

LABOUR BETRAYS MINERS

THE Labour leadership's decision to renege on a promise to renationalise the coal industry marks a new depth in its treachery and must be fought throughout the Labour movement.

Martin O'Neill, the party's energy spokesperson, told a coal industry meeting this week that a future Labour government will not renationalise the industry. This move will overturn the party's policy decided at its last conference.

O'Neill also broke his own promise in March this year, when he told the Commons: 'The Labour Party is committed to the reintroduction of public ownership of the coal industry.'

'We believe that the coal industry can be safe only when it is in the people's hands and only when the miners are employed as public servants.'

This is not an issue just involving the coal industry. It is not just a matter for the members of the Labour Party.

It is of vital concern to the whole working class.

The Labour leadership is determined to ditch any commitment to Clause Four. This is the clause in the constitution that commits the party to the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

The Tories under Thatcher fought a ruthless battle to break up the National Union of Mine-workers to prepare the coal industry for privatisation.

They prepared the way for their friends in the City to make millions, and to destroy the conditions and rights that miners had fought for for decades.

Bitterly

Many miners were bitterly disappointed by the post-war nationalisation as carried out by the Labour government. It denied the workers control over their industry and created an industry providing cheap coal for the capitalist system.

But miners were and still are bitterly opposed to privatisation

BY THE EDITOR

of the industry. Privatisation has meant a worsening of conditions wherever it has been introduced.

It has meant a deterioration in safety standards, casualisation of the workforce, and greatly increased exploitation of labour.

Resign

The president of the NUM, Arthur Scargill, said this week: 'Martin O'Neill should carry out Labour Party policy, democratically decided by conference, which is to renationalise the coal industry.'

'If he can't do that he should resign. I deplore this departure from Labour Party policy and from the commitment given to the NUM.'

The Labour leaders must be told: coal and all the industries privatised by the Tories must be renationalised, without compensation, and under workers' control.

The biggest campaign must be launched inside and outside the Labour Party on this issue.

■ See editorial, page 2.

Will these claws replace Clause Four?

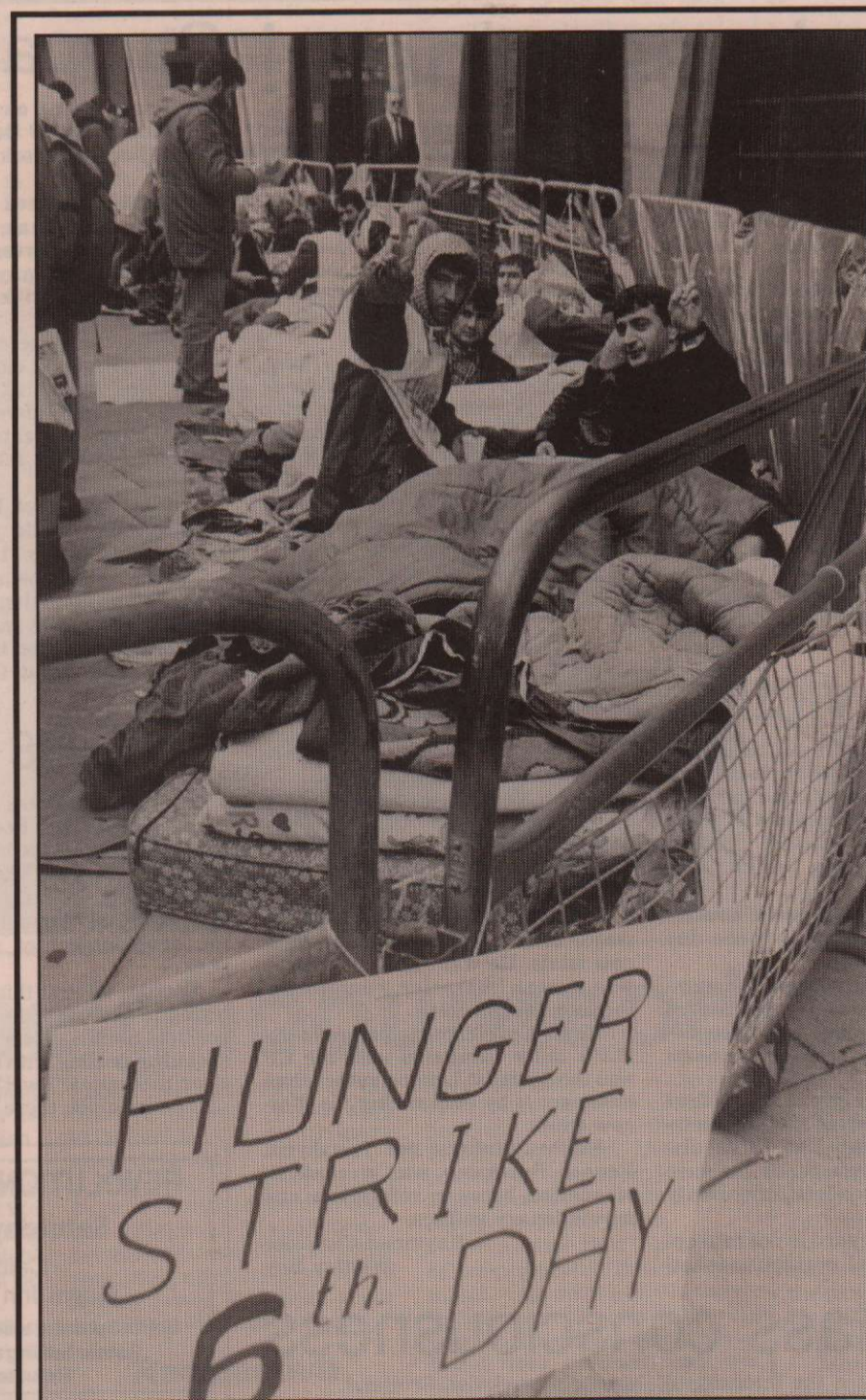
'FOR a mere £500 per head, you and your partner could rub shoulders with the Harpers at the Labour Party's gala dinner at London's Park Lane hotel this month. Peter Harper is chairman of Hanson Industrial.

'Thousands of US coal miners were on strike last year against another Hanson subsidiary, Peabody Holdings, accusing it of closing union mines and sacking miners so it could open new mines with non-union labour, and so destroy hard-won

conditions.

'Peabody is among the multinational vultures eyeing what's left of the British mining industry. . . .

(From Charlie Pottins's 'Inside Left' column, Workers Press, 7 May.)



Kurds hunger strike against deportation

KURDISH refugees have been on hunger strike outside the Home Office, London, against the deportation of Kani Yilmaz, a spokesperson for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Yilmaz spent ten years as a political prisoner in Turkey. He has been living as a refugee in Germany.

He came to Britain legally on 23 October, at the invitation of MPs. He was arrested three days later as he stepped out of Westminster tube on his way to address a meeting at the Houses of Parliament.

The Home Office said it had ordered an inquiry into how Yilmaz was allowed into Britain. Tory Home Secretary Michael Howard said he had directed that Yilmaz should be excluded.

Civil rights worker Conor Foley, of Liberty, who tried to record an interview with the Kurdish leader in Belmarsh prison last weekend, was removed from the prison and had his tape confiscated.

■ It was reported last week that the Home Office wants to deport scores of Bosnian asylum-seekers to Croatia, even though they have no ties there, were not welcome, and could be in danger. (See story, p.3.)

The Tory government, accomplice of 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia as in Kurdistan, refuses Bosnians the right to defend themselves at home, and refuses their right of refuge here.

Photo: Maggie Nicol



A EUROPEAN LOOKS AT AFRICAN MUSIC

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Proceeds to South Africa Solidarity Fund

Workers Revolutionary Party (Namibia) manifesto for next month's elections
'We demand work, land and peace'
See pages 4&5

South Africa £5,000 Fund

Please help our comrades in the Workers International (South Africa) and the Workers Revolutionary Party (Namibia). Send money to the Workers International, South Africa Appeal, PO Box, London SW8 1YB. Cheques, etc., payable to 'South Africa Appeal'

AT LEAST nine people have been charged under the Criminal Justice Act in the first few days since it came into force.

After receiving 'Royal Assent' on Thursday 3 November, there were a series of mass trespasses on the Friday in defiance of the act, including the rooftop protest at the House of Commons.

But it was at the weekend

Criminal acts of injustice

that criminal injustice was officially rolled into action. Five hunt saboteurs were charged with aggravated trespass, under section 68.

The five were trying to disrupt the Woodland Pytchley

Hunt near Stoke Albany, Northants. Police patrolling the area first spotted them at 10am last Saturday.

And on Monday four anti-roads protesters appeared in court in Manchester charged

under the act.

They were arrested within hours of the act receiving Royal Assent for climbing a 100-foot crane on an M65 site. They were also charged for aggravated trespass.

Clause Four discussion

AN IMPORTANT discussion is under way in Workers Press on the nature and future of the Labour Party and on Clause Four — the clause in the party's constitution committing it to the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

These are some interim remarks in what we hope will be an on-going discussion.

How should we decide our attitude towards Clause Four?

After 1945 the Labour government, with widespread support in the working class, carried through the nationalisation of a number of industries. Most of them, such as the railways and the coal mines, were financially bankrupt after years of little or no investment.

Their owners were lavishly compensated by the Labour government. But this was still a setback for the capitalist class, which clearly would have much preferred to have received large state handouts to revive its industries, without nationalisation.

Looking at things from the other point of view, we know that over the last ten years and more the Tories have privatised a number of industries — gas, water, electricity, etc. They were only prevented from adding the Post Office to the list because of the deep internal divisions in their ranks.

Workers Press

What has privatisation meant for the working class? Often it has meant the destruction of many traditional rights, a deterioration in safety standards at work, loss of entitlement to holiday pay and other benefits, and in general a sharp increase in the exploitation of the working class.

A similar deterioration has occurred where services have been put out to tender by local authorities.

In short, the privatisation programme has strengthened the ruling class in its struggle with the working class.

The reverse side of the coin is also true. The renationalisation, without compensation, of those industries privatised by the Tories would surely be a blow at the capitalist class. To achieve such renationalisation would without doubt raise the strength and fighting capacity of the working class.

We would obviously support such a demand in the working class. This is surely the essence of the matter when discussing our attitude to the fight against the removal of Clause Four from the Labour Party constitution.

Naturally those who call for the retention of Clause Four do so for a variety of motives. Some do so in the hope that this will keep the Labour Party on the road. Others will take part in such movements because they identify nationalisation with socialism.

But we cannot start from these motives. The question of Clause Four is one for the whole of the working class. **We must test out those who come forward in defence of Clause Four.** How far are they prepared to take the fight? Are they tied so completely to the Labour Party that they will back down when the right-wing leadership cracks the whip?

It is only when the working class, in particular its most conscious elements, learn through its own experiences the answers to these questions that the class will be able to break from the reformists. But for this to take place we ourselves must be to the fore in this movement.

That is why we say again: we must defend Clause Four and find ways of fighting alongside all those, inside and outside the Labour Party, who also stand for that defence.

An editor's conscience

LET'S not get too excited about 'Guardian' editor Peter Preston. In pursuit of the Tory sleazemongers he has shown himself tenacious enough.

No half-way competent trainee journalist,

fed juicy material daily by the vengeful Mohammed Al Fayed, could have done less. Preston has done the job he's paid, rather well, to do.

But this doughty liberal editor has a big blot on his own record, dating back 11 years. Here is how the 'Financial Times' (5 November) described it:

'If you want to touch a raw Preston nerve, ask him about the Sarah Tisdall affair of 1983. . . . It undermined his credentials as a liberal and as a protector of sources.'

'Official documents from an unknown source had arrived at The Guardian office giving the date of the arrival of cruise missiles at Greenham Common.'

'At the time, that was electric news. The ministry of defence and the police wanted the papers back in order to discover the source. Not knowing the source himself, Mr Preston capitulated. He walked down to the police station at Holborn Viaduct with the documents in his pocket, still wondering whether to tear them up.'

'The result was that Ms Tisdall, a junior officer at the Foreign Office, was exposed and sent to prison for six months. Mr Preston says now that he should have had the documents shredded immediately, while retaining the information. Had he known how tender the source was, he would have gone to the stake for her.'

Stake yesterday, stake tomorrow, but never stake today! This is the sort of thing that gives new meaning to the old expression 'rotten liberalism'.

WE WELCOME LETTERS

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Letters

Help west Donbass miners! Campaign for minimum wage

I WRITE to ask you for support for the Independent Miners Union of western Donbass in Ukraine. Their newspaper, 'Lava', which has been in growing financial difficulty due to hyperinflation, has now been fined about £334 for publishing an article on the misuse of resources by the coal company.

It is difficult to describe briefly the problems faced by our comrades in western Donbass. Their country is undergoing hyperinflation — last year the Karbovanets stood at 6,000 to £1, now it is 160,000 to £1.

Wages are falling far behind prices, but, worse still, workers are simply not being paid. This month (November) most miners are still waiting for August's wages.

Talks with the coal corporation and the government solved nothing.

Iron ore miners in Krivoy Rog were paid some back-wages last month after staging a one-week hunger strike.

The Independent Miners Union in Kazakhstan reports similar problems.

After a strike in June, hundreds of their members have been sacked or had wages cut and bonus systems cancelled. The union's funds — including donations from British trades unionists — were sequestered by the courts.

It is our internationalist duty to help these comrades.

Unlike some sections of the Independent Miners Union who are influenced by the right-wing American and German trade union bureaucracies, these comrades have sought links with rank-and-file trades union-

ists internationally. Their paper 'Lava', which is now endangered by the legal action, has consistently supported international campaigns, like Workers Aid for Bosnia, and carried articles by British miners.

At the end of November we have the chance to send money to our comrades with someone travelling to Pavlograd.

Please send donations, made payable to the ITUSC, to the following address: International Trade Union Solidarity Committee, PO Box 12, Barking, Essex IG11 7UJ. Tel/Fax: 081-689 0188.

If you need publicity material, contact us there.

Keith Scotcher
Secretary, ITUSC

■ See story on page 3.

THE issues raised on the minimum wage (Workers Press, 29 October) are pressing for millions of workers throughout the world.

The 35-hour week espoused by most British unions has increasingly disappeared under pressure to force down hourly rates of pay. Hourly rates of £3.25-£3.50 for skilled drivers are not uncommon.

Yet they are one of the few groups of workers with legal controls on maximum hours. The legal daily maximum of ten hours' driving is disregarded and broken regularly at these rates of pay so drivers can pay rent and feed and clothe their families.

A £175 pay packet, less stoppages, for a 50-hour week would produce take-home earnings of roughly £110. Yet some people get even less per hour.

At the forthcoming union conferences, and in the branches and committees which draw up motions for them, there must be motions setting out targets not just for

hourly rates but also for maximum weekly working hours.

The first May Day demonstration in London was organised by Karl Marx and the First International around the slogan 'For the legal eight-hour day'. That seems a good starting-point. More to the point would be a slogan, and a campaign in the unions, for £7 per hour for a 35-hour week.

Such a campaign would get a real response from many workers. It not only provides the possibility for a wage nearer what is necessary, but also reducing hours and excessive overtime would help create more jobs.

It could therefore begin uniting those fighting in unions for better pay and conditions and a healthier working life, with those unemployed millions who could begin to work because of the reduction in working hours.

I hope that others active in the unions will write in with their ideas.

Peter Gibson
Secretary, Croydon Trades Council

Stalinists potential victims of Stalinism

BARRY BUIOTEKANT ('Letters', 29 October), is correct that 'it does not take a great deal of imagination to realise what fate awaited ILP leaders and members if the CPGB took power'.

Many members of the Independent Labour Party's Spanish sister party, the POUM, fell victim to the purges. Stalinist agents were probably responsible for the death of Bob Smellie, a member of the ILP contingent in Spain.

George Orwell, deputy commander of the ILP contingent, wrote in 'Homage to Catalonia' of a group of socialists fleeing Spain. Staying would have meant death at the hands of the Stalinists' NKVD agents.

The Comintern report recently quoted by Peter Fryer went further. Stalinists themselves were potential victims.

In World War II the Communist Party, fearing illegality, took measures to protect itself. One involved my aunt, Marie Grimsditch. A party official, Jimmy Shields, brought round a membership list for safe-keeping.

Shields died and my aunt was left with the list. I looked at it one day when she was away.

What surprised me was the number of CP members suspected of Trotskyism — more than then belonged to all the Trotskyist groups combined.

Stalinists were prone to political paranoia, the fear of finding Trotskyists everywhere. The same disorder arises elsewhere, as the case of former WRP leader Gerry Healy shows.

The only safeguard is not misrepresenting political positions, debat-

ing honest differences, and not manufacturing imaginary ones.

When Moscow was condemning Fenner Brockway as 'definitely Trotskyist', Trotsky himself was writing an article entitled 'Fenner Brockway: Pritt No.2'.

What incensed him was Brockway's failure to condemn the Moscow trials. He was right. Brockway was a weak character, compromising and equivocating.

He thus preferred to preserve the ILP's unity campaign with the CP and the Socialist League rather than endanger it by denouncing the Moscow trials.

Neither Stalinist nor Trotskyist, Fenner Brockway was a centrist, wandering between reformism and revolutionary politics.

Raymond Challinor
Whitley Bay

Scottish working-class consciousness

JAMES YOUNG is not alone in his struggle to put the Scottish national question on the agenda for Marxist study and discussion.

It is good to remind readers that sections of the Scottish working class once had a highly advanced understanding of the nature of both capitalism and socialism. Every Marxist, Scottish or otherwise, can learn from this history. But what was true then is not true today.

There is no surviving unbroken tradition of distinctive Scottish radicalism and socialism. The defeat of the Bolshevik revolution had a devastating effect on the thinking and activity of the Scottish proletariat.

consciousness explains the intensity of the political and bureaucratic atomisation of the class struggle.

Stalinism has deep roots in the Scottish left. It reflects the interests of an intelligentsia that clings — however critically — to illusions in the progressive nature of the former USSR and the national liberation movements it supported worldwide.

Tom Nairn's idea that the break-up of Britain into three separate Scottish, Welsh and English republics will be the first stage of socialism in these isles is one variant of the Stalinist 'two-stage' theory of revolution.

Similar is the idea that a Scottish government can be forced to nationalise the means of production and

create a 'socialist' Scotland.

Neither is radical or socialist. Nationalism will flourish in Scotland while Marxists remain ignorant of the country's history, culture, and separate institutions.

Young is therefore right to recall the rigged 1979 referendum for a Scottish parliament. This denial of democracy entitled the left to describe Scotland as an oppressed nation.

The time is ripe for Marxists to raise the idea of socialism in opposition to collectivism, and develop proletarian democratic forms in opposition to demands for a Scottish parliament and national independence.

Paul B. Smith
Govan, Glasgow

Workers Press facing both ways?

ISN'T Workers Press trying to face both ways on the Clause Four issue? On the one hand you support the idea of a campaign to defend Clause Four (22 October), yet on the other hand you argue that the Labour Party is an increasingly unviable arena for the development of socialist consciousness.

Could it be that this is because you are trying to deal with the issue at the level of political tactics, when on the contrary you should be dealing with it at a methodological or theoretical level?

For example, there are really fundame-

ntal questions, such as: Do we accept that the Labour Party is a bourgeois workers party?

You seem to assume that the definition Lenin used in very specific circumstances can be generalised to include the conditions, or the relation of class forces (to use Trotsky's conception), in which the Labour Party exists today.

Doesn't this suggest that your efforts to engender a debate about the Labour Party need to be refocused?

Sue Ryder
London N16

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Abbot renews ARA crisis

Last week the Labour MP Diane Abbot, newly elected chair of the Anti-Racist Alliance, walked out on the movement after clashing with the former national secretary Marc Wadsworth.

Abbot was joined by three other national officers, including Ken Cameron, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, and 11 executive members.

Here **MIKE RAHMAN**, who is on the ARA executive and is also chair of the National Union of Refugee Organisations, comments on these developments:

DIANE ABBOT and the others who have resigned have allowed the problems of Wadsworth's manoeuvring — real though they are — to overshadow the main issue of building a mass movement against racism and fascism.

They are not interested in building and leading such a movement but are more concerned

in using the campaign to further their careers. They will inevitably join with Ken Livingstone, the Labour MP who was ousted from the chair at the recent annual general meeting (Workers Press, 22 October), and set up a new anti-racist body.

This will be an attempt to contain the mass action — to head off any kind of mass rebellion against the legal and physical attacks on black people.

Livingstone is an opportunist with no interest in the black working class which he uses to foster his position as a 'left' politician.

It is time for the ARA to move away from trying to capitulate on black and other perso-

nalities who are not the legitimate spokespeople for black workers.

The crisis of the ARA is, in part, the crisis of petty-bourgeois elements who are not interested in the working class. A clear distinction must be made between the struggles on the ground and the squabbles between so-called black leaders.

We must develop structures which involve and support the rank-and-file in an independent grass-roots movement. The role of the trade union movement is very important in this.

Transport and General Workers' Union general secretary Bill Morris must do more

than criticise the present leadership of the ARA. He should take an active role and openly identify with racist victims and their living conditions.

His union should take more active measures against those who are attacked — there should be strikes against racism.

The Anti-Nazi League have had some successes in mobilising large numbers of young people in protest marches. But the Socialist Workers Party who lead it do not allow others to participate in decision making.

Protest

The fundamental difference between the ARA and the ANL is that the SWP sees the league as a protest movement against fascism in which they hope to recruit a few members but with no real interest in building a movement which will fight racism. This is a cheap way of capitalising on the fatalities that bedevil the black population.

The real struggle is to educate the white working class on the causes of their own problems. They see black people getting jobs instead of them and think they are the enemy.

An anti-racist movement has the responsibility to educate both black and white workers on the causes of unemployment and other problems — laying them squarely at the door of capitalism.

Amnesty call against deportation deaths

TRADES UNIONISTS, immigrants from all countries, and the black community as a whole are being urged to attend a public meeting in London next week in protest at British state terrorism against immigrants.

At the meeting a call will be made to build a mass campaign around the demand of amnesty for all refugees and unregistered migrants.

Sixteen organisations, mainly from the black community, have come together to organise the meeting. It is backed by the families of Joseph Nnalue from Nigeria and Kwanele Siziba from Zimbabwe — who recently fell to their deaths in London as

they tried to escape the police and immigration authorities harassing and intimidating them in their homes.

Relatives of Omasase Lumumba and Joy Gardner have been invited to join the Siziba and Nnalue families.

A spokesperson for the 'Amnesty Campaign for Refugees and Unregistered Migrants', which initiated the call for a campaign, said: 'The systematic state terror inflicted on refugees and immigrants must end.'

'Omasase Lumumba died at the hands of prison officers in Pentonville. Joy Gardner was suffocated in front of her five-

year-old son. Kwanele Siziba and Joseph Nnalue were hounded by their deaths by the British state. Who is next?'

Speakers at the meeting will include Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn, Mike Rahman (chair of the National Union of Refugee Organisations), Theodora Matthews (sister of Kwanele Siziba), Julie Southey (African Refugees and Migrants Monitoring Project).

■ The meeting is in Brixton Recreation Centre, Station Avenue, Brixton, London SW2, on 17 November at 6.30pm.

For more information contact Julie Southey at 071 924 9033.

CSC pickets coroner

WORKERS taking their lunchbreak in London's Horseferry Road stopped to talk with Construction Safety Campaign (CSC) supporters and members picketing Westminster Coroners Court on 2 November.

Two cases were being heard. Kevan Heath, 34, a plumber, died after being electrocuted at the Carlton Tower, Chelsea. 21-year-old Shane Bergin, originally from Co. Offaly in Ireland, was killed when a skip on rails hit him on a Thames Water site in Putney, where he'd been working for Tunnelcraft. Among those at the court was Anne O'Connor, whose brother Larry was killed last year in east London working for the same company.

The day after the London cases, an inquest opened at Peterborough Magistrates Court into the death of 24-year-old Christopher Sellars, who fell through the roof at the new Royal Mail sorting depot there. CSC supporters picketed the court at the request of Christopher's father.

Every year on average 130 building workers are killed at their place of work. The CSC says the deaths and injuries will continue so long as negligent employers escape with derisory fines, and workers risk victimisation or the sack for refusing dangerous work.

Photo: Marg Nicol



Dangerous neighbourhood

'LAVA', the paper of the Independent Miners Union in the western Donbass region of Ukraine, has been fined about £330 for discrediting 'the name of western Don Basin Colliery in the person of its director M. Khalimendik' ('Letters', p.2).

The accusation arose from an article by I. Zaharuk, published in the 4 June edition and reprinted in an edited form below, which asserted that levels of radiation in miners' allotments and dachas are dangerously high.

After publication of the article the IMU called for the establishment of a commission to report on the radiation. The investigation specifically requested the presence of V.P. Zhizhin, a researcher of ecology in the area, who was unable to participate.

In his absence the inquiry seems to have been dominated by the management, who found that radiation levels were within health and safety regulations. The inquiry was used then to

financial reparations 'for moral damages' in a clear effort to cripple the union's publication.

'I'M GOING to tell you something, but don't print it — at the moment I can't prove anything — but something is not right around the miners' dachas on the outskirts of Ghernovka.

'I happened to be there when the land was being recultivated. As evening came, my head was getting hot. What about the people who are there every day?'

These were the words of a biologist I remembered six years later as I was passing Ghernovka in a car. His figures were stunning. What if he was right?

The miners' union of the western Don Basin decided to measure radiation levels in the allotments of some miners' associations, after complaints from miners about the deterioration of their health.

A well-known environmental journalist took part: he could not disprove any of the figures.

Volkov, vice-president of the miners' union, were also attached to the preliminary measurements.

The group first took readings from recultivated land around the village of Blagodatnoie. Levels were not notably different from normal. However, a freshly-raised slag heap registered 90 milliCurie per hour.

Radioactive

The group approached Pavlograd without optimism, but was pleased to discover that there was no measurable radioactive pollution on the allotments or the streets.

Western Don Basin is littered with smoky slag-heaps. Workers' summer-houses are built on some of the most dangerous of them. Radiation levels reached 215 mC per hour. The drivers who transport the slag, the miners and their families are all at risk.

Beside the slag-heaps are the dachas of the miners' club 'Izo-

heap pollution levels in the gardens ranged from 90 to 260 mC per hour. Further on they were 200mC per hour. Inside the houses we recorded levels of 170mC per hour. All this is on the outskirts of Ghernovka.

We assume that this is a result of radioactive dust from the mines. Our selective measurements demand a thorough investigation of the whole region. If our data are confirmed we need to act immediately to deactivate the radiation.

Specialists must define which areas can be used for gardening. Owners of polluted allotments must be given new gardens. We must establish who is responsible for this ecological catastrophe and force them to compensate for the liquidation of the consequences.

All we can do is wait for confirmation of our findings, and think about where our ecological negligence and social passivity might lead. If we complain about our health, perhaps we should also worry about the health of our children.

Bosnians to be deported as 'Croatian' citizens!

BOSNIANS who entered Britain on Croatian passports are under threat of deportation by the Home Office.

Hundreds of passports were issued by Croatia last year in its attempt to extend its influence over Bosnia. Many Bosnian people obtained the passports with a view to fleeing from the war and the memories of rape, torture and internment.

All that was needed to get a Croatian passport legally was a Roman Catholic baptism certificate. The black market price was about £600.

Now people who have lived in Bosnia all their life and whose families have no connection at all with Croatia are being told that they are Croatian by the British government.

'You have sought and obtained a Croatian passport, and therefore the protection of

the Republic of Croatia,' the Home Office informed one 20-year-old woman from Fojnica, in Bosnia.

At least 20 Bosnians are appealing against such decisions. From the beginning of this year 7,590 people from former Yugoslavia have sought asylum in Britain.

Only 370 of these applications have been processed and 25 have been turned down. OF FIVE have been awarded refugee status and the remainder have been given a year's leave to stay in Britain.

The position from the comfortable Home Office is that refugees 'would only have the right to remain in Britain if they could demonstrate that they had a well-founded fear of persecution'.

How do they know what 'well-founded fear' is?

Bus company faces ban

BY ROY THOMAS

FOLLOWING revelations in Workers Press of falling standards of bus maintenance after privatisation, the Department of Transport has turned its inspectors to London Transport companies just as they are about to be sold off.

The sale of South London Buses, based in the Brixton/Norwood/Croydon area, has been delayed after a hearing before the Southern Traffic Commission. A number of their buses were stopped and checked on the Crystal Palace bus stand some weeks ago.

As a result of the large number of oil leaks, dirty buses, and defective lights and signals, the company was summoned to explain itself before the Traffic Commission last week. They were told that if they did not improve maintenance on their 447 buses, their licence to operate services could be withdrawn in April 1995.

A senior London Transport source is quoted as saying 'the implications are devastating'. Indeed, the drive to reduce running costs in the run-up to privatisation has resulted in up to

50 per cent cuts in maintenance crews in London garages. One company axed all their engineering managers.

Yet seven of the 10 London bus companies have already been sold for £20-25 million each, and the buyers have said they expect to get 12-15 per cent profit each year.

If the Traffic Commissioner now crack down on poor maintenance, the new private companies, who have worse maintenance records than South London Buses, could lose a lot of money.

Problem

The problem for South London is who will now buy it. Managers had planned to, but as a result of the ruling may not be allowed to. But that could mean private bus companies with even worse maintenance records being allowed to buy it.

This position confirms the point made by Workers Press over the last year that privatisation can only lead to lower safety and maintenance standards. It is time the passengers, bus crews and engineers took over control and running of bus services from the new private profit-driven monopolies.

Bill Morris under pressure

BY MARY IDE

THE STRIKE last week by the 900 Transport and General Workers' Union office staff could well be the first of a series of one-day strikes over general secretary Bill Morris's refusal to give union workers the same wage increase he is telling TGWU members to get from their employers.

It is believed to be the first 100-per-cent strike of all TGWU staff in the history of the union, although sections and regional offices have walked out in the past.

But it's not Morris's only problem. He faces increasing resistance from TGWU members opposed to his plans to close Transport House, the union's historic home, and move the office to Palace Street. The union is already paying rent on the new offices, and stories of a £1 million refurbishment are circulating widely.

More worrying is the belief

that after a review of the work needed to bring Transport House up to date, it will be deemed too expensive and the building put up for sale.

There even seems to be dispute as to whether the release was signed before, after, the elected Executive was aware of it.

The TGWU's largest regional committee, London and South East, has discussed the possibility of a motion of no confidence in Morris. He is to appear before the regional committee as well to press, and members of the committee are determined to push the motion to a vote.

Morris is in some difficulty as he is standing for re-election in two years time, and must begin to build up support now if he can find it!

Campaign to Close Down Campsfield
Conference/Day-school on immigration controls
Sunday 13 November,
9.30am-4.15pm, East Oxford
Community Centre, Princess Street

WORKERS PRESS IS THE PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
Please send me information about the WRP

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Workers Revolutionary Party

State the obvious

MY Dad missed the 1926 General Strike. Having taken the King's shilling, he was out upholding the British raj with dustbin-lid riot shield and baton, against rioting Indian students. 'They were breaking shop windows, turning over motor cars and setting fire to them. Just what I'd wanted to do when I was out of work back in England,' he told me.

Discussing the 1919 Amritsar massacre, when General Dyer ordered troops to open fire on a mass meeting, my father said Dyer had contravened army rules, which laid down that when ordering a crowd to disperse, the commander must leave people a way of exit. At Amritsar the crowd was trapped, and whichever way they ran they could not escape the murderous fire. About 1,500 were killed or wounded.

Leaving aside 'Bloody Sunday' in 1972, when the Parachute Regiment shot dead 13 people in Derry, it is a long time since demonstrators were shot down in these islands. Yet two or three times in recent years I've been reminded of my old man's point about not surrounding crowds, but leaving people free to disperse. During the big anti-poll-tax demonstration in March 1990, for instance, when we found ourselves trapped in Whitehall, London, with mounted police coming from different directions.

Or after the demonstration against the Criminal Justice Bill on 10 October, also in London, when, to quote Richard Love in 'Socialist Organiser' (13 October):

'The crowd was by now completely surrounded by riot police, some pushing us into Oxford Street, others pushing us away from Oxford Street — mass arrests looked very likely. This was very frightening. The riot police were pushing us in different directions, with no escape.'

I'VE quoted other accounts of the CJB protest in this column on 22 October ('Whose control?'). On both this march and the anti-poll-tax march people who had come from afar, some with children, found themselves caught up in the fray, with tube stations closed to them, and on the Criminal Justice march they were prevented from going to their coaches.

The police's object, in short, is not to disperse crowds, nor to prevent or minimise violence, but to maximise clashes — and frighten people from exercising their elementary right to attend political demonstrations.

On the 29 October CND demonstration, having warned about 'anarchists', and mobilised 2,000 police to 'control' little more than 1,000 demonstrators, the police evidently felt compelled to do something. So they snatched people out of the crowd at the beginning 'on suspicion' that they might be intent on violence.

There are coppers who look forward to a fight, or rather, as they're better equipped, to bashing someone's head in. During the weeks before the big anti-fascist demonstration in Welling, south-east London, in October 1993, some were boasting about what they could do. Others, especially those not kitted out in riot gear, may wish they were somewhere else.

The point about police conduct in recent demonstrations however is not whether this or that copper is a fascist pig, or a decent fellow (I don't speculate on the relative proportions), but the way the police force is being used politically. If the other side has a strategy, the least we can do is observe and pay attention.

Charlie Pottins

THE Workers Revolutionary Party (Namibia) election campaign is based on the following:

The interests of capitalism and of the working class are irreconcilable. The capitalists' greed for profits causes them to keep wages low, reduce the work-force, increase the work-load and push up prices. Workers, on the other hand, are forced to fight against the capitalists for their very existence — for their daily bread.

In this its imperialist stage, capitalism fails to develop the material wealth of society. Despite its economic capacity to feed, clothe and house peoples of the world, capitalism dooms millions to death by starvation, wars and civil wars.

The overwhelming majority of people in the world live in squalor and poverty. Misery and suffering are the order of the day. This happens because a tiny handful of capitalists usurp the fruits of the labour of the rest of human society.

'The opposition is a farce, standing with SWAPO on the side of the capitalist exploiters. They are against the interests of the working class and all exploited people.'

It is this situation that we describe when we say: *under imperialism the productive forces stagnate.*

The Workers Revolutionary Party [Namibia] and the Workers International, of which it is a section, believe that it is only the working class that can save humanity from the barbarism of this decadent capitalism, and that it has the power to overthrow it.

In overthrowing capitalism the working class has nothing to lose, except its chains. In the process of the revolutionary struggle against capitalism, the working class has the task of leading all other oppressed classes — principally the poor peasants — behind it.

'Democracy'

THE people of Namibia, as in all parts of Africa, have endured long years of struggle for national independence. This struggle is not yet completed, because it cannot be completed as long as capitalism remains.

For real national independence, there must be real democracy, that

is, the self-rule of the people. The land must be taken out of the hands of the imperialist companies, and the rich settlers who are their collaborators, and returned to the people. This includes all the precious resources under the land.

Parties such as the South West Africa Peoples' Organisation (SWAPO) talked of socialism long ago. Now its serves to protect the interests of the capitalist multinational mining companies and other South African, American and European exploiters.

SWAPO's role was to pose as revolutionary socialist while actually making Namibia safe for capitalism. That is why it crushed the SWAPO Youth League in 1976, just as the African National Congress (ANC) dealt with its 'young mutineers' in the Quatro camp in Angola, and the Zimbabwe African National Union suppressed its youth fighters in 1974. They claimed they were rooting out spies. A lie!

In underdeveloped countries, only a workers' government has the interest and the capacity to resolve the outstanding tasks [to achieve socialism], in particular giving land to the poor peasantry. For such a government is not tied to the apron strings of imperialism, but serves its bitterest enemy.

Five years after independence

THE confirmation of the correctness of our general view is illustrated by the story of SWAPO and the so-called opposition during the five years since independence.

These five years were marked by sheer corruption, a rapidly deepening economic crisis, and a rapid evaporation of the expectations of the exploited masses.

The peasants have seen their hopes of more land turn into a fear of losing their remaining pieces of land to a shamelessly corrupt and greedy government and its officials.

In this way 40 prime farms went to government officials in the Mangetti Block. Pidico, a shady Egyptian company, was given prime communal lands in Caprivi.

The Augeigas peasants had a part-victory by winning land after their determined occupation of their own land, but they still did not get their land back.

The Rehoboth community is at present busy with a determined struggle against a few speculators — a species which evolved in the Odendaal scheme in 1964 — in

WE DEMAND WORK AND

The Workers Revolutionary Party (Namibia), section of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, is participating in the coming elections in Namibia on 6 and 7 December. When our comrades in Namibia declared their participation they said: 'Only working-class action can stop the barbarism in Angola, Rwanda, Bosnia and the whole of the world. *'We demand work, land and peace.'*

The WRP has an aim in rebuilding the Fourth International. Our party will be to rule and exploit.



In the 1989 elections the WRP (Namibia) campaigned against SWAPO's cahoots with SWAPO functionaries hell-bent on helping themselves to the few crumbs that the ruling classes have left them.

The wholesale waste of taxes through corruption has marked the rule of the SWAPO regime. Pensions disappeared through a virtually total lack of administrative security and standards.

Government cheques are stolen with tedious regularity and even junior officials have access to government cheques that have a minister's signature on them.

But there is worse. This government will not take responsibility for the collapse of its own administration. No amount of criticism will make it so much as wince.

Its motto seems to be: 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.'

Commissions and the taxpayer

AT TAXPAYERS' expense, the regime appointed commission after commission to investigate corruption in government, in the fishing industry, in education.

But the 'embarrassing' findings

of the O'Linn Commission were concealed. The Frank Commission's findings into government corruption were concealed.

The auditor general's report into government corruption was rejected. The list is endless.

CDM and the N\$5 billion embezzlement

THE role of the SWAPO regime as that of a hopeless puppet was revealed through its impotence in the face of the Thirion Commission's findings that Consolidated Diamond Mines and its affiliated company, Marine Diamonds, have cheated the people of Namibia out of N\$5 billion by evading tax through the illegal transfer of diamonds to South Africa.

Stanley Jackson, serving in his capacity as a member of the Diamond Board, incorrectly declared the quantity of diamonds mined. As a result of this gross violation, Namibia, with its poor population, and at that time in the throes of a prolonged drought and with an estimated unemployment rate of 40 per cent, was yet again robbed of an astronomical amount of money.



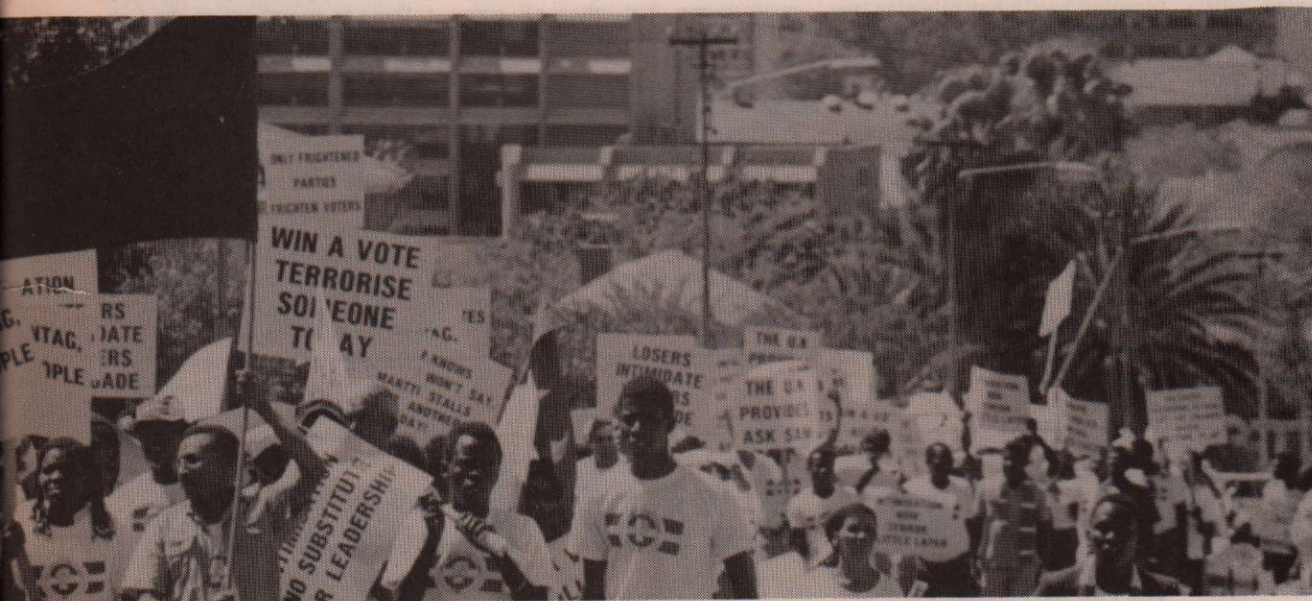
WRP (Namibia) banner on march in 1989 elections against the SWAPO camps

Party (Namibia) election manifesto

DEMAND WORK, LAND PEACE

Namibia) does not see these elections as itself, but as 'a tactical step in the process of the international working-class and the reconstruction of its world party, the Workers Revolutionary Party International'. On these pages, we publish the election manifesto of the WRP (Namibia) and an open letter protesting against the use of the armed forces in controlling the election.

resources. It is a thieves' kitchen where they sell the national resources to foreign financial interests. 'The formation of the Namibian Mineral Corporation is a case in point. This corporation was founded on the basis of privatising the national resources.' On these pages, we publish the election manifesto of the WRP (Namibia) and an open letter protesting against the use of the armed forces in controlling the election.



Equality against its own freedom fighters — now it warns against methods of repression during current elections

The opposition

THE farcical nature of the opposition parties was reflected in their support of the so-called Land Bill. Party after party bestowed great praise on the 'mother of all land bills'. The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance was as ecstatic as the rest.

The Land Bill was hailed as a great step forward towards reconciliation.

The WRP rejects this farce, which the so-called opposition cooks up with SWAPO to again try to fool the masses. In the first place, because of its class basis the SWAPO government cannot solve the land question. This can only be done by the working class itself.

The Land Bill will allow members of the government — based on their behaviour over the past five years — to use taxpayers' money to take and buy up areas of lands and give them to themselves.

The poor peasants will not see one piece of extra land unless they fight for it. The opposition is a farce, standing with SWAPO on the side of the capitalist exploiters. They are against the interests of the working class and all exploited people.

Election policies

ON THE basis of the above programme and principles of the WRP (section of the Workers Revolutionary Party International) we will fight the election campaign on the following policies:

■ **Defence against the privatisation of communal land.**

This land belongs to the community. Only the community should decide how it is used. Let the landless people farm on President Sam Nujoma's land.

Expropriate all absentee landlords without compensation and return the land to its proper owners: those who cultivate it. Expropriate all land illegally taken and land stolen from the poor peasantry and return it to its legal owners.

■ **Immediately expropriate N\$5 billion with interest from CDM and take the necessary steps to exact punishment and determine penalties.**

THE following minimum measures should be fought for by all working-class organisations and representatives:

■ **Health service:** Institute a national health service, with equality of treatment and service to all

Namibians. No means testing. All medical resources, hospitals, etc., to be pooled in this essential public service.

■ **Pensions:** Retirement pensions are a right not a privilege, and must be available to all. Immediate increase to N\$500 monthly, a minimum living income, with annual increases linked to the cost of living.

■ **Education:** Free education and equal opportunity for all, from primary to university level, regardless of class, status and income.

Put an end to the situation in which our children, apart from a rich minority, are victims of a constant shortage of teachers, of books, and of adequate school buildings.

Allocation of emergency public funds to education — taken from cuts in defence spending and by levies on the mining and fishing multinationals — to provide increased teachers' wages (a rise backdated, to account for inflation, to 1992) and a new programme of teacher training.

Remove the top-heavy bureaucracy. Pool all existing facilities

into a single public service.

■ **Missing people:** There can be no democratic elections without SWAPO giving account of the missing people in Angola and bringing them back to the country.

■ **Unemployment:**

1. We demand a programme of public works to begin solving the massive problems of housing, water supply, electrification and schools. The contracts for this work to be under workers' control, controlling all supplies, accounts, sales, tenders, etc. This is the only way to eliminate corruption.

2. Reduction of the working week to 35 hours, without reduction of pay.

■ **'Law and order':** The WRP rejects the 'law and order' hysteria that is being whipped up by the ruling and opposition parties. If there is an increase in theft then this is basically the result of unemployment and desperation. It is necessary to eliminate the cause of this increase in crime.

When the other parties call for a strengthening of the police force and introducing stronger punishments, the working class should beware! These stronger forces and their harsher laws will be used against the ordinary working people when they strike or peacefully protest against their conditions of life.

The SWAPO government, like the ANC government of national unity in South Africa, will use the police and army against striking workers. When did they ever use them against employers when they pay starvation wages?

■ **We refuse to be led from darkness into darkness. Open the reports of the various commissions. Now!**

The working class needs to know the scale of corruption and mismanagement of their taxes and natural resources. Workers need to know how many jobs are destroyed and taken from them through the unbridled corruption of the government and its officials.

■ **Open the books of all com-**

panies. The workers need to know how much is stolen from them by raising prices and keeping wages low. They need to know how much profit is being taken out of the country.

These problems are too important to be left in the hands of business people with their 'business secrets' and inefficient or corrupt officials, whose commissions and inquiries have produced nothing.

■ **Open the books!** Public inspection of all the accounts and all the evidence, under the control of elected workers' representatives, and of experts, statisticians, lawyers, and accountants sympathetic to the people's struggles and accountable to the people.

This same policy — open the books! — is necessary to protect the interests of consumers against high prices (inflation) and profiteering. And it is necessary for all the landless and small peasants on all questions of the land, its ownership and control.

THE WRP's programme is not a programme of promises about what our party will do. It is a programme to open the door for the working class itself to do what is necessary and take the people forward to complete the struggle for real independence.

This will be the centre of our work during the election and after the election; and will be the centre of our work inside parliament and outside parliament.

Vote for the WRP!
Your party.

THE question every voter has to ask is how can we trust the SWAPO government to solve any problem, or believe its election promises?

The WRP says no! You cannot believe a word. They are telling lies. Do not vote for them.

Vote for the WRP.

No to arming of election monitors

This open letter from the Workers Revolutionary Party (Namibia) is in response to a statement by the Namibian home affairs minister, Lukas Pohamba, to the Directorate of Elections that he may deploy soldiers to assist officials to monitor the elections. The director of elections sought the views of parties participating in the elections. The WRP's reply comments on the actions before national independence of SWAPO, now the ruling party, in torturing and killing young members of the organisation, in its camps in Angola and Zambia, who disagreed with the leadership

THE WRP of Namibia rejects with contempt the suggestion of Home Affairs Minister Pohamba, that the army may be used to assist election officials in the forthcoming election campaign.

This is a clear attempt to legitimise the army of Jesus Auala, 'The Butcher of Lubnango', as a so-called instrument of 'law and order' that can secure free and fair elections. It cannot! It is an instrument of repression!

With this treacherous and clever trick, the SWAPO regime wants to usher in the same torturers and killers who have liquidated freedom fighters in Angola and Zambia for the purposes of intimidating the Namibian people into voting for them. This is in line with the well-

worn dictum of dictators and tyrants around the world that 'those who intimidate best win the election'.

The WRP rejects this proposal from Pohamba and instead demands that the people still missing since the reign of terror of the 'Butcher' and the SWAPO leadership be brought back to Namibia to ensure democratic and free and fair elections.

We also demand that all election officials supervise these elections without any arms to discipline people.

The WRP will not wait a second to fight any attempt to usher in the SWAPO leadership's intentions to reintroduce terror and intimidation.

A heroine for our times

IF you want to know my definition of a heroine, it's a 15-year-old east London girl who defies the unwritten code, her fears, and threats of vengeance, by taking a stand against racist violence.

It wasn't easy for Kelly Turner when she found that a former boyfriend had been one of the gang of about 20 white youths who attacked 18-year-old Mukhta Ahmed, a Bengali student, in Bethnal Green last February.

They kicked his head from side to side like a football, until the scalp came away from his skull and his face was turned into an unrecognisable pulp. He was in a coma for two days.

Nicky Fuller, her 17-year-old ex-boyfriend, boasted to her: 'We did a Paki.' Later, he explained:

'There was loads of us. We all put in a couple of boots. I've got that Paki boy's blood on my trainers.'

'He had blood in that bit where the laces are', Kelly told a reporter. 'It was all congealed. He'd left it on his trainers. He was obviously proud of it being there.'

'He told me that they were planning to kill Mukhta, or cripple him. They only stopped kicking him when a woman living in the flats nearby came out and shouted at them.'

In the community where Kelly was born and brought up, you don't help the police on any account, whatever your private feelings.

But in this case Kelly saw things differently: 'I was really scared myself, but I thought, what if it happened to me and nobody came forward? My mum brought me up not to be racist. At the end of the day, I couldn't keep quiet about it.'

To bear witness needed something transcending ordinary courage. But she conquered her fears. In the event, since Nicky Fuller pleaded guilty, she didn't need to go to court.

She has had people following her; she has had menacing silent phone calls; and she has had death threats: 'I had a lot of nightmares in the weeks before the trial. I used to wake up crying because I was afraid.'

Kelly Turner epitomises all that is best in her generation. Her decision to do what she knew to be right is a shining example to those much older than her who have not yet succeeded in organising an effective resistance to racist violence on our streets.

Genius time

'EVERYBODY had fun at Chanel. We clapped a lot, and even wolf-whistled. We had a genius time.'

'The models wore loud little tweed suits in pink and baby blue; the skirts were unzipped up the front to expose glittering G-strings. ("Not too porno for you?") Lagerfeld had asked his older assistants at the studio.'

'The jewelry... appeared to be molded from candy. Marxist dialectic would dismiss all this as commodity fetishism, but the trouble with Karl Marx is that, through no fault of his own, he never saw Helena Christensen wearing a flame-colored, rhinestone-studded bikini thong.'

The trouble with the 'New Yorker', from whose trivia-studded special issue on 'The World of Fashion' I cull the 101 fairly typical words above, is that, through every fault of its own, it's starting to give the game away.

Marx has been dead and buried these past 111 years; Marxism, we are constantly being told on all sides, is now also as dead as a door-nail.

PERSONAL COLUMN

That's what the pundits tell us. But if this is really the case, then why do these oh-so-frothy, oh-so-smart, oh-so-knowing hacks keep on digging up the old man's bones and publicly and vulgarly gnawing them in journals designed for moneyed readers in the US and Britain?

Can it be that these boringly inappropriate references to 'Marxist dialectic' and 'commodity fetishism', by a fashion journalist who wouldn't recognise commodity fetishism if it bit him through his baggy trousers, indicate a deep secret doubt?

I think that they do. In an industry that caters for rich nonentities, within a society that is plainly falling apart, the more intelligent commentators can see the writing on the wall.

The same article makes this clear when it goes on to admit: 'The fashion world is more rabid and self-involved than any other, because, in the end, none of it matters.'

Fashion designers, it adds, know that what they are doing with their lives 'is at once thrilling and void'.

Void: that's the point exactly. To justify their empty-headed 'genius time', these chroniclers of emptiness invoke the name of a real genius: a thinker who analysed what was wrong with a society whose terminal sickness and decadence now ooze forth from every page of this 'New Yorker' special issue.

'Just booze', indeed!

IT'S several years since I wrote anything about wine here. The last time I did so I got a roasting from a reader who apparently saw nothing wrong in the devil having all the good tunes and the bourgeoisie all the good bottles.

That wasn't the view of Friedrich Engels, who loved good wine, quaffed rather more than his fair share of it, and regularly sent some to the Marx family at Christmas, both to cheer them up and for medicinal purposes.

I venture back on this thin ice because I'm popping my cork over a piece in the current 'Times Literary Supplement' alluding to 'the dangers of being excessively reverential about what is, after all, just booze'.

This was a dig at someone who had written that a certain French wine 'ought to be drunk while kneeling'. That's over the top, daft, and indefensible, for sure.

But to call wine 'just booze' is like calling music just horsehair scraping across catgut.

It's a calculated affront to those of us who drink the occasional glass of wine, not to get drunk, but to enjoy the smell and the taste — and the good company with which this beverage is associated.

We should, I think, respect — not revere, but respect — the fruits of highly skilled human labour, based on ancient traditions of craftsmanship and sometimes attaining the status of a minor art.

The same applies to good beer. One swelteringly hot day last summer, Brian Pearce and Cyril Smith introduced me to the cool, succulent glories of Theakstone's Old Peculier on draught.

Let no one dare to assert in my hearing that this splendid beer is 'just booze'. Those would be fighting words.

Peter Fryer

Television

Upstairs and downstairs

Review by Charlie Pottins

ON Thursday 7 November 1974, Sandra Rivett was battered to death in the basement at 46 Lower Belgrave Street, the London home where she worked as a nanny. Some time later her employer, Lady Veronica Lucan, also injured, staggered into the nearby Plumbers Arms crying for help.

It is generally assumed that the man who did it was Lord Lucan, that he had gone to the house intending to murder his wife, that he killed Sandra Rivett in the darkened basement by mistake, and that he fled the country. Whatever the truth, he has never been caught.

In 'Murder in Belgravia — the Lucan Affair', (BBC 1, 2 November), Ludovic Kennedy gave us some idea of what sort of man Lucan was — Old Etonian, racist, right-wing son of a Labour peer, professional gambler — at the same time sowing some doubts as to whether Lucan really had been the murderer.

Could a man really mistake another woman at close quarters for his wife, long enough to beat her to death? (Maybe not, but someone brutal enough might, having begun by mistake, carry on to finish off a witness.)

How come Veronica, having been attacked, didn't try to get away sooner? And hadn't she told a reporter since then that she might have been mistaken in identifying the attacker as her husband?

We were repeatedly told that the coroner had tried Lucan in his absence, although the obvious response is that the absence was Lucan's fault, and that of his friends, perhaps?

Some of the friends and relatives were interviewed, still talking about Lord Lucan's charm, and how much he loved the children, and still regretting his unsuitable choice of wife.

Apparently, Veronica was not interested in gambling, and would 'just sit there looking miserable' while her husband won or lost.

Most chillingly, Lady Lucan herself remarked in a trance-like voice that having borne children, she no longer had any



Lucan affair: was the 'lucky' lord a killer and his wife a victim?

useful function to fulfil, and might as well have been disposed of.

As for Sandra Rivett (remember her?), her role was treated like that of the fictional victim in the worst type of old English detective story, of no interest whatsoever except to provide a corpse for the story.

Ludovic Kennedy wondered why she had gone all the way downstairs to make a cup of tea, a boyfriend was mentioned, but nobody was brought in who knew her; and if any of the upper-class characters interviewed betrayed the slightest

sympathy for this unfortunate young woman, I must have missed that bit.

We were told she had been a good nanny, but when all was said and done, that's just a cheap servant.

The Lucan programme reminded us just how far Britain is from any promised 'classless society', and how much it remains an 'Upstairs, Downstairs' culture.

There had been another illustration of how little human lives count in this society earlier that evening on Channel 4's 9pm DESPATCHES programme.

A small child was killed by a lorry ploughing into the back of her mother's car, the lorry driver having fallen asleep at the wheel after long hours.

Drivers under pressure to make long runs and return journeys straight away are putting in 30 or more hours at a stretch, and faking tachographs to cover up.

One firm Wharfedale Traction was fined some thousands of pounds for 'permitting' this. The manager denies actually encouraging it. He is now running another haulage firm and cites the fact as evidence that he has done nothing wrong.

Six people were killed when a lorry's brakes failed on a hill at Sowerby Bridge in Yorkshire. The brake drums were worn right down to the rivets. The mechanic who had been responsible for maintaining the vehicle says he had told the management about its condition.

Killed

Two people a day are being killed on the roads in lorry accidents. Tight profit margins mean that cowboy firms are cutting corners and taking risks with maintenance and drivers' hours as a means to stay in business.

It's not just the firms, either. The government is making a 20 per cent cut in the vehicle inspectorate. Transport Minister Steven Norris says you can cut numbers and still get greater efficiency out of the system.

Lucan is not the only kind of gambler; nor, if he's guilty, the only member of the ruling class responsible for killing people.

But I'd been prepared for this reflection earlier in the day, talking to members of the Construction Safety Campaign (CSC) outside Horseferry Road Coroner's Court, at the inquest on yet another young lad crushed to death on a building site. Most passers-by willingly took and read leaflets, but some still showed numb-headed ignorance.

Perhaps one of our most vital, elementary tasks is to insist, as CSC is doing, on the value of our lives as working people.

Book review

'Out of the Old Earth'

RAYMOND CHALLINOR looks at a recently published autobiography by Harry Heslop, an important but neglected figure in the labour movement

A DURHAM miner, Harry Heslop (1898-1983), remained a working-class activist throughout most of his life. He participated in the Minority Movement, was a full-time Labour College student, and at the 1955 general election stood as the Labour candidate for North Devon.

Heslop also found time to write a clutch of novels, one of which sold half-a-million copies in the Soviet Union.

This is one of the finest autobiographies I have ever read. It bulges with fascinating information. You have vivid portraits of the miners' leaders of the time, including a youthful Aneurin Bevan, a fellow student at the Central Labour College.

Then there were Harry Heslop's journeys abroad. In 1930 he was the only British delegate to attend the International Conference of Proletarian Writers at Kharkov. He witnessed a show trial and watched the epic building of the Dneiper dam.

In Moscow he drank with the Nobel prize-winning Mikhail Sholokov. He insisted in being allowed to meet Yevgeny Zamyatin, who had just received the black spot from the Soviet authorities.

Under the watchful eye of his Russian minder, they chatted about World War I, when Zamyatin worked as a designer in the Tyneside shipyards on building icebreakers

for Russia. It was there he acquired the raw materials for his novel, 'The Islanders', revealing what peculiar people live in Geordieland.

Understandably, they did not mention his novel, 'We', which describes the horrors of living in a totalitarian state.

As Isaac Deutscher points out in one of his essays, it was reading this work which led George Orwell to develop his ideas on Big Brother and write his novel, 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'.

For a while, Harry Heslop was employed promoting trade and tourism between Britain and the Soviet Union.

A fellow worker in the same organisation, Dick Beech, objected when asked to arrange for goods manufactured by a firm employing blackleg labour to be sent to Russia. He was told they would help to strengthen the Soviet socialist economy; he contended they would help to weaken British trade unionism.

An angry Dick Beech resigned from his job. He went on to become one of the pioneers of British Trotskyism and president of the Chemical Workers' Union.

Moira Beech, Dick's wife, was a daughter of James Con-

nolly. Harry Heslop recounts how the doctor, tending the great Irish patriot and revolutionary, who had been badly wounded and captured in the 1916 Dublin Easter Uprising, told Connolly's family that he did not think the British would be so callous as to execute a man already in such a wrecked condition. The doctor, of course, was wrong.

In my opinion, the greatest thing in this great book is the way Harry Heslop describes his family and life in the Durham coalfield.

His mother suffered from a kind of repetitive strain injury then common among pitmen's wives — repeated child-bearing.

One day, when he was still a boy, Harry was asked by his mother what he thought about Mrs So-and-So.

Harry replied: 'Not much'. Whereupon he was told that this widow would probably become his next mother. Mrs Heslop was carrying twins and did not expect to survive the pregnancy. To keep the family together, her husband would need to acquire a fresh partner.

Mrs Heslop's predictions about herself proved tragically

true. Complications occurred during labour. In the isolated mining village there was not a single telephone.

Agonising time was lost in the night, first sending for a midwife and, when she could not do anything, for a doctor. He had to travel a long distance by horse-drawn transport — cars were almost unknown in those days — along bumpy, badly-kept roads. No wonder Mrs Heslop did not survive the ordeal.

While the editors are to be congratulated for bringing back from the dead an important but forgotten figure, it is a shame that their introduction is marred by elementary mistakes, such as reference to a general election of 1930 and the misspelling of names.

It is, moreover, a pity they omitted to publish the chapters relating to the last part of his life. It may be that Harry Heslop became demoralised when he joined the Labour Party, becoming constituency party secretary for Taunton CLP and parliamentary candidate for North Devon.

Even so, it would have been instructive to hear, in his own words, how it was that he took these steps to perdition.

'Out of the Old Earth', by Harold Heslop and edited by Andy Croft and Graeme Rigby (Bloodaxe Books, 1994), pp. 270 H/b £20 P/b £8.95.

The concentration camp of Sarajevo

While attending a conference called by the Tuzla Citizen's forum, in Tuzla itself, DOT GIBSON and FAIK DIZDAREVIC interviewed SEAD FETSHAGIĆ, a writer from Sarajevo and a member of Circle 99 and the Pen Club BiH

AFTER 1,000 days of detention in the concentration camp called Sarajevo I came out of this bewitched and proud town. I got out, almost crawling, through a tunnel 800 metres long beneath the airport runway, like a mole.

Then I climbed along the steep Mount Igman like a wild animal through a corridor protected by the surrounding mountains and valleys.

Every inhabitant of Sarajevo would like to leave their beloved town just to feel what it's like to live without fear that at any moment a shell might start falling.

Without being afraid of snipers who, in these days, are injuring and killing the innocent, mostly women and children, on the outskirts of the town.

Without being afraid that you will lose your arm, your leg or your head in an overcrowded tram being shot at from the surrounding hills.

Truly, not every day, but one should know which is that day; one should know what is that moment on that day when they will start shooting.

To leave the town, the bars of the cage, to go out and not feel that you are a potential target to be shot at for at least a few days — that is the dream of the inhabitants of Sarajevo.

What is most marvellous and most awful is that it becomes normal to live in an occupied city. As if there is no more hope left. Everybody accepts such a situation, and simply goes on living, working, fighting.

Desire

Maybe this is in spite of the situation, but maybe it is true that what dominates is the ordinary human desire to live. There are many very mentally disturbed people, but their number is still smaller than the number of wounded. It is interesting that the number of suicides is insignificant.

Frequently there is no gas, no electricity, and no water in Sarajevo. When I left — and I will return there in three days — the water supply was fairly good.

However the inhabitants only get four, six, ten, 12 hours of electricity over two, three,

four days. But one never knows when and for how long. As if it were according to some unwritten law, the citizens get power just during the periods when there is no water in their taps.

Hot water from a boiler — what is this? Laundry from a laundry, a washing machine — what is this? It is as if we live in the Middle Ages. As if we belong to a wild tribe, and as if we do not live in the heart of Europe.

The great majority of the citizens, and I dare say over 90 per cent of them, do not receive any wages.

Only traders and smugglers get money. The others live on humanitarian aid provided by various organisations and individuals, by relatives and friends living outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bills for water, electricity and gas (so far) have not been received. The tram is free of charge.

There are only bills for the phone, and they are not high as Sarajevo is under a communications blockade. Only local calls are made, and these only when the phones are operative, since

the lines are frequently silent.

However the citizens cannot pay even those bills, being without any resources. But the truth is that this non-payment is tolerated.

Money is necessary to provide food — the humanitarian aid through the United Nations High Commission for Refugees has been miserable lately.

One person, to last 15 days, gets: 1-2kg flour, 400g beans, 450g tinned meat, 200g sugar, and, in general, that's all. Sometimes we get some salt, soap or some detergent.

The question arises: how do we feed ourselves? That is a question I would not know how to answer. Mostly, as I said, from outside help.

Worst

The worst situation is faced by the retired, old and weak, as well as the children. Nevertheless, the children's voices can be heard everywhere. They run about, play, laugh.

These are the children of which, according to the statistics, 60 per cent have been witnesses to their playmates being wounded or killed.

Sarajevo is a town — as are many others in Bosnia and Herzegovina — in which earlier nobody would ask you what religion or nationality you belonged

to. In general that was not known.

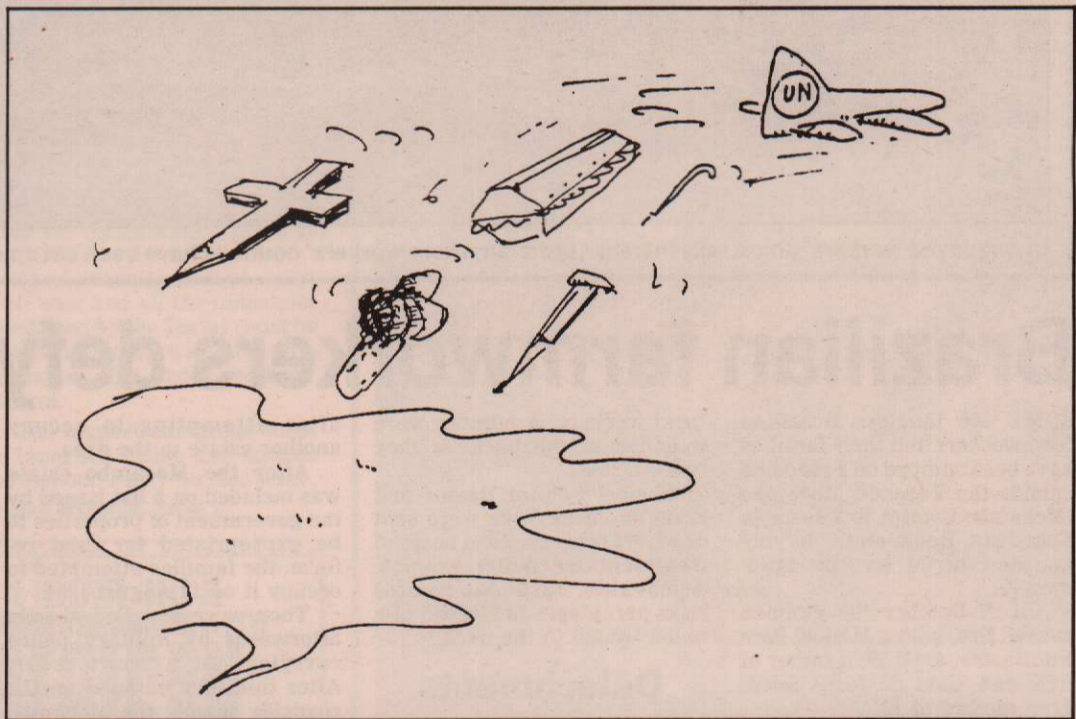
Maybe only the Muslims could be identified by their names, but even that would not be sure-proof, because often they do not have traditional Muslim names either. Here you really can find all of them — Muslims, Serbs, Croats, Jews and many other nationalities living together.

In this town there were 30 per cent of mixed marriages, and during this time in which the national oligarchies make war, still 15 per cent of such marriages take place.

Although the nationalist euphoria is very strong here too, encouraged by the international community led by France, Germany, Britain, Russia and the US, this spirit of togetherness has not been changed significantly, especially among the city's (the 'civic') inhabitants — and now there are many refugees and displaced people from the villages — among the intellectuals.

Consequently, if there is something I would like to ask the working people in Britain and the world, it is for them to help in every possible way the civic, democratically oriented inhabitants of Sarajevo, much more than the official authorities.

They should help us for their own sake.



'Humanitarna Pomoc': The UN drops humanitarian aid, including Christian and Muslim gravestones. Solana salt works research director Suad Buljugic and his brother Niad are both cartoonists. Workers Aid were presented with a signed copy of their book of war cartoons.

Iranian writers' union formed

THE FOLLOWING are excerpts from a letter, sent to the major newspapers in Iran and not as yet published by the British press, by a group of Iranian writers in protest at the Islamic regime's repression. It is the first time in the last 15 years that such a letter has been issued:

WE ARE writers. What has happened in the contemporary history of our society and others has altered the picture that the government and sections of society, and even some writers, have painted of writers.

Therefore the identification of the writer and the essence of his/her work, together with his/her collective presence, has been the subject of inappropriate treatment.

We Iranian writers therefore consider it our duty to remove any doubt and illusion about the essence of our cultural work and the reason behind our collective presence.

We are writers: this means we write and publish our feel-

ings, imagination, and the result of our research.

It is our natural and civil right that our writings, whether they be poems, stories, plays, film scripts, research, criticism or translations of other writers, should reach our readers freely and unhindered.

No individual and no establishment has the authority to obstruct publication of such works, on any basis, although after publication the right to judge and criticise freely is open to all.

When opposition to obstacles is beyond our individual capacity, we are forced to face them in a collective professional manner. This means, to achieve freedom of thought and expression, publication and struggle against censorship, we must act collectively.

This is why we believe our collective presence, with the aim of establishing an Iranian Writers Union, is a guarantee for our individual independence. Writers should be free to

express their views, create, criticise and analyse other people's works.

The co-operation and co-ordination of a writer in matters of common interest should not mean that he/she is responsible for his/her personal matters, as the individual responsibility, or political or social responsibility of every individual, lies only with that person.

Connections

In spite of this, some recognise the writer not as a writer *per se*, but on some assumption of possible connections with a group or a party, and judge him/her accordingly.

Therefore the presence of a collective body of writers, within a trade/cultural union, will act itself as a category within political tendencies or parties.

The state and its organs, and the groups related to them, generally judge the work of a writer according to immediate political necessity.

With the help of self-made interpretations they relate the collective presence of the writers to specific political tendencies who are . . . conspiring against them from inside and outside Iran. They even use false interpretations as a means of insulting, threatening and belittling the writers.

Therefore we stress that our main aim is to eliminate obstacles in the way of freedom of expression, thought and publication, and any other interpretation of the responsibility of their advocates.

The responsibility for any article is with the person who freely wrote and signed it. Therefore the responsibility for all articles published in Iran or abroad, in our defence or against us, lies with those who signed them.

We repeat we are writers, see ourselves as writers, and consider our collective presence as the presence of a trade union of writers.

Signed by 134 Iranian writers

Salt town welcomes Workers Aid convoy

This is the second of a series of reports from Workers Aid for Bosnia's October convoy that has recently returned from Tuzla, in north-east Bosnia

TUZLA gets its name from the days of the Turkish empire. It means simply 'salt'. For hundreds of years brine has been extracted from the area. In the middle of Tuzla a bridge crosses the river Jala and at each end of the bridge two statues hold up lights made in the shape of salt crystals.

The statues are cracked; the lights — like all street lights and traffic lights — have been dark since the war began.

Not far from the bridge, dotted amongst the houses and allotments are the wells where the brine is still extracted. Parts of the town suffer badly from subsidence due to the continual underground extraction.

Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy members were invited to visit the Solana salt processing factory when they were last in Tuzla.

We were welcomed by the Tuzla trade union district committee president Fikreta Sijercic, the president of the salt workers' union, members of the factory workers' committee — mainly women — and by Suad Buljugic, director of research at the works.

Fikreta thanked Workers Aid for once more helping to break the isolation of Tuzla. She spoke of the importance of this support coming from the working people of countries like Britain, where the government was actively involved in trying to divide Bosnia.

Fight

The salt workers' union president thanked us for our fight for internationalism. He explained about the problems of the workers — no one was getting any pay and said the trades unions must fight against the ideas of ethnic division promoted by the Chetniks — the extreme nationalist Serbs.

The director of research spoke of the history of Tuzla and salt mining.

Since the war started there had been enormous problems: shortage of raw materials needed for processing.

Now much of the factory was idle due to a shortage of vital equipment.

There had been much ingenuity in starting to make new products and in overcoming problems. He appealed to Workers Aid to try and get the

needed equipment. He told that all the big humanitarian aid organisations had been asked but none had brought what was needed.

The equipment was not difficult to get — it could be bought second-hand from any salt-producing area.

Workers Aid representatives promised to do all they could help but explained that in the West the workers and trades unions stood in a very different relation to production with control over production equipment. We explained that their union visited one of the factories they would not be visited in and given dinner — we were.

We also told the meeting that in our opinion there was a very good reason why none of the humanitarian organisations brought the equipment.

Divided

Tuzla would not be allowed by the UN to restart production until it had accepted the division of Bosnia and the people would be divided. Tuzla — and Bosnia — would not be allowed to be independent of the aid that was delivered and used to blacken people.

The research director replied that he agreed and added that Tuzla could only really come a centre of production again if the main route out of area — the 'Northern Route' through Orasje — was opened up.

At present everything is going and going to central Bosnia to follow the route our convoys take along forest tracks, farm paths and over mountains. This is the only way in, except for the UN who can pass through Chetnik front lines.

After the meeting we were shown round the old salt works which has been kept as a museum. In the photographic display, recording the history of Tuzla, was a picture of workers in the 1920s. Taken with the workers in their blue clothes, you can see men and women who are Muslim, Croats and Serbs.

As a man in the union of — a Serb — told me, Tuzla workers' town. We are workers first and second — all the rest is irrelevant. He was the Grandmaster of former Yugoslavia.

WORKERS AID FOR BOSNIA

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR 1994

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Bryant St. E15

Release Indonesian unionists!

WITH President Clinton, China's Jiang Zemin and 16 other world leaders about to meet for trade talks in Indonesia, the country's leading trade unionist has been jailed for fighting for workers' rights.

Muchtar Pakpahan, founder of the Indonesian Prosperous Labour union, SBSI, has been sentenced to three years by a court in Medan, for 'incitement' of workers to strike to improve their starvation wages.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

The union's three branch officers in Mef01dan have also been convicted, as have 11 workers arrested after a strike in nearby Pematang Siantar. Several other trades unionists and a union lawyer are facing charges.

The government decided to clamp down on SBSI, Indonesia's largest independent union, after a wave of strikes for better conditions and minimum wages, culminating in a general strike and mass demonstrations in Medan in April, when workers clashed with riot police.

During Muchtar Pakpahan's trial, President Suharto claimed the charges against him were nothing to do with trade union rights, but were 'purely criminal'. But Pakpahan was not in Medan when the

April strike broke out, and had earlier advised postponing action till October. As for violence against Chinese-owned businesses, trades unionists have blamed this on police agents provocateurs, which the government has tacitly admitted to be true by bringing no charges.

During the trial, Medan branch treasurer Hayati said the union had been forced to back action because workers could no longer contain their anger over starvation wages and victimisations. She was sentenced to seven months imprisonment.

Muchtar Pakpahan said the government's regional minimum wage was based on basic physical needs. 'This means treating workers like animals who have no spiritual or social

needs, such as housing and the like. This is why the SBSI has called for an increase to a level based on decent living needs.'

Pakpahan asked why he and other trades unionists were dragged before the courts while employers who broke the law were protected for a fee. 'There has long been collusion between

companies and those in power, civil and military, in this region,' he charged.

The top-level trade talks between 18 governments in the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum, including Indonesia, China, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Malaysia and the US, are due to be held in Bogor,

Indonesia, this week. If the talks go as planned, they will show that workers' rights have no place in this capitalist world order.

Messages demanding freedom for Indonesian trades unionists should be sent to: President Suharto, Istana Negara, Jalan Veteran, Jakarta. Fax: +62-21 36-1471.

Messages of solidarity to SBSI: SBSI, Jl Kayu Ramin 32, Utan Kayu Ota, Jakarta Timur 13120. Fax: 62-21 489 84 65.

THIS WEEKEND: Saturday 12 November, 12noon-1pm, picket the Indonesian embassy, 38 Grosvenor Square, London W1. Anniversary of Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor.

Frisco press strike goes electronic

STRIKING newspaper workers in San Francisco have taken to the electronic battlefield, putting an on-line newspaper of their own out on the computer internet, as well as bulletins listing scab advertisers to be boycotted.

The 2,600 workers at the 'San Francisco Chronicle' and the 'Examiner' came out after 18 months of fruitless negotiations to replace contracts which expired on 1 November 1993. The owners fired the first shot, by trying to sack 900 young paper carriers, who deliver to people's homes. The paper carriers responded with marches and rallies in downtown San Francisco.

The lay-offs were halted by court order. But the owners — the giant Hearst press — revealed their hand next with a proposal to freeze wages, and get rid of 150 drivers, members of the 'Teamsters' union, who deliver bundles of papers to the neighbourhoods, where they are picked up by the paper carriers.

The strike has demonstrated that traditions of workers' solidarity remain strong in this West Coast city. A picket on Pier 27 at the docks on 31 October persuaded dockers to refuse to unload newsprint for the papers. Even after a court order the dockers would not cross picket

lines, and the San Francisco Central Labor Council urged other unions to keep picketing.

The employers have engaged an expensive, notoriously anti-union, law firm, King & Ballou, to guide on tactics, and have fortified their plants with barbed-wire-topped chain-link fencing. In scenes reminiscent of the News International dispute in Wapping, riot police escorted scabs, some fetched from as far as Oklahoma, through crowds of angry pickets.

But while the management has only managed a couple of editions, and a sports newspaper, members of the eight unions at the two newspapers have worked together to produce a 12-page 'Free Press', with news, cartoons, articles, and advertisements. This is sent out on the computer internet and in hard-copy form, reaching a 100,000 print run.

They have also fired a warning shot at firms which advertise in the scab issues by circulating a blacklist of scab advertisers through nationwide and internationally-accessed computer networks. Trades unionists say they intend to defend the Bay Area as a union stronghold, and that they're at war. The class struggle has come on line!



Unemployed workers' union rally in Iraqi Kurdistan where workers' councils have been set up opposing Saddam Hussein

Brazilian farmworkers defy gunmen

SOME 500 landless Brazilian farmworkers and their families have been camped on a roadside outside the Fazenda Mocambo (Mocambo Estate), in Vitoria da Conquista, Bahia state, defying gunmen hired by the landowners.

On 29 October the gunmen opened fire, killing Manoel Bonfim Bastos, aged 39, a father of five, and Zilda de Jesus Silva, 51, a mother of 12.

Six other people were seriously wounded. Leaders of the group had previously received death threats and the families had been shot at on other occasions. There are suspicions that police were among the gunmen.

A group of the farmworking families had entered the Mocambo estate on 29 October to clear rough vegetation next to the roadside, which gunmen had used as cover to fire at them in the encampment.

Once on the property, when they tried to discuss the situation with the landowner, the families were surrounded by a group of gunmen who started to beat them and fire shots at them.

A number of women and children were injured. The families reacted with farm implements, injuring some of the gunmen. One of the gunmen — wearing a hood to cover his face — reportedly claimed to be a civil policeman, another wore a bullet-proof jacket.

It is further alleged that some of the gunmen wore surgical gloves. (These are regularly issued to police personnel as a protection against HIV infection when in contact with blood from wounds of members of the public.)

According to reports, the gunmen proceeded to fire at the

rural workers. A number were wounded in the back as they tried to flee.

Manoel Bonfim Bastos and Zilda de Jesus Silva were shot dead. Six others needed hospital treatment for bullet wounds. Ariosvaldo Jose dos Santos risks paraplegia as a result of a bullet wound in the neck.

Detachments

A military police detachment has been sent to the estate and some military police have been stationed at the hospital. No news has been reported, however, of an investigation into those responsible for the killing and wounding of rural workers on the estate.

The group of families wanted to be settled on land in the Vitoria da Conquista area through government land reforms. They had previously been expelled

after attempting to occupy another estate in the area.

After the Mocambo estate was included on a list issued by the government of properties to be expropriated for land reform, the families attempted to occupy it on 12 August 1994.

They were expelled shortly afterwards by military police carrying out a court order. After this they camped on the roadside outside the Mocambo estate, waiting for it to be expropriated by the government and receiving food and water from local government and non-governmental agencies.

Landless rural workers and squatter peasants have frequently been the target of threats, assaults, abductions and killings in the struggle over land in Brazil.

Of 173 cases of rural murders involving hired gunmen being investigated by the attorney

general's office in Brazil in 1993, 80 proved to have direct participation of military and civil police personnel.

Two Brazilian socialists, Rosa Hernandez and Jose Luis Sandeman, were murdered at their home in Sao Paulo in June.

Rosa had been organising poor farmworkers in the area, and Jose was vice-president of the university workers' union. Both were members of the United Workers Socialist Party (PSTU), and of the International Workers League (IIT).

Trades unionists and socialists in the area are campaigning to have the killers brought to justice. The issue has been taken up internationally by the International Workers League, and by the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, the Workers Revolutionary Party and Militant Labour.

Messages

Workers Press urges readers to direct messages, demanding the hired killers and their patrons be brought to justice; and demanding guarantees for the safety of all trades unionists and working people fighting for their rights, such as the Bahia farmworkers, to Brazil's Minister of Justice: Exmo Sr Ministro de Justicia [Salutation: Dear Minister], Dr Alexandre Dupeyrat, Ministerio de Justicia, Espalanda dos Ministerios, 70.064-900 Brasilia DF, Brazil. Faxes: +55 61 322 3905. Telegrams: Exmo. Ministro Dupeyrat, Ministerio de Justicia, Brasilia, Brazil.

And to His Excellency Rubens Antonio Barbosa, Embassy of Brazil, 32 Green Street, Mayfair, London W1Y 4AT. Fax: 071 493 5105.

Army threat to Rio slums

CONCERN is growing in Rio de Janeiro at the Brazilian government's plan to let troops storm the poor favelas (shanty towns), which house a third of the city's population.

The military campaign is supposed to be aimed against drug traffickers and other criminals. The army is taking over police work because, according to its intelligence reports, 70 per cent of Rio's police and 20 per cent of its military police are corrupt.

Police officers have been linked with drug trafficking, hired death squads, extortion rackets, and running 80 car breakers' yards where stolen vehicles are dismantled.

General Roberto Senna, in charge of the military crack-

down, has moved his family into army quarters for safety, and told soldiers who live in the favelas not to wear army haircuts or uniform, which might make them targets for reprisals.

But local people say that ordinary favela residents, most of them decent working people, could get killed in crossfire if the army storms the shanty towns. Thirteen people, including three children, were killed in a police raid on the Nova Brasilia favela recently.

Civil rights organisations say if the army wants to deal with crime it should stop arms and drugs from reaching Rio. Many weapons found in the possession of gangs in the favelas have come from military arsenals.

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