government issues within those local issues.

We’ve always campaigned to broaden the party and the council out. Part of the charges against us were things like the Gulf War meeting where there was a broad political counter to be injected. Even if local government is totally closed down, councillors only allowed to set the budget once a year, award the contracts and do nothing else, we should still be trying to force them to take a broader political platform.

The trouble is legislation has taken away real authority from councils and given it to either the local government department or the government directly.

SO: Your eight years as councillors have come to an end and you’ve been thrown out of the Labour Party. What next?
GT: We haven’t broken our links just because the party’s expelled us. We’re still trying to build and recruit to the party and have an influence on it. We have to make sure our experience is disseminated, not wasted.

We still have some influence, we’re still listened to on the Labour Party’s internal affairs, and we don’t believe the right can bottle up the party in Lambeth. It hasn’t been able to expel everyone or destroy political debate – that will continue.

Whether we’re in the party or not, whether we’re allowed to stand for the council again or not in four years time we will still see people who agree with us stand on the left policies we’ve argued for.

SF: It may sound arrogant but to put it on the balance sheet, as individuals and as supporters of Socialist Outlook, we have in the bank a strong base of support and respect in the Labour movement. That won’t evaporate on May 5.
Blackmail beats down Tower resistance

By Dafydd Rhyd

THE LAST deep mine in South Wales has closed. Miners at Tower colliery voted to accept redundancy, reversing an earlier decision to fight closure.

The vote followed an unprecedented week of mass-mouning by British Coal. In the words of one Tower miner, "If British Coal worked as hard to keep the pits open as they do to close them down, we'd all be smiling."

The events which unfolded are as bizarre as they are tragic. The first response by British Coal was to try to undermine the vote, by pressurising individual miners to accept redundancy; they even asked one coal-face team to vote, as a team, on the redundancy offer.

By next day management were forced to accept this concession, thus procedure and all offers of redundancy were withdrawn. It seemed the pit was back on a lengthy review period.

British Coal then announced the pit would be kept open after all, if miners accepted pay cuts and increased production. In one week their position had changed from closing the pit, because of lack of markets, to keeping it open with increased output. The NUM were given 48 hours to respond.

A 27-hour sit-in at the pit by Ann Clwyd MP began, with Woman Against Pit Closures lobbying the Welsh Office and calling an impromptu demonstration at the pit gates.

The following morning a recalled NUM mass meeting re-confirmed the decision to take the pit into review. British Coal responded with a cynical worded statement, announcing they had decided to keep the pit open after all.

This was widely reported by local and national media as a victory for the campaign.

The sting in the tail was the last sentence: "Men will be paid fully in accordance with the industry's collective agreements, as regards basic grade rates and the local agreements covering incentive and bonus arrangements." This sounded innocuous enough, but "basic grade rates" meant re-grading most of the men at the pit, affecting pay-packets by £100 or more per week as well as final redundancy payments.

British Coal were asking the men to lose a further £20,000 or more on top of the £3,000 already sacrificed — for a pit that wasn't guaranteed a future beyond the next three months, at least.

Merseyside fighting back

Firefighters on the move

By Glen Varia, St Helens Trades Council

ON MONDAY April 18 Merseyside FBU called a ballot following threatened closure of a Liverpool fire station.

The ballot proposed a series of one hour strikes throughout Merseyside, to be stepped up if closure is not reversed. Results are not yet known.

To give FBU members confidence the Merseyside leadership called a national demonstration in Liverpool for Thursday April 14.

To the amazement of local and national leaders over 8,000 FBU members — more than a fifth of the entire membership — participated.

After this show of strength Merseyside FBU leaders are confident of a massive vote for determined strike action.

Post Office workers beat anti-union laws

200 workers walked out of Copparus Hill Post Office Sorting Depot, Liverpool, on Tuesday April 12.

A supervisor had deliberately provoked a deaf UCW member by continually laughing behind his back because of his disability. Harassment was so bad that the UCW member eventually threw a punch.

Management neither investigated the incident nor used agreed Disputes Procedure. The supervisor immediately suspended the deaf worker, causing uproar in the sorting depot. After a mass meeting the whole work-force walked out, setting up pickets at the depot. Management used all the anti-union laws at their disposal and on Thursday April 14 an injunction was served on the union.

The UCW National Executive, frustrated of losing their precious funds, demanded the branch immediately return to work. A mass meeting decided unanimously to continue the illegal action.

Letters were piling up —

there was no mail coming in or out of Liverpool. Over half a million homes and businesses were affected. Management and local union leaders had round after round of talks without reaching agreement.

Management tried to break the strike by transferring mail to other large depots. At Ellesmere Port, Warrington and Bolton workers refused to handle mail.

After six days on strike, the branch decided to return to work on Monday April 18.

Management reluctantly re-instated the suspended worker, though he still faces a disciplinary hearing.

The branch made clear further attempts to block him would result in more walkouts.

This is the first time workers have floated the new anti-union laws. It is a major victory for the trade union movement. By standing firm and spreading action disputes can be won despite management intimidation and reactionar union leaderships.

![Image]
Why we are against UN air strikes
Five questions and answers on the Bosnian crisis

Q: But shouldn’t we punish the Serbs for their brutal attacks on unarmed civilians? They pay no attention to cease-fires or agreements. Force is the only language they understand.

A: None of the decision-making in this situation is under any democratic control. It is not ‘we’, but our government which is taking action, and deciding on what basis should be used. We have no say in this, and should not give any support whatever to John Major’s re-actionary government, whose motives are very different from working people. The most immediate impact of any bombing of Serb positions would be to reinforce the position of Serbian leader Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb leadership, who would revel in the situation.

Q: The Serbian policy of ethnic cleansing is the latter-day equivalent of fascism. Are you saying that the international community should sit back and watch these developments in the heart of Europe?

A: There is no such thing as an international community, only governments and the class interests. What is being proposed is not some kind of International Brigade to lend enlightened proletarian support to the Bosnians, but a brutal Blitzkrieg against Serbian troops by imperialist warplanes. The British and US governments which now pose as opponents of ethnic cleansing have been quite happy to do deals with Milošević’s Klačanin, the man who, under the brutal period of rule.

Q: At the end of the day, it is obviously an impossible situation. How can we say that 20 years of living now, than to leave the Serbs to run riot and massacre who they please?

A: At the end of the day, the only sure defence of the Bosnian Muslims is to ensure they are armed and supplied to defend themselves. This must be linked to a solidarity effort aimed at strengthening anti-war movements and left wing opposition to the Milosevic regime in the Serbian working class.

The Bosnians have been quite consciously left stranded by imperialism, and would be left stranded again once the air strikes had concluded. They have learned the hard way how foolish it would be to entrust their fate to benevolent overlords. The British left must learn this lesson too and redouble the campaign to lift the arms embargo.

The probability is that the Serbs who come under air bombardment will take reprisals not against the well-armed and technologically superior NATO jets flying overhead, but against unarmed Bosnian civilians on the ground. They might also begin more systematic attacks on unarmed UN forces - potentially widening the war - or on aid workers.

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Bosnia: the scandal of the British Left

THE DESTRUCTION of Gorazde by Serb forces and the impending human catastrophe has highlighted the scandalous position of the British left, including most of the far left, on the war in Bosnia. The large scale ethnic cleansing of Muslim peoples and other major atrocities amount to some of the greatest crimes perpetrated in Europe since the defeat of the Third Reich.

In the first of two articles ALAN THORNE and DAVE PACKER discuss the response of the far left to this crisis. The next issue will take up the debate with sections of the Labour Party left.

ACCORDING to Socialist Worker, the arms embargo against Bosnia must stay, because it would make the situation worse. This is the astonishing conclusion the SWP draws from the position of the British army trying to defend the 60,000 people in Gorazde against 200 Serb tanks and 400 heavy guns with rifles and hand guns.

Even now the SWP does not agree that the Bosnians should be given the basic right of self defence. This is actually what they said: ‘Lifting it [the embargo] now would see the American and Turkish governments rushing to arm the Bosnian forces which could spark a new spiral of killing all sides. Far from ending the fighting, the war would take on a new intensity as Muslim soldiers sought to retake territory.’

Yes indeed. People who have their arms taken away often fight to recover it – like the Palestinians fight to recover Palestine.

This is political confusion in the extreme. Two-thirds of Bosnia Herzegovina is under Serbian occupation, 200,000 Bosnians are dead and 1.5 million refugees. Contrary to the view of Socialist Worker apologists, most of these people are victims of ethnic cleansing perpetuated by Serb forces. And yet the Socialist Workers Party and the Militant still think this is a ‘civil war’ between equally reactionary nationalists.

Like Pontius Pilate they wash their hands and shrug their shoulders, and despite their ever so principled rejection of all ‘nationalisations’ (which of course has nothing whatever to do with Marxism), they abstain from the real interests of the working class – to defend their national rights.

This sectarian and profoundly economic approach objectively ends up by its passivity, aiding and abetting the most reactionary and aggressive chauvinism embodied in the ‘Greater Serbia’ project of Milosevic, Karadzic and those sinister forces even further to their right.

Crass

Do they really think that Karadzic and the Bosnian Serbs are independent of Milosevic, or that the Bosnian Serbs envisage some separate state to Serbia? Such a view would be crass in the extreme.

Bosnia was a multi-ethnic Republic and then an independent state with proportional representation of all ‘ethnic’ groups.

The vast majority had lived without cultural or religious conflict for many years, until Milosevic declared for a Greater Serbia and agitated and organised, including planting insurrection, for the Serb minorities in Bosnia and Croatia to join it. The war does not take place on the soil of the Serbian Republic, it is a war of aggression and territorial expansion perpetuated by the degenerate Serbian bureaucracy, initially as a means of holding on to power. Once the war is over, those parts of Bosnia and Croatia held by the Serbs will become a part of Serbia itself even if covered by a federal camouflage.

An SWP member recently claimed in a meeting that the situation is ‘complicated’. This is the typical response of many in the workers movement who do not understand the relationship between the struggle for national rights and the fight for socialism, in other words, the combined character of many revolutions in our epoch. To ignore the national question, as many economic groups do, reducing everything to simply ‘the workers versus the bosses’, is fatal. The national question represents historically unfinished business and will always be used to divide the working class, if we do not understand how to unite with it.

Marxists therefore always defend national rights and the rights of national minorities within any state. But crucially, we fight for the independent working class to lead the nation, against the chauvinist national bourgeoisie and imperialism.

This is why we support self determination for Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia, but oppose the bureaucratic and pro-capitalist régimes who currently run these Republcs. Many things are complicated in politics but the essentials of this particular war are in fact quite simple: Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Serbia are historic nations and Bosnia is a distinct political-cultural entity, was granted this same status under Tito. They all have the right to self-determination. In fact it was formally written into the 1974 Tito Constitution.

The Greater Serbian project denied these national and democratic rights and invaded and occupied two of its next door states. This outrage only stimulated the growth of right wing nationalism in Croatia in particular.

The issue is not whether the borders were just; a genuinely socialist Yugoslavia would have resolved conflict in the only possible way, through the democratic process and workers’ democracy. The Bosnian people were denied this by the Yugoslav government, who launched a naked war of aggression.

Mixed ethnicity

The peoples of Bosnia, a huge proportion of whom are of mixed ethnicity and inter-married, and want the right to live together, have the democratic right to liberate themselves and determine their own future. That is not so complicated. Without recognising these rights there will be no class unity. For Marxists in ABC.

In any case where does Socialist Worker think the ‘Bosnian Serbs’ get their tanks and their SAM missiles from? How come the ‘Bosnian Serbs’ have these and not the Yugoslav government? The answer is not very difficult – they came from Serbia! From the beginning the Serbs were armed from the arsenals of the Yugoslavian army who handed over heavy weapons to them, other caches were supplied in planned raids.

The International Workers Aid (IWA) film, ‘From Tito to Turol’ interviewed front line members of the Croatian army, a proudly working class and multi-ethnic force, who possessed only small arms and were limited to ten bullets each.

As everybody but the British SWP and Militant knows, the arms embargo is only effective against the Bosnians! It is a UN/Imperialist policy aimed at forcing the Bosnians to the negotiating table and surrendering to cannibalism.

This is how the ‘level killing fields’ argument all over again. It is also the argument of Western governments that the important thing is ‘peace’. But who are ‘we’, and who are Socialist Worker to propose such an unjust ‘peace’ for the Bosnian people?

We don’t say to the Palestinians that the most important thing is peace so long as they should forget the recovery of their country.

Spanish resistance

The left correctly defended the Spanish Republic in the 1930s. They did not say that less people would have died if the Republicans had used arms and had mounted no resistance to Franco. Nor did we say that the NLR in Vietnam should not have been armed because it would make the situation worse.

The arguments of Socialist Worker and even the Militant (who, after their debates on the Scottish question, should know better) are nothing less than a justification of political confusion and bankruptcy on the national question in ex-Yugoslavia. They are a typical product of crass workerism and economistism.

It is clear Socialist Worker opposes imperialist intervention into the region. That’s good, but utterly confused as well – since they are in favour of the imperialists continuing to enforce their arms embargo!

We, along with IWA, are in favour of the right of the peoples to survive and the lifting of all imperialist/UN embargo, including those against Serbia, which only devastate the lives of the workers there, further feeding the myth of a national and international conflict.

Stop the bombing, Imperialist troops out of the Balkans. Lift the arms embargo!
Nothing much seems to have gone right for Major: now a new scandal awaits him in the autumn.

Great Scott!

It’s another Tory scandal!

By Dave Osler

THE SCOTT INQUIRY into arms for Iraq actually did a half-way decent job. The 95 per cent of the population who always suspected that politicians and top civil servants perpetually lie, fib, deceive, tell porkies, hoodwink, dissemble, mislead, cheat, double-cross, trick, peddle untruths, fiddle, diddle, and generally economise with the truth now know for certain. But if the hearings weren’t the whitewash that cynics expected, in many key respects they didn’t go far enough. The inquiry’s terms of reference were strictly limited to the questions of whether the government breached its own restrictions on arms exports to Iraq and the suppression of evidence in the Matrix Churchill trial. The potentially explosive Thatcher connection has only been touched upon. Mark Thatcher, son of former first minister Margaret, had extensive business dealings with Industrias Carton, the Chilean company that built the Iraqi arms factory that Matrix Churchill’s lathes equipped. Furthermore, arms sent to Saudi Arabia as part of the giant Al Yamamah deal signed by Margaret Thatcher in 1986, enabling Mark to glean hefty commissions as a middle man, may have been diverted to Iraq.

Looking the other way? Kenneth Clarke was Defence Secretary

Neither those who facilitated Iraq’s arms procurement programme - the clearing bankers, the accountants and the lawyers - nor any of the major defence manufacturers - Vickers, British Aerospace/Royal Ordnance, Racal or Marconi - have been questioned. All we are likely to get is a handful of scapegoats, probably William Walgrave, currently chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, and Sir Nicholas Lyell, the attorney-general, who may well to be dispatched in a cabinet reshuffle even before the Scott report is published, tactfully after the end of the political conference later this year. The remarkable story starts in October 1983, when Sir Geoffrey Howe, then foreign secretary, announced in the Commons that the government would not approve exports of any defence equipment which, in our view, would significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the [Iran-Iraq] conflict. These were in themselves welle words. Alan Clark, then defence minister, described them as drawn up in “as elastic as possible a way as the English language would tolerate... obvi- ously drafted with the objective of flexibility.”

In 1988, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein ordered that the Kurdish town of Halabja be brushed with poison gas, killing 5,000 people. That didn’t stop the then trade minister, Tony Newton, flying to Baghdad shortly after- wards to offer £340m in trade credits. The government had visions of developing the country into a major export market for Britain. This was the year that Matrix Churchill was sold to a Coventry-based manufacturer of sophisticated computer-controlled machine tools - equipment, such as lathes, that shape metal - to be allowed to sell to Iraq, enabling the company’s directors to provide intelligence on the country. Machine tools aren’t weapons as such, but they can make them. Were they thus covered by Howe’s guidelines? Much of the subsequent story hangs on precisely this question.

‘Flexibility’

In December 1988, three junior ministers took a secret decision to permit “flexibility of interpretation” of the embargo, in what has since become known as the “tilt” towards Iraq. The first was Walgrave, then the Polish-educated son of the 12th Earl of Waldegrave and brother-in-law of Marmaduke Hussey, former chair of the BBC, who was then at the Foreign Office. The second was Clark, then trade minister, the then Oxford-educated son of the multi-millionaire Lord Kenneth Clark. The third was the 3rd Baron Trefgarne, then defence procurement minister. So much for the compliant society.

Labour backbenchers were starting to ask difficult questions. Margaret Thatcher told Harry Cohen MP in April 1989: "The government have not changed their policy on defence sales to Iraq." That statement was a lie. The evidence is that she knew the tilt, and was quite simply lying. Margaret Thatcher had instructed Whitehall to provide her with intelligence reports on Iraq’s arms procurement efforts in Britain. An Iraq Procurement Working Group was established in May 1989, which met at least six times before it disbanded in February 1990. Minutes show that it discussed Matrix Churchill’s assistance to the Iraqi ministry of defence.

In March 1990, Saddam ordered the hanging of British citizens Paul Colley and Robin Bristow. The following month, Customs officers at Teesport seized compo- nents of a bicycle engine in a garage in history, bound for Iraq.

Licences

They had been made by two British firms, Fergumaster in Sheffield and Walter Sonmez of Halesowen, who had export licences to supply steel tubes for a petrochemical project. Two men were arrested, including Walter Sonmez’s managing director, Peter Mitchell. His defence was that the project had been agreed with the government, thanks to the mediation of his personal friend, local Tory MP Sir Hal Miller. Miller made it plain that he was willing to go public, in technicolor, if his buddy had to take the rap. Meanwhile, Iraq occupied Kuwait in August 1990, and in January the following year, the Gulf War began. British soldiers were killed with munitions manufactured on British equipment, supplied with the ‘Tilts’ full approval despite their parliamentary de- mands. The government had every motive to keep such story quiet.

In the midst of the conflict, all charges against Mitchell and Chris Cowley, an engineer who had worked in Iraq, were suddenly dropped after the inter- vention of Sir Patrick Mayhew, the then attorney-general. The decision is still unexplained.

Custome were hopping mad and determined to get a result elsewhere. Four executives of a company (Ford for Ordnance Technology) were charged in Reading with supplying shell fuses to Jordan that were in reality bound for Iraq.

Parallels

There were uncanny parallels to the later Matrix Churchill trial. Peter Lilley, then trade secretary, and Kenneth Baker, then home secretary, signed gagging orders on government documents requested by the defence, while, Peter the defendant, Paul Cregan, claimed to be an intelligence asset.
After threats to call ministers and civil servants, the accused were allowed to plead guilty to small technical offences instead. It was light fines, suspended sentences and large gin and tonics all round. Customs got even madder, and began investigating Matrix Churchill.

Meanwhile, in February 1991, John Major, the prime minister, insisted in the Commons: 'For some considerable time we have not supplied arms to Iraq.' Again, he was almost certainly lying.

Late the following year, Customs prosecuted three Matrix Churchill directors: Henderson, Peter Allen and Trevor Alberham — for supplying machinery tools allegedly specially designed to make arms to the Iraqis.

Both the government and the civil service were perplexed that the tilt would come to light. Whitehall tried and failed to block the prosecution. Four ministers signed gagging orders — officially known as public interest immunity certificates — which suppressed government documents vital to a defence case on government complicity.

These were Malcolm Rifkind, defence secretary; Kenneth Clarke, home secretary; Michael Heseltine, trade secretary; and Tristan Garel-Jones, foreign office minister, acting in the absence of the then-secretary of state, his own choice, in his department, Douglas Hurd.

All insisted that the were merely obeying orders from Jeffery, who, it later transpired, didn’t even bother to find out exactly what he was telling his colleagues to shout up. Heseltine contended that he had only been told on the understanding that his serious misgivings were passed on to the prime minister. This was not true.

The prosecution was already in trouble when Clark stood up in the witness box and admitted that he had been ‘economical with the truth,’ in advising Matrix Churchill to ‘say that its exports to Iraq were for general engineering purposes.’

No-one is quite sure why he did not simply go along with the cover up. Shortly afterwards, the case collapsed after Judge Brian Smelley QC exercised his option to overturn the gagging orders.

There was instant public outcry, forcing the government to set up the Scott inquiry. Testimony after testimony reveals that while MPs are not allowed to call each other liars in the House, lies are an everyday event.

As for the social justice minister, the late Margaret Thatcher, she was convinced that her actions were justified.

Inventive new ‘flexibility’: William Waldegrave is now laughably reclassified as minister for ‘open government’  

The explosive connection: Thatcher talked so as far as the previous witness statement had. David Gore-Booth, the Ehrenfeld and Oxford educated son of Lord Gore-Booth, himself was one-time foreign office civil secretary, was formerly responsible for Middle Eastern policy at the foreign office, and is now ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Quizsed on answers to MPs, he said: ‘Of course half a picture can be accurate.’

Full or half empty

He added: ‘The extent to which a parliamentary answer should be full, half or empty is very much up to the minister. Similarly, Sir Robin Butler, head of the civil service, insisted: ‘Half the picture can be true. My justification of the answer is it wasn’t misleading, it gave half the picture.’

He went on to lambast the media for saying nasty things about ‘middle-ranking officials who could not have expected to be thrust into the limelight in the way in which they have’ and reminding the ‘damage which has been unfairly done to our system of government, to the reputation of the civil service and to individuals’. Perish the thought.

Mark Higson, a former foreign office official who has now quit, argued outright that ministers misled parliament: ‘It wasn’t telling the truth.’ Ian McDonald, a Ministry of Defence official who monitored arms sales, merely stated that ‘truth is a very difficult concept.’

William Paty, foreign office official, said that civil servants had written reports for their ministers which were inaccurate, misleading and ‘clearly wrong’.

Andrew Leitch, assistant treasury solicitor, defended official secrecy with the argument that ‘it is damaging to the public interest to have any decision-making process exposed’. So much for the democratic process.

So much for the bureaucrats. What about the politicians? Howe argued that ministers could not give inaccurate answers to MPs, but added: ‘Perhaps you can give an answer that is incomplete.’ Trefgarne believes that ‘of course you must not tell parliament untruths, or mislead them, or tell them something that’s not so, but you don’t tell them everything you can.’

Waldegrave contended that ‘in exceptional cases, it is necessary to say something that is untrue in the House of Commons’. He argued that there were ‘plenty of cases’ when a minister ‘will not mislead the House … but he may not display everything he knows about a subject’.

Heseltine said: ‘I was of course preoccupied that I had given false information to the House of Commons. I’m not going to tell you that no minister has ever told half the truth to the House of Commons.’

Major is in all this up to his neck. At least half a dozen relevant documents crossed his desk. One he said he didn’t see. One he saw, but he says he did not read the relevant page. There are to be had reading, as they carried his own handwriting in the margins, but somehow he failed to twig their significance.

Actually, Garel-Jones, that sounds like a fair summary of what was actually going on. Of all this makes nonsense of the liberal media uproar about government willingness to see ‘three innocent men’ go to jail. The Matrix Churchill directors were guilty of breaking the law. The Tories should be done for aiding and abetting.
The Portuguese revolution revisited

TWENTY years ago, on 25 April 1974, officers of the MFA (the radical Armed Forces Movement) overthrew the fascist regime in Portugal. An intense period of revolutionary upheaval followed. DAVE PACKER looks back at these events suggesting lessons for today.

THE OVERTHROW of the Caetano dictatorship ushered in far more than a period of political and economic struggle; it opened the door to a vast movement that brought Portugal to the brink of revolution. Streets filled with hundreds of thousands of people demanding radical change, even a socialist Portugal.

But the Socialist and Communist parties re-emerged, virtually from nowhere, and placed themselves at the head of the mass movement, determined to pursue a purely democratic programme.

The leaders of both parties joined Admiral Spinola’s first two governments of ‘National Salvation’, and did everything to preserve their alliance with the different sections of left-wing military officers.

Over the summer, despite concessions, a huge strike wave developed. In August a Second Provisional Government, supported by the CP, attempted to impose anti-strike laws.

6,000 Lissave shipbuilding workers marched illegally on Lisbon, daring troops to shoot them. They called for an end to capitalism and ‘democracy for the workers and repression for the reactionaries’. A mass demonstration was called for 25 September by the most militant factory councils.

In response Spinola called a march of the ‘silent majority’ and launched his first presidential coup. His march was prevented by a semi-outrage of the Lisbon working class, while the CP and far-left PRP-BR mobilised armed militiamen. Despite this victory, the CP and SP continued their coalitionist.

During the winter the bourgeoisie exported capital to salvage the economy, leading to factory occupations and growing demands for nationalisation of enterprises. In January, armed agricultural workers in the Alentejo began land occupations.

Rural and state committees were established everywhere amongst certain army regiments, notably the Fifth Division, were infiltrated by the workers’ parties. Big capital launched a second Spinola coup on 11 March, involving bombardment of the barracks. The working class response was immediate; armed barricades and roadblocks of workers and soldiers remained in force for a week. Leftist units opened up severe resistance to the coup.

The mass movement flourished, throwing up new forms of organisation in workplaces, barracks and popular sectors. Factories councils began to implement measures of workers control and management of industry.

Elements of dual power were coming into existence, though not yet fully centralised into Soviet. Revolution was on the streets and it was armed. March 11 opened up a revolutionary situation.

Despite the scale of the mobilisations the CP and SP did not break with the bourgeoisie. The centrist Guide and Companheiros documents (militant sections of the MFA) called for workers’ power and socialism, but also insisted on the ‘unity and discipline of the armed forces’, ‘respect for the constitution’ and a ‘people-MFA multi-class alliance’.

Spring of 1975 was the high point of the mass movement, but the mass workers’ parties vacillated, manoeuvred against each other, undermining the unity of the workers. Both stepped away from breaking with the leftist military to form an independent workers’ government, which would have propelled the revolution onto a higher stage.

In July, following the famous occupation of the Republica newspaper by leftist forces, the Socialists and the bourgeoisie PPD led the Fourth Provisional Government to launch a bitter anti-Communist Party campaign.

They took up themes which struck some working class support, denouncing the ‘Republica incident as a violation of workers’ democracy’, the CP’s use of ‘private militias’ to settle disputes within the workers’ movement.

Although there was some truth in these claims, SP leader Soares had, in reality, launched the counter-revolution, mobilising the more backward sectors of the workers along with the middle classes against the militant workers and soldiers. In the SP stronghold of the North and Oporto many labour movement buildings were left in flames.

The collapse of the Fifth Provisional Government and the formation of the Sixth of Aznavor in September, was the first real fruit of the SP led counter-revolution. Aznavor promised to roll back nationalisations, promote business interests, strengthen relations with the EC and most importantly, reverse ‘law and order’ and the authority of the state.

The government rapidly moved to strengthen the police and formed the ASM, composed of commandos, ex-forces legionnaires and mercenaries. This force attacked strikers and demonstrators, destroyed left wing Radio Renasci and imposed press censorship.

This Sixth Government consisted chiefly of the SP and PPD, together with the MFA Assembly, whose leftist majorities had been bureaucratically reversed. It was also joined by a CP minister. Behind the scenes a rapid regroupment of political and state forces was taking place, leading inevitably to a collision: tragically, this show-down was not to be Portugal’s October.

Renewed offensive

During September and October the most advanced sections of the masses renewed their offensive. Plans for leftist coups and insurrections were being widely discussed. The masses were confronted with the pressing question of which class ruled and who should form the next government.

Was it to be Carvalho, the charismatic, populist military leader who accommodated to the CP (who in turn were wedded to Popular Frontism), or was it to be the weak and divided forces of the revolutionary left, temporarily united in the FUR, a loose federation of disparate forces?

Unfortunately, because of previous disparity and, in most cases, ultra-left sectarianism, they were not seen as a serious alternative by the Portuguese workers.

The far-left joined in promoting the general insurrectionary mood without placing demands on the CP-Carvalho axis such as: break with the bourgeois ministers; campaign for a united front of the workers’ organisations; for a workers government.

It did not fight for a genuine Popular Assembly - of factory and popular committees, trade unions and workers’ parties – to prepare the ground for a workers’ government and the mass movement needed to defend it.

This was the context of the fateful events of 25 November, 1975. What actually happened is unclear, but it appears that forces around the CP and Carvalho - who, this morning had been sacked from his Lisbon military command – launched a minority military action to pressure Costa Gomes into dissolving the Sixth Provisional Government and call in Carvalho and the CP to form the government.

Gomes refused to play ball with his erstwhile ‘allies’. Action floundered and commandos were sent to crush the left wing units before the working class of Lisbon and Setubal had the opportunity to mobilise. Where the workers took up arms they were quickly demobilised and quickly demonised for lack of a political response. The revolutionary process was at an end; the elements of dual power were soon to disappear.

The failure of the Portuguese revolution has important lessons for socialism.

The absence of a well established revolutionary party that knew how to unite the masses in struggle independently from the bourgeoisie and the officers, and how to fight the mis-leadership of the reformist parties, was decisive.

A second lesson, a product of the dominant ultra-left sectarianism, was the failure of the revolutionary vanguard itself to understand how to combat the treacherous role of the two mass reformist workers’ parties. Instead of using the United Front tactic they thought – wrongly – they could simply by-pass or outflank them.
Voices of the oppressed

INSIDE BABYLON: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain
Editors: Winston James and Clive Harris
£12.95, Verso 1993, 317pp

Reviewed by Bala Kumar

'WHAT MAKES this collection distinctive', note the editors, 'is its attempt to give voice to the fractured narratives of the Caribbean diaspora from within'.

This fine volume has ten essays. They range from reworking the industrial reserve army thesis to fit into the facts of post-war migration to Britain; the Notting Hill Carnival as a metaphor for black culture; psychiatric racism through to the Indo-caribbean condition as a landmark contribution on the experience of Caribbean migrants and the trials of their descendants.

Yet in the voluminous literature on migration and racism the specific experiences of black women have most been neglected.

This review will concentrate on four essays by and about black women. The need for cheap labour in the expansion of the National Health Service coupled with changes in the manufacturing base of post-war capitalism created openings for black women in paid employment. However in Black Women's Employment, Gill Lewis finds that not only are black women concentrated in areas of 'women's work' but also in the lowest paid and least skilled jobs.

Supporting families in the Caribbean and later in Britain too made full-time work the norm. By the late 1970's only 19% of Caribbean women worked part-time compared to 36% of white women.

Contrary to the idea of 'separate spheres' which legitimise the sexual division of labour, black women were often the major wage earners. Employers motivated by racism and depriving pay confined black people in general to occupational ghettos.

As capital strives to surmount crisis of accumulation e.g. through Thatcherite strategies, workers too struggle.

Caribbean women are sometimes forgotten voices at the centre of the suffering in racist Britain.

Tales recur as themes in the inter-relationship between these men and their partners.

Compounding all of this is the abject failure of state agencies like courts, local authorities, hospitals and the police to look after the interests of black women.

Courts have awarded custody of children to the abusive (male) parent. Hospitals have allowed assaults of battered women to visit them.

Forced out

Women have been forced to leave their own council tenancies and then spend months in refuges or filthy beds and break-fast accommodation.

The role of the police comes in for particular criticism. We are reminded that black women would be reluctant to approach the police authorities because of racist policing in their communities.

After all it was the lass that lashed out at Cherry Groce and the fatal assault on Cynthia Jarrett by policemen which sparked the Broadwater Farm uprising in 1985.

In one situation the police asked the battered and bleeding woman to sit in their van with her assailant and sort their problems out. She was told "to kiss and make up".

Another incident was when they chased, 'Bennie missing me,针 in the eye', while they decided who to arrest. Finally it was the woman who was arrested and taken to the station where she was racially taunted and assaulted by the police officers before being released the following day.

Many believe as Black Women and the Police detail that the police are involved, 'if either the woman or the man is black, the entire case may become one not of protecting the woman but of an immigration investigation'.

Finding themselves at the sharp end of racism as well as sexism and homophobia, Claudette Williams affirms that black women are 'a natural part of many different struggles'.

In Black Women Organising the early struggles are chronicled. From when the community was trying to find its feet and help each other to raise money for mortgages and for social support, women had gendered roles.

Their part was in food preparation and accounting while it was the men who were in the public sphere.

Newspaper

Women like the Trinidad-born Claudia Jones, did their best to change attitudes within the black community. She founded the first community newspaper, the West Indian Gazette.

The rise of the Black Power and Women's Liberation Movements unleashed many black women. However they found their concerns marginalised by both.

Black radicals even of the revolutionary variety felt that racial oppression needed grappling against to the exclusion of other oppression.

Political questions like childcare, sexuality, women's participation and free, safe and legal abortion were sidelined.

In the women's movement Williams recalls, there was the inability to acknowledge that racism shapes and is a fundamental part of the experience of black women.

In 'reclaim the night' marches, white women marched through predominantly black communities demanding 'better policing' insensitive to black women's feelings.

Once again the need for autonomous self-organisation surfaced. 'It is only those who are oppressed who are best equipped to liberate themselves. No one else can do it.'

The Black women's movement was born and it lived through groups like the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD) and dozens of black women's collectives.

There are no magic formulations to iron out the contradictions within our communities. The crucial point is to assert that we recognise no 'hierarchies of oppression'.

Sexism, racism and class exploitation interlock to oppress black women. All of them need to be recognised and challenged simultaneously.
Bitter fruits of imperialist divide and rule

Rwanda bloodbath

‘Things fell apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere, The ceremony of innocence is drowned’

WB Yeats.

By Bala Kumar

15,000 are estimated killed in the carnage on the streets of Kigali, Rwanda's capital. The downing of an aircraft carrying Rwanda’s President, General Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundi’s President, Cyprien Nyamwaru killed their deaths.

It unleashed a frenzy of violence combining carefully planned executions and massacres with mob attacks. Western television and print media have concentrated on the murder of 11 Belgian troops serving with a United Nations force and the evacuation of European expatriates. The media have fed racist myths about Africa by reporting the atrocities as ‘tribal bloodletting’. This is inaccurate and offensive as it would be in describing the war in ex-Yugoslavia.

Habyarimana’s assassination was almost certainly the work of the presidential guard. This was a coup attempt by a group of elite officers who belong to the same ethnic group as the late president, the Hutu.

Their motive was to safeguard their power and privilege as army officers and as members of the dominant ethnic group. However, the Arusha accord negotiated last year between Habyarimana’s government and the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) there would have been a multi-ethnic government and a smaller army with reduced political clout.

The RPF is numerically dominated by Rwanda’s second largest ethnic group, the Tutsi. But it has Hutu soldiers and as its chairperson, Alice Kayaragywe, is himself a Hutu.

The RPF had the most to lose by any breakdown in the UN sponsored peace process. It has become one of a number of factions fighting in Kigali. The others are the Army, the Presidential Guard, the gendarmers and the youth wing of the ruling party.

Much of the violence has been intra-ethnic. Hutus be longing to rival opposition parties have been targets of Hutu members of the ruling party.

There have also been inter-ethnic massacres. Hutus fearing that the RPF will favour Tutsis have turned on their neighbours.

Agents

For centuries Hutus were ruled over by a feudal aristocracy of Tutsis. When the Belgians colonised Rwanda and Burundi, they maintained the Tutsis as their local agents. Using the tactic of “divide and rule” they pitted one group against the other.

Hutus and Tutsis share the same names and culture. They speak the same language, Kirundi, and have inter-married for generations.

Racism diverts Indonesian fightback

By K Govindan

A MASS strike of workers and a demonstration in the city of Medan, northern Sumatra, turned into an anti-Chinese riot last week. 20,000 factory workers marched on April 15 and over 50,000 the next day. This followed the first nationwide general strike, on Feb 11, since the military seized power in the bloody coup of 1965.

The general strike and a series of small activities have been led by the Independent Labour Welfare Union (FSBI) which is persecuted by employers and the military. According to Sunarti of the FSBI, the demand of the Medan protests are:

- A daily minimum wage of 7,000 rupiahs (US$2), instead of the present 3,800 rupiah;
- Better working conditions including an end to military interference in labour disputes;
- An independent investigation into the death of labour activist, Riski.

The strikers exploded into attacks on the shops, homes and property of the ethnic Chinese minority. The Chinese form only 3% of Indonesia’s 165 million people, they dominate the economy from petty trading to regional giants. One leaflet in circulation read, ‘destroy the Chinese who completely colonise our lives.’

- They are rapists, murderers and robbers who plunder the country’s money that belongs to us, oppress the workers and humiliate the workers’.

The Chinese have been a convenient scapegoat for Indonesia’s economic ills. The wealthiest like Lien Sioe Liong have prospered with close links with the military and the President’s family. Yet it is the politically weakest Chinese who suffer popular resentment, not the big capitalists and their powerful patrons.

The FSBI has been quick to distance itself from the leaflet, suggesting it could be the work of agent provocateurs.

The pamphlets are not out’, said Sunarti, ‘we never distributed them. There must be third parties who have been using our pretext for their own interests’.

A new generation of militant trade unions has come forward after thirty years of repression. In what direction will they take the Indonesian workers’ movement?
France hits the road for the right to work

OVER ONE thousand people lost their job on an average day in France in 1993. This year is expected to be even worse. In many regions industrial and agricultural deserts are being created. But French workers and the unemployed are fighting back.

Two important initiatives are now underway and both deserve the full support of the Labour movement in Britain. GEOFF RYAN looks at the campaign for the 35 Hour Week Without Loss of Pay and the March for the Right to Work.

(More details of both these campaigns can be obtained from Socialist Outlook)

ON APRIL 30, trade unionists from throughout France, as well as a number of other European countries, will meet in Paris to discuss a European wide fight for the 35 hour week without loss of pay.

The following day, May 1, is of course International Workers' Day. It commemorates those who fought in the 19th century for the 8 hour day. A century later the need to co-ordinate struggles to further reduce the working week remains a necessity.

Petition

The Paris forum follows the launching of a petition, initially signed by a thousand trade unionists from all the different union federations. After five weeks 50,000 people have signed this appeal, despite the organisers having no appraisers or finances to promote their initiative. They have had to build up a national network of shop stewards, union militants and sympathetic officials to ensure the distribution of the appeal in workplaces and at markets, as well as on all major demonstrations.

Their success so far shows the possibilities that exist in France for a broad movement to cut the working week. They aim to build on this excellent start by bringing together union activists from throughout Europe for a common struggle for the 35 Hour Week With No Loss of Pay.

The forum is organised around four main themes: The Trade Unions and the 35 Hour Week - with representatives from the different federations. It will look at issues such as: how to win this demand, how it can help build trade union unity and what is place of this demand in trade union strategy.

The 35 Hour Week as a Response to Unemployment - this will look at how the demand can build bridges between the unemployed and those in work.

The 35 Hour Week in Europe - with speakers from Germany, Spain, Basque country, Italy and others. In Spain a similar petition has already been launched. How can initiatives be developed throughout Europe?

The Mobilisation in France today - how does the fight for the 35 hour week fit into the struggle of young workers against government attempts to cut their wages? How does this conference relate to the national march against unemployment?

The organisers themselves see no conflict between their initiative and the March for Jobs and will be proposing that the forum does all it can to make the march a massive display of working class unity in the fight against unemployment.

Act Together Against Unemployment!

THE FIRST of five national marches set off from Carmaux in South West France on April 6. Nearly two hundred people braved appalling weather to support this march organised by Agir Ensemble Contre le Chomage (ACI - Act Together Against Unemployment).

Carmaux had never seen so many TV, radio or press journalists. Nancie, an unemployed member of the Albi ACI Collective, who is marching all the way to Paris, suddenly found herself thrust into stardom. The media scrambled for interviews and photos, while the Communist Party mayor of St Benoit de Carmaux presented her with a spray of Lily-of-the-Valley.

The Carmaux march is supported by fifteen local organisations including miners from the Communist Party-influenced CGT federation and the local Peasants and Small Farmers Confederation.

Miners

The CGT miners decided to walk out of work to see the march off. Rented miners provided refreshments along the 16 kilometre route to Albi, where a civic reception was provided by the Socialist Party mayor.

When the march left Albi - yet more wind and rain - it was accompanied by striking postal workers. In the small towns of Graschat it was met by Didier, an unemployed worker who had heard about the march on TV and decided to go with it to Paris.

On April 9 the march was met by a 750 strong demonstration in Toulouse. The following day they met with workers from ABG-Sema in Montauban who have been occupying their factory for five days to fight plans for 120 redundancies.

Meanwhile the South East leg of the march has met off from Narbonne and Toulon, to join together in Avignon on April 19.

Narbonne march is accompanied by a tractor supplied by the local Peasants Confederation. At the railway station they held a meeting with the CGT branch. They crossed the eaux de Thau in boats provided by local fishermen.

The marches have received tremendous welcomes in every town they have visited.

Well attended public meetings have taken place every evening and support has been given by all the different union federations, as well as the unemployed and pensioners. Communist and Socialist Party-controlled municipalities have given civic receptions.

Most importantly new ACI collectives have been established in all the towns along the route. They are now organizing couches and even trains for when the marches all finally link up together in Paris on the May 28-29 in a massive demonstration for the right to work.
BUSKING FOR BOSNIA

By Chris Ewerell

BOSNIA aid campaigners in Manchester have developed a new tactic for raising the issue on the streets.

Leafleting the centre of Manchester on Saturday morning had previously not met much of a response. Shoppers refuse to take leaflets.

So we retreated from the class war to the glass war in a local pub and had a coffee. A new tactic was hatched: using music as a draw.

After a session with our student supporters it was proposed that we organize a major musical benefit event at Manchester University.

To our leafleting a lift we decided to experiment with street music. Two of us just happened to be blessed with the gift of musicianship, notably the truly amazing Fiddlin' Adam Hartman - he can knock out a tune!

On Tuesday 19th April 'Busking for Bosnia' was born! It was of course, being Manchester, pouring with rain. But that didn't deter us - we headed for Manchester University shopping precinct, which was sheltered and had excellent acoustics.

VIOLIN CASE

The idea was that two of our number would belt out some Irish music while others leafleted. The public would be invited to put money for Bosnia in Adam's violin's case.

The response was truly amazing! In the space of a couple of hours an incredible number of people stopped and gave money.

People were obviously sickened by the shelling of the civilian population of Goranci and the air strikes against the Serbs. Just as we were launching into 'Ragtime Annie', an American from San Francisco on holiday (he must be loopy spending it in Manchester) heard our music and introduced himself.

Not only that he offered to do a stint on the guitar! The sound of their music floating across the precinct was wonderful.

By the end of the session we had lost count of the number of pound coins that had been tossed into the case.

We are planning to do this kind of thing more often in future. There is more than one way to skin a cat.

OBITUARY - FRANK RIDLEY (1897-1994)

Last link with the pioneers

by Ellis Hillman

FRANCIS Ambrose Ridley died on March 27 at an old age home. He was the last link with the generation inspired by the October revolution who resisted its Stalinist distortion.

Frank founded the Marxist League in 1926, which became the first group to disseminate the writings of Lenin Trotsky following his exile from the Soviet Union.

Pioneer Trotskyists, including Hugo Dowett and Reg Groves, gained their inspiration and training from him.

Frank played an important part in influencing Sri Lankan revolutionaries - including Calvin de Silva and Phillip Gunaratne - towards Trotskyism.

He felt out with Trotsky over the formation of a new International, Ridley promptly calling for it before its necessity was established following Hitler's victory in 1933.

Frank gravitated towards the ILP, becoming one of its principal theoreticians.

Marxist groupings in the ILP regarded him as a maverick, oscillating from ultra-leftism to centrism, whilst Fenner Brockway et al viewed him as a Traitor.

Despite his disagreements with the 'Old Man' and the Trotskyist movement, he wrote a moving tribute to Trotsky in 'Socialist Leader' after his assassination in 1940.

Ridley actively supported efforts made by the RCP to expose the Moscow Trials, which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate their differences.

If you agree with what you see in Socialist Outlook, and want to join us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in towns across the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get active!
WHAT'S HAPPENING

WANT YOUR event included?
Send details by May 7 to What's Happening?, P.O. Box 1109, London N4 2UJ.

ARIL
Thursday 28
MARCH to commemorate International Workers Memorial Day 12.00 Euston Station to Parliament details Construction Safety Campaign 071 537 7220
CAMPAIGN Against Hazards in London meeting 2.30pm-6.30pm Church House Dean’s Yard off Great Smith Street details 071 226 5436
LABOUR of Parliament against deregulation 2.30pm -7.30pm GATT, Globalisation and People’s Resistance. Meeting called by LONDON, 6.30pm, Conway Hall, RTed Lion Square, London WC1. Details 071-713-7077
JAZZ NIGHT for Nicaragua with The Westbrook Trio, Annie Whitehead’s “RUDE”, Keith Tippett, Zubok, 8pm- midnight, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. £3/£2.50
Sat 30
LIBERATION/ editorial meeting 11am sharp South Manchester
LEEDS TUC May Day march and rally 11.30am assemble outside the art gallery BIRMINGHAM May Day Marches: STOP HOSPITAL CLOSURES, DEFEND THE NHS. 11am, Fircroft College, Balsall Common. Assemble 12 noon
TUESDAY 10
Manchester SOCIALIST OUTLOOK educational on Cuba, Vietnam and China, 8.30pm, Unicorn pub, Church St
Wednesday 11
ANGOLA Emergency Campaign Lobby of Parliament 7pm Committee room booked in the name of Bob Hughes
7pm, London South Bank University, 6-8 Queen’s Way, London N1 7R5
Marion Brain (IWA); Alan Thommett (SMTUC), Geoff Martin, (London Health Emergency)
MANCHESTER May Day March: AGAINST RACISM and FASCISM, 12 noon La-dybarn Park, Paris Wood Rd, Burnage. March to rally in Albert Square, 1pm.
MAY
Sunday 1
MAY DAY FAMILY Festival with live bands, top comedics, food, beer, labour movement speakers. MARCH FROM Kennington to SERTUC Rally on Clapham Common. Assembly 12 noon
Saturday 7
GERMANY’s role in Europe: day-long seminar with Peter Gowan (New Left Review), Colin Meads (Socialist Outlook) and Gunter Minnerup & Gus Fagan (Labour Focus on Eastern Europe) Details: Peter on 071 607 2789
Tuesday 10
Manchester SOCIALIST OUTLOOK educational on Cuba, Vietnam and China, 8.30pm, Unicorn pub, Church St
Wednesday 11
Angola Emergency
Campaign Lobby of Parliament

What’s Happening

Dead end for Tamil Tigers

The opening paragraph of ‘Fratricide in the Tamil Tiger movement’ (SD 59) should read, ‘The LTTE...as the dominant expression of Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism’. The ‘Mahattaya episode’ highlights the LTTE’s bankruptcy and the impasse of the Tamil movement. Three Tamil groups (EPDF, TELTO, PLOTE) are now collaborating with the Sri lankan Armed Forces against the LTTE. Once sworn enemies of the state they are now its mercenaries. The LTTE has applied fully Mao’s dictum, ‘Power grows out of the barrel of a gun’, imprisoning Tamils in prison camps, individual terrorism, suicide attacks and occasional set pieces battles are its only strategy. LTTE officials often say, ‘the end justifies the means’. They are wrong. It is the means which determine the end. If a struggle is elitist and exclusive, the Tamil people merely exchange a Sinhalese oppressor for a Tamil oppressor. If a struggle empowers not only the bearers of arms but the mass of the Tamil people and reflects the demands not as the rich but of the poor and landless, then comes closer to achieving genuine liberation. Democracy, freedom of expression and respect for human rights are not luxuries that a liberation struggle cannot afford. They are guarantees the struggle does not lose its way. Tamil cannot struggle in isolation from other events in Sri Lanka. As the NSP exhorts, they must link the struggle for self-determination with that of the Sinhala people against austerity, in defence of democratic freedoms and justice for the families of the ‘disappeared’. Weakening the Sri lankan state from within and winning the Sinhala masses to the goals of the national liberation struggle is the way out for the Tamil people.

K Govindan (Committee for Democracy and Justice in Sri Lanka), London

What’s Happening

Militant’s basic errors on Bosnia

The letter on Bosnia (Outlook No. 59) needs a clear reply. Why do we defend Bosnia? The war is not simply between national or ethnic groups. It is between those who wish to live in a multi-ethnic society.

There is no question whose side we should be on. Bosnia-Herzegovina is a multi-ethnic state. One ethnic group cannot seek to exclude another without murder and ethnic cleansing.

The only way in which self-determination for the ethnic groups in Bosnia can be realised is by the defence of the multi-ethnic state.

Smith is wrong about the Bosnian Serbs and Croats are not ‘a few tensis’, although the hideous logic of ethnic cleansing means there are fewer previously.

THE HVO in Tuzla fights alongside the Bosnian army, as did in Sarajevo until it was incorporated into the Bosnian army proper. The Serbian govern- ment is not ‘largely Islamic’ even if its majority is Bosnian Muslim. Unfortunately, the larger Serb national- ism occupies half the country and the more pressure is applied by imperialism, the more likely a Muslim state becomes.

Smith says ‘it would be dif- ferent if the multi-ethnic militia were against the government, the Muslim warlords and militia that also commit atrocities’. This is pure indolism. Those militias which are multi-national and also oppress the Muslim warlords. Many multi-ethnic militias are not creatures of Zion- ism but operate more or less independently of their gov- ernment. As do those purely Muslim militia who have com- nised indefensible atrocities.

A military bloc with the Bos- nian government if necessary is no problem — what is important is political independence from it.

Rather than making ultima- tums demands we are for develop- ing a practical orientation which brings out the class dynamic in every question, particularly the national question. This is the only method capable of reaf- firming our long-term objectives.

Wooden

Here Militant’s wooden, ab- stract approach is exposed. To the Bosnian second army, largely recruited from minorities and heretically defending Tuzla, Murray Smith counterposes an idealistic notion of a multi-ethnic militia existing only in his head. It was correct to call for Tuzla airport to be opened. It was kept shut for political reasons as part of the war as ‘a lid on a drip’ to ‘feed’ strategy. We do not make this demand in isolation.

It is in the context of a cam- paign exposing imperialism’s entire intervention: its role in Bosnia’s partition, the killing out of the cities, the shooting down of Serb aircraft, its threats of airstrikes and the sanctions against Serbia.

The demand isn’t isolated from our defence of Bosnia, nor our class perspective of a Bal- kan Socialist Federation.

Nick Davies, Swansea.
AS WE GO to press the second UN 'ultimatum' to the Serbs to withdraw from Gorazde or face massive air strikes is about to run out - at midnight on Tuesday April 26.

Whether or not the air strikes happen, the terrible sufferings of 70,000 people in Gorazde and in Bosnia as a whole are far from over. Bosnia is caught between the superior firepower of the Serbs and a UN/NATO force which, while purporting to 'protect' them against the Serbian military onslaught, is seeking partition and dismemberment of Bosnia.

This would hand two-thirds of the country over to the Serbs and give them political and militaryinsky on a plate. With 'friends' like this they don't need too many enemies!

The lesson for the Bosnian people, reinforced by the mess and confusion of UN and NATO policy in the region, is that they must rely on their own resources, and on those who are prepared to defend their national rights, if they are to survive as a nation.

The UN/NATO forces are driven from top to bottom by policy divisions and equivocation. They are not only incapable of defending the Bosnians from the Serbs but are enforcers of an arms embargo which prevents the Bosnians from effectively defending themselves.

The arms embargo is the number one issue of this war. The task of socialists is to campaign for the lifting of the imperialist arms embargo to allow Bosnia the basic right of self-defence. Without the embargo being lifted, the war will not end.

None of the imperialist powers have enough material interest in the region for a full commitment to the war. They all want the war ended at any price but are divided as to how to go about it. US strategic interests are in Turkey and the oil rich Arab regimes; they therefore want to appear more pro-Bosnian.

Germany's interests lie in Croatia and Slovenia where they are putting in investment. British links are more directly with Serbia.

Russia is strongly linked to the Milosevic regime and at the same time wants to use the situation to strengthen its role as a world power and its influence in the UN.

At the same time NATO's sabre rattling is as much to do with its world role, its humiliation at the hands of the Serbs last week, and its conception of the new world order rather than the immediate effects of its policies (and its bombs) in the Balkans.

One of the problems for the UN is that Serbian political leaders have a very good assessment of all this. They know exactly who they are dealing with and are able to push the UN to the brink at each stage.

At the time of writing they appear to be withdrawing heavy weapons from Gorazde but very much on their own terms.

It could well be a repeat of the Sarajevo 'corridor' with the Serbs prepared to withdraw under conditions where they have already achieved most of their objectives and can move their weapons on to the next target area.

Step up Workers Aid!

By Mick Woods in Split.

THE INTERNATIONAL Workers' Aid campaign for Bosnia has now firmly established itself. A permanent office operates from Split and our warehouses are currently full of aid materials.

The second IWA convoy has just returned from Tuzla. They delivered flour, oil and sugar for the 'Bread Programme' requested by the people of Tuzla.

Further convoys will leave Split every 12 days. The next is planned to leave on April 28. The urgency of the current situation in Bosnia means the campaign in Britain needs to be stepped up.

For further information, or to send much needed donations, contact: IWA, 12-14 Thornton St, London SW9 8BL. Tel: 071-978 8622.