

## Workers International and the 'Socialist' conference — p.4&5.

Our comrades in South Africa, members of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa), are on the political offensive (see pages 4 and 5). But to continue their work of

building a revolutionary workers' party needs money. Please give generously cheques made payable to our 'South African Appeal'. Send to South African Appeal, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

### On other pages:

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Bosnia, p.6;

Haiti: cheers fade for US occupation, p.8.

## Build mass movement against state harassment

# DEMAND AMNESTY FOR ALL REFUGEES

**A CLEAR pattern of deaths of black refugees at the hands of the state is emerging in Britain.**

Black community groups are calling for a mass movement against this systematic harassment and for an amnesty for all refugees.

A meeting in London mainly comprised of representatives of these groups discussed many of the cases and the need to build such a campaign.

The latest victim of the state violence was Joseph Nnalue, a Nigerian, who two weeks ago fell to his death from a back-room window of a second-floor flat in Clapham, south-west London, when police and immigration officers raided his home.

The press had tried to portray this as a case of suicide but Joseph Nnalue had been forced to hide when police and immigration officers raided his home at 8am. He panicked and fell after he heard the police interrogating his two children aged four and three.

He stood up after falling but the police held him down and did not call immediately for an ambulance which arrived 25 minutes after the fall.

Julie Southey of the African Refugees and Migrants Monitoring Project, which convened the meeting, said that a pattern of deaths was forming as 'Fortress Europe' — a racist European Union policy supposedly designed to keep out 'economic migrants' from eastern Europe and the so-called 'Third World' — tightens against refugees.

### Poverty

But these 'economic migrants' are fleeing the grinding poverty caused by the rapacious imperialist policies of a Western capitalism that bleeds dry their home countries with interest repayments on loans and other forms of exploitation.

The Joseph Nnalue killing had many similarities with the case of Kwanele Siziba, a 27-year-old Zimbabwean woman who fell to her death in April.

Her sister, Theodora, told the meeting that the police had harassed and intimi-

dated Kwanele even though her delay in returning to Zimbabwe was due entirely to her waiting for medical treatment for a broken arm.

Other cases cited included that of a refugee who died in Pentonville prison, and Joy Gardner who suffocated to death in front of her five-year-old son after being gagged and bound in preparation for deportation to Nigeria.

### Mobilised

Kofi Klu of the African Liberation Support Committee which has set up a Refugee Help Link, said that a force must be mobilised which will challenge the legitimacy of the state's actions. This meant a campaign against both the Asylum and the Criminal Justice Acts.

This meeting of black activists was an important step forward. It was correct to emphasise that the campaign must go beyond the immediate grief of the relatives and have political aims.

Britain plundered and murderously exploited the resources of its colonies and now the international banks and monopolies retard any development of their economies.

The peoples of these countries have a right to travel and work anywhere in the world. It is the duty of the workers' movement in Britain to support this right and to join the campaign for an amnesty for all refugees.

A public meeting is planned to launch the campaign in Brixton on 17 November.

For further details contact 071-924 9033.

BY JACKIE VANCE



Health workers on the march against hospital cuts in Melbourne, Australia, on Tuesday 25 October

Photo: Nick Bailey



# Students strike against racism

BY PAUL DAY

OVER 50 students from two east London boroughs went on strike on Wednesday 12 October to protest at racism within their schools.

Some 25 female students at Skinners Company School in Hackney were joined on strike by a similar number of students from Gladesmore School in Haringey and individuals at other schools in the boroughs.

The strikers produced a leaflet, announcing that 'we want

teachers not to divide us but to give better education'. The leaflet detailed incidents of racist abuse after complaints were made about the quality of the food in the school, and reported racist remarks made by teachers and other staff.

## Grievances

The leaflet called for students to unite against 'all the problems we are facing in our schools'. It demanded the removal of racist teachers and the use of school halls for mass meetings to discuss grievances.

The struggle was led by Turkish and Kurdish women, who were sick of being treated differently from students of other

nationalities. They were joined by students from other backgrounds who believe that teachers were not forceful enough in trying to break down barriers between students.

Anger had flared when some Turkish and Kurdish students were attacked by Afro-Caribbean members of the school. The headmistress had refused to meet the students to discuss the situation.

At a picket the following morning, the headmistress found time to speak to the students, but only to encourage them to return to school or risk expulsion if they did not.

During the morning break the school locked other students in the building — in a clear

breach of health and safety regulations — to prevent them joining the protest. The school also called in the police against the strikers. They left after finding the students well-organised and disciplined.

In the afternoon the students were offered talks with the headmistress, but it was made clear that those who did not do so would face disciplinary action. On returning to school they found teachers handing out leaflets, purporting to come from 'students that care', calling on them to 'stop fooling around'.

The students are now trying to organise a public meeting on the question of racism in schools, and wish to have discussions with teachers' unions.

# Home Office grabs Kurdish leader

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

KURDISH leader Kani Yilmaz was walking along the street when eight or ten police officers bundled him into a car and drove him away.

It's an everyday occurrence in Turkey. But it happened in London, where Kani Yilmaz, a representative in Europe of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), had been invited to meet MPs on 27 October.

Kani Yilmaz is on the Turkish regime's wanted list as a fighter for Kurdish freedom. He lives in political exile in Germany, and he entered Britain legally.

The Home Office said Yilmaz had been served with a deportation notice and arrange-

ments were being made for his removal as soon as possible. It would not say where he was being deported to.

In parliament, Labour MP John Austin-Walker condemned the British government's hypocrisy, in pretending to defend the Kurds against Saddam Hussein's regime but backing repressive Turkish rule against them.

## Strike

Outside the Home Office, Kurdish refugees and supporters began a hunger strike to protest against the deportation. The Kurdistan Information Centre said the government was responding to pressure from the Turkish embassy.

The Home Office claimed Yilmaz was stopped for 'nation-

al security considerations', and because his presence 'was not conducive to the public good'.

What a load of rubbish! Whose 'national security'? What 'public good'? The British government welcomes all sorts of brutal reactionaries, war criminals and international arms dealers with their dirty money, because it can do business with them.

Whatever our views on the PKK, it represents no threat whatsoever to working people in Britain; which is more than can be said for the Tory government and its laws, and the way it uses the police force.

Turkey, with its troops razing Kurdish villages and police torturing prisoners, is a member of NATO. The British and other European Union governments are doing the Turkish

government's bidding, backing repression against the Kurds, because they look to the Turkish regime, and particularly its military, to do their dirty work in the Balkans, the Middle East and central Asia.

## Aggressive

But more than that, the direction the British state is taking, with the anti-union laws, the Criminal Justice Bill, and aggressive police actions would take us down the same road as Turkey, and further. Seizing a political leader off the street on his way to address a meeting is a warning we should heed.

The labour movement must strongly oppose the deportation of Kani Yilmaz. Defend his right to speak here, and that of all refugees from tyranny!

# TV rip-off for health service patients

BY MIKE COOKE

MAKE the sick pay — to watch TV. That's the message from the new privatising NHS.

Patients not uncommonly feel a bit grotty and bored when they're restricted to being in bed, and not surprisingly a bit of telly is just 'what the doctor ordered'.

But it ain't what the hospital managers order when there's a profit to be made!

At Northwick Park hospital in Harrow, north-west London, they're installing 'a new bedside system for patients that will provide a sophisticated range of

services, including a telephone and answering service, television, video and radio for each patient.'

Sounds wonderful! But the catch is that patients will have to pay 'a modest charge' for some of these 'services'. 'The cost of watching television programmes is still being finalised with Patientline [the installer of the system] and the cost of each service will be available in a bedside booklet,' says a Northwick Park hospital press release.

What's not mentioned in the press release is that hospital managers are banning portable TVs from bed-sides ('Evening Standard', 1 November). But director of operations Martin

Lerner is forced to explain in the press release: 'We know that many patients are disturbed by the noise from televisions which other patients have brought into the hospital.'

And 'our electricians will no longer need to check the safety of televisions which have been brought into the hospital,' says Lerner.

The system uses a 'smart card' rather similar to a phone card. Patientline chief executive Colin Alton helpfully suggests: 'These smart cards would make a super present for someone who is ill in hospital, instead of bringing the usual bunch of flowers.'

A nice little earner for Alton

and all very well if you have visitors, but those without visitors are left in the lurch.

The TV price question has obviously caused a bit of embarrassment to the Northwick Park managers. Alton said in the 'Evening Standard': 'We are looking at charges starting from £1.50 a day, which is very reasonable for a whole day's TV with 20 different satellite and broadcasting channels.'

But does your £1.50 get you the 20 channels? And are the channels any good anyway?

'This is a disgusting move,' said a spokeswoman for the public service union, UNISON. 'It illustrates commercialism at its worst in today's NHS.'

# Review finally set on Kashmiris' jailing

BY MIKE COOKE

A JUDICIAL review of the imprisonment of two Kashmiri students, held at the discretion of the home secretary, has finally been set for 8 December.

For many years the two — Abdul Qayyum Raja and Mohammed Riaz — did not know the judge's recommendation on the length of their imprisonment. In fact, Riaz has now served longer than the ten years Justice Bristowe suggested to the home secretary.

The two were convicted of the murder of an Indian diplomat in Birmingham in February 1985 and have been in prison since February 1984.

They were convicted on the basis of circumstantial evidence. Qayyum and Riaz have both denied any part in the actual killing but admitted to the charge of false imprisonment. The trial judge, noting that Riaz had unwittingly be-

come involved, had said that he was 'unlucky to have been involved at all'.

Qayyum says that he did not know that the man was going to be killed. Those accused of carrying out the killing were alleged to have fled the country. Police are still looking for the murder weapon.

When Douglas Hurd, the home secretary in 1985, received the judge's recommendation, he added ten years to the sentences. That political decision was kept secret for many years, denying Riaz and Qayyum their right to know and the right to appeal. Home Secretary Michael Howard in 1983 upheld the original decision.

Leaders of the Free Riaz and Qayyum Campaign claim Howard did not give serious consideration to mitigating circumstances, or take account of the original decision being incorrectly based upon the pre-trial report from West Midlands police, which was inconsistent and full of assumptions.

## OBITUARY

### Sylvia Bolgar: a fighter remembered

TRADE union activist and campaigner Sylvia Bolgar has died from cancer, aged 70.

For many years secretary of Camden Trades Union Council in London, Sylvia will be remembered for her energy and determination in support of working-class struggles.

Sylvia joined the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II, and then returned to England where she studied at the London School of Economics. During this period she became disillusioned with the Labour Party and joined the Communist Party.

In 1947 she went as a Student Work Brigade volunteer to the new Stalinist countries of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Rumania, where she helped construct railway tunnels.

Unable to pursue a career in journalism because she was blacklisted, she became a teacher at Hampstead School, where she became active in the National Union of Teachers.

She was very active during the 1984-85 miners' strike, and joined the picket lines night after night during the News International dispute at Wapping in 1986. Kevin Courtney, branch chair of the Camden NUT, remembers her when the police charged. 'Police were charging

at the crowd and many protesters ran away, but Sylvia stood her ground,' he says.

She was also very active in raising the issue of self-determination for the Irish people throughout the trade union movement in Britain.

In recent years she was committed to unity, and tried to work for it wherever she could. She supported the Crisis in London Campaign and participated in its conferences.

A memorial held in the Camden Workers Club after her funeral honoured her commitment to the anti-poll-tax movement. Speakers included Norma Laws, himself imprisoned several times for non-payment in spite of his 74 years.

In a message read out at the memorial meeting, the secretary of Tower Hamlets trades council, Phil Edwards, honoured Sylvia's courage and contribution to the workers' movement.

'Sylvia and I came from different traditions in the workers' movement, but like many others around her I was always impressed by her sheer determination and energy to fight on every issue. . . . We will miss Sylvia but never forget her. She was a fighter for the working class.'

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## A EUROPEAN LOOKS AT AFRICAN MUSIC

A lecture by Peter Fryer, author of 'Staying Power: A History of Black People in Britain' and 'Black People in the British Empire'. Introduced by Clara Buckley, Orville Blackwood Community Campaign. A general survey of Africa's giant contribution to world music. Illustrated by original recordings.

Wed 16 November

7.30pm, Assembly Hall, Lambeth town hall, London SW2

Tickets £4 (£2 concessions)  
Proceeds to South Africa Solidarity Fund

## Workers Aid for Bosnia

### Bazaar

Saturday 10 December

2pm, Bryant Street

Community Centre

London E15

Items required are:

cakes or other items for the homemade stall, toys, books and records, prizes for the tombola, bric-à-brac, plants, good jumble, small toys for the lucky dip.

Contact: Jill Oxley on 081-555 7045.

**Inside left**

**Our time must come!**

UNTIL last week I'd never heard of 'Our Time'. But in its heyday, this magazine published work by Dylan Thomas, J.B. Priestley, Julian Symons, V.S. Pritchett, Edith Sitwell and Arthur Calder-Marshall, as well as Communist Party writers such as Jack Lindsay, Alexander Baron, and Sylvia Townsend Warner.

And artists whose work appeared on its pages included Paul Hogarth, Ronald Searle and Tomaszewski. But from its peak circulation of 18,000, in 1945, 'Our Time' did not last beyond 1949.

I've just been reading Andy Croft's article, 'Writers, the Communist Party and the Battle of Ideas', in issue five of 'Socialist History'. This explains that 'Our Time' emerged from the short-lived 'People's Convention' called by the Communist Party in 1941 when the party was still opposing World War II.

Published by Fore Publications, it was to all intents and purposes a party journal, even though, according to Croft, 'Rumpole of the Bailey' creator John Mortimer, who contributed film reviews, says:

'Naive as ever, I didn't realise that it was a Communist magazine and when I got letters saying that "The Party in Wimbledon" didn't like the tone of what I wrote I thought that some people in the suburbs had met for a few Saturday night drinks and taken the opportunity of discussing my notices.'

What finished 'Our Time' was not cold war anti-communism, but the CP's Stalinist leadership, which sought to impose the aggressive, sectarian (and chauvinist) line of Soviet ideologue Y. Zhdanov.

Editor Edgell Rickword resigned after a meeting at the CP's headquarters in King Street, London. Issues of the magazine were often delayed because King Street disapproved of editorial reluctance to endorse Zhdanov's campaign against "decadent bourgeois literature", explains Croft.

After Lawrence and Wishart published Zhdanov's speeches, Maurice Cornforth penned a fierce attack on the party's erstwhile literary authority, Christopher Caudwell, denouncing his 'Freudian idealist' psychology and 'bourgeois ideology'. (Caudwell could not reply, having been killed in Spain.)

Andy Croft's article affords a fascinating glimpse of British Stalinism's period of strength, and its relation to cultural and intellectual developments. (Whether we can be satisfied with Croft's understanding of the political issues is another matter.)

IN THE same issue of 'Socialist History' Stepen Woodhams looks at some ideas on class and culture in the 1950s (mainly those of 'Universities and Left Review' and Raymond Williams), and John Lucas criticises Croft's book 'Red Letter Days: British Fiction in the 1930s'. On a sour note, I notice 'Socialist History' now costs £15 for three issues a year. 'Our Times' in 1945 cost a shilling.

The collapse of Stalinism leaves us, as Trotskyists, the long overdue task of building a real, revolutionary communist party in Britain, as everywhere else. The WRP is but the nucleus, or seed, of this.

Based essentially on the working class, and with none of the opportunism of 'popular fronts' (or a People's Convention), such a party must also attract writers and artists rejecting capitalism, and must enable them to participate with their own skills. Our time must come!

Charlie Pottis

# South Africa: working-class

THE South African Communist Party (SACP) for years put forward its 'theory' of there being two stages to the socialist revolution: first the struggle for a 'national-democratic' revolution, and only then, after democracy had been achieved, the struggle for the socialist revolution.

Now the SACP says that apartheid is gone but still we, the workers, are not at the stage of the fight for socialism. We must, it says, complete the democratic revolution — we are only, somehow, in an earlier phase, or pre-stage towards the 'first stage'.

This talk by the SACP is mumbo-jumbo; it expresses nothing but the complete bankruptcy of the 'two-stage theory'. And it covers up the reality of the class-collaboration of the African National Congress/SACP alliance with the enemies of democracy and socialism, by their participation in the 'government of national unity'.

The Marxist theory of the struggle for socialism is not a 'two-stage' one. In South Africa the actual sequence is very clear. In this country the most advanced forms of capital exist, owned by domestic and multinational companies employing many thousands of workers.

Yet this monopoly (imperialist) stage of capitalism was reached in South Africa without a preceding stage of capitalist free competition and democracy [the classical model of capitalist development]. It was built through a political regime of brutal, racist repression, culminating in apartheid.

The working class has taken, over the decades, the leadership of the masses in the bitter and bloody struggles to overthrow the apartheid regime. That task will be completed by the working class taking power, at the head of all the

As reported in last week's Workers Press, our comrades in the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (South Africa) have been invited to the 'Socialist' conference organised by the Congress of South African Trade Unions. This followed COSATU's executive committee overturning the organising committee's decision to exclude them.

This conference, held in Johannesburg this weekend, was called after a resolution, from the NUMSA metalworkers' union, was put on COSATU's congress agenda in September. The resolution was not debated but referred to the executive. (It was wrongly reported last week that the resolution was passed by the congress.)

But the organising committee changed the purpose of the conference. It is now a 'Socialist conference for reconstruction and development'. In other words, the discussion is to centre on the implementation of the government's reconstruction and development programme (RDP). This programme contains no socialist or even 'state capitalist' measures. It demands that workers make 'sacrifices', 'donations', 'work during their holidays for nothing', etc.

Last week we reported how housing minister Joe Slovo, who is

oppressed. The revolutionary struggle will take that form as it carries through to the end the fight against apartheid.

This struggle will grow over directly into the socialist revolution, that is, the expropriation of the big capitalists who were protected by apartheid.

Now, in 1994, the ruling class has been forced to retreat by the struggle of the working class, and has brought the ANC/SACP into a 'government of national unity'.

This device is being used by the capitalists to hold on to their rule, to deny to the people of South Africa the full fruits of their struggle against apartheid.

It attempts to prevent — in the name of democracy and national unity — the working class from

going forward to the taking of power and the construction of a socialist society, in unity and solidarity with its allies, the international working class.

The final defeat of apartheid and the achievement of democracy will be possible only through a workers' government, which will lead the working class in the dismantling of the apartheid state regime.

The apartheid regime cannot be 'democratised'. It must be broken up and replaced by workers' power. And the working class in power will find itself having to break the power of capital everywhere — that means going forward to socialism.

The party the working class needs now is a party with this programme — the programme not of

also the chair of the South Africa negotiated loans from the bank. But these loans are tied to an as family defaulting on payment w

Members of Slovo's party, the S conference's organising comm comrades. The SACP is split into last mass Stalinist party, but it o loyalty of workers on the basis o usurpation of the 1917 Russian has now collapsed.

Our South African comrades — tradition of the fight against this the world's working class by the reflection of the break-up of Sta COSATU executive — again do forced to overturn the decision the 'Socialist' conference.

Below is the submission of our conference, entitled 'The Current Africa and the Way Forward for

'two stages', but of the permanent revolution.

## The response of the working class

BEFORE the elections, SACP chair Joe Slovo appealed to workers not to strike before, during or after them. But workers did not agree with this. Striking is not a luxury or pastime, it is one of the few weapons workers have to defend themselves against the bosses.

Since the elections there has been a wave of strikes and other struggles — in the communities, over education, and by members of the former military wings of the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress over their merger with apartheid state forces. Many of these have finished, many are con-



When Nelson Mandela was elected to head the new government, workers expected it to serve their interests

## China

TOM OWEN looks at two film relationships under different and their relation to the epic

THE experience of China's ancient culture being propelled into the 20th century was brought 'closer' to a contemporary British audience by the Chinese films 'Raise the Red Lantern' (Channel 4, Saturday October) and 'Farewell my Concubine', shown in cinemas this year and now out on video.

It takes a leap of the imagination for us Europeans to grasp even the most mundane of cultural practices of the medieval or Renaissance periods. So to understand Oriental cultures seems to present almost insuperable problems. The Western genres that come closest to describing these films are tragedy and epic respectively.

These forms — inherited from the classical Greeks — have been regarded as the most exacting forms of art. Indeed many believe as did Marx, that in 'modern times the conditions do not e

# forward to ss power

an Communist Party, had  
s for people to buy their homes.  
insurance from Slovo that any  
ould be evicted by the army.

SACP, dominate the  
ittee, which tried to exclude our  
o at least five factions. It is the  
an no longer command the  
of the Soviet bureaucracy's  
Revolution. That bureaucracy

Trotskyists — stand in the  
s usurpation of the leadership of  
e Stalinist bureaucracy. It is a  
linism in South Africa that the  
minated by the SACP — was  
to exclude our comrades from

South African comrades to the  
nt Political Situation in South  
Socialism'

tinuing, and there are many new  
strikes looming.

In these strikes workers have two  
main concerns: wages and the  
ending of apartheid's work practices.

Workers have put the new gov-  
ernment in power, and they are  
fully justified in *expecting* it to  
serve their interests. South African  
workers do not sit around passively  
waiting. No, our working class is  
the most militant in the whole  
world — they know they have to  
struggle, and they know how to  
do it.

The new government's response  
to the strikes and other struggles  
is causing workers to begin to realise  
that the ANC and SACP, part of the  
government, are not serving their  
interests, but are implementing the  
policies of the big capitalists.

The following are the key

reasons why we say this:

1. The ANC and SACP politi-  
cians have taken over as the lead-  
ing champions of capitalism.

2. The police and the army con-  
tinue to brutally attack strikers and  
other protesters. But who is the  
minister of police? None other than  
a leader of the SACP. Who is the  
defence minister? A leader of the  
ANC.

At least four protesters have  
been killed as a direct result of  
police actions. Hundreds have been  
injured. Thousands of workers  
have been arrested by the 'ANC-  
controlled' police.

In only the past few days, a  
striker was killed in a Durban  
street while marching behind ANC  
posters; and in Cape Town, mem-  
bers of the South African Manual  
Workers' Union, demonstrating  
against the apartheid-created city  
council, were brutally attacked and  
injured by the police.

We note with concern that, to  
date, the trade union leaders have  
failed to stop the police brutality  
against the working class.

It is clear where the 'govern-  
ment of national unity' stands, and  
that the ANC and SACP are not  
serving the interests of the  
workers.

3. The ANC-led government of  
national unity has now committed  
itself to privatisation, despite the  
long-standing opposition of  
workers.

4. The ANC and SACP are  
throwing another lifeline to apart-  
heid by agreeing to share power  
with its functionaries in the transi-  
tional local councils.

5. President Nelson Mandela is  
calling on workers to tighten their  
belts. But the workers rightfully  
believe that, after suffering under  
apartheid, they should be getting a  
better deal.

Today the working class is in the  
process of rising up against their

suffering, imposed on them by  
capitalism.

In this battle, the ANC and SACP  
leaderships, as well as many trade  
union leaders, have gone over to  
the side of the capitalists, sending  
in the police and army to attack  
strikers.

If the socialist conference does  
not take note of this, and deal with  
it, it will end up as a failure.

## The way forward

OUR country and the working class  
face the onslaught of imperialism  
and its agencies such as the Inter-  
national Monetary Fund and the  
World Bank.

Poverty and unemployment are  
increasing. The working class is  
resisting its incorporation and  
co-optation within the capitalist confines  
of the government of national  
unity.

We see the following as the only  
way forward at the present time:

a) The complete withdrawal of  
the COSATU trade union federation  
from its alliance with the ANC and  
SACP.

b) Unqualified support for disci-  
plined working-class action in the  
factories, workshops and rural  
areas.

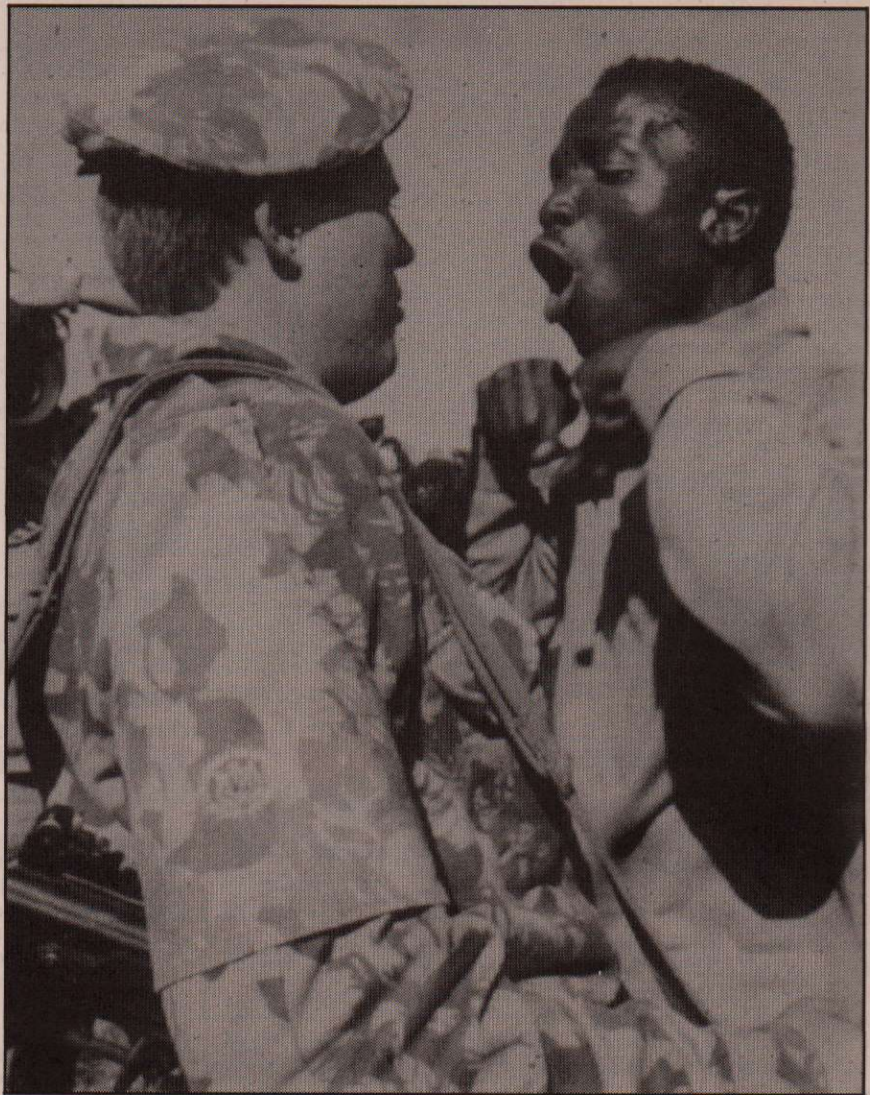
c) Open and democratic debate  
between all working-class organ-  
isations, parties and individuals  
towards the establishment of a  
workers' party that will:

■ Struggle consistently for so-  
cialism;

■ Base itself on Marxist/social-  
ist principles;

■ Resist the imperialist plans of  
the IMF, World Bank and interna-  
tional capitalism, and the 'new  
world order'; and

■ Build strong links with inter-  
national workers' and socialist  
organisations, on the road to recon-  
structing the proletarian interna-  
tional.



The apartheid regime, which was led by De Klerk (top), who is now part of the 'government of national unity', cannot be 'democratised', it must be broken up and replaced by workers' power. Apartheid's soldiers (above) are being merged with the ANC's and the PAC's military wings

# a's cultural great leap forward

s on the distortion of personal  
tyrannies in China this century,  
and tragic dramatic forms

for the re-creation of these genres.

'Raise the Red Lantern' seems  
to have all the focus and power of  
a classical tragedy. It has only one  
location, the household of an early-  
20th-century Chinese feudal  
warlord.

It follows the fortunes of Song-  
olian — a student from an impover-  
ished family who has been sold into  
concubinage. She is to become the  
fourth wife in the master's harem,  
servicing the needs of the master  
and, above all, providing him with  
sons.

After her initiation into the  
rituals of the household, Songolian  
becomes aware of the crippling  
constraints of domestic ritual and  
that her life as a free woman has  
been tragically short.

The household is a prison and the  
power of the master is absolute. He  
has all the whimsical power of the  
gods to determine the fate of his  
hapless retinue.

The central ritual of the day  
comes in the evening, when the  
master selects the concubine he  
will sleep with. This is marked pub-  
licly by the raising of a red lantern  
outside the quarters of his chosen  
bed-companion, in a communal  
courtyard.

This combination of humiliation  
and patronage ensnares the women  
in a net of deception and intrigue,  
in which they both comfort and  
betray each other.

## Betrayed

Songolian herself is drawn into  
this web and attempts to curry the  
master's favours in a desperate  
gamble: she pretends she is preg-  
nant while hoping to conceive. She  
is betrayed by an ambitious ser-  
vant, who hopes to be a wife her-  
self.

As an act of revenge, Songolian  
exposes the keeping of forbidden  
lanterns by this servant, who is  
then forced to pass her nights in the  
freezing cold and dies of fever.

Her only real ally turns out to be  
the former opera singer, who be-  
hind a mask of perverseness and

eccentricity has been able to carve  
out some spiritual space for her-  
self. But this is not enough and she  
begins an affair with a Westernised  
doctor.

Again there is betrayal. Song-  
olian gets drunk and exposes her  
friend. She then witnesses, in hor-  
ror, the singer being hauled off and  
hanged in a hut on the roof of the  
house by the male retainers.

The film is a masterly study of  
patriarchal tyranny and the reg-  
imes that flourish in the corrosive  
culture of absolute power.

If 'Raise the Red Lantern' has  
the intense concentration and emo-  
tional engagement of tragedy, then  
'Farewell my Concubine' has the  
historic sweep and depth of the  
epic. Based on the novel by Lilian  
Lee, it deals with the momentous  
events in China this century. But it  
does this obliquely, through the  
fortunes of two performers in the  
Peking Opera Company.

The central figure, the 'con-  
cubine', is in fact a male actor, the  
son of a prostitute. His mother cut  
off his abnormal sixth finger so that  
she could enter him into the opera  
troupe, where he has to serve a

barbaric apprenticeship learning  
how to contort his body to acquire  
the exacting disciplines demanded  
by the postures of classical Chinese  
theatre and opera.

He becomes a 'concubine' be-  
cause of the role he excels in: a  
warlord's devoted concubine in an  
ancient opera. He forms a bond with  
the actor who plays opposite him,  
and this intense relationship is  
threatened when his partner mar-  
ries a 'real-life' prostitute.

This triadic partnership sur-  
vives the revolutionary upheavals  
of the 1930s and 1940s, and the  
establishment of the 'People's Re-  
public' under Mao Zedong.

For the 'concubine' the archaic  
art-form of the Chinese opera be-  
comes a life-style of decadence, a  
refuge from history. His partners  
are more pragmatic, adapting at  
least outwardly to ideological  
pressures.

It is the 'cultural revolution' of  
1967 that finally breaks the profes-  
sional and personal bonds of the  
three. Victims of denunciation by  
Mao's Red Guards, the triad  
breaks down in a series of public  
personal betrayals and humilia-

tions, leading to suicide, guilt and  
despair.

If the classical epic dealt with  
the fate of a people pitched against  
the forces of nature, the super-  
natural and war, then this film  
comes close to grasping the mod-  
ern forces that are breaking down  
the loyalties to the past and redefin-  
ing historically the new challenges  
for humanity.

## Pernicious

The most pernicious 'actor' in  
'Farewell my Concubine' is Stalin-  
ism. This is reinforced by the film  
being presented as a reminiscence  
after the two actors meet following  
the death of Mao. They attempt to  
reperform the ancient opera —  
which contains a suicide scene —  
but with tragic consequences when  
the former prostitute kills herself.

'Raise the Red Lantern' and  
'Farewell my Concubine' are in the  
tradition of great Chinese cinema-  
tography, having survived the dead  
hand of Stalinism's 'socialist real-  
ism'. They may be the harbingers  
of new and rich possibilities for  
world cinema.



# The political economy of Sleaze

With Prime Minister John Major's government under increasing pressure from the 'sleaze factor', NICK LEE shows that it is not a merely a 'British' phenomenon, but is based on international trends that show the decay of the capitalist system

THE Tory party seems to be burying itself under a mountain of petty corruption. Try as he might, Prime Minister John Major is unable to stem the flow. What a year ago looked like a problem specific to Italy is now revealed at the heart of the British state.

'Sleaze' as the press calls it, is not quite corruption: no minister has yet been caught — though civil servants have — accepting bribes in return for awarding state contracts to foreign multinationals. But the principle is the same.

Members of Parliament have been accepting payments, usually in the form of expensive holidays, in return for asking parliamentary questions to get information relevant only to the interests of their sponsors. In short, attempting to turn the civil service into a research department for private companies.

The two heads to fall so far have both been junior ministers, Tim Smith at the Northern Ireland Office and Neil Hamilton, a junior trade minister.

They had, it is alleged, taken money from Mohammed Al Fayed, the owner of Harrods, for asking parliamentary questions and had failed to declare it in the register of members' interests. Hamilton admitted that in 1987 he had received over £4,000 worth of 'hospitality' at the Ritz hotel in Paris, also owned by Fayed.

The home secretary, Michael Howard, has also been mentioned in this murky context, as has another cabinet minister, Jonathan Aitken.

Aitken had his hotel bill from the same Paris Ritz on the front page of the Guardian (£1,000 for two days!). Aitken claims that he paid this bill in full. His stay at the Ritz was in September 1993.

Aitken's account at the hotel was actually closed in September, with the balance being transferred to the account of a Saudi businessman, Said Mohammed Ayas. Aitken claims this was covered by a cheque sent on 21 February to Ayas's nephew, Abdul Rahman.

Fayed has contributed £250,000 to Tory party funds in the past. He has applied for British passports for himself and members of his family. He was reported to be particularly annoyed when his brother was denied a passport.

Fayed denies reports that he threatened to name four ministers who had taken bribes of 'hundreds of thousands of pounds' if his complaints are not seen to.

## Party donations

AS MARTIN LINTON pointed out in the 'Guardian' (28 October), since the early 1980s the Tory party has deliberately sought cash donations from wealthy overseas businessmen. Asil Nadir — currently back in his home in north Cyprus to escape the attentions of the Serious Fraud Office — gave £400,000, while Greek shipping magnate John Latsis reportedly donated £2 million.

The need for such large outside cash donations for a major bourgeois political party reflects changes both in the nature of the Tory party and in the political system.

As general elections have degenerated into mass advertising campaigns run by media consultants, the need for massive party funding has grown.

## Arrangement dissolves

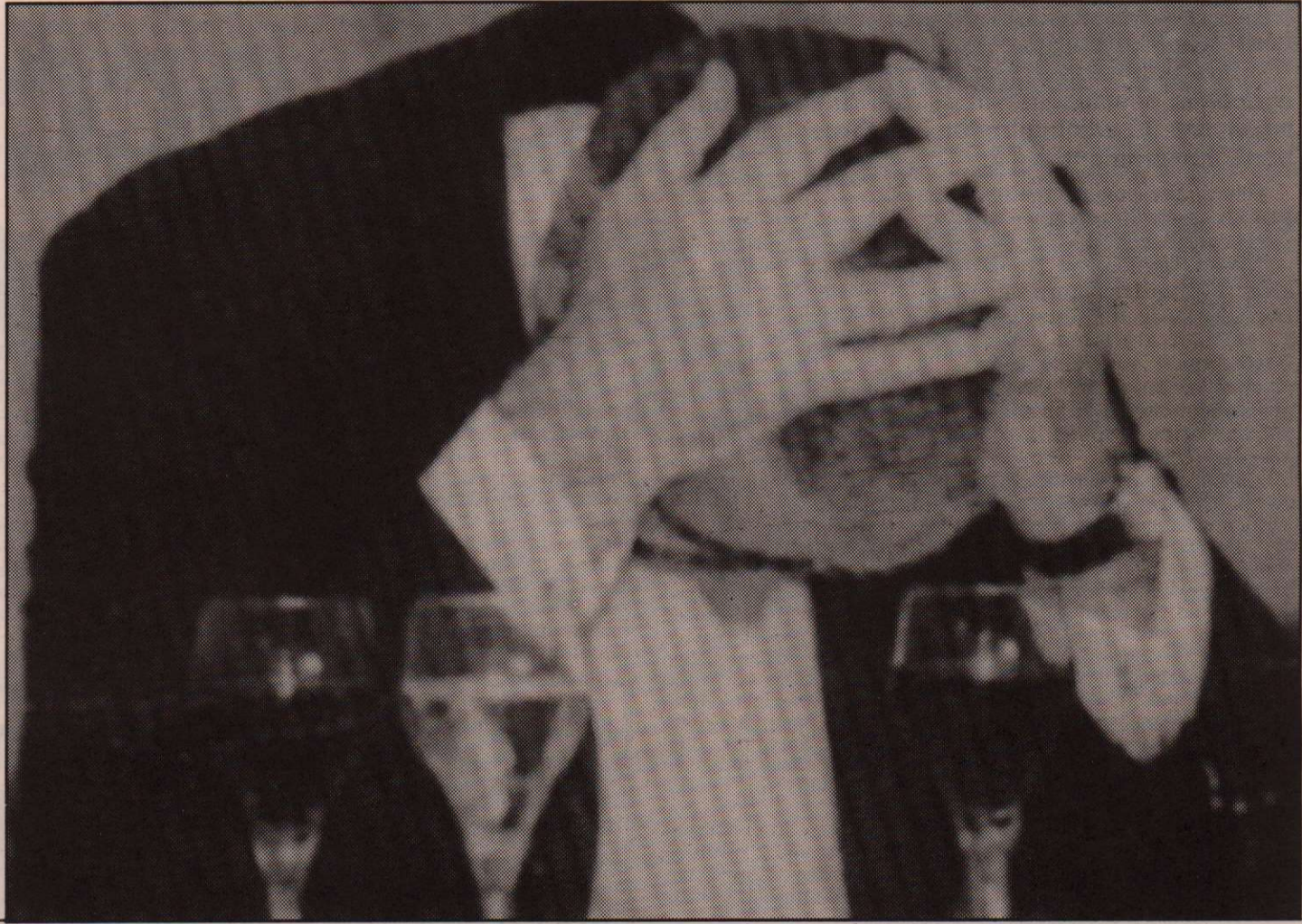
MEANWHILE, the old British arrangement whereby the aristocratic Tory leadership ran the state on behalf of the bourgeoisie has, to a great extent, dissolved.

Under Thatcher the old Tory 'grandees' — extremely wealthy landowners and financiers, were gradually pushed out in favour of a newer generation of brash young men without 'breeding', with less wealth but with strong business connections.

This means that Tory MPs are now more likely to have direct business connections — the number of MP's earning consultancy fees has grown, as has the numbers of ex-ministers landing on the boards of directors of companies that had a direct connection with their departments.

Dependent on perks and consultancy fees to keep up their life-style, these people think nothing wrong in the idea of providing a service to a customer — even if it involves abusing the traditions of the 'mother of parliaments' — in return for a fee. Meanwhile the big outside donors like Fayed want something directly for their money.

These people become more important than politicians and governments. Martin Linton, in his 'Guardian' article, mentioned an episode during a visit by Major to Hong Kong in 1991. Major excused himself after only 30 minutes from a cocktail party given by the senior British trade commissioner to go off to



Under pressure: Prime Minister John Major's government seems to be burying itself under a mountain of sleaze

a private dinner party hosted by the richest man in Hong Kong, Li Kashing, who is reported as having donated £500,000 to Tory party funds.

Corruption in the strict sense of the word has also increased. Another of the changes of the Thatcher period was that more senior civil servants have been recruited directly from the private sector.

Another section of the old aristocratic tradition of the British state has been weakened by an infusion of people who maintained their close connections with private business.

The result has been an increasing number of cases in recent years of procurement fraud: business paying back-handers to civil servants to receive government contracts, particularly, it seems, in armaments and catering.

## A world-wide process

FROM the standpoint of business, being able to bribe civil servants or buy Members of Parliament takes on increasing

importance throughout the world as the struggle for profitable investment opportunities intensifies under conditions of world recession.

There is hardly a capitalist state that has escaped this process. Japan — one of most 'modern' and efficient of capitalist countries — comes immediately to mind, as do the corruption scandals of recent years in France, Spain and Germany.

In France at the moment one ex-minister is in jail, another has been recently forced to resign, and hundreds of businessmen and minor politicians are under judicial investigation. According to the 'Economist' (29 October) two-thirds of French business leaders believe companies regularly engage in corrupt practices.

'Many maintain that it has become impossible to win a public contract or obtain planning permission without the payment of a kickback to the local mayor or party boss.'

The 'Economist' quotes Antonio Gaudino, a former police inspector claiming that 'corruption has infiltrated everywhere, not just among politicians, but

also in the civil service — at all levels'.

## Capitalist decay and the state

THESE developments, while exacerbated by the current economic depression and the search for profitable contracts, reflect much more basic changes in the relationship between the state and the capitalist class, changes that become increasingly evident as reflections of capitalism in its period of decay.

The key feature of capitalism in its ascendant phase was the independence of the state from particular sections of the — often internally competitive — capitalist class.

This independence enabled the state to serve the general interests of capital accumulation as a whole. Part of this arrangement involved Members of Parliament being seen as 'representatives' rather than delegates.

That is, rather than fighting tooth and nail for the particular interests of those who sponsored their election campaign, they were to be influenced by the general interests of 'party' and 'country'.

But under monopoly capitalism this distinction between particular and general interests of capital is less clear.

Powerful financial blocks and multinational companies operate in a world in which the nation state is increasingly weak.

They don't need a strong parliament to represent their interests.

Large multinational companies can talk directly to governments: and governments will listen.

The leading sections of global capital see parliamentary democracy as simply one among many political forms with which they can coexist — as long as their interests are carried into effect.

The other side of this coin is a growing cynicism amongst all classes about the relevance of 'politics'. Politicians and civil servants are suffering from de-

clining status and prestige, even in the traditional bourgeois democracies.

This, in turn, undermines old aristocratic notions about the high status and moral integrity of 'public life'. These are regarded as anachronisms.

But at the same time, the nation state — including local government — still dispenses important public contracts, distributes overseas aid and issues tax laws, planning permission, etc. The national state is still the only law-making and law-enforcing body around.

Bribery and corruption, or simply large donations to party funds, are the methods whereby large capitalist concerns, having abandoned any need for the processes of bourgeois parliamentary democracy as such, now seek to exercise a direct influence on government.

In this scenario MPs become regarded as simply functionaries to be bought. But it does not stop there.

Right at the heart of government a concern with the 'affairs of state' becomes translated into a concern with sucking up to one section of business or another. If this means violating the government's own policy and cabinet ministers lying through their teeth, so be it.

This is the significance of the 'arms-for-Iraq' issue, which will flare up again on the publication of the report of the Scott inquiry into the issue. It was also shown by the Pergau dam affair, when the government's own policy of not linking overseas aid to arms purchases was being openly violated.

Mark Thatcher's activities in various Saudi arms deals were justified, in his mother's famous phrase, as 'batting for Britain'.

The issue facing the working class both in Britain and internationally is therefore not simply the collapse of reformist politics, as witnessed by the Blair leadership of the Labour Party, but also the growing degeneration of national bourgeois politics as such. That is why the development of new movements to defend the working class must start out from an international agenda.

# Where are Zeki and Ilyas?

TURKISH authorities are being asked to account for the 'disappearance' of two young members of the country's ancient Christian minority, believed to have been held by security forces combatting the Kurdish resistance.

Zeki Ercan Diril, 17, and his brother Ilyas Edip Diril, 15, had been working in Istanbul for six months when they decided on 15 May to return to their home village of Kovankaya.

Kovankaya, an Assyro-Chaldean Catholic village, was burnt to the ground by Turkish armed forces in 1990. Villagers fled to Istanbul, but two years ago some began returning to rebuild their homes.

Zeki and Ilyas had been given some money by a Catholic charity in Istanbul to help with their fares, and to give some-

thing to their extended family in the village. They arrived at Uzungecit, some distance from Kovankaya, where they had to stop because the road was mined. Before setting out to continue their journey they left the money with the Kurdish owner of the house in Uzungecit where they were staying.

## Detained

The Diril brothers never made it to Kovankaya. According to two villagers who came to meet them, the two lads were detained by village guards on 19 May and handed over to gendarmes from Uludere, the nearest large town. The gendarmes also confiscated the money from their Kurdish landlord.

On 4 June, Kovankaya was burnt down again, and four

families, including young children, were taken away and held at Cevizagac. A village elder who went to Beytussebab to complain and make enquiries about the 'disappearance' of the two teenagers was arrested and held in Beytussebab prison. He has been accused of helping Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) guerrillas.

The four families are now allowed to move. Together with one other family in Cevizagac, they are the last remaining representatives of the Assyro-Chaldean Catholic community, which numbered more than 5,000 before the Turkish government launched its war in north-west Kurdistan in 1984. All the others have migrated to Istanbul or to Europe.

The two brothers remain 'disappeared'. Amnesty Inter-

national has appealed for people to write to the Turkish authorities expressing grave concern about the 'disappearance' of Zeki Ercan Diril and Ilyas Edip Diril following their detention on 19 May by security forces in Uzungecit, Hakkari province; and urging that a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation be conducted into their 'disappearance'.

■ Amnesty recommends writing to: Chief of Staff of the Gendarmerie, General Aydin Ilter. Salutation: 'Dear General'. Faxes: +90 312 418 0476

And to: State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights, Mr Azimet Koyluoglu. Faxes: +90 312 417 0476.

Send copies to: His Excellency Mr Candemir Onhon, Embassy of Turkey, 43 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PA.

# HAITI: cheers fade for US occupation

**MANY** Haitians who welcomed the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide are not cheering the US occupation force, nor the package of capitalist economic policies known as 'the American plan', which the US administration has thrust upon Aristide's government.

BY PIERRE DUPONT

One of the government's first steps was to announce a petrol price increase, to 38 gourdes a gallon, up from about 19 gourdes before the coup, because the International Monetary Fund 'says Haiti cannot subsidise the price of gas anymore.' When people panicked and protested, the price dropped to 30 gourdes (US\$3.00).

Aristide announced he supports a 'market economy' and 'economic democratisation' — the sale of state-held businesses. He also talked about the importance of the private sector and said he is creating a private-sector state commission.

Calling for 'order and discipline', the cabinet has denounced looting and 'violence', and urged 'no vengeance, yes to reconciliation!'

People attacked the homes and offices of the military and secret police oppressors, as part of the *dechoukaj* ('uprooting') of oppression they thought Aristide stood for. They resorted to people's arrests, and sometimes summary justice, fearing that those guilty of crimes against the poor would otherwise escape.

Critics say the army's 'interim high command' is full of those who took part in the military coup that drove Aristide into exile, and that known human rights abusers have been rewarded with overseas posts instead of being brought to trial.

It is not clear what guidelines there are for the US occupation. But it is clear that the US wants control over which army officers are kicked out and which remain, over the choice of the new army chief, over the training of the new forces. It also wants a say in the new police system.

The Haitian army is a product of the first US occupation, from 1915-34.

## Opposed

When Aristide was elected president in 1990 he sought to have Swiss training for a new palace guard. The US government opposed this and supported the army's coup.

The army is headed by Jean-Claude Duperval, a coup participant allegedly implicated in the drug trade.

The US wants Duperval to

remain in place, and the Aristide government does not, but thus far Aristide has not made any announcements or even reacted to Duperval's moves to take over 'law and order' around the country.

The US also wants the exclusive right to train the new police officers, through its International Criminal Investigations Training and Assistance Program [ICITAP].

## Notorious

Run by the US Justice and State Departments, and staffed by FBI agents, secret service and narcotics agents and police officers, ICITAP has worked in many Latin American countries, including Panama, Guatemala and El Salvador. The 'new' forces in those countries remain notorious for human rights abuses.

The Haitian government wants Canada and France to participate in the training, but ICITAP representatives say it is a US affair.

Bonivert Claude, who oversaw illicit exports of currency and other irregularities, has been shifted from his post as governor of the central bank but remains as a member of the administrative council.

In all of the programmes announced, there has been no mention of any plan to investigate and prosecute 'respected' members of the bourgeoisie who collaborated with the military regime in underhand deals, and made hundreds of millions of dollars of profits, leaving the country a shambles.

A huge crowd greeted two returning leaders of the peasants' movement, MPP, in Hinche on 20 October.

Climbing on top of a car to address thousands of exuberant supporters, Chavannes Jean-Baptiste congratulated those who had resisted military rule, especially the women. Then, to the obvious surprise of many in the crowd, he condemned the US invasion.

'This is not a victory,' he said. 'This is not the way we should have come back. It's not the way Titid [Aristide] should have come back.'

'It is not a US occupation that should have brought him back. It's us that should have done it ourselves. We have to work so

that nobody will do our work for us. We have to work like Charlemagne Peralte!' [Peralte was the rebel leader who died fighting the US occupation forces in 1919.]

'Don't celebrate and think that the [US] army is here to liberate us. . . It is part of the same strategy as the coup! The tables can be turned at any time,' he warned. 'If they are given the order, they will beat us!'

The crowd's reactions were muted compared with the cheers at the beginning, but Jean-Baptiste told them: 'Don't run out and say the marriage is beautiful! We celebrated on 7

February 1986 [when dictator 'Baby Doc' Duvalier was overthrown] . . . and then we realised that the Macoute system came back even stronger.

'The Macoutes are still drinking our blood, destroying our homes, raping our children . . . and so we have to understand. This little liberty we have from the occupation is not the liberation of Haiti!'

Jean-Baptiste said the country would not be free until the army, the barracks and the paramilitary death squads were destroyed. He told people to make lists of everyone who committed human rights violations and stole from them.

'Bring them to justice! Make them pay!' he said.

The previous day, employees of the National Port Authority (APN) held a press conference to denounce corruption and graft.

Workers said APN had stolen 18 million gourdes (US\$1.4 million) from the pension fund. They said former de facto director Max Paul regularly wrote 'zombi' cheques to members of FRAPH (Front pour l'Avancement et le Progres Haitien), military attaches and illegal 'January 18' senators, sold an APN boat, cut workers' salaries by 26 percent, and gave a payoff to police chief Michel Fran-

cois every month. They demanded Paul, who fled to the Dominican Republic, be brought before the courts. 'An example must be made!' workers cried in unison.

Many business people from the 'patriote bourgeoisie' ('patriots of the pocket' bourgeoisie) who wrote fraudulent contracts with the state, constructed illegal piers, and engaged in massive contraband are recycling themselves and making a great deal of money out of the US intervention. The Mevs family, for example, has rented the US forces its fuel storage facilities, its industrial park and other sites.

## Chinese joint ventures lose money

CHINA'S 'boom', based on joint ventures and foreign investment, is failing. A survey by the State Industrial and Commercial Administration expects 51 per cent of foreign-funded joint ventures in China will lose money this year.

In the past four years, 40 per cent have lost money. In the last year the losers have lost US\$13.75 billion. The 41 per cent of profitable companies earned just \$8.15 billion.

'China Daily' claims that some of these are 'losses' designed to cheat on tax. For example, it says 60-80 per cent of the ventures in Fujian province have been found to be evading tax.

The paper reports that some foreign ventures have traded their concession-loaded licences to local companies and the 'more reckless ones profiteered through smuggling, swindling, gambling and prostitution'.

Many foreign businessmen complain that only the 55 million members of the Chinese Communist Party are making good money. They describe the party as 'the world's biggest chamber of commerce'.



Volkswagen joint venture in Shanghai, China, is just one of many set up in recent years.

## Australia's 'rorting' rich

FROM NICK BAILEY  
IN AUSTRALIA

LIKE in Britain, it is the certainly not the rich who shoulder Australia's tax bill.

According to the Australian Taxation Office, of \$31 billion in business income, only \$6.1 billion was subject to tax.

Eighty per cent of the gross income received by the self-employed and individual business owners escaped tax.

Some 21 per cent of employers and the self-employed wriggled out of paying tax at all in 1992-93.

There have been suggestions in the press that there is some cheating and finagling — 'rorting' as it's called here.

Among the Australian great

untaxed are found:

- Ten per cent of barristers and solicitors on gross incomes of \$125,000 on average.
- Surgeons earning as much as \$1 million gross.
- Large minorities of dentists and accountants; and,
- More than 40 per cent of video, food and clothing store owners.

How can this be?

For those of us who pay our income tax 'pay as you earn' (PAYE), it is often difficult to understand the labyrinthine process of filling in a tax return.

Along with declaring 'income' the self-employed and business owners can declare 'allowances'. These include expenses, overheads, etc.

The real skill lies in declaring all those important 'business lunches', 'hospitality',

'company cars', and on and on. There are armies of tax accountants that specialise in making the maximum number of allowances, so reducing the customer's taxable income.

The tax office reported to the Australian parliament some truly astounding cases:

- Two plastic surgeons with a combined business income of \$1,866,000 ended with a net loss after deductions. Result — no tax.
- Seven pathologists with a total income of \$2,710,000 clocked up a loss of \$157,000 at the tax office. Result — no tax.
- Two diagnostic radiologists grossing \$497,000 together claimed negative incomes of \$502,000. Result — no tax.
- One thousand accountants and tax agents — 10 per cent — paid no tax despite earning on

average \$42,000 gross.

Comparison between those who pay tax and those who don't showed there was little or no difference in the amounts earned.

The 300 dentists not paying tax earned \$146,266 compared with the \$185,936 of those who paid tax.

But, video store owners — and some surgical specialists — who didn't pay tax earned more on average than those who did.

In the past three years, gross business income has increased by 31 per cent, but the taxable amount has only increased by 12 per cent.

Over the same period, the number of employers and self-employed paying tax rose by 8 per cent, while the numbers not paying tax increased by 34 per cent.

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