



As Tories plunge into civil war... PREPARE FOR FIGHT AHEAD

THE civil war raging in the Tory Party involves grave dangers for the working class.

■ The Tories are trying desperately to re-organise their shattered forces.

■ The Labour leaders are giving them every help to do this. John Redwood has made clear what sections of the ruling class have in store.

He demands lower taxes and further cuts in state benefits, along with tough law-and-order policies.

Such measures would plunge millions more people into the direst poverty and provoke massive social struggles.

This is why Redwood bangs the law-and-order drum. He knows that the forces of the state will have to beat down the inevitable resistance that will explode in the working class.

But what about the Labour leaders?

Blair makes a routine call in the Commons for a general election. But he has no intention of rousing the working class to force such an election.

With the slightest lead from the trade union and Labour leaders the working class could have kicked the government out long ago.

Blair wants to head a Labour or coalition government. Like all his fellow Labour leaders he is attracted by the smell of the gravy train.

But there is something more important than the desire of these people to get their snouts in the trough.

Like the Tories, Blair fears the working class will jump the gun. Millions of workers might take things into their own hands and bring the government down.

The ruling class and Labour leaders know that the miners brought the Heath government down in 1974. If a similar movement in the working class forced the Tories out there would be a far more explosive situation than if Major left office simply as a result of a government crisis.

This is what the Labour traitors are up to:

■ The very day Major resigned, Labour education spokesman David Blunkett announced Labour's new education policies. They mean a vicious attack on

BY THE EDITOR

parents and teachers.

■ Labour vies with the Tories, including Redwood, to present itself as the 'party of order'. Blair outbids the Tories in his determination to strengthen the police and the forces of repression.

■ Labour now accepts privatisation of the NHS — naturally in the name of 'freedom' and 'choice'.

Reaction

Blair and company more and more adopt policies which are no different from those around which the forces of reaction.

Time is not on the side of the working class!

There can be no reliance on a Labour government to solve the pressing problems that millions now face.

Those who advise the working class: 'Wait for a Labour government' are liars and deceivers.

The issues facing the working class are quite different.

■ How can all those who stand for the development of an independent line for the working class in this crisis unite their forces?

■ How can all those who support a socialist programme as the only answer to the catastrophe that we face, join hands in one organisation and movement?

Workers Press will be issuing its Programme for the Crisis. We look forward to the widest discussion of it in the labour movement.

■ Behind Tory civil war — see page 2.

Tuzla Trade Union Convoy news



Durham Miners Gala, an annual celebration of workers' solidarity: this year there's a Workers Aid for Bosnia contingent

Workers Aid/Durham Miners Gala: an invitation

EVERYONE all who supports the struggle against ethnic division in Bosnia-Herzegovina is invited to participate in the Durham Miners' Gala with the Derwent Valley (Consett) contingent.

Workers Aid for Bosnia asks supporters and all trade union branches that are organising for the convoy to come to Durham with their banners. The Derwent Valley contingent will be led by a colliery band and by local fire-fighters campaigning against the closure of three stations.

The Bosnian solidarity contingent will be headed by ex-detainees of the Chetnik concentration camps in Bosnia. Last year the presence of Bosnian refugees on the march made a big impact.

Even though the deep mines of the North East are now closed, the gala brings together thousands of working people who want to show their pride in their class and their determination that the Tories will not destroy their movement. It is the Tories who are also working to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Assemble at 9am outside the Old County Hospital at the top of North Road. If you are travelling to Newcastle on the Friday night and need accommodation contact Dave Parker at Wallsend People's Centre, tel: 0191-263 5029.

Pre-Convoy Weekend of Activities

15-16 July, Manchester

Saturday, 2pm: Workers Aid for Bosnia meeting (all welcome) to make final convoy plans and map out the future work for August and September.

Saturday evening: Convoy send-off social. Bosnian food.

Sunday, 10am: Discussion. What is the war in ex-Yugoslavia about?

Sunday, 2pm: Meeting for all supporters of Workers Aid for Bosnia who are going on the convoy.

Saturday night accommodation in Manchester will be available. Contact Workers Aid on 0161-707 1584.

Durham Miners Gala Saturday 8 July 1995

9am-11am: Miners banners and bands march through Durham
11.30am-1pm: Speakers address crowd at Durham Racecourse
3pm: Cathedral service

Dickensian laws return to England

LOCAL jails are fast becoming debtors' prisons, according to Home Office figures.

Last year 1,500 people were jailed for council tax debt — a 750 per cent increase on 1990. A recent survey of some 150 poll tax debtors now in jail showed that two-thirds were on state benefits or had no income at all. A third were either physically or mentally disabled.

Only two of the 150 were legally represented.

Unlike banks or building societies local authorities can still imprison people for non-payment of debt. In Scotland that right was abolished in 1987.

Workers Press

Behind Tory civil war

The crisis that is breaking up the Tory party is not simply a crisis in that party. It is not the product of MPs seeking to save their seats and parliamentary sinecures. Nor is it the result of a 'clash of personalities' or a 'breakdown of relations' within the cabinet.

It involves a crisis in the whole ruling class and one that has implications for the form of capitalist rule in this country.

Throughout most of this century the Tory party has provided governments for the ruling class. In periods of exceptional crisis, such as 1929-31 or after World War II in 1945, the Labour leaders, either alone or with the Liberals as junior partners, have formed governments that have served the interests of big business and the banks.

The depth of the crisis in the Tory Party reflects the depth of the crisis in the ruling class. Large swathes of the middle class have lost all confidence in the Tory Party. Many — in banking, junior management, those running small businesses — have lost their jobs. Many are suffering the nightmare of negative equity in their property — they owe more to the banks than their houses are worth.

Like the working class, many middle class people have seen their social and medical services relentlessly cut. Many middle class people are forced to pay for their childrens' education at university; many old people are forced to sell their homes in order to pay for care.

BUT it is not simply the middle class that has lost confidence in the Major government. Big interests in the City and industry have also withdrawn their support from the government.

Funding of the Tory Party by big business is at an all-time low. Impor-

tant sections of the capitalist class — people such as multi-millionaire supermarket boss David Sainsbury — are now urging closer relations with Tony Blair and the Labour leaders.

BLAIR and shadow chancellor Gordon Brown have spent months wining and dining in the City to reassure big business chiefs that they have nothing to fear from a Labour government. And indeed they have not. Labour will be tougher on inflation, tougher on public spending, pledge Blair and Brown.

But the ruling class know that more than tough words will be required of the Labour leaders. They, and Blair, know that big struggles under a Labour government are inevitable, the outcome of which is by no means certain.

Why are important sections of big business looking upon Labour with increasing favour? Because the ruling class knows that, for all the Tory rhetoric, the working class in Britain has not been decisively defeated. Spending on social security is still largely out of control. The measures the Tories have so far felt strong enough to take go nowhere near to tackling the chronic deficit in state finances.

The truth is that the capitalist class must administer far more savage blows against the working class and the middle class if they are to address the problem. John Redwood has said

as much: he wants the attack on the Welfare State intensified, taxes cut and services further slashed.

Big business and the City increasingly doubt the ability of the government that has lost all political and moral authority to tackle these pressing problems.

This crisis is a reflection of a deepening world crisis. Throughout Europe, the ruling class faces similar problems: the need to slash working-class living standards. For example, as we report elsewhere (see City Lights, page 5), throughout north America and western Europe capitalism is now unable to sustain state pensions at anything like their current levels.

EVERYWHERE the question is the same: how to wrest back from the working class the gains they have extracted from the employers and the state for the last half century or so?

In Britain the crisis is especially acute given the chronic decline of the British economy. For the last half century or so it has continued to lose ground to its rivals in Europe, the Far East and Japan.

Much of British industry has disappeared, and the City — on which British capitalism has increasingly depended — comes under increasing pressure from New York, Tokyo and Frankfurt. British capital is in no condition to sustain the sort of concessions that in the past it was forced to give.

The ruling class enters this fight against the working class seriously divided. In the Balkans, the European powers are deeply split as each fights for its military and political interests in the region.

On the trade front Japan and the United States square up to each other and threaten to plunge the world into a bitter struggle for markets.

It is these international divisions that are reflected in the Tory party, ones creating conditions of near civil war in its ranks.

WHOEVER wins the present leadership battle cannot possibly unite the warring factions in the Tory party. Its divisions over Europe cannot possibly be healed. The very future of the City depends on London retaining a large degree of autonomy for its financial operations. To sink its lot with Europe — in reality to accept the domination of Germany — would undermine much of that autonomy.

Yet to break away from Europe, as a section of the Tory Party all but proposes, would be to sever Britain's link with her most important trading partners.

They're damned if they do, they're damned if they don't.

In any event, the working class faces an intensifying social and political crisis whoever wins the Tory leadership battle.

The most important thing is to prepare now for the big class struggles that still lie ahead. It becomes ever more urgent that all those who want to see the independent interests of the working class asserted in this crisis, who stand for a socialist solution to the catastrophe that threatens millions, find ways of means of coming together, of uniting in a common movement and organisation.

Letters

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The importance of 1 July 1985

AN important event occurred in the history of the WRP on 1 July.

Ten years ago on this day a letter from Aileen Jennings was distributed to the WRP's political committee which, like the whole party, was under Gerry Healy's control.

The letter explained details of Healy's sexual abuse of women comrades which Jennings, Healy's secretary, said she could no longer cover up. Jennings had to go into hiding as the letter was being distributed.

The letter set in motion a chain of events which led to Healy's expulsion from the party he had led for several decades.

Political evaluation can come later, with the anniversary of Healy's actual expulsion.

I would like to mark this date by saluting:

First, Aileen Jennings;

Second, the small group of comrades involved in the preparation of this action;

Third, all those in the party who responded to the issues raised in the letter and took part in the struggle to oust Healy; and

Fourth, the miners and women in the coalfields who engaged in the powerful strike of 1984-85 which created the class divisions for our party to deal

Dangers for mentally ill patients

AS A past mental patient, I cannot at all agree with Ken Singer's remarks (17 June) about the direction of discharged mental patients.

When the Secretary of State for Health, Virginia Bottomley, embarked on her 'care in the community' programme, many long-stay patients were discharged with two weeks' medication, no help with finding relations, lodgings, money or benefits and with no family doctor.

As a result, many have been quite disoriented, failed to register for treatment, gone berserk and killed themselves or other people, put in prison for petty crimes, or just died of neglect, in a street or in a casualty ward, unknown.

In the face of these disasters, the pendulum has to swing the other way: patients are to be given instructions as to where to find lodgings, a day centre, a training centre and, one would hope, an understanding GP.

All this is quite laughable unless the government intends to spend millions on funding schemes for housing, day centres and workshops for the mentally ill, who must not be confused with the mentally disabled, although a few may be either.

We are fortunate in my area in having a weekly 'drop-in' club, run by the Mental Health Asso-

are introduced, not directed, and provided with transport where needed. Good food and drinks (non-alcoholic) are available cheap. Games and pastimes are catered for and outings are subsidised. We can also get information and advice.

Otherwise people come and go as they please. However, if people miss several meetings, the leader will check up to see if they are in any trouble. They may go back into hospital for a few weeks if their medication needs adjustment.

As for psychiatric hospitals, Ken is a little out of date. Modern hospitals I have experienced, in two countries, are not regimented: nobody wears uniform and nobody is pressed into therapy sessions.

Some young patients went out on work projects, though their chances of regular jobs were poor. The place was rather bleak, with dull wards and spartan furniture, and the food was unexciting, most patients were taciturn.

Lack of funds was only too evident in the shortage of materials and equipment and the shortage of therapists to provide occupation through the day.

My chief recollection of both places is of long periods of boredom, during which most patients smoked. Only medication was never neglected!

A manic-depressive
Walton on Thames

Misleading headline

protesting against the death of Brian Douglas after a beating from the police (Workers Press, 17 June).

'Protest won't stop deaths' is misleading if from it a reader were to draw the conclusion that we stand aside from such protest movements, simply proffering advice from the sidelines.

It is of course true that many groups on the left simply move from one campaign to another, taking up new issues as rapidly and light-mindedly as they drop others.

But it is our job to oppose these middle-class and unprincipled politics while fighting alongside those who are drawn genuinely into such campaigns out of a real hatred for the police.

Peter Jeffries
London W3

Striking statistic

IN SPITE of eight sets of anti-trade-union laws since 1979, and the massive increase in unemployment, the job insecurity that exists in both privately- and publicly-owned organisations, the number of strikes taking place is growing.

The government-appointed certification officer has reported that applications for strike ballots has risen from 380 to 1,469 in a single year.

This shows the Tory government, the bosses and the judges have been unable to stop workers striking against worsening conditions.

HOLIDAY FLAT: EAST SUFFOLK

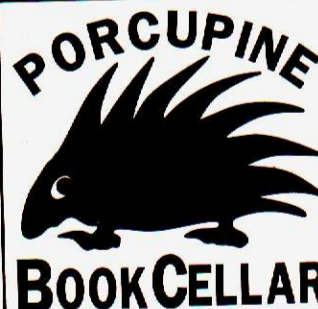
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OILWORKERS/MINERS VOTE FOR MERGER

BY DOT GIBSON

ENERGY workers are likely to join in one trade union in a proposed merger of the National Union of Mineworkers and the oilworkers union, the OILC, after a ballot of both memberships.

The Offshore Industry Liaison Committee came into existence following the Piper Alpha rig disaster in 1988 when 167 workers died.

The purpose of the OILC was to co-ordinate the fight for proper safety conditions in the North Sea and to assist the bereaved families. Whilst their members were involved in what they considered to be humanitarian activities, the unions had a suspicious but patronising attitude towards the OILC.

Meanwhile the shock of Piper Alpha was short-lived as far as the oil giants were concerned. Conditions on the rigs are hazardous and the employers did not willingly introduce all the necessary and costly safety equipment and personnel.

The OILC responded in 1989

and 1990 by organising occupations of the rigs. Many of their organisers were blacklisted for this action and have never worked on North Sea installations since.

They consistently fought in the unions for a democratic, militant and response to the oil companies' failure to take proper safety measures and to hold down wages by means of the 'hook-up' agreement. The engineers' AEEU organiser James Airlie is the main advocate of this iniquitous system and it is he who turned aggressively against the OILC, using witch-hunting methods against it and its officers.

'Hook-up'

The 'hook-up' agreement is a system whereby a union agreement ensures that the workforce is policed during the initial construction phase. But, as soon as oil flows, the AEEU and the GMB general union are derecognised. Derecognition on live platforms is a condition laid down by the 'hook-up' agreement that the AEEU accepted! The OILC has always campaigned for a continuous union agreement covering all

work in connection with the rigs.

Some hold the view that the OILC should have formed a trade union from the outset or at least at the time of the rigs occupation. However many of the most active members had been in their unions from the days of their apprenticeships and thought that they would finally be able to convince these unions to support their fight in the North Sea.

But, having tried everything to move their unions and failed, in 1992, the OILC members decided to launch their organisation as a trade union. The TUC refuses to recognise it. The oil companies refuse to recognise it. The employers and the 'official' unions joined together in a 'no-holds barred' effort to break the new union.

Compare this with the welcome given to the electricians' EETPU when by means of a merger with the engineers' AEU it rejoined the TUC. This is the union which scabbed on the printworkers' year-long Wapping dispute in 1986-87 and continues (now as the AEEU) to go over the heads of other unions to set up company-union 'organisations' with 'sweetheart' agreements on

building sites and factories throughout the country.

In the face of all the problems, the OILC has held a steady but difficult course, organising legal representation for their members, fighting and winning many cases of wrongful dismissal, holding their annual conferences and producing a monthly paper 'Blowout' which consistently fights for a united workers' struggle on the rigs and exposes the underhand activities of both the employers and some representatives of the 'official' unions.

In the case of the OILC-NUM proposed merger, the response is immediate and direct — the outraged AEEU will take the matter up with the TUC, and the NUM is accused of using Tory laws against the Bridlington Agreement.

Airlie commented: 'Arthur [Scargill] has probably lost his mind. On reflection he and the OILC probably deserve each other.'

Shameful

In a shameful attack on OILC members, who did so much, for so long, to fight within their original unions, they are equated with the scab Union of Democratic Miners which broke away from the NUM and whose members worked throughout the year-long miners' strike in 1984-85!

OILC general secretary, Ronnie McDonald's response was just as immediate and direct: 'They don't want us to exist,' he said. 'They can huff and puff to eternity as far as I'm concerned, but the only opinions that matter are those of grassroot members. For them it will be a simple yes-no vote.'

From the outset it was quite natural for the men and women who came together to form the OILC to seek inter-union collaboration in the North Sea. They are already in talks with the Norwegian offshore workers' union, the OFS.

It is also quite natural that oilworkers and coal miners should be in the same organisation.

A merger of the OILC and the NUM for an energy workers' union would surely be a step in the right direction.

TGWU news

Blair's candidate rejected by T&G membership

BY PETER GIBSON

IN SPITE of the efforts of Labour's HQ in Walworth Road, whose press department and full-time staff toured the country organising meetings in his support, Jack Dromey lost the election for general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union against Bill Morris. The vote was 158,909 to 100,056 on a 33 per cent turnout.

Speaking at a victory celebration on the night of the declaration at the TUC's HQ, Congress House, Morris responded to Dromey's statement that his 100,000 votes could not be ignored by saying that the vote 159,000 must have even greater authority and spoke even clearer.

Dromey's second defeat — he was well beaten when he stood against Jack Adams for the deputy general secretary position — is a clear statement by T&G members that they reject the policy of Labour leader Tony Blair and the rest of the Labour Party leadership.

In spite of the criticism of Morris by many members, he received more votes in this election than he did four years ago when he was first elected. This was a chance to vote against Blair's policies and attempts to break Labour's links with the trade unions.

All of which makes you wonder why Blair and Gordon Brown bothered putting themselves forward after the last election for the T&G parliamentary list of sponsored MPs.

The T&G general secretary election was also a chance for members to express a view on the Labour Party's refusal to support the union's demand for repeal of all anti-trade-union laws and on the need for a minimum wage that people can live on.

But this is not the end of the struggle in the T&G. The union's conference is in Blackpool in July and the executive elections are in October. Almost 30 per cent of the executive will not be standing again. All Workers Press T&G readers must play an active part in these coming struggles against the Labour leaders.

Good progress on July's Tuzla Trade Union convoy

AS THE departure date for the July Tuzla convoy approaches, a growing number of people around the country are working to collect aid and money. In the trade unions new contacts are being made every day.

One of the members of Workers Aid for Bosnia who is from Tuzla is spending a few days in Scotland talking to oilworkers and local trade unionists in Dundee and Fife. Then he is off to Ireland to speak to groups who are now beginning to build for the convoy.

At the Communications Workers Union conference, north-west members who are preparing lorries for the convoy collected £2,000. Workers Aid members went to the AEEU conference and collected £480.

Bolton trades council is one of the latest trades councils to begin support work. After a visit by local members of Workers Aid, including a group of Bosnians, the trades council organised a supermarket collection and raised £700 and £1,000 worth of food.

Other trades councils and the Greater London Association of Trades Councils are continuing their fund-raising efforts.

The Association of University Teachers conference raised £1,600 for aid to be sent to Tuzla university. Manchester Student Aid also raised £1,000 for help

for Tuzla students. Leeds Student Aid recently collected £800 and their members travelled to Cambridge and helped the student group there collect £450 on the streets.

In Morecombe Workers Aid members collected £800 at a supermarket and filled a lorry with food. Trade unionists and refugees in Newcastle collected £1,000 at a supermarket and completed the filling of their lorry. Exeter Workers Aid collected £1,300 in the city-centre.

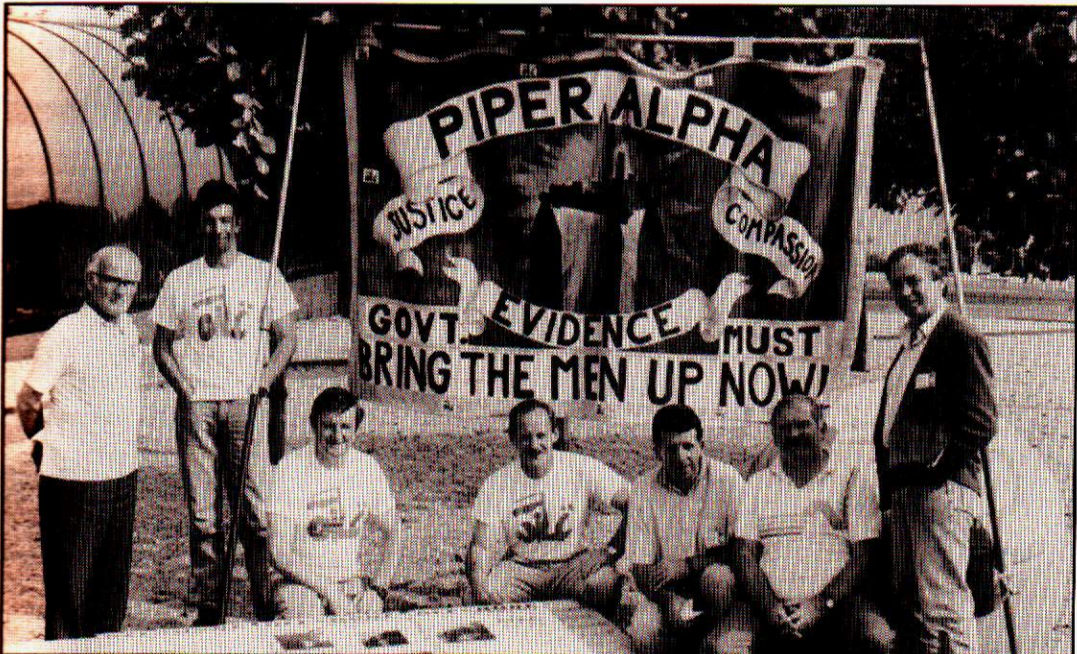
Two Workers Aid members from Scotland went on the road and raised over £1,000 in pubs. Pub collections in Glasgow have raised hundreds of pounds.

Donations

Many donations continue to come in from Labour Party and trade union branches. As more and more local trade union initiatives get off the ground there is a frantic search for lorries.

One group of trade unionists in the North East have managed to persuade their local brewery to lend an attic but so far they are the only lucky ones, (these union members have also begun servicing the existing Workers Aid lorries for free).

Elsewhere, the problems with insurance are proving the stumbling block for borrowing vehicles. Some of the local groups will probably have to club together to buy their own lorries.



The OILC was formed in the aftermath of the Piper Alpha disaster that killed 167 oilworkers

Tuzla, UNISON and internationalism

BY STUART CARTER
Salford Mental Health
UNISON branch secretary

department intervened!

First of all they said that the message was still too long and should simply be a message of greetings to UNISON from Tuzla. They also said that the part of the message that calls on workers 'to take sides — the side of an undivided people against those who wish to herd people into "concentration camps"' could not be read out, because UNISON had to remain neutral in order to have dialogue with all sides.

Then the chair of UNISON's international committee, John McFadden, came along to say that Fikreta Sijercic's letter was not signed and could have come from anybody. Louise Richards said they would read out a fax from Tuzla itself. I had to explain that it was not easy to send faxes from a war zone where the electricity is only on for a few hours each day!

McFadden was overheard telling Richards that he wasn't happy with a message being read out and he didn't know whether Bosnia should be considered to be a state at all!

Both McFadden and Richards made it clear that if the convoy was organised by Workers Aid for Bosnia, UNISON would not support it.

I told them that the trade union convoy was being supported by Workers Aid but that the organisation was in the hands of the Tuzla District Trade Union

tact the GMB, whose national conference had agreed to support the convoy, or fax the Tuzla district committee themselves.

By the following day, Wednesday, they had contacted the GMB, who confirmed their support for the convoy, but had not been able to reach Tuzla by fax. They agreed that a shorter version of the message accepted by the standing orders committee could be read out.

The message had still not been read to the conference by Thursday morning, and more pressure and lobbying of standing orders was required before it was.

Discovered

I also discovered that a fax from Tuzla had arrived on Wednesday. I obtained a copy and took it to Louise Richards. She did not want to discuss it, saying: 'It's not on headed notepaper, it could have come from anywhere.'

Besides food and fuel, the people of Tuzla are appealing for other necessities which are in short supply, such as washing powder, sanitary towels and pens. It now seems that they must also obtain headed paper before they will get the support of UNISON's international department!

fighting through layers of bureaucracy to get something done. Several members of the standing orders committee and UNISON staff were very helpful.

The problem is that influential people, like McFadden and Richards, are politically opposed to the defence of Bosnia against Serb-Chetnik attempts to impose ethnic division there. It is worthwhile drawing their attention to the following part of the fax from Fikreta Sijercic, which Richards would not discuss:

'Some would like to ignore the victims of this bloody war of aggression — the dead men, women and children, the raped women, the homeless and the crippled — and tell us that all sides are the same: they seek to equate the aggressors and their victims.'

'Our town and country are multi-cultural. It cannot be divided into ethnic ghettos. This would mean separating families — husband and wife, parents and children, grandfathers and grandmothers from their sons, daughters and grandchildren.'

'Greater Serbian nationalism, with its fascist methods and aims to take over the whole region, is not and can never be the heritage of the partisans who fought against fascism in the Second World War.'

A refusal to take sides

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British section of the Workers International (to Rebuild the Fourth International)

Please send me information about the WRP

Name Date

Address

Trade union (if any) Age (under 25)

Inside left

Musso, Maxton and the SWP

DEMONSTRATING against Italian neo-fascist Gianfranco Fini's visit in February, I was sorry to see no placards remembering Fascist Italy's invasion of Ethiopia (Abyssinia), in October 1935. Poison gas was dropped from the air, hundreds of villages burned, educated Ethiopians systematically wiped out, to bring 'Western civilisation' to Africa's last independent kingdom.

In June 1935, Labour's Clement Attlee said Mussolini's threats to Ethiopia were putting the League of Nations (the UN's forerunner) to test. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden insisted Mussolini was innocent until proven guilty.

Labour urged League of Nations sanctions. Stafford Cripps, then a leading left-winger, quit the national executive. Convinced that 'the League being run by France and England for purely imperialist purposes', Cripps said that if people didn't face this, we shall be led under the banner of the League to another imperialist war.

In fact, French Foreign Minister Pierre Laval had promised Mussolini free hand in Ethiopia. In June 1935 Eden urged Ethiopia to surrender territory to the Italians. In September, while reinforcing the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean, the British government secretly assured Mussolini that he needn't worry about the future. Italian troopships went through Suez, fuelled on Russian oil.

Rather than trust the imperialist League of Nations, Leon Trotsky's followers urged workers' sanctions, to halt fuel and munitions to Italy. A motion was adopted by the Independent Labour Party, but reversed by its leaders Jimmy Maxton and John McGovern. Disgusted, Trotsky wrote to a British supporter:

'Maxton and the others opine that the Italo-Ethiopian war is a "conflict between two rival dictators". To these politicians it appears that this fact believes the proletariat of the duty of making a choice...'

If Mussolini triumphs, it means the reinforcement of fascism, the strengthening of imperialism and the encouragement of the colonial peoples in Africa and elsewhere. The victory of the Negus [Haile Selassie], however, would mean a mighty blow not only at Italian imperialism but at imperialism as a whole and would be a powerful impulsion to the rebellious forces of the oppressed people. One must be completely blind not to see this.

McGovern puts the "poor little Abyssinia" of 1935 on the same level with the "poor little Belgium" of 1914; in both cases it means support of war. Well, "poor little Belgium" has 10,000,000 slaves in Africa, whereas the Abyssinian people is fighting in order not to be the slave of Italy. Belgium was and still remains a link of the European imperialist chain. Abyssinia is only a victim of imperialist appetites. Putting the two cases on the same plane is sheerest nonsense.

McGovern's conclusion that it should have been the ILP's task "to stand aside from quarrels between dictators" is an exemplary model of the spiritual and moral impotence of imperialism.

Unable to conceive of a workers' international policy, reformists dithered between social-patriotism and pacifism. They proved impotent in the face of fascism and war. Maxton thanked Neville Chamberlain for the Munich agreement.

Bosnia hasn't got a Negus but an elected government, and a workers' movement asking for our support. The Socialist Workers Party says internationalism means under a con-

Interview

Ivorians: victims of

With their drums and slogans, members of the Ivorian Relief Action Group (IRAG) were prominent on the 27 May African Liberation Day march in London.

Workers Press spoke to Gérard and Jean-Claude of IRAG. Gérard has been in this country for two years and Jean-Claude for three years. They are still waiting for decisions on their applications for political asylum.

Workers Press: What is the role of IRAG and your own background?

Gérard and Jean-Claude: IRAG is the community organisation in Britain for Ivorians. At present there are over 4,000 students and workers from the Ivory Coast seeking asylum in Britain whose lives are in danger if forced to return.

There are also Ivorians, mostly students, in other European countries. Many who fled the repression are in Germany, Belgium and Denmark. The most politically active students and trade unionists are now out of the country.

In Britain there is little knowledge of the Ivory Coast — our duty is to provide information on this. European governments pretend that the Ivory Coast is a democratic country with no dangers for political dissidents. We demonstrate this is not true. We are also looking to build a community centre to assist Ivorians in the many problems that affect immigrants.

IRAG was formed in 1994 and there are now over 20 branches covering every borough in London and we also have branches in Oxford and Portsmouth.

We both left the Ivory Coast as our lives and liberty were in danger because of our political opinions. Gérard was a student leader in the FESCI (Federation of Ivory Coast students), which organised university students and secondary school students. Most members of IRAG are students, teachers, or journalists and many are active trade unionists.

Gérard was arrested and jailed several times in the capital city, Abidjan, for his leadership of the student movement. Jean-Claude is a journalist and is wanted by the government for criticising the prime minister in a student newspaper.

Every time Gérard was arrested he was beaten up and tortured — sometimes with electric shocks. Most

IRAG members have suffered similarly.

What is the background to the situation?

Between 1958 and 1960 all the states of French West Africa won independence. A federation was proposed but Félix Houphouët-Boigny, nationalist leader in the Ivory Coast, opposed this on the basis of the relative prosperity of the country and his privileged neocolonial relations with France.

'We are not saying "goodbye" to France, but "see you later",' he declared when announcing independence.

As a major producer of cocoa, coffee, rubber and diamonds, the Ivory Coast was able to attract investors and, under Boigny's authoritarian rule, it offered extremely cheap labour. Nearly all the executive and technical jobs were filled by the French, thus absorbing a large share of the national income.

There was a period of economic growth but when the West went into recession after 1979, agricultural exports fell from \$4 billion to barely \$1 billion between 1980 and 1983 and half the industries set up between 1966 and 1976 closed down.

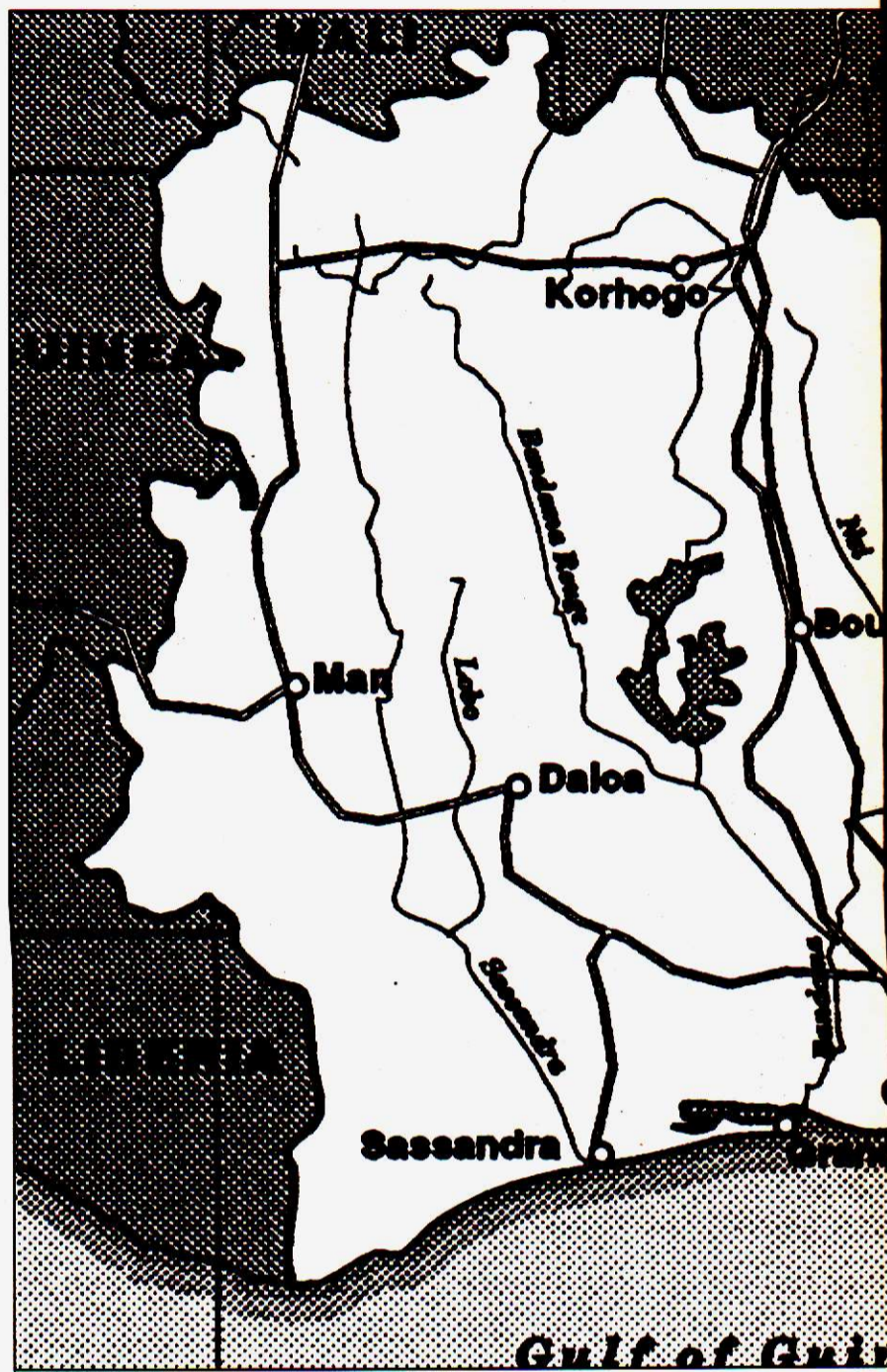
Unemployment in the cities is now about 60 per cent and it is even higher in the countryside.

Foreign debt has risen sharply and servicing it consumes a sum equivalent to half of all exports.

Under the instructions of the International Monetary Fund, Boigny made savage budget cuts, paralysed nearly all public projects and slashed food subsidies.

All the big industries that are left are branches of French multinationals such as BOUYGUES and BLOHORN which are run by members of the Ivory Coast government.

The ruling party is the Democratic Party of the Ivory Coast



When Ivory Coast military goes on the streets to suppress dissent, the French are often there too

(PDCI). It came to power in 1960 when independence was granted. Boigny was the president under French colonial rule and was given authority by them to continue as ruler. From 1960 to 1990 he ran a one-party system — the PDCI was the only legal party.

When this dictator died in 1993, his son Henri Konan Bedie took power without an election and was congratulated by Mitterand and Baladur.

In 1990, the constitution was

changed to allow for a multi-party system but the PDCI murdered and threatened many of those who tried to form other parties.

There are now opposition political parties which are not very radical. They don't organise against the PDCI.

In the 175-seat parliament there are ten opposition members. The elections are a farce, with massive corruption and a pretence of democracy.

The opposition plays the game of the PDCI. If it really threatened them it would be eliminated.

Can you give an example of how Houphouët-Boigny dealt with opposition?

One of the worst cases was the massacre in 1970 of 4,000 of the Guebie people. Kragbé Gnagné tried to organise PANA, an opposition party, and he was hounded down and killed by a man who is now in the government of the Ivory Coast as minister of home affairs.

The massacre was in the region where the PANA leaders came from. Government troops had gone looking for Kragbé Gnagné and when they couldn't find him they killed 4,000 Guebie in the village of Gagnoa.

They raped and tortured the people before systematically shooting them. One priest who was shot fell into the mass grave they had dug, pretending to be dead, and was able to tell the story. The regime also exterminated 300 Sanwi in the south-eastern part of the Ivory Coast.

Kragbé Gnagné was a pan-Africanist and a revolutionary socialist who campaigned for land reform. He was an anti-imperialist who wanted a system of justice and democracy and the land to be given to all the

an evil system



underground. Among these was SYNARES for teachers and lecturers and researchers. Also SYNESCI the union of secondary school teachers.

In 1991, many teachers' union leaders were imprisoned and since then there has been systematic repression of its leaders. The union is now weak and has not been able to stop massive cuts in wages. Since 1991, every new teacher has been paid only half the wages. Before 1991, there was a feeling of revolution but now with the repression and division of the working class there is a climate of fear and corruption.

In 1994, 2,500 bus drivers in Abidjan were sacked after demands for better working conditions and wages. They were replaced by the army until new workers were eventually recruited at the old conditions.

There is a history of 'accidents' causing deaths of oppositionists, so-called suicides. Jean-Baptiste Mockey was the health minister in 1981 who was opposed to some policies of PDCI, wanting more freedom and democracy — a crash was staged in which he was killed. Ernest Boka — head of the High Court, jailed in 1963 for allegedly organising a coup — 'committed suicide' in jail.

There are no state benefits of any kind for the poor people and the unemployed. Even if you worked before and have now retired there are no pensions. Maybe one person in a family is working and has to look after everyone, including brothers, uncles and their families — paying for their food, rent, education.

The private, informal sector is growing in the streets — cleaning and repairing shoes, washing cars, giving haircuts. People walk about all day, carrying their material and equipment, working all day for the equivalent of 50 pence. At the same time a small group of people close to the ruling party are living in luxury in big houses with expensive cars and holidays in France.

people to be shared equally among them.

What is the recent history of protest?

In April 1990 the students held big demonstrations in Abidjan University's Youpougon student residence. Their campaign was for improved conditions — for more teachers, libraries and scholarships. It was also for a multi-party system of government with freedom of choice.

This was the beginning of the protest movement. After the students came the teachers, workers and parents. There was the growth of unofficial, underground parties. Even the army demanded more money.

Faced with this wave of popular unrest the government agreed to be more democratic and to have an open multi-party system under free elections. In reality the PDCI increased the repression and tracked down the leaders of opposition organisations. They sacked many from their jobs and banned demonstrations. The student organisation was banned in January 1991.

Part of this repression was the brutal attack by the army on the Youpougon campus in May 1991. They struck during the night when the students were sleeping, and hundreds were injured. Many were raped and others have disappeared, probably killed.

Between 1990 and 1991 there was a revolutionary situation. The mass upsurge was bought off with promises. Up to then there were no free trade unions; the only one recognised was the General Workers' Union which is government-run.

After 1990, new trade unions emerged — many of them had been

What is the the role of France?

Since 1960, French companies have been allowed to invest in the Ivory Coast without paying any tax for the first 25 years they are there — in practice even after 25 years they are not paying anything. The Ivory Coast is strongly backed militarily by France — there is a military camp of 10,000 French soldiers in a strategical place near the only airport.

The main instructors in the Ivory Coast army and police are French officers. There are also a lot of French 'advisers' in main positions in all government areas. When there is social unrest the French army comes out on the streets to support the Ivory Coast police and army. This happened in 1990 against the mass protests of students, workers and teachers.

This military support by France is in return for the economic advantages given to its companies. Because of this collaboration the Ivorians who go to France are usually supporters of the PTDC. Asylum-seekers would not go there.

Ivory Coast is a repressive dictatorship. The groups which are most oppressed are the students and the youth generally, trade unionists and human rights activists. Muslims are also increasingly oppressed and there have been police attacks on mosques.

There have been inquiries by Amnesty International into the violations of the rights to freedom of expression and association, and in 1992 it adopted 77 prisoners of conscience in Ivorian jails.

A report in 1994 was particularly

concerned with the systematic arrests and convictions with heavy sentences of students and journalists, which Amnesty saw as attempts to stifle any form of opposition.

In March and May 1994, over 200 students were arrested following clashes with the security forces, and a member of the local FESCI executive was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Five other students have been held without trial since March 1993.

The students from three universities had been involved in protest movements and sporadic strikes in an attempt to improve their living standards and conditions of study, in particular as regards the payment of grants and the provision of public transport.

Amnesty International believes that the Ivorian regime used the student protests as a pretext for breaking up the FESCI which, although banned in 1991, continued to operate.

What are IRAG's main activities?

IRAG wants to expose the brutal dictatorship and let people know what happened in the Ivory Coast. We want to show the role of France in the repression of Ivory Coast youth and the working class and to detail the struggle of the people of the Ivory Coast for liberty and socialism.

Most of IRAG are young. We want to create an awareness of the struggle for socialism in Africa and to welcome the asylum-seekers because they are victims of an evil system.



Kragbé Gnagbé

We in the Ivory Coast are victims of French imperialism. But we want to let people know that there is no difference between French, British or US imperialism — they are parts of the same rotten system.

We are campaigning for amnesty for asylum-seekers and to stop the deportations of Africans. Since the Asylum Act in 1994, there has been a 100 per cent refusal rate by Britain to Ivory Coast asylum-seekers. We particularly target the working class, trade unionists, socialists and MPs and MEPs.

We are asking British MPs to sign Early Day Motion 623 dealing with human rights in the Ivory Coast. Support has already been given by Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Keith Hill.

Asylum-seekers from Britain and other countries sent back to the Ivory Coast are arrested on arrival and imprisoned — detained in unknown places. We have tried to get in touch with them but have been unable to do so. If IRAG can be successful in gaining protection and refugee status it will be telling the Ivory Coast regime that its real face is known.

At this moment we are campaigning for ten Ivorians who are facing deportation from Britain. It is urgent that this campaign is successful.

For further information — petitions, model resolutions, etc. — contact IRAG, 365 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DB.

City Lights

Pension time bomb

ACCORDING to an article in the latest 'Investors Chronicle' the vast majority of people still think that the state will pay them an adequate pension in their retirement years. Their expectations are without foundation.

The World Bank, normally restrained in such matters, does not mince its words. Its chief economist Michael Bruno warns: 'There is a looming old-age crisis that threatens not only the old but their children and grandchildren, who must shoulder, directly or indirectly, much of the increasing burden of providing for the aged.'

Most state pension schemes in the world are quite inadequately funded. The majority are run on a pay-as-you-go basis — with each generation of workers paying for the pensions of those who are currently retired, and relying on their children to do the same for them in the future.

For the ruling class the problem is that people are living too long. In Britain, for example, one in five people were aged over 60 in 1990; in 55 years' time the figure will be closer to one-third. Every ten people currently working have to finance the pensions of three people.

In 50 years' time ten people will be needed to support six retired people. Such figures do not take into account the trend towards earlier retirement, which will worsen the situation.

The result is a yawning and growing gap between expected future contributions and payouts. Dealing with this problem will, in the opinion of 'Investors Chronicle', mean:

■ Increasing income tax by around 15 percentage points to keep benefits at their present levels.

■ Raising the state pension age by 12 years and keeping benefits at their current rate. This would mean pensions for retired male workers at 77, four years beyond their current life expectancy. As far back as the start of this century the Liberal Government introduced state retirement pensions for those over 70!

■ Slashing existing benefits.

Governments are being forced, whatever the obstacles, to move towards these sort of 'solutions'. In Britain the basic state pension was worth around a fifth of average earnings in the 1970s. In the 1980s, the link was switched to the level of prices rather than earnings. (At first the Labour Party pledged to restore the old situation; that promise, along with nearly all others, has been broken.)

Since then the level of state pensions in relation to average earnings has been falling steadily and is set to get worse. Even if national income grows at an average annual rate of 2.5 per cent, by the end of the century the pension would be worth less than a sixth of average earnings. If the economy grows at 1.5 per cent, the figures would be around an eighth.

The equalisation of the state pension age at 65 means that in practice women will have to wait five years longer for their pension than is now the case.

Other countries are going down the same road as the Tory government. In the United States, taxes have been raised and so has the retirement age. In France a new income tax has been imposed, earmarked for the rising social security budget. Meanwhile Japan has reduced the rate at which benefits build up.

Australia, Denmark and Switzerland had made company pension schemes compulsory. Workers are forced to finance their retirement pensions. But private pension schemes cover only a minority of workers, usually the better-paid.

ing population in Britain has no pension provision other than the state scheme. And many in private schemes are making hopelessly inadequate contributions, with their employers in many cases paying nothing.

Apart from the exclusion of the unemployed from such schemes, there is the Maxwell factor. Pension funds are a tempting pot for company bosses short of cash, as well as an invitation to the plain crooked.

Even without fraud, many workers have found that when a company goes most of their pension vanishes along with the company; in the case of Swan Hunter, for instance, benefits were slashed by 40 per cent.

The pensions crisis is part of a wider problem of state spending on social benefits of all types. As Bronwen Handyside reported in Workers Press (17 June) money spent on state benefits has risen a staggering 700 per cent in real terms since 1949-50.

As she also pointed out, both Labour and Tory MPs are equally alarmed by such a trend, the tackling of which at the expense of the working class becomes unpostponable.

An Englishman's home is his

GOVERNMENT figures issued last week claiming that 'only' 900,000 people are suffering from negative equity — their houses are worth less than the money they owe to the bank or building society — seriously under-estimate the problem.

So says a report published this week by the actuaries AKG, which calculates that one in seven households are in this situation — a total of 1.5 million homes. Unlike the Bank of England or the Department of the Environment surveys — on which the government bases its figures — AKG takes into account the effect of arrears and other loans secured on homes.

The housing charity Shelter goes further, saying in a recent report that 3 million households are in negative equity or have insufficient equity to allow them to move.

The vanishing 'boom'

THE much-heralded boom is vanishing as quickly as an ice cream in the midday sun. After years of fiddling the unemployment figures to keep the real level of those out of work artificially low, even the government admits that the rate at which unemployment is falling has slowed down dramatically.

Department of Employment statistics show that unemployment fell in May to its lowest rate for 17 months. Women are now losing their jobs at a far faster rate than men. Part-time female jobs were 8,000 down in the first quarter of the year compared with the last quarter of 1994, with female full-time jobs dropping by 15,000 in the same period.

The fall is attributed largely to sacking by the big high-street shops, which are facing falling profit margins and intensified competition.

Two kinds of philosophy

PERSONAL COLUMN

LAST week's 'Times Literary Supplement' was a special issue largely devoted to recent books on philosophy.

Alan Ryan, professor of politics at Princeton University, wrote on 'Alasdair MacIntyre and the rescue of moral tradition' without seeing fit to mention that this particular moral philosopher, for a brief spell in the late 1950s, saw Marxism as the only possible way in which 'moral tradition' could be rescued.

For a time MacIntyre was literary editor of 'Labour Review' and a member of the Socialist Labour League (forerunner of the Workers Revolutionary Party), which he left together with Brian Behan in order to set up a little-supported and short-lived 'Workers Party'.

Ryan is either unaware of these aspects of his hero's career and intellectual 'formation', or else he decided not to draw them to the attention of 'TLS' readers.

David Papineau, professor of philosophy of science at King's College, London, had some rude and true things to say about the late Sir Karl Popper, author of 'The Open Society and its Enemies' (1945):

[I]t is... becoming difficult to understand exactly how Popper acquired his renown. ... Popper has never given straight answers to the objections [to his philosophy of science]. Instead, he has reassured his readers of the importance of his views, while throwing up various smoke-screens to hide their deficiencies.

'One of Popper's strategies is to use words in a way which makes his views seem far more sensible than they are.... Another ploy is to refuse to engage with his critics....'

It does not help the defence of [critical academic] standards if their most prominent twentieth-century proponent failed to uphold them in his own intellectual practice.'

Readers may recall that eight months ago, shortly after Popper's death, much the same criticism of this leading anti-Marxist philosopher was made in Workers Press, though rather more incisively, by Mike McKenna ('Defender of bourgeois society', 1 October 1994).

Among other contributions to last week's philosophy issue of the 'TLS' was a review by Stephen Mulhall, reader in philosophy at Essex University, of Jacques Derrida's 'Specters of Marx'.

With its headline on 'Derrida's inheritance from Marx' and its forthright admission of 'Europe's essential indebtedness to Marxism', this review went curiously against the grain of recent academic manderings about Marxism being 'dead', 'irrelevant', 'obsolete', and so forth.

Perhaps the whirling of academic fashion is now beginning to turn? We shall see.

IN ANY event, philosophy is too important to be left to the bourgeois academics. For these, almost to a man and woman, the point is not to change the world but to come up with showy new interpretations of it that dazzle the media for a short season only to end in the dustbin.

A recent example is Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history' nonsense, the intellectual high fashion of the day before yesterday. Fukuyama's 'end of history' has rapidly joined the cloche hat, the twist, and the steam train in the museum of 20th-century antiquities.

But for Marxists, as somebody once said, the point is to change the world. And who, looking with clear eyes at the state the world is in, could possibly disagree?

But, as somebody else once said, the world can't be changed — i.e. there can be no revolutionary practice — without a revolutionary theory to guide the movement for change, to light up the way ahead.

Press in arranging two series of weekly lectures at London's Conway Hall on 'The Future of Marxism', beginning next October.

The programme is a rich one, and several of the lectures will discuss various aspects of Marxist philosophy and its bearing on many different disciplines.

I greatly look forward, for instance, to Steve Drury on Engels's 'Dialectics of Nature' (26 October), that posthumously published attempt to formulate a Marxist philosophy of science. How well does this unfinished pioneering manuscript stand up in the light of the advances made in every branch of the natural sciences since Engels died in 1895? I foresee a lively discussion.

Nor should I dream of missing a practising historian speaking on historical materialism: Terry Brotherstone's lecture (23 November) is intriguingly sub-titled 'The Persistence of History and the Necessity of Marxism'.

There is a rare chance also to hear the distinguished Marxist scholar István Mészáros (30 November) speaking on his forthcoming new book 'Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition'.

The second series, beginning in January, looks like maintaining this high standard, with, amongst others, Workers Press contributor Tom Owen on 'Marxism and Culture'; Mike McKenna on 'Marx, Hegel and the Dialectic'; and a symposium on 'Science at the End of the 20th Century'.

The philosophy that these lecturers and their audiences will discuss is light-years away from the ivory-tower variety that preoccupies the contributors to last week's 'TLS'.

There are a number of reasons for this, but I think the main one is that the working class and its revolutionary role, wholly absent from the work of bourgeois academics, are central to Marxist philosophy.

Whipping up Satanic panic

A CHILLING example of an attempted brain-washing of innocents is reproduced in the latest issue of the US journal 'Skeptic', kindly lent me by Mike Howgate.

It's a cartoon tract titled 'The Poor Little Witch', distributed by 'reivalists' at a teenagers' meeting-site during the 1988 Satanic rumour-panic in Jamestown, New York.

The heroine, schoolgirl Mandy, is invited to a 'slumber party' by her wicked teacher, who offers to teach her how to levitate tables and shows her a sure-fire way of winning in school games by praying to 'Bruth'.

'Bruth' (surprise, surprise) turns out to be Old Nick himself, and soon poor Mandy is being compelled to drink the blood of a freshly slaughtered new-born baby.

'Don't even THINK of going to the police', she is warned; but mercifully she turns to helpful Mrs Grayson, whom she'd been warned off as a 'traitor'.

Happily there's a way out for the 'poor little witch'. All she has to do is kneel and pray to Lord Jesus: 'Lord, I want to serve YOU instead of Satan.'

And, lo and behold! she is forgiven — and 'When Mandy ties, God will say: "Well done thou good and faithful servant."'

So susceptible to rumour were the good citizens of Jamestown, says 'Skeptic', that they mistakenly assumed this bosh was *pro-Satanic* propaganda!

Peter Fryer

TV review by Tom Owen

In search of Aristotle

Oliver's Travels, by Alan Plater. BBC1, Sundays from 12 June.

FOR ANYONE who enjoyed Alan Plater's whimsical comedy 'The Beiderbeck Affair', it looks like they are in for another treat on a Sunday night. Plater's new creation is 'Oliver's Travels' and stars Alan Bates as the 'early retired' lecturer from one of the 'new' universities, the University of Rhondda Valley (Pryfyscol Cwm Rhondda).

Oliver is or was a lecturer in comparative religion, a non-believer, garrulous polymath and aspiring lecher. Apart from sex, which he never tires of telling women he knows something funny about, his obsessions are jazz and crosswords.

In fact crosswords rule his life as magical obsessions. Anagrams,

wanton destruction of any serious pursuit of knowledge.

After Oliver has been given his bags — literally matching travelling cases — for his retirement present, he travels to a burnt-out cottage in the Brecon Beacons where he thought Aristotle lived.

On seeking Aristotle in the missing person's department of a local police station, he comes across a beleaguered and bemused woman police officer whom he assiduously courts and attempts to impress by solving an outstanding murder case.

For their troubles both these innocents abroad have blundered into a web of political, criminal and police corruption based on property speculation and asset-stripping.

By the second episode the successful Plater formula of the

threatening them with dismissal if they do not return to work.

The strike is vital not just because of existing conditions, but also because of the proposed intervention of major British retailers in the Irish market.

Sainsbury's announced last week that they would be opening seven stores in the north of Ireland. This is widely seen as the launch-pad for a move into the Republic, and will be the first major threat to Dunnes' hegemony of the Irish market.

For Sainsbury's intervention to succeed they must undercut their competitors. This will only be possible if they introduce exactly the same contracts that Dunnes are currently attempting to impose.

This is why the strike is so important: if Dunnes win out against the shopworkers, it will mean the smashing of their union power and a declaration of open war on the workers' wages and conditions throughout the island.

Over the last twelve months alone almost 50,000 homes, housing 110,000 people were reposessed. The figure will rise by 10 per cent in the coming year, the Council of Mortgage Lenders estimates.

The housing charity Shelter says that a quarter of a million people are now more than six months in arrears with their mortgage repayments.

The banks are making huge sums out of this crisis. Mortgage lenders are raking in some £50 million a year in extra fees and interest charges from people who fall into arrears. These extra charges are one of the main reasons for the rising tide of repossessions.

Chelmsford bus strike settled

BY ROY THOMAS

THE 105 sacked Chelmsford bus drivers have voted by 80 per cent to accept an offer made at the arbitration body ACAS of a £400-per-year-of-service payment.

The drivers were sacked on 8

comic thriller has been established, the eccentric but naive male lead and the sceptical but resourceful female companion.

Of the trivial problem-solving and amorous games the couple are drawn into the murky world of death-threats, mysterious agents and hired killers.

Some critics have expressed their dissatisfaction with the series as a reworking of a successful formula. My response to this is that Alan Plater has still a great deal of mileage from this rich comic source.

It is also a bitter-sweet voyage through the devastated industrial heartlands of the British working class accompanied by the most haunting and memorable jazz background music.

Worth anyone's time on a Sunday night at 9 o'clock before facing the curse of Monday morning.

November 1994 for holding a two-hour strike against longer working hours. The top payment for a bus driver in Chelmsford will be £12,000. All staff sacked in November will be eligible and free to apply for their old jobs back.

But the catch is there are not that many vacancies. There is no automatic reinstatement.

Strikers in Chelmsford have been running a very effective free bus service with T&G minibuses.

They have received thousands of pounds each week from donations being made by grateful passengers.

Eastern National Bus Company, who owned the Chelmsford operation, was taken over by GRT to form FirstBus and became the second biggest bus company in Britain.

It seems the new management did not like the bad publicity they were getting around the Chelmsford dispute and told the local managers to get a deal.

When the T&G general secretary became involved, managers offered a £150 one-off payment.

When this was rejected by the union and the offer published there were further talks at ACAS which produced the offer of £400 per year of service to each of those sacked for striking.

Dunnes: victory is vital!

BY PAUL DAY

THE all-out strike at Dunnes, Ireland's largest retail group, is widely being seen as vital to the future for all low-paid workers in the country.

Workers came out on strike at the beginning of last week in protest at plans for compulsory Sunday working at flat rates, and the introduction of 'zero hour' contracts, which require workers to be available for work at all times.

Conditions in the stores are already abysmal. 'We're treated like dirt here... it's very authoritarian', said one striker. If management are allowed to win, they will get worse.

An all-out picket was sanctioned last Thursday by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). All 62 Dunnes stores have been closed.

Management have made no effort to contact the shopworkers' union MANDATE to negotiate. Pickets claim that Dunnes' managers have been ringing part-time workers, (who make up 91 per cent of their workforce), and

Home-owning democracy?

ABOUT 700,000 people have been thrown out of their homes over the last five years because building societies and banks have seized their houses because of ar-

Letters

More letters — page 2

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Strikes not enough to save NHS

THE article by Stuart Carter in the 24 June Workers Press, on the public service union UNISON's wages demonstration, raises the need of a thorough discussion on revolutionary trade union policy.

The service industries provide possibly the largest proportion of membership in the trade unions today. And in those industries the reality is that there are no pure and simple trade union or economic struggles.

For a long time it has been true that it was not possible for workers to gain long-term results by their own sectional militancy and without political action bringing change in the nature of society.

In my book 'They Knew Why They Fought', I tried to show how the great militancy and economic successes of the dockers in the post-war period, most obviously on Merseyside in the 1967 strike, could not be carried into the future because there was not this political solution.

What I described as equivalent to the 'prisoner ate a hearty breakfast', was also the lot of men and women in other industries

Castle, the Labour government's minister of labour — did not become power over the running of the country.

The real deep support for the Beveridge Plan during the war — because it was felt that it meant care according to need from the cradle to the grave — led to support for Labour which was pledged to implement it.

On the day that the Beveridge report was published, a queue a mile long formed outside the government bookshop in central London. Within three hours, 70,000 copies were sold. Two weeks later the British Institute of Public Opinion published a survey which showed that 95 per cent of the public had heard of the report, with 88 per cent in favour, 6 per cent against and 6 per cent undecided.

It is these feelings which are moving people again as they see the Tory alternative, the corruption of quangos and new shoddy hospitals built solely with an eye on profit.

There is a rapid increase in social consciousness. That is so because of the crises of society and its political parties sunk deep in sleaze, corruption, hypocrisy and demagogy.

The need for developing a political militant movement in the unions is all the greater today when the question of who is con-

For members of UNISON working in the National Health Service, the condition of our hospitals, of 'community care', of the disabled, the old, is of burning importance. That importance was expressed at the recent Royal College of Nursing conference. A very large number of its members took up the job with a desire to serve a social need.

The National Health Service is disintegrating. That disintegration and the capitalist dogmas of market competition and business management are frustrating, depressing and oppressing workers in it and are as great a problem, if not more of a problem, than wages.

Every attempt should be made to unite the ranks so neither the union bureaucrats nor the government are allowed to forget this.

Any militant movement in UNISON must have a programme for the health service, a programme for linking itself to the communities.

All this is why it appears to me that Stuart's article on the tactics of winning a struggle of UNISON in the hospitals is not sufficient in being limited to the pay struggle itself.

More and more struggles pose the question of who has the power and the class 'democracy'

with demands worked out for control by communities and workers in the services, bringing out the real issue: whether we have a health service for need or profit.

There must be a campaign to unite UNISON in the hospitals with the population outside and to unite the rank-and-file of all unions.

Otherwise there can be the defeat of actions separated in a way from the movement to social consciousness in the country, from the opinion of masses of people against the privatisations and squalid money-grubbing of the Tories and criminal opposition to the welfare and future of our youth, our sick and of the very earth itself.

And that separation will be used by trade union bureaucrats. We saw that in the case of the National Union of Teachers.

The great question in the NUT for all militants is why was McAvoy able to have some success in accusing his opponents of ignoring the parents? He put on what should have been their clothes and could only have been able to do so because of the weakness of their programme.

There is a need for a little more thought than a slogan of strike. That must have a well-prepared campaign and programme.

INDONESIA'S 30-YEAR PRISON REGIME

WHEN South Africa's President Nelson Mandela visited Indonesia last year, the Indonesian regime's opponents observed that it is holding political prisoners in its jails just as long as Mandela spent on Robben Island.

Indonesia's dictator General Suharto seized power in October 1965, acting ostensibly to crush a 'communist coup' — which many people believe was partly stage-managed by America's Central Intelligence Agency.

The CIA began cultivating Indonesian army officers after sponsoring an unsuccessful re-

gional rebellion against the Indonesian government, which made it rely more on the army. US military aid to Indonesia was increased, and in 1962 the Kennedy administration began aiding the army's 'civic action' programme.

Infrastructure

The Indonesian Army's staff college at Bandung trained officers in politics, economics and administration. A territorial infrastructure extended through the country. Civilian groups received Ford Foundation grants to op-

pose communism. US-backed officers organised gangs which staged pogroms against Chinese communities.

A US military training advisory group was established in Jakarta on the recommendation of a 1962 State Department report. One of its authors, University of California academic Robert Pauker, urged in a book published for the military-backed RAND Corporation that Indonesian officers should take 'full responsibility' for their nation's future and 'sweep their

house clean'.

US motives weren't purely ideological. In April 1965, the Freeport mining company secretly reached agreement with Indonesian officials for what became a \$500 million investment in West Papua (see 'Profits versus people in Papua', Workers Press, 10 June).

One of Freeport's directors was a close business associate of diplomat Averell Harriman, who ensured US backing for the Indonesian takeover of West Papua. American companies were also interested in Indonesia's oil industry.

Turning the Indonesian army into a reactionary force was not a smooth process. It had emerged from the anti-colonial struggle.

Peasant soldiers sympathised with left-wing calls for land reform. On 30 September 1965, some troops attempted an ill-advised coup aimed at foiling right-wing conspiracies. With foreknowledge, General Suharto, was able to crush the rebellion easily. Some units' US-trained officers had pretended support for the rebels, then took part in crushing them.

Six generals had been taken to an airbase during the night, and murdered. Suharto blamed this on the left, although the removal of these middle-of-the-road officers suited his plans. Indonesia's border 'confrontation' policy against the British-backed Malaysian federation also helped. Edward Luttwak, who worked with the CIA, says 'though Communist-infiltrated army units were very powerful they were in

the wrong place; while they sat in the Borneo jungles the anti-Communist paratroops and marines took over Jakarta and the capital'.

Suharto's forces took over on 1 October 1965, and set out to destroy opponents. This is where the US-backed 'civic action' programme came in.

The CIA provided lists of Indonesian communists. Trade unions and peasant associations were banned. Arms were distributed to political groups helping the military.

Echoing the words of the US academic Pauker, an army order to Muslim students said 'sikat' — 'sweep clean' or 'wipe out' — the communists. By the end of 1966 almost a million people had been killed.

Elimination

A series of show trials followed to legitimise the right-wing seizure of power and the elimination of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and unions. Some 26 elderly, ailing political prisoners sentenced in that period remain in jail.

In addition, more than a million tapols, political detainees who were never tried or convicted, remained subject to restrictions, stigmatized with the initials 'ET' (ex-tapol) on their identity cards. People have been sacked from jobs because their parents were tapols, or belonged to the peasant union.

Last September, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, meeting in Canberra, the Australian capital, asked President Suharto to lift the death sentence passed on

Sukatno, a former PKI member of parliament arrested in 1968 for taking part in an attack on a police station. Aged 66, the former MP remains on death row in Cipinang prison, Jakarta, with three other prisoners.

Ruslan Widjajasastra, a peasant union leader arrested with Sukatno, and accused of trying to reconstitute the Communist Party, died in Cipinang on 1 April, aged 78. He had been ill, and totally paralysed for some time, but appeals for his release on compassionate grounds were ignored.

At his funeral, the family were joined by many old friends from before 1965, and younger political activists who had met him while in prison.

This year, for the first time in 30 years, Indonesian workers held demonstrations on May Day. There were also walkouts over wages at six factories in Jakarta's Tangerang industrial estate. At May Day rallies in Jakarta and Semarang, one of the main demands was for the release of all political prisoners.

On 19 May, Mochtar Pakpahan, leader of the independent SBSI trade union, jailed last year for organising strikes, was released by the Supreme Court pending appeal.

Ostensibly, Pakpahan was freed on a legal technicality, but one of the judges said the decision had been taken because the case had come 'under the spotlight of the international workers movement'. We must see attention and support grows for the Indonesian workers' freedom struggle.



Leader of the SBSI trade union, Mochtar Pakpahan, after his release from prison, 19 May

Bosnia dominates G7 summit

FROM the start, Bosnia troubled the meeting of Group of Seven (G7) most industrialised countries of the world, which began on Thursday 16 June in Halifax, Canada.

The G7 leaders had planned to talk about general economic problems, but in the event the perspective of the war restarting in Bosnia, particularly around Sarajevo, took up most of the preliminary meeting and disturbed their digestion during their first meal.

The G7 summit had to push back its economic talks to the meeting on Friday. During their deliberations, G7 leaders threatened the Bosnian people not to take 'any military action'.

This message was clearly addressed to the troops of the Bosnian government, who were poised to launch a massive operation to stop the siege of the capital.

The Bosnian Serbs have surrounded Sarajevo for three years, blocking supplies of water, electricity and food at will and harassing the population with military means and shooting civilians.

The declaration of the G7 leaders and their governments, drafted by France, but barely modified, called for the so-called 'warring factions' to come to an immediate military agreement and threatened that if the Bosnian army continued to attack, the Serb-nationalist Chetniks could retaliate in an even more brutal fashion than they had done before.

Negotiations

It also called for them to restart negotiations. European leaders are again sending Torvald Stoltenberg — who, with Lord David Owen, has been the architect of several plans to give the Chetniks what they want, a substantial slice of Bosnia (49 rather than the 70 per cent the Serb nationalists demand!) — to get in touch with all parties involved.

The general philosophy of the document reflects the programme of the infamous Contact Group — from Germany, the US, France, Britain and Russia — that there is no solution to the Bosnian war apart from a carve-



United Nations Protection Force soldiers cower as a citizen of Sarajevo passes them by in the streets of the besieged city

up. But then US Republican opposition to the creation of the 'rapid reaction force' to protect United Nations ground troops — and certainly not Bosnian civilians — caused the G7 summit some headaches.

The 'rapid reaction force' is the brainchild of the UN Security Council, particularly its French and British representatives, and US Republicans don't see why their 'boys' (and presumably in these days 'girls') should be put in danger to protect soldiers of other countries — especially when they might be facing angry relatives of dead GIs at a polling station near them!

The European G7 members, and particularly the French, thought that there would be no problem and that Congress Chamber Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senate leader Bob Dole could be brought around and would

stop opposing President Clinton on the creation of such a force. But the G7 meeting found no such agreement between Congress and the Clinton administration. The Republican-dominated Congress is particularly against the US being drawn into financing the 'rapid reaction force'.

The European G7 leaders then demanded that the UN security council meet again and vote on the resolution on Friday 17 June, or at least come to a compromise. To take into account US Congress reservations, the text was supposed to allow military operations to go ahead, leaving financial questions to later.

On Wednesday 14 June, French President Jacques Chirac had tried, without success, to persuade Gingrich and Dole to support the creation of the 'rapid reaction force'.

Chirac had claimed that by

postponing the creation of the force Congress was playing into the hands of the Serb forces. But news last week of France's role in cutting the deal to free UN hostages — which promised no further NATO airstrikes on Chetnik positions — showed how shallow Chirac's lecture to US Republicans was.

Chirac went to the UN's New York HQ after his visit to Washington where he had spoken with Clinton, Dole and Gingrich.

Creation

There Chirac gave the feeling that US Republican leaders had finally accepted Clinton's line and agreed on the question of the creation of the 'rapid reaction force' to intervene in the UN's operation in Bosnia.

'I have the feeling that the vote on the resolution could happen today, it is a hope if not a certainty,' said Chirac at the UN

building on Thursday 15 June before jetting off to Halifax.

But Dole and Gingrich wrote to the UN secretary-general to say they were opposed to 'the cost of the new force or any cost of any other staffs authorised by this resolution' being paid by state members of the UN and demanded that 'no supplementary military or financial obligation of the US were to be the result of this new resolution'.

The UN security council met on the night of Thursday to Friday at the request of France to agree a resolution to create the 'rapid reaction force' for Bosnia.

Thirteen members voted for, Russia and China abstained. It ended a long fight among the Great Powers at New York and the G7 Halifax meeting. France and Britain finally won on the creation of the new force, but the financial problem remains.

Bosnian PM denounces UN 'rich man's club'

'WE CALL TO WORLD'S PEOPLE'

BOSNIANS fighting for their life and freedom, fed up with betrayal by the United Nations, have appealed over the heads of the world's governments, to ordinary people, to come to the aid of embattled Bosnia.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

'We call, not on foreign governments, but on their people and their representatives, to push the authorities to lift the arms embargo,' says Prime Minister Haris Siladzic.

'Every government which denies us the right to defend ourselves cannot be excluded from the guilt of each and all murders in Bosnia. All those who insist that the arms embargo be upheld take part in the genocide in Bosnia.'

Prime Minister Siladzic, whose people have suffered three years of war at the hands of both Serb and Croat nationalist forces, and UN partition plans which encouraged 'ethnic cleansing', says the UN has shown itself to be just a club for the strong and rich.

The Bosnia and Hercegovina army has begun the struggle to liberate the country by co-ordinated attacks on several fronts.

First aim is to break the Serb nationalist stranglehold on Sarajevo, where civilians have suffered three years of siege, shelling, sniper-fire and hunger. At the same time, gains are reported in the mountains north of Tuzla.

Eight missile launchers, a dozen mortars, two Bofors guns and several cannon were captured from Serb nationalists near Sarajevo.

The Serb nationalists — Chetniks as Bosnians call them — are reinforcing their ranks by drafting reluctant young men conscripted by the Milosevic regime in Serbia.

They retain superiority in weapons, thanks to Serb and Russian supplies, and the UN embargo on Bosnia. And to compensate for losses on the battlefield, they continue to target civilians.

Sidbela Zimic, aged nine, was killed with three of her friends when a Chetnik shell hit their

wounded by a Chetnik shell in Dobrinja, not far from the water pump where seven people were killed and a dozen wounded when a mortar bomb landed.

'Their planes fly freely and we are denied the means to defend ourselves,' Haris Siladzic said.

UN special envoy Ysushi Akashi, who condemned the Bosnian army for taking the offensive to defend Sarajevo, has reassured Serb-nationalist war criminal Radovan Karadzic that the planned 12,500-strong UN 'rapid reaction force' will remain 'impartial', under a 'strictly peacekeeping' mandate.

British UN commander General Rupert Smith was called to a meeting in Split on 9 June, and told his men could use force in self-defence, but not to protect Bosnian civilians or humanitarian aid deliveries.

General Smith said he understood that General Janvier and Akashi had to consider 'global political and diplomatic issues'.

While some people on the British 'Left' have worked themselves up worrying that the rapid reaction force might attack the Chetniks, Bosnians, having seen the UN, have obtained a different perspective.

'We are afraid that the rapid reaction force, particularly the British and the French, could deliberately block our liberating actions against Radovan Karadzic's paramilitaries,' said Bosnian Army General Jovan Djivjak — himself incidentally a Serb, like many of the soldiers fighting for multi-ethnic Bosnia.

Deputy commander Andjelko Makar of the Bosnian Army 2nd Corps agrees: 'My personal estimate is that one of the reasons why so many Brits are arriving in Bosnia, is that the Bosnian army and HVO (Croat forces) are undertaking a successful offensive which can bring a sudden collapse of General Mladic's troops and a quick breakthrough of our forces on territories under Chetnik control,...

Goal

'Since our goal is the liberation of the whole of Bosnia, at some point the world will say: "Stop, you cannot go further". Their estimate is that we are very close to that moment, so they are bringing in heavy forces in order to stop us and force us to negotiate.'

Recently, with no UN airlifts to Sarajevo, and convoys held up by the Chetniks, a Bosnian army

truck crossed Mount Igman, running the gauntlet of Chetnik gunfire, and delivered food to the UN mission. UNPROFOR still refused to help protect the aid route.

On 11 June an entire 200-tonne flour convoy was handed over by UNPROFOR to Serb police outside Sarajevo, and another convoy was handed over to the Chetniks outside Zepa.

Under the UN generals' deal, food supplies to British troops in Gorazde will come via Belgrade. The Chetniks proposed similar arrangements for Srebrenica, Zepa and Sarajevo. Letting the Chetniks control food supplies, UNPROFOR can connive with them to starve Bosnians into submission.

The Chetniks' commander General Mladic stands to profit personally from the deal. 'General Janvier promised General

Mladic that his company, Centrex, could supply food,' says Bosnia's Minister for relations with the UN, Hasan Muratovic.

Cynicism over profiteering by their leaders has contributed to demoralisation among Serb nationalist forces.

Gangster

Many young people don't wish to die for Karadzic's fascist gangster-state, or its ally next-door in the Krajina. But since 11 June, military police in Serbia have rounded up some 2,000 men from colleges and refugee centres, and sent them back to reinforce the Chetniks. Human rights groups in Serbia say this violates international law.

It also exposes the British government's pretence that the Milosevic regime, which armed

the Chetniks and started this war, is an influence for peace in the region.

Only the working people, united, can bring peace and freedom to the Balkans. But Bosnian workers fighting for their lives, their multi-cultured tradition, and civilised future, know it can't be done without militarily smashing the fascists, and defying the great powers who lurk behind them.

We welcome the Bosnians' call to 'the people', over the heads of governments, to act.

The Bosnian people are entitled to weapons from wherever they can come, and entitled to all the material and political support the international working class can mobilise. Every action for Bosnia is a blow against fascism, and the imperialist 'rich man's club.'



Bosnians are fed up with repeated betrayals by the United Nations

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Air strikes in Italy

BY PETER GIBSON

AS a reaction to a strike by 340 airline pilots at Alitalia, the Italian government has sent doctors to check on the medical condition of those who said they were sick that day.

Government tax inspectors have begun a check on all the pilots' records.

The pilots are accused of not only going on strike by taking a day off sick, but of failing to give 10 days' advance warning of their action.

The Alitalia pilots complain that they are being pushed to work harder — sometimes with unfamiliar crews — and being forced to work with cabin crews that are sub-contracted from an Australian company as part of the airline's restructuring.

The government's reaction to the airline strike is reminiscent of former US president Ronald Reagan's attack on air-traffic controllers in 1981 when all striking trade unionists were sacked. There followed a sharp increase in near-misses and actual accidents in the air.

Limbo-land prisoners protest in Jericho

PALESTINIAN prisoners held in a limbo-land existence around Jericho under the PLO's 'autonomy' deal with Israel, took to the streets last week, threatening an Israeli army checkpoint and clashing with Palestinian police.

They called for the release of 5,000 Palestinians still held by Israel, many of whom have been on hunger strike.

The previous day, two young people were killed, and fifty injured, when Israeli troops opened fire with tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds on Palestinians demonstrating in Nablus in solidarity with the hunger-striking prisoners.

About 600 political prisoners were released by the Israeli

state into the Palestinian National Authority's Jericho enclave.

But they are banned from returning to their home towns or villages elsewhere in the occupied West Bank.

Existing on meagre hand-outs from the Palestinian authority, these internal exiles are staying in disused buildings and caravans.

On Monday they marched into Jericho, demanding their right to return to their homes, and the release of 5,000 Palestinians still held in Israeli jails. Protesters set fire to four empty cars to block the main road through Jericho, and reportedly pointed weapons at an Israeli military checkpoint.