



Workers Press

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

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London support committee formed **LIVERPOOL DOCKERS**

LIVERPOOL DOCKERS have unanimously thrown out a £25,000 employers' offer to end their 19-week long strike. The decision was carried at a mass meeting, following talks between the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and full time officials of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Speaking to Workers Press after the decision, secretary and treasurer of the stewards' committee in Liverpool, Jimmy Davies, said he and the committee were 'quietly confident' that they would get overwhelming support in the postal ballot that the Electoral Reform Society is now conducting.

The same mood was echoed by committee chair Jimmy Nolan. Speaking at a meeting of London supporters last Tuesday night, he said he was 'extremely confident' of the ballot's outcome.

'I have no doubt that all 500 dockers will be re-instated,' Nolan declared.

Nolan said that support had been consolidated throughout Liverpool, among trade unionists and the unemployment centres. The decision to organise support 'down south' was a 'tremendous development', he said.

Some 36 delegates from all over the world would be attending the international conference of dockers that the Liverpool dockers had called for the 17 February, he reported.

BY GEOFF PILLING

'Internationalism is developing,' he told the meeting.

At the meeting members of the transport union RMT, the TGWU, the National Union of Journalists, the Manufacturing Science Finance union, UCATT building workers and others decided to set up a support committee in London that would now be meeting regularly.

Call

The response to the call for the international conference was 'overwhelming' and had taken the stewards by surprise, Davies had earlier told Workers Press.

Only that morning another group of dockers from Sweden had contacted him and asked whether they could come.

Italian dockers had been in touch that day. 'I think that

half of Italy plans to come,' joked Davies.

Dockers from the US West Coast would also be represented, Davies confirmed.

Stewards' committee member, Mike Carden reported to the London meeting the great financial damage that the strike had already inflicted on the port employer. He estimated that they may have lost up to £8 million.

Over £70 million had been wiped off their shares since the dispute started, Carden reported.

Stressing that international support had been a 'big factor' in the struggle, Carden said that a three-day strike on ABC shipping lines was currently taking place in support of the Merseyside dockers.

■ Next support meeting, Tuesday 8 February. For details of the London support committee, phone or fax Dot Gibson, 0171-627 8666.

STAND FIRM

THE LIVERPOOL DOCK STRIKE

Its importance in Britain and the world

WORKERS PRESS MEETING: Liverpool TU and Unemployed Centre, Hardman Street. Wednesday 7 February, 7pm.

Chair: **Dot Gibson** (Workers Press editorial board). Speakers: **Bill Hunter** (Socialist Voice editorial board, author of *They Knew why they fought: Unofficial Struggles & Leadership on the Docks 1945-89*); **Sue Mitchell** (Women of the Waterfront); **Bobby Moreton** (Liverpool docks shop steward); **Geoff Pilling** (Workers Press editorial board)

Community march and demonstration

in support of 500 sacked Liverpool dockers and their families

Saturday 3 February

Assemble Myrtle Parade (near Philharmonic Hall), 10.30am
March to St George's Hall, Rally St George's Plateau, 12noon.
Invited speaker: Arthur Scargill.

Workers Press Meeting

Saturday 10 February, 10.30am-4pm

Change of venue: The Falkland Arms, 31 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1. Tube: Holborn.

OUR readers are cordially invited to the 10th anniversary meeting of Workers Press. This is a time for us to review the past ten years, to consider the present and make plans for the future. The editorial board will present a report. We want to know your views, criticisms and proposals. Workers need their own paper, to report on and unite their struggles here and internationally. At this meeting we want to open up the discussion and practically begin the campaign for such a paper. For us in Workers Press our purpose — socialism — is the same purpose as every worker and those intellectuals whose lives are dedicated to the socialist cause.

Bosnia Solidarity Newsletter

Published by the Bosnia Solidarity Campaign, 12 Flitcroft Street, London WC2H 8DJ.

January 1996

Price 20p

- ★ War crimes — no cover up ★
- ★ Interview with Bosnian exiles ★
- ★ Bosnia on the internet ★
- ★ Workers Aid winter convoy ★

Workers Press

WEEKLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB. Tel: 0171-387 0564 Fax: 0171-387 0569

To all socialist and working class organisations and individuals

CRISIS IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT — THE NEED FOR A NEW SOCIALIST PARTY

CONFERENCE:

Saturday 16 March, 11am-5pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

(Holborn tube) Entrance: £1 (50p concession)

MILLIONS of workers will vote Labour in the next general election — to defeat the hated Tories — knowing in their heart of hearts that the Blair leadership will continue to attack them on behalf of big business.

The working class needs its own socialist party — a party that will organise the fight in its own interests. Many people are already organising themselves.

We need to unite, we need to discuss, we need to prepare. That is the purpose of this conference. We propose to discuss the following demands:

- Down with privatisation! A full and open workers' inquiry into the companies' books!
- No to casual labour! Demand permanent jobs for all!
- Down with the anti-trade union laws! Restore trade union rights!
- Down with the cuts in social and public services! A full and open workers' inquiry into state finance!
- Down with the racist immigration laws! Demand the right to asylum!
- Down with the Criminal Justice laws! Demand basic democratic rights!
- An injury to one is an injury to all! Build workers' internationalism!

I want to attend the **CRISIS IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT — THE NEED FOR A NEW SOCIALIST PARTY** conference on Saturday 16 March, 11am-5pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

NAME
ADDRESS
.....
Organisation (if any) Enclosed: £

Please complete and send this form with your entrance fee (£1 or 50p concession, cheques/POs payable to Workers Press) to: Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB

There will limited facilities for bookstalls at the conference and tables on which individuals can place their own written material for circulation.

Please indicate if you need childcare facilities: we will make arrangements depending on demand.

p&p Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB

PLEASE PHOTOCOPY AND DISTRIBUTE

A new mood for battle

THE unanimous decision of the mass meeting of the 500 sacked Liverpool dockers on 26 January to reject the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company's (MDHC) £25,000 offer to end their strike is a clear indication of a new mood for battle in the working class.

The dockers have been 'on the stones' since 28 September 1995. They have no money coming in except solidarity collections and donations. But the mass meeting confirmed the dockers' resolve that they will not give up their decision that all 500 must be reinstated, with full pay, pension rights and union recognition. There is no doubt the union's postal ballot will show the same result. In the two-week break in negotiations between the company and the union there were top-level talks with the government — the largest shareholder — to raise the proposed 'pay-off' sum.

It was another attempt to split the workforce.

Acceptance of this cash offer would have meant that only 40 dockers would be taken on by MDHC and only a further 30 by Torside Limited, the company which provoked the strike with its plan to replace permanent dockers with casual labour. These 70 dockers would be hand-picked by the employers.

This latest decision reflects the growing mood among workers that 'enough is enough'. The working class is beginning to recover its confidence to fight back against cuts, privatisation, casualisation and anti-trade-union laws. The general strike of French workers last November was powerful confirmation of this.

THE Liverpool dock strike is illegal. But the government knows that any action taken by the state against the dockers would bring forward a huge workers' solidarity movement like the support for the miners against pit closures in 1992-93. And this is not confined to Britain.

It is the strength of the international support won by the strike that has shaken the MDHC, the government and the dockers' own trade union.

When they dispatched the dismissal notices last September, MDHC directors boasted to the shipping companies that they would have a 'trade-union free port within a fortnight'. They confidently expected that they would get 150-200 dockers to break with the rest and sign new contracts. It was their intention to supplement this core team with casual labour. They knew the union was de-recognised in every other port in the country following the 1989 strike; they knew that laws were in place which made this strike illegal. They thought they had it made.

WHAT they didn't bargain for was the strike leaders' decision to seek solidarity action from dockers in other countries working on vessels which unload and load in the port of Liverpool, and the massive response to that appeal both practically and financially. Industrial action by dockers in Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada has provoked powerful shipping companies like ACL and ABC to threaten to take their vessels out of Liverpool.

Far from having a 'union-free port within a fortnight' the MDHC is now faced with the international strength of trade union-organised workers. The company is paying huge sums to Drake International Limited to bring in scab labour and house them inside the dock. The company's share values have fallen by 20 per cent.

Thousands of workers and their supporters throughout Merseyside have taken up the call for an inquiry into the finances and organisation of the company, and the local council has delayed the payment of development grants.

Meanwhile, the 500 sacked dockers are preparing to hold an international dockworkers' conference in Liverpool from 17-22 February. A tremendous boost for this was the resolution of support carried unanimously by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) inspectors on 18 January (Workers Press, 27 January). Addressing the ITF inspectors, Jimmy Nolan, chair of Liverpool Dockers' Shop Stewards Committee, said: 'The MDHC, the British government, financial and legal institutions are conspiring against the workers.' These trade unionists from all over the world said they understood — from their own experience.

The Liverpool Dock strike has begun to put the working class into the leadership of its own movement — internationally. It is a powerful step toward the new socialist party that the working class needs.

Workers Press's role

I SHALL not be able to be at the Workers Press meeting on 10 February and since the role of Workers Press is so vital in the discussion of the crisis in the labour movement I wanted to make the following points.

The Workers Press has a vital role to play in the development of the combativity of the working class. It must be in the forefront of the struggle to provide the class fighters and activists with the weapons, the ideas, the facts, to help them in their day-to-day struggles with the employers, the state machine and the Labour leaders who put themselves forward as better able to run capitalism than the Tories.

The Workers Press should seek to highlight corruption and the role of the fat cats which are an essential part of capitalism.

The Workers Press needs to develop an understanding of the issue of the minimum wage, which is a major international issue for the working class.

We need to highlight the links between low wages, long hours, the impact that excessive hours have on health, and the extent to which longer working hours destroy jobs and increase unemployment.

Workers Press must expose the fraud now being promoted on pensions, where those on very low wages may be forced to pay even more from their inadequate wages into private pension schemes. This will of course be on top of their payments to National Insurance.

These are very much day-to-day issues for many families and should be in the forefront of the coverage of Workers Press each week.

The organisation of the working class around such issues — and I know there are many others — are a vital part of the regrouping of those who see the need to reorganise society into one where production is for the needs of the mass of the people and not for the profit of the few.

The Workers Press must not be a paper just for those whose lives are dedicated to the socialist cause — but a paper for all those who are fighting against

the exploitation of the working class.

By supporting these fighters, we show that there is a civilised way in which society can be organised.

I think that by directing the Workers Press in this direction, by activists sending in the news of their struggles, by getting the paper into the hands of more and more class fighters, the Workers Press will become the paper that people in struggle will identify with and think of as their paper.

Peter Gibson
Croydon

changes,
And other paths also
Another goal set up.

In a passage, now well-known, in one of his posthumously published notebooks, Trotsky wrote: 'Lenin created the apparatus [i.e., the Soviet bureaucracy, BP]. The apparatus created Stalin.'

But did Lenin, once in power, have any choice but to 'create the apparatus', with consequences he could hardly foresee — though towards the end of his life, he began to have premonitions?

Brian Pearce
New Barnet, Herts.

Moral questions

PETER FRYER (27 January) raises a fundamental question: Can there be a universal morality, standing above classes?

In 1920, Lenin told Russia's Young Communists that 'we say that our morality is deduced from the class struggle of the proletariat' and that any different conception of morality 'is a fraud'.

From this premise has followed such conclusions as that, while it would be wrong for the Whites (supporters of Tsarist Russia) to kill any children, it was right for the Bolsheviks to kill the Romanov children. Had the Tsar's children lived they might have served as 'a living banner' for the enemies of the Bolsheviks, who represented the proletariat.

The criticism must always be: who was doing it to whom, and to what end? That was moral which was considered necessary to keep the proletariat's vanguard party in power.

Here we come upon the old problem of ends and means. Does the end always justify the means? May there be feedback from means to ends?

In *Their Morals and Ours*, Trotsky quotes — from Lassalle's play *Franz von Sickingen* — the warning given by Frank to Ulrich von Hutten when the latter has advocated a certain course of action:

Show not the goal alone
But show also the path.
So closely interwoven are
path and goal
That each with other ever

Smear by speculation

THE question is asked (Workers Press 16 December 1995) 'Are they [Building Worker Group] an anti-union group or what?' Smear by speculation!

The short answer is — no. [See also page 7.] But we are most definitely against trade union officials selling out jobs, wages, conditions and basic trade union and working-class principles.

It is the actions of people like these which in fact undermine trade union organisation, discredit it in the process, and cause building and other workers to have no confidence in it whatsoever. It is most definitely not those struggling and prepared to struggle against the odds and often their own union officials!

Tony O'Brien writes that he and his stewards are putting up a fight for principles and asks the readers to 'Compare this with the "Building Worker Group" whose leaflets call for [his] removal even though they know that Southwark council has given [him] a redundancy notice'.

The only principles we see him defending are those of the 'free' market economy. He is the only one to be offered redundancy to date. Why are none of the other workers offered it instead of transfers? Whatever he is offered should be made public and set a bench mark for all the other workers.

He uses the word removal and places it in the context of redundancy. Thus making it appear that we're calling for his sacking. What we actually wrote in our

September 1995 Bulletin on Southark is:

'You've gone beyond the pale Mr O'Brien. You're no longer fit to represent the DLO building workers or what's left of them! You should resign! If you don't, there should be a mass meeting to give the DLO workers the opportunity to democratically decide what to do about the convenor and general situation.'

We believe this applies equally if not more today! We are of the unshakeable opinion that O'Brien had a definite hand in the attempts to transfer Terry and Johnny [to a private company which won a Southwark council building department contract under Compulsory Competitive Tendering] and in their subsequent sackings for refusing this.

This is because Johnny Jones has been such a thorn in O'Brien's side over the years and has been the only steward to consistently stand up to him in this time.

O'Brien writes of how he stood outside a site with a placard round his neck protesting about his victimisation. We suggest he does this once again. Only this time the placard should read 'I am an arch scab, do not touch with a bargepole.'

In fact to our knowledge, he is the biggest scab in the UK trade union and labour movement at present, and that takes some doing!

Brian Higgins
Secretary, Building Worker Group

Putting the record straight

The EDITOR responds: TONY O'BRIEN, secretary of the Southwark Direct Labour building workers' Shop Stewards Committee, was given a 90-day redundancy notice by Southwark council on 1 October 1995 because 'they did not need a trade union convenor'.

The Shop Stewards Committee and a mass meeting of the workers gave notice that if this was not withdrawn they would take industrial action to defend him. At present, notice has been extended to the end of March 1996. Negotiations proceed.

Backing for 'Crisis in the labour movement' conference

Statement of the International Socialist League, section of the Workers International League/Fourth International (LIT/C), in support of the 'Crisis in the labour movement' conference on Saturday 16 March

THERE is clearly a new upsurge of workers in the world. The signs in Britain cannot be denied and are giving heart even to the most downcast of the generation of fighters who have been disheartened by the retreats of the 1980s.

Bitterness and anger against the Tory government and its assistance to capitalist greed and decay is all around us. It is now hated by the youth, wide sections of the working class and the middle class.

There is a widespread feeling now against privatisation; against attacks on health and education, quangos and the anti-democratic institutions of capitalism; against the corruption among parliamentary representatives and in capitalist institutions; against greed and hypocrisy among the capitalist owners of businesses and banks.

With the rise of the world struggle, there comes an increase of international consciousness.

The effect of action of 500 men in Liverpool sweeps through the world with a reaction from Japan to the USA, from Spain to Australia.

Everywhere today the same problems come up before workers, thus a struggle against casual labour can unite workers throughout the world.

The need for a unity of all these feelings for change in Britain is what poses a new labour socialist alliance.

Who politically represents and really fights for the unemployed and homeless? For the old, the sick and disabled? For the young?

Who politically represents and fights for the dockers of Liverpool who are opposing the return to casualisation on the docks?

Who gives political representation to those trade unionists who are suffering political repression today?

Blair speaks for none of these people.

The laws against secondary picketing and the laws against union organisation in the workplace were political class acts against the organised workers, in many ways far worse than the Taff Vale judgement (1901) and the attacks on workers' organisations which stimulated the desire for political representation at the beginning of the century. Blair is for continuing those attacks!

Agitating

Blair and his 'New Labour' make no campaign on the issues which are agitating large numbers of men and women. Quite the contrary.

Their central crime is that they disenfranchise the very forces — the working-class masses — who made the great step in breaking with the Tory and Liberal parties and forming the Labour Party as their independent political expression.

No wonder that the dockers'

representative — engaged in a bitter struggle for the last trade union organisation among Britain's dock workers — began his speech, at a Liverpool meeting to discuss the new party in December, by saying: 'We are in the position we were 100 years ago.'

A Labour government will shortly be swept into office. It will be a government of crisis because the continuance of pro-capitalist policies will be opposed to the very tide which will defeat the Tories.

Larger numbers of thinking workers and socialists will feel more than ever the need of a new socialist labour movement. There must be a continuous dialogue among all those who are being pushed into struggle and who want seriously to face the problems of socialist leadership.

We welcome the call of Arthur Scargill but believe that the way the development of the Socialist Labour Party is conceived as going from the top downwards is an obstacle to its evolution. Those who have called it, have their eyes turned to the past and fail to realise the nature of the deep movements in Britain.

There is the struggle rising again in the unions; there are the movements among the youth; among a mass of people facing an abyss of uncertainty and deprivation; all contain a desire for a deep change in society.

Even the single-issue struggles come from a reaction to expressions of the profound decay of this system. All have a profound anti-capitalist content, but they cannot be strait-jacketed into decisions from above.

We welcome Militant Labour's pre-condition for a new party — or an alliance, as we foresee it — that it should be 'democratic, inclusive and not exclusive'.

The first step is a united alliance against capitalism, Toryism and the anti-socialist philistines who are leading the Labour Party. A united alliance that decides its constitution and policies out of present general agreement and necessities of unity in struggle.

Lessons

This is a movement of new generations coming into struggle and having to relearn old lessons. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that it be a movement of tendencies, loyal to each other in their agreed struggle, but teaching and learning the ability to discuss their differences.

What is needed is nothing less than to forward a collective endeavour to draw the lessons of experience of working-class leadership among all men and women concerned with the anti-capitalist struggle and hostile to the betrayal of socialist principles by leaders of the labour movement.

Workers Press has already taken the initiative in organising a conference on the need for a new party which will now be held in London on Saturday 16 March.

We welcome that, and believe that all those who are discussing a new socialist labour party or alliance should attend this conference, including supporters of the Socialist Labour Party led by Arthur Scargill.

■ See front page ad.

Ireland: Where now for Republicans?

BY JOHN STEELE

IT SEEMED all previous capitulations by Sinn Fein's leadership and its president Gerry Adams would be enough to see them sitting around the negotiating table with the British government and the other northern Irish political parties once a compromise was reached on 'surrendering arms'.

But it's not to be. The international commission headed by US Senator George Mitchell, which gave its report last week, was designed to produce this compromise and it duly obliged.

Mitchell proposed that the IRA and loyalist weapons should be handed over in tandem with all-party talks and that this disarming should be monitored and verified by an independent body agreed by the British and Irish governments.

However prime minister John Major, reflecting the contempt of British imperialism for the leaders of Irish nationalism once they accept the 'peaceful democratic' road, was intent on rubbing salt into these self-inflicted wounds.

Sidelined

He sidelined the main thrust and proposals of the Mitchell report. Taking just one reference from it, Major announced elections to a non-legislative assembly in Belfast which would



Adams has led the Republican movement and its supporters into a political cul-de-sac

attempt to reach a consensus on further negotiations and 'contribute to the building of confidence'.

This will put back any prospect of Sinn Fein being involved in their cherished all-party talks for at least six months.

It is also a deliberate snub to Irish premier John Bruton who had an agreement from Major that these talks would begin by the end of February. Dublin politicians and newspapers, united in their anger, describe it as a 'mugging'.

Major's decision is undoubtedly influenced by his fear of alienating the Unionist MPs on whom he might have to depend for survival in a parliamentary no-confidence vote.

But his treatment of Bruton and Adams, and his contempt for agreements made with Dublin, illustrate the historic weakness of the ideology of Irish national-

ism and its subordinate role in dealings with Britain.

The political bankruptcy of Sinn Fein and its inability to forge a strategy independent from the structures developed by British imperialism is confirmed by Adams's acceptance of the so-called 'principles' of the Mitchell report.

Proposals

As well as the proposals on disarmament, these include:

- 'the democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues';
- 'the renunciation of violence and opposition to any other group using force or threat of force to influence negotiations';
- 'agreement to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and use of democratic and peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect

of the outcome with which they may disagree'.

At last week's Bloody Sunday commemoration march in Derry, Sinn Fein leader Martin McGuinness told a 10,000-strong rally that they would not take part in the new body sought by Unionists and the British government.

But where else have they to go? They have already committed themselves to the essentials of the Downing Street Declaration with its intention of restoring an elected legislature at Stormont.

The pressure from rank-and-file Republicans may force Sinn Fein to boycott these current proposals but they will eventually find their place in shoring up a six-county administration.

On the backs of the struggles and sacrifices of tens of thousands of Irish workers Adams has led the Republican movement and its supporters into a political cul-de-sac.

Support for Bongani Mkhungo

This is the text of a fax from Tower Hamlets trades council to the leaders of the South African trade union federation, COSATU. The fax is to protest against threat made against the life of our comrade, Workers International member Bongani, at the tenth anniversary celebrations of COSATU in Durban on 2 December 1995 (see Workers Press reports from December 1995).

IT HAS recently come to our attention that comrade Bongani Mkhungo, a member of COSATU and of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, was attacked and threatened with his life at a COSATU rally in Natal province, South Africa.

Since then his children have been threatened with guns and we know he lives in fear of his life. The trades council, which has ten affiliated trade unions in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, has instructed me to express our concern and dismay at the actions taken by these members of COSATU.

Solidarity

Bongani was a guest of myself on a previous visit to Britain and has in the past raised the question of the need for workers in Britain to organise solidarity with workers in South Africa in pursuance of their just and legitimate demands for the betterment of their working conditions, equality of rights before the law and for the building of workers' organisations in pursuance of their class interests.

We have always stood for the destruction of apartheid and many delegates were involved in the past in the anti-apartheid movement.

They do not all share Bongani's views but they do share a common concern that a worker distributing leaflets, namely Bongani — taking up the cause of the Transkei nurses and demanding that COSATU should end its political alliance with the 'Government of National Unity' — should be threatened in this way.

Violence

We know that in South Africa now such threats are often carried out. We are completely opposed to violence being perpetrated by members of the workers' movement against other members of the workers' movement in order to silence differences of political perspective or tactics.

Proper and open freedom of debate inside the workers' movement is the lifeblood of the movement. It suppression can only act against the interests of the workers' movement.

We ask you to condemn these attacks publicly and unreservedly, to instruct those involved to cease their intimidation forthwith, and to ensure Bongani's safety. We look forward to continuing to support you in your struggles in defence of the interests of workers in South Africa.

Yours in solidarity,
Phil Edwards
(Secretary, Tower Hamlets Trades Union Council)

■ Please send resolutions and letters to COSATU, fax: 00 27 11 339 6940. Copies to Workers International: 0171-387 0569.

We are also asking for funds to help arrange for the protection of our comrade Bongani Mkhungo. Donations to 'South Africa Solidarity Fund', and sent to Workers International, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Asylum Bill danger of mass deportations

BY MIKE RAHMAN
Journalist and refugee from Guyana, and chair of the National Union of Refugee Organisations

THE threatened deportation of Mohammed Al-Mas'ari, the Saudi Arabian opposition leader, to the former British colony of Dominica, has totally exposed the government's case for new immigration laws.

Kenneth Clarke, the former Home Secretary, said that the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act aimed to close 'all the loopholes in our present laws'. Why then the new set of laws? Present Home Secretary Michael Howard — the son of Jewish immigrants, who, with his relatives, fled persecution from Hitler's Germany — says that 'we need fair and just immigration laws to prevent bogus refugees entering Britain'.

He claims that more than 80 per cent of asylum seekers are bogus. 'They are economic refugees,' he says.

Howard accepts that Al Mas'ari is a genuine refugee. But when questioned about his deportation, he says that the right of political refugees has to be weighed against British economic interests.

He is also reported to have said in India that a refusal to deport Al Mas'ari would have been detrimental to Britain and would have cost jobs.

In this case and many others the government has flagrantly violated the UN convention which established the right of refugees to political asylum.

Article 1 of the 1951 UN convention defines a refugee as a person with 'a well-founded fear

of being persecuted... who is outside his or her country and due to fear is unwilling to return to it'.

It is clear to everybody that the British government grants political asylum only to those it chooses, based on its own misinterpretation of the UN convention.

The result is that the vast majority of genuine asylum seekers are being given only 'Exceptional Leave to Remain'. This means that they stay here for one year only, with the possibility of stopping longer — but only at the home secretary's discretion.

A large proportion of refugees do not get their stay extended and are forced to remain here 'illegally'.

It is estimated that there are between 50,000 and 100,000 unregistered immigrants now living in Britain. Last year some 5,000 such people, including women and children, were forcibly deported.

Some of the most barbaric and inhumane methods, normally reserved for animals, were used to deport them. There is no justification for a fresh set of laws.

Documents

The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act of 1993, which amended the earlier Carriers Liability Act, imposed a fine of £2,000 on all airlines that brought refugees into Britain without proper documents. The fine was later doubled.

As is well known, many asylum seekers are often forced to flee their own countries in tense and violent circumstances.

It is almost impossible for a refugee running away from terror and persecution to apply for valid travel documents without alerting hostile government offi-

cials of their plans. This is why many refugees have to use forged passports and documents.

There is no provision under UK immigration laws for issuing visas to asylum seekers in their own countries.

The Carriers Liability Act in effect delegates to airline workers the crucial decision as to whether someone can apply for asylum in this country.

In some cases asylum seekers have been stopped from getting off planes on arrival at Heathrow and Gatwick when carrier staff have discovered false documents.

Since 1987, airlines and shipping companies have been fined a total of £300 million.

James Foster, manager of procedures and facilities for British Airways, was quoted in the Independent (10 July 1991) as saying: 'We could refuse a genuine asylum seeker, yes'.

This single provision in the act has led to a sharp drop in the number of applicants for asylum. Most potential applicants were from Asia and Africa.

Between January and May 1991, the largest number of applicants came from Zaire (3,129), Angola (2,851), Sri Lanka (2,128), Pakistan (1,545), Ghana (1,369), Uganda (1,081) and Turkey (990). Most of these countries have well documented histories of civil war, repression or widespread lack of civil and political rights.

The new legislation, if implemented, will result in refugees and migrants sleeping on the street, since they will lose their right to income support and housing benefit. There is the real danger of mass deportations.

Thousands are already living here 'illegally', and many more will be driven underground. They will be at the mercy of the

police who are to be given wide powers to arrest suspected immigrants, which is likely to produce more deaths like Joy Gardner's, the Jamaican woman who died at the hands of immigration officers.

Offence

The proposed laws will make it a criminal offence to employ 'illegal' immigrants. It will place a heavy burden on employers to police the jobs market and will result in open discrimination against black and ethnic minority workers.

This move underlines the government's rejection of the European Union's social chapter, which calls for decent wages, better working and living conditions.

The new restrictions on employers will result in yet lower wages.

At the moment unregistered migrants and refugees provide cheap labour throughout Britain, especially in the service industries, where government subcontractors are the biggest employers of such workers.

These workers make an invaluable contribution to the economy but have no rights and get little reward for their labour.

Women suffer doubly. Like men they work long hours for meagre wages but often suffer the crudity of sexual exploitation by ruthless employers who are aware of their 'illegal' status or that of their partners. Like all unregistered migrants they are excluded from the trade unions.

Single women with young children often have to fit their working hours around school hours because they cannot afford child minders, which means they

can often only work part-time. Others are forced to take as many as three low-paid jobs in order to try and make ends meet.

Unregistered migrants are also denied free medical treatment and have to resort to private medicine, which they can ill-afford. They and their dependants are thereby at risk from long-term illnesses.

It is not simply the Tories who are guilty of using racist immigration laws.

The Labour Party has been responsible in the past for introducing some of the harshest immigration laws ever seen. Like their predecessors the present Labour leaders have never tackled the cause of the problem but have always look for immediate remedies.

Immigration laws have been implemented at a time of severe economic and social crisis and the knee-jerk reaction from the Labour leaders is the same as the Tories — restrict the flow of people coming to this country and deport those who are 'overstayers'.

The immediate solution to the thousands of people who have no

legal rights to stay here is to offer them an amnesty.

The campaign 'Amnesty for Refugees and Unregistered Migrants' will in no way compromise the call for the complete repeal of all racist immigration laws in this country and the rest of the European Union.

But this campaign will certainly lay the basis for the launch of a sustained fight back against the immigration laws and in so doing will put an end to the super-exploitation of people who usually have to work like slaves.

Solution

The longer-term solution lies in the collective effort of the whole of humanity to work out a global strategy of democratic control of the world's economy, which can lay the basis for full employment, cheap housing, free education and medical care for all. In that way people will not be driven to leave their homelands in search of a safe and better life.

■ Asylum and Immigration Bill demonstration, Saturday 24 February, Embankment, 11am.

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Inside left No angel

WHEN Labour's national executive rejected former Islington councillor Tony Davies's adoption as candidate for North-East Leeds, they relied on evidence from ex-colleagues like James Winston, who queried her loyalty and fitness for parliamentary office.

Now, according to *Tribune* (26 January), Councillor Winston has been suspended from the Labour whip. He is facing investigations; by the police, a council committee, and Islington North constituency. They pertain to housing benefit, destruction of documents, alleged threatening threats in a row over refreshments, and the disappearance of the famous red flag from the town hall square.

Tribune's John Cryer says chief whip Stephen Twigg, whom we remember for his moderate leadership in the National Union of Students, has been criticised for lack of vigour in pursuing investigations. Twigg also ordered a damning report on Islington's schools, which somehow reached the hands of the Tory MP for Chesham and Amersham, and hence the national papers. ('Islington left whip lashed over education report', *Tribune*, 26 January. You read about these things...)

Hillman Imp

The death of Ellis Hillman, soon after that of Sam Levy, is a sad loss, particularly to the journal *Revolutionary History*. Very different temperaments, each made a contribution. As a student, young Ellis Hillman wrote to Trotsky's widow Natalia. With Cyril Smith he joined the Labour League of Youth, and the group that started *Keep Left* in 1952. After Labour's right-wing bureaucrats disbanded the youth movement in 1955, this paper became a vital link between local youth sections, and a way of reaching young workers.

When the Trotskyist movement split over Michel Pablo's adaptation of Stalinism, the group joined Gerry Daly's 'Club'. New forces were won following Khrushchev's speech, the Hungarian revolution and the Suez crisis. In 1957 Ellis Hillman contributed an interesting article on Israel to *Labour Review*. But he opposed the launch of the Socialist Labour League in 1959, arguing it would invite expulsion from the Labour Party.

He'd been elected to the London County Council in 1958, and soldiered on until 1981. As chair of Arts and Recreation he was credited with saving the Kenwood concerts. In 1994 he became first Labour mayor of Barnet. From the mayor's parlour went Margaret Thatcher's bust, replaced by Aneurin Bevan. The Lewis Carroll Society (founder E. Hillman) mounted an exhibition at the local museum.

I remember watching an unsuspecting Marxist Party member approach him with their little magazine. 'Tell me,' said Ellis, all-innocence, 'What's the difference between Mao's theory, of "the self-reform of bureaucracy", and what Gerry Daly's saying now about Gorbachev? Collapse of stout party (M. Barney).

Loving intrigue and gossip, having changed to opposing left-wing tenants, (and ended up life-president of the Flat Earth Society), Ellis Hillman had a wicked sense of humour, and would be delighted to hear people arguing now over where his allegiance lay.

Charlie Perkins

Plan fails to meet Eurocurrency German bosses face hurricane

BY BOB ARCHER

MANY business circles in Germany are not impressed with a government action plan to combat economic difficulties and reduce unemployment.

The government economic report for 1996 was produced last Friday after talks with the 'social partners', union leaders and representatives of employers' organisations.

Most worrying is that the government predicts its budget deficit for 1996 will be 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) — too high to meet the criteria for participating in the European currency union. In 1995, the government debt ran at 3.6 per cent. Germany's overall state debt is equal to 58.2 per cent of its gross national product (GNP) for 1995.

The state debts are high for two

main reasons. First the government is paying huge sums of money to sustain the 'new federal states' in the former DDR and to prevent their economic collapse.

Second, the German economy has been weakened, not strengthened, by reunification. Economic growth is expected to be a meager 1.5 per cent in 1996.

Sharpening international competition is the underlying factor exacerbating these problems.

Giant

The head of the giant Siemens conglomerate, Heinrich von Pierer, said:

'The wind of competition has become a storm. The real hurricane is still in front of us.'

Although trade union and social-democratic leaders have offered an 'alliance for jobs' involving a wages

standstill and much greater flexibility, unemployment is to increase by 300,000 to 3.9 million, or 10 per cent of the workforce (up from 9.9 per cent last December).

The employers' negotiating bodies have accepted the offer. The joint plan is now called the 'Alliance for Jobs and to Secure Germany as a Place to do Business'.

Chancellor Kohl's 'economic cabinet' has adopted the plan and tacked on a series of measures to stimulate the economy and reduce unemployment.

There are measures, including tax breaks, to help new businesses to get started. But the guts of the report is a series of severe cuts.

Health and national insurance, pension payments and taxes, add 80 pfennigs to every mark that a German employer pays to the workers.

German workers have excellent sick-pay and maternity leave

arrangements. These are to be slashed in the hope of making Germany competitive on world markets and attractive as a place to do business.

Agreement

There is not yet any agreement about the extent of cuts in insurance contributions or in government expenditure, but they are bound to hurt badly.

The plan anticipates new government debts of 60 billion marks in 1996. Tax cuts of between 45 and 50 billion marks are expected in 1997 and 1998.

Meanwhile consumer prices are either holding steady or even falling in some sectors — further evidence of increasingly hard times ahead.

Lack of consumer spending has led to a bitter price war in retail trade. Some observers talk about a

'Alliance

KLAUS ZWICKEL, the leader of Germany's engineering and metal-working union IG Metall, certainly grabbed the headlines on Christmas Day 1995.

He suggested that all overtime should be offset against regular working hours.

Thus, say a worker had to do two hours' overtime to get a job finished, she or he would, for example, come into work two hours later the next day.

The overtime rate would be paid, but not the basic rate for the two hours worked.

In return, Zwickel wanted guarantees from the engineering employers that they would lay on between 70,000 and 80,000 new workers.

Zwickel had first put forward his idea of an 'Alliance for Jobs' two months previously. At first it was presented as a way of combatting the widespread discussion among employers about Germany's lack of competitiveness on world markets.

But there is a logic to this kind of class collaboration, and it rapidly unwound.

At Christmas, Zwickel was still insisting that the 1996 engineering wage increase (already negotiated) must be adhered to. He 'uncompromisingly' rejected employers' calls for workers' legal protection against sacking to be relaxed.

But pressure was already coming from the machine-tool industry for a wage freeze in return for a fund to create new jobs. Michel Rogowski, a spokesperson for the employers' association (VDMA), proposed that wage increases should depend on productivity increases measured in falls in unit costs.

He thus started to trespass on the territory of the engineering employers' legally established negotiating body, the famous Gesamtmetall.

By 27 December the white-collar



'Money is needed for shipyards — without help shipbuilding is dead!' German shipyard workers' demonstration, 1995

'Mittelstand' calls for cuts

GERMAN municipal government could save between 20 and 50 per cent of its costs through privatising services.

These are the findings of a study by the Association of Medium Sized Business Economics (BVMW).

The association thinks utilities, transport, telecommunications and local authority building could be done better and more cheaply by private firms.

They want to change the law to make privatisation a priority. They also want to place the burden of proof on local authority depart-

ments to show they can do the job more cheaply than private businesses.

There is no report on whether the association has studied the chaos caused by attempts to introduce Compulsory Competitive Tendering into local government in Britain.

But UNISON members should deluge the ÖTV (Germany's public sector union) with details about the suffering that has been caused here.

A simple answer

US economist Lester C. Thurow has a simple answer to Germany's economic problems.

'All that needs to happen is for real wages to fall,' he told an audience in Baden-Baden last week.

He said the cut in real purchasing power would end once and for all the danger of any fresh inflation.

He attacked the most hallowed of all German economic institutions, the Bundesbank, saying 'institutions to combat inflation are superfluous'.

Thurow told his audience the political changes of 1989 had created the conditions for a completely new economic order in the world, releasing massive raw material reserves in the former Soviet bloc.

He particularly emphasised the effects of economic globalisation.

His remarks were carefully recorded on the front page of *Die Welt's* economic section.

targets ses ne

downward spiral in prices leading to a bad collapse in retail prices.

There are worries that this would stop investment in the production of consumer goods, further curbing the money available for spending. Japan is pointed to as an example of this spiral in action.

While it will stir up real opposition to cuts in benefits and services, Kohl's plan, however harsh, fails to go far enough to meet the needs of German business and industry.

Bitter social struggles are bound to erupt in Germany.

The government's failure to take the firm action many business experts are calling for is a measure above all of one thing: Kohl wants to avoid a head-on collision with the working class under conditions where he is not confident the ruling class will win.

He is desperate to avoid the mistakes Alain Juppé made in France.



'How many more mistakes can this management make?' Protest against sackings

for Jobs' ties unions' hands

union (DAG) officially supported the 'Alliance for Jobs' and offered to forego the 1996 increase where firms made binding promises to employ new labour.

Zwickel meanwhile had made it clear he would consider trading away a wage increase in engineering in 1997 if new jobs were offered by the employers.

The 'uncompromising' defence of agreements and gains really started to crumble.

Meanwhile, in a development typical of the 'social market economy' that is so rapidly disintegrating in Germany, the president of the Federal Employment Service, a Mr Jagoda, severely criticised employers for being 'too cautious in employing new workers'.

He said that Germany was 'short of between 5 and 7 million jobs'.

Jagoda also pointed out that some employers were raking in exceptional profits and called on Chancellor Kohl (his boss) to enter talks with the unions.

Meanwhile the unions had already agreed to discussions on the basis that they would moderate future wage negotiations if the employers made binding promises to increase the number of jobs 'considerably' in the next three years.

Cuts

At the same time the DGB (the German TUC) was loudly insisting that planned cuts in unemployment benefit and social security benefits should be dropped.

A straw in the wind came on 29 December 1995 when the (conservative) CDU party in the state of Brandenburg offered to join the 'Pact For Jobs' put forward by Social-democratic state premier Stolpe.

But in return the state CDU demanded that 'sacred cows' in the

employment field should be looked at again. This was to open the door to discussions on flexible working hours, special help for the unemployed to set up small businesses and specially low 'starting wages'.

Stolpe's own plan involved joint action on jobs by employers, the unions and other bodies, including the churches.

The employers kept upping the ante. Borrowing from the Thatcherite right in Britain, they started to demand that pensions and unemployment benefits should be cut and that dole should only be paid to 'genuine jobseekers'.

In response the unions became more and more conciliatory. By 29 December 1995 the Berlin *Tagesspiegel*, which covers the life of the Social-democratic Party (SPD) very thoroughly, was trumpeting that:

'The clarity with which the unions are prepared to accept sacrifices on behalf of their members which a short while ago would have been unthinkable... must send a signal to the employers that their negotiating partners are ready for a fundamental rethink.'

'The unions in the DGB and the DAG have freed themselves from several dogmas. One of them is "wage restraint doesn't create jobs".'

By mid-January the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) was encouraging Zwickel to renegotiate the 1996 wage deal on the grounds of the poor economic situation. The DIW is generally regarded as being the closest to the unions of the 'big five' economic units.

However the political weekly *Die Zeit* pointed out that if Zwickel did agree to this he would 'have the distrustful rank and file on his neck'.

The paper on that day had a harsh word for the new president of the German civil service union (DBB),

Erhard Gayer. Gayer had rejected a call for a wage freeze or even cuts in civil service pay, angrily recalling the Emergency Decrees against labour in the later years of the Weimar Republic.

But in the week before the union leaders met with the employers and the Chancellor, even Social-democratic circles were demanding far greater cuts in civil service jobs, state services, benefits and health, and pension entitlements (see 'Germany next for social strife?', *Workers Press*, 27 January).

Haggling

Whatever the haggling over detail, the union leaders are now thoroughly committed to selling wages and conditions and a huge range of social benefits for the rather vague promise of jobs.

And what about these new jobs? So far only the Volkswagen car makers have promised to lay on 1,000 workers at their Wolfsburg plant.

The news was greeted with euphoria in the town, where the labour exchange was overwhelmed with applicants. None of them was taken on.

The real situation is that last year Volkswagen sacked 2,900 workers. Even the right-wing Hamburg daily *Die Welt* compared Volkswagen personnel boss Hartz to a used-car dealer cooking the books to cover up his losses.

Meanwhile, as the leaders of the unions and the Social-democratic party retreat and the sackings and cuts continue, Germany's stock exchange is enjoying a fabulous boom.

The DAX share index reached record levels in the week beginning 22 January, falling back a little at the end of the week. Evidently an economic crisis is good for business!

City Lights

Labour's pension shake-up

PEOPLE should be forced to save for their own pensions, according to a report issued last week, *Pensions 2000 and Beyond*. It was drawn up by a team representing the employers, the City, unions and Whitehall.

Its conclusions are remarkably similar to those published by the so-called Commission on Social Justice, the 'think tank' set up by former Labour Party leader, John Smith.

Commenting on the report, last week's *Economist* says:

'Reforming Britain's pension system is shaping up to be a crucial battleground in the coming election. After 20 years in which all the running was made by the Tories, who curbed the growth of the state-pension bill and encouraged private pensions, Tony Blair is at last goading Labour into some fresh thinking.'

'He regards pension (and welfare) reforms as a key part of creating a "stakeholder society".'

From 1980, the state pension has risen only in line with prices and not, as previously, with average earnings. This has meant that the gap between those in work and those retired is widening all the time. The Labour Party leaders have dropped their pledge, made at the 1982 Party conference, to restore the link between the retirement pension and average male earnings.

The report proposes that the present arrangements be scrapped in favour of a two-tier system. Those already retired from work would receive an 'assured pension' consisting of a basic minimum pension which would be topped up by a second means-tested element.

Meanwhile, all those in work would have to pay into a second pension fund to finance this second element.

The inquiry's chairman, former Treasury official Sir John Anson, says bluntly that it is 'not possible' to restore the pension to a level that would guarantee an adequate level of income for all.

The pension is today equivalent to only 15 per cent of average male earnings and on current trends will be worth only 9 per cent by the year 2030. To increase it to the equivalent of 20 per cent of average male earnings — where it stood in 1979 — would cost £6.6 billion immediately and almost £50 billion by the year 2030.

The report remains silent on two crucial questions:

■ Nothing is said about the level at which the 'assured pension' should be fixed.

■ Every worker would initially have to have to pay 2.8 per cent of his or her wages into the scheme, with a similar amount coming from the employer. This figure would rise gradually over time. But to what level? We are not told.

The background to the report is a growing crisis over pensions throughout the capitalist world. Unfortunately for the capitalist system, people are living too long. In the advanced capitalist countries people retiring at 65 can expect on average to live a further 15 or 20 years. A century ago, you would, on average, already have been dead.

In 1990, some 18 per cent of people in the OECD countries (the advanced countries) were aged over 60. By the year 2030 the figure will have risen to 30 per cent. The share of the 'oldest old' — those over 80 — is set to double over this same period.

In most of Asia and Latin America the share of the over-60s is set to double by the year 2030; in China the figure will rise from its present 10 per cent to over a fifth. By the end of the

century there will be 400 million people over 60 in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

The elderly are more likely to need medical and residential care — assuming they are available. That is why these things are under such heavy attack.

The vast majority of these people do not produce surplus value and are therefore a sheer burden for the capitalist system.

Britain is part of these global trends. In the 1960s there were more than four people of working age for every pensioner; today that ratio is 3.3 to one and by the year 2030 it is predicted that there will be only 2.7 workers for each pensioner.

The problem is compounded in that increasing numbers of 'working age' are not in fact working. Even in the strongest economy in Europe, Germany, the number of unemployed now stands at 6 million.

The proposals from Anson's committee are drastic. For they involve the gradual elimination of a pension guaranteed as of right in favour of means-tested benefits. But for some they do not go far enough.

Last week the *Economist* called for the immediate scrapping of the state pension for all those 'who do not need it'. And you can guess the sort of people who will judge what constitutes need.

The runaway peer

YOU probably don't know of the death of the eighth Earl of Warwick. His only claim to fame was as 'the Peer who ran away'. His home and ancestral pile used to be Warwick Castle, one of the finest medieval buildings in Europe, what Sir Walter Scott called 'the fairest monument of ancient and chivalrous splendour which yet remains uninjured by time.'

His father, the seventh Earl, had passed it on to his son and heir early in life as part of a tax evasion scheme.

In 1978, 'Brookie', as the noble eighth Earl was known to his cronies, flogged the castle to Madame Tussaud's and decamped to Paris, then Gastad, Bermuda and Spain. He was no Lord Lucan, nor was he in need of the money, for he never lacked for the odd bob or two.

That was the problem. He was convinced that the Labour government of James Callaghan was so under the baleful influence of Tony Benn that his castle was about to be confiscated and his earnings slashed by punitive taxation.

To some extent Brookie broke with tradition. His great-grandmother, Daisy Warwick, apart from being mistress of both Lord Kitchener and Edward, Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, had once stood as a Labour candidate.

The pity of it all was that only a year after his flight abroad the dreaded Bolshie Benn and his fellow expropriators fell at the hands of Mrs Thatcher.

This bizarre attitude to the likes of poor old Wedgie and company was, it seems, formed from an early age. For Brookie never forgot the day at his prep school, St Leonards in Sussex, in 1945 when he read a newspaper report of a Labour minister Aneurin Bevan's gibe that the Tories were 'lower than vermin'.

How many of today's Noble Lords, even those as unbalanced as Brookie, sleep fitfully at the thought of the next Labour government? No prizes for guessing. In fact you can expect a number of blue-blooded 'tax exiles' to return once Blair enters number 10.

Threadneedle

Preserving disorder

ONE fine evening in June 1991 three friends left the Royal College of Art and walked together into Soho, intending to go to a restaurant.

One of them was a teacher, 41-year-old Paul Delmuth. Another was a photographer, 40-year-old Malcolm Glover. The third was a solicitor, 31-year-old Clare Roberts.

Suddenly, in Old Compton Street, two policemen shouted at them to stop, whereupon Paul Delmuth put his hand in his pocket, took out a matchbox, and dropped a very small piece of cannabis.

One of the policemen, PC Martin Heap, ran over to him, put his hand across the base of his neck, and started pressing on his windpipe. Delmuth was then handcuffed and thrown face down on the pavement.

PC Heap put his foot on Delmuth's head, causing him to splutter in an effort to draw breath. He almost passed out.

Claire Roberts was grabbed and held in an armlock and Malcolm Glover was detained. The three were put in the back of a police van.

'Get that tart out of here', shouted one policeman.

On the way to West End Central police station PC Heap thought fit to put Delmuth in a headlock, all the while laughing and joking about what he was doing.

When the van reached the station the three were thrown out bodily. Delmuth lost consciousness and was found lying in a pool of blood.

At the station, while Glover was being questioned, he was asked what Delmuth did for a living and replied that he was a teacher.

'Oh, one of those Trotskyites?' commented the interviewing officer.

The three were charged variously with possession of illegal drugs or obstructing the police. But when the case came up at Great Marlborough Street magistrates' court the police offered no evidence.

Last week, an agreed county court statement set out the three friends' complaints of assault and battery, false imprisonment, and malicious prosecution.

The Metropolitan Police denied liability but agreed to pay £20,000 to Paul Delmuth and £12,000 each to the other two. Damages and costs together total almost £90,000. But there has been no apology.

And it seems unlikely that there will be one.

JUST after midnight on 16 December 1994, two policemen saw a man 'acting suspiciously' in Upper Clapton Road, north London.

According to them, he dropped two pieces of crack cocaine wrapped in cling-film, and when they went to pick them up he became violent and tried to escape.

He was taken to Homerton hospital in a police van, and soon after arrival he was found to be dead. Cause of death was asphyxiation.

The dead man was Shiji Lapite, a Nigerian asylum-seeker, a painter and decorator, and the father of two children. At the inquest, which ended last week, PC Paul Wright and PC Andrew McCallum admitted:

■ **Kicking** Lapite in the head;
■ **Biting** him; and
■ **Pinning** him down with a neckhold.

However, they denied using excessive force. PC McCallum said that yes, he had kicked Lapite in the head — but only because he believed he was going to be attacked.

The jury heard that a pathologist had counted 45 separate injuries to his body. His larynx had been crushed. The coroner said to PC Wright:

'You had just a graze to your elbow. There appears to be a great disparity of injuries, to say the least, between you and the deceased.'

PERSONAL COLUMN

The jury returned a verdict of unlawful killing. The Crown Prosecution Service had earlier ruled out a prosecution because there was 'insufficient evidence'.

'GENTLEMEN, get the thing straight once and for all', said Chicago's mayor Richard J. Daley, when he spoke to journalists about the riots that had taken place during the 1968 Democratic Party convention. 'The policeman isn't there to create disorder, the policeman is there to preserve disorder.'

Slip of the tongue or not, this puts in a nutshell the role of the police as a component part of the capitalist state machine. Its role is to preserve that highly profitable disorder known as capitalism. That is its essential function.

All its other functions are wholly secondary and could be performed — and performed much more efficiently — by civilians assisted by specialists in various aspects of crime detection.

In a rational and truly human society, there will be no police because there will be no need for them. Or, to put it another way, all the adults in a local community will take part in 'policing' it.

The need to preserve capitalist disorder has led the British state to give the police virtually everything they ask for in the way of pay and resources, to privilege and pamper them.

This feather-bedding of the police has had disastrous effects on the everyday conduct of young police officers. They have become coarse, arrogant, and overbearing beyond belief.

They swagger around like an army of occupation. They treat their civilian contemporaries, black and white alike, as colonial subjects in need of discipline.

And this contempt for, and vicious cruelty towards, the young unemployed, young black people, and the young homeless is now increasingly spilling over into assaults on 'respectable' middle-class citizens.

But police arrogance is not confined to the lower ranks. It runs right up to the top, like the letters in a stick of rock. And in London the tone is set by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner himself, who really ought to know better.

The Police Complaints Authority is currently investigating the death of Wayne Douglas in police custody at Brixton, south London. Wayne Douglas was not the first black person to die in police custody in this country since 1969. He was in fact the 51st.

It was no accident that Sir Paul Condon chose the very day on which the press revealed the various exploits of PCs Heap, Wright, and McCallum, detailed above, to attack the black community newspaper *The Voice* newspaper for being 'dangerously irresponsible', 'wildly irresponsible', 'inflammatory', and 'dangerously confrontational'.

This attack bears the hallmarks of a grubby public relations exercise designed as a 'spoiler' of the Soho assault story and of the unlawful killing verdict in the Lapite inquest.

The Voice acted quite properly in printing the eyewitness account of a man who saw Wayne Douglas being beaten by police before his death. When it scrutinises police behaviour towards the black community, it is only doing its duty.

Condon and the faceless spin-doctors who advise him on how to handle the press are on a slippery slope when they attack a newspaper for legitimately exercising its freedom.

Press freedom was won in struggle. We have to defend it, with the utmost vigilance, against those who desire to limit it or whittle it away.

Peter Fryer

Obituary

Pierre Journet 1934-95

WITH the French working class entering — in its latest big movement — a new phase of preparation for a renewed 'assault of the citadels', let us remember one of its most valorous and talented fighters who died on 3 October 1995.

Son of a workers' family in a Paris suburb, Pierre Journet had to change his school-desk for a work-bench in his early youth and became very rapidly a highly skilled tool-maker. A real master of his trade, he always despised those who saw the work only in terms of slavery. He tried to find again the other, human, significance of work as a true blossoming of humanity's direct and creative relationship to nature. It was precisely from this that came his profound hatred of capitalism which perverts work into painful travail at the same time as it also destroys nature.

Pierre did his military service during the Algerian revolution and war of independence.

Although he understood that war to be a profound injustice against the Algerian people, he stayed with his fellow-soldiers, working people in uniform, and jeered sarcastically at those 'lefts' who, following their trendy ideology Jean-Paul Sartre, advocated desertion. Some even left France — to Switzerland and other places — to desert.

He looked at this form of 'protest' as a petty-bourgeois excuse for deserting the real fight inside the army. He observed with irony that the mass of young workers had no real possibility to 'desert'.

With such experiences, along with those he accumulated in the factories, Pierre developed rapidly towards Trotskyism, represented at that time by the Lambertist (PCI, 'International Communist Party') organisation in France.

At the same time he continued his union work in the CGT union federation, which he always understood as a fight not only against the capitalists but also against the Stalinist and reformist leaderships. He often had to change his workplace because the bosses — and the Stalinists (!) — knowing his intransigence did everything to have him dismissed.

At each new place Pierre immediately joined the local CGT union — and, if necessary, would establish a branch! He organised industrial actions, prepared and led strike movements even where previously the union was unknown. In his peregrinations from factory to factory, in more and more bad and unhealthy working conditions, he contracted tuberculosis. In 1963, he was sent to hospital, and then to a sanatorium.

EVEN before this Pierre had avidly searched out knowledge. He seriously studied Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. His sharp and ironic criticisms of the 'peaceful co-existence' slogan of the Stalinists or against Mandel's 'neo-capitalism' were delivered with talent, a great sense of humour and plenty of living examples from his own rich experiences.

I always greatly regretted that he refused to write down his reflections, saying simply, and seriously believing — unfortunately and wrongly — that he was not sufficiently prepared for this.

Irony

Yet he immediately detected all false authority based on lack of knowledge (so widely used among a great number of would-be Trotskyists), which he always attacked with his inimitable irony and sarcasm.

Some years ago, at an international conference before the Workers International was founded, 'Pierrot' made fun, with his sharp sarcasm, of the ludi-

crous 'security' conceptions of a group from South Africa (WILSA) along with those comrades who took it seriously.

AFTER his illness it was impossible for him to return to a factory, which he always regretted. He had a new work in the social security services as a well appreciated member of its central maintenance crew.

It was only two months before the great general strike in 1968 in which he took a leading part in his new workplace as a member of the reformist-led Force Ouvrière union because the Stalinists had succeeded in expelling him from the CGT.

During the general strike he had several harsh confrontations and bitter clashes with the Stalinists as well as with the reformist leaders because of his principled fight for the centralisation of the strike movement at a national level. This was to make the strike into a direct confrontation with the government. Instead the Stalinist and reformist leaders were looking for a 'negotiation' from the beginning, ready for rotten compromises in the process.

After the strike it was impossible for him to remain in his workplace. Thanks to the strong presence of the Lambertist organisation in the social security services, and after he had obtained a new qualification in his trade, he was appointed as a monitor-instructor in a technical school workshop for the rehabilitation of invalids in a big sanatorium in southern France.

AN ENTIRELY new life began for him. He had to leave his beloved Paname (Paris) where he felt at home. But all his life he remained a Parisian worker, even in the countryside, with his joyful mischief and disrespect for everything. A true Parisian worker, with his Parisian slang which held no secrets for him.

Yet Pierrot maintained that there is a difference between the Parisian slang commonly spoken by underworld people and the Parisian worker's jargon much more linked to work and the workers' movement.

Anyway, he considered them as integral parts of the French language which he used to perfection and constantly developed by his reading.

In Dordogne, country of Cyrano de Bergerac and good wines, he was a Parisian worker wholly integrated to this new environment with his roguishness and humour, expressed in a kind of Parisian-worker jargon

— a 20th-century Cyrano fighting against capital and its servants.

For this he didn't have to go far. The Stalinists were in leading positions in his workshop and the whole sanatorium, all the time attacking this Trotskyist. Then Lambert launched his slander campaign against me and sent one central delegate after another to Pierre in order to implicate him in this campaign.

It was considered important for Pierre Lambert to compromise this outstanding and respected worker leader. But he failed to do so.

As always, Pierre Journet chose the principled way. Against his organisation, which he so profoundly honoured and with its leadership which he respected, he refused to follow them in this path. It was not an easy choice to condemn this vicious campaign. But he did so immediately.

And it was difficult to be left on one's own, outside the organisation and facing the Stalinists. Because the struggle became more and more bitter as Pierre unmasked the Stalinists' integration into the sanatorium's management in service of the state. At the same time he was alone, without an organisation to help him.

Movement

The situation was aggravated when, on the basis of a correct analysis of the great revolutionary movement of the Polish working class in 1980-81, he led the fight against the Stalinists while at the same time harshly criticising the partly opportunist, partly sectarian, pro-Stalinist positions of the petty-bourgeois currents.

And what had already been foreseen happened. Under Stalinist influence the management, without any valid reason and completely unlawfully, dismissed him from his work and even forbade him from entering the workshop!

Right up to his death neither he nor his family were allowed any compensation for this!

PIERRE didn't join us in the organisation which later came to be led by Anibal Ramos. He characterised Ramos, his French leader Assouline and their associates as a comical troop and he didn't want to merge with them.

But later, when we were expelled by Ramos and Co. and founded 'Combat International', he came into its French group. Then he wholly approved the dissolution of 'Combat International' as an international organisation and the entry of its

national groups into the Preparatory Committee which led to the formation of Workers International, against those comrades who saw it, at the beginning, as a 'liquidation'.

Before that, Pierre had already shown on each occasion his real internationalism. He was convinced that the world proletariat would raise his head. It was for this reason that he was so utterly critical of its traditional leaderships and of all those who had only the pretension of leadership.

He saw the proof of his confidence in the capacity of the working class as well as the proof of correctness of his sharp criticisms of political leaderships in the big 1980-81 action of the Polish working class as well as, later, in the great 1984-85 miners' strike in Britain.

He was convinced that the British miners' strike which he greatly admired had only retreated but was not defeated. On the contrary, he thought it presented a transition to a new epoch of working-class struggles. Thanks to our miner comrades, he was once invited to the Durham Miners' Gala and his confidence was strengthened by the fighting spirit of miners, and also by his acquaintance with some WRP comrades.

THIS international experience was certainly decisive when he looked to make a better contribution by building the party in France, despite his isolation and distance from Paris. Just at the point when he was in a good, but still difficult, personal situation to be able to take up a complete resumption of his party work, and even to lead it, a dreadful thing happened.

Suddenly he was accused of anti-semitism: a letter arrived from a party member to several comrades accusing him of anti-semitic declarations. It was too much for him, too much for anybody!

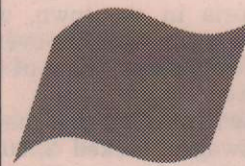
He was so profoundly shocked that, deeply wounded, he immediately withdrew from the organisation, from everything.

Pierrot anti-semitic? ... A lie, a slander! But he refused even to ask for an inquiry, and we didn't proceed to carry out such an inquiry in order to be able to clear him from this ignoble accusation. I bear a heavy personal responsibility for this omission.

Notwithstanding, Pierrot Journet remains one of the best fighters the French working class produced in our time. Despite mean accusations, he will stand in the memory of the international proletariat.

I express here my deepest and friendly sympathy and that of all those who appreciated Pierrot, to his wife Malou, who always in the worst hardships firmly backed and encouraged him, and to his son and daughter.

Balazs Nagy



The International

No.17

January 1996

Price £2.00

Journal of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International

THE new issue of *The International* contains a series of articles that no socialist or active worker will want to be without. The history of the struggle of the Vietnamese working class against imperialism is the subject of an article by Ngo Van, a veteran of the Vietnamese working-class and Trotskyist movement. It provides an invaluable background to Van's book *Revolutionaries They Could Not Break*.

Rex Dunn contributes an article on Modernism and postmodernism in the epoch of capitalist decay;

there is a contribution from Simon Pirani on a joint declaration issued last year by the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International and the Workers International League/Fourth International (LIT/CI). The journal opens with an article by Bob Archer explaining the background to the present crisis and disintegration of reformism.

Copies of the latest issue can be obtained from PO Box 735, London SW8 4HW, price £2.50, including P&P.

Who's the fraud on Frensham picket?

TORY legislation has resulted in wholesale privatisation of social and public services. Southwark Building Direct Labour Organisation (DLO), with a trade union organisation led by Tony O'Brien, is one of the DLOs in London where the workers have been able to stave off complete privatisation. There has been a consistent fight to save jobs.

Last year, following Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), a private company, Botes, took over sections of the Council's building work, and the Council announced its intention to transfer 54 of the DLO workers' jobs to that company.

Finally, after negotiations and industrial action, only seven workers' jobs were transferred to Botes without loss of earnings and with trade union recognition. This result was reported to a mass meeting of the 230 building workers together with other recommendations following negotiations on their contract of employment.

Two of the seven, John Jones and Terry Mason, voted against the Shop Steward Committee's recommendations at the mass meeting and at a separate meeting of the seven workers.

The rest of the workers recognised that these two had the right to refuse to transfer to Botes, but knew that under the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) agreement they would lose their jobs. The mass meeting therefore agreed that the union organisation would pay these two workers full pay to become full-time organisers of a campaign against privatisation.

Jones and Mason opposed this and set up a 'picket line' outside the Frensham Road DLO depot, supported by the Building Worker Group.

Workers Press published (2, 9, 16 December 1995) a letter and two articles critical of this 'picket'. We believe that it was sectarian. We agree with Tony O'Brien that the two workers — especially John Jones, a steward — should have stayed with the other five transferred workers to maintain and build trade unionism in Botes. We believe it was correct for the rest of the workers to cross that fraudulent 'picket line'.

Brian Higgins, secretary of the Building Worker Group, sent us a 2,500-word response to the articles. The letter is too long for publication in full. It has been cut to 1,784 words, the final section being published separately on the letters' page (page 2). We believe that we have maintained the spirit and thrust of the original.

Reply from Southwark building workers

AT THE mass meeting held on 21 October 1995, the trade union officials from UCATT [building workers' union], the TGWU and the convenor reported that after lengthy negotiations agreement had been reached which now meant that CCT [Compulsory Competitive Tendering] contracts would be awarded to Botes and the transfer of seven workers concerned would now take place.

Legal advice was that we would not now be able to stop the contracts being awarded and the TUPE transfers [of undertaking] going ahead. The union officers made it clear that the legal advice they had received was 'those refusing to transfer would be resigning from their contracts of employment'. Despite this, two workers, John Jones and Terry Mason, refused to transfer.

The mass meeting held on 3 November 1995 agreed to give financial support to any worker who lost their job with Southwark because of CCT and TUPE and were prepared to campaign

under the direction of the shop stewards' committee. John Jones and Terry Mason were the only persons to vote against this proposal.

Instead, John and Terry set up their own campaign, involving outsiders, which started with a picket at Frensham Street depot on 13 October 1995.

This campaign is unaccountable to the trade union members on our DLO [Direct Labour Organisation] and to the trade unions. It puts out leaflets that attack the trade union organisation. It has sought support from outside bodies, held public meetings calling on these organisations to take part in mass picketing of our members.

Our members have been abused and threatened by those on the so-called picket line. As such, disciplinary action is being taken under the rules of the union. To put up a false picket line at our depot is an insult to us as trade unionists as we do not cross picket lines that have been

agreed by democratic procedures of our unions.

We call upon the national officers of the trade unions to take action to permanently end the picketing of our depot. All hooligan activity must be stopped.

This meeting is aware that there are other very important matters that require the attention of our shop stewards.

Therefore we instruct the stewards' committee to not spend any more time on this matter and refer any related business to the regional offices of UCATT and the TGWU. We request that our union officials pursue Terry and John's request for completion of their appeal.

We further agree to donate £200 each to Terry and John's families in respect of hardship. That this donation be made without any prejudice to our position in this statement.

Endorsed by Southwark Building Group mass meeting of 200 with four votes against.

'Thanks for sympathy and support'

A comrade responded to the call last week (Letters) to write to Frank Daboh, a Nigerian seeking political asylum but locked up in Rochester jail by the British state. Frank has replied to his letter:

IT was a surprise to hear from you. Your letter was received this morning and I was very delighted to hear from a brother. Thank you for your sympathy and support.

I have been detained in this prison for almost nine months. The Home Office didn't believe my experience in Nigeria. They felt that all I was saying was fabrications. I don't really know how else I could make them believe that I went through all those sordid experiences.

Now, look at all the time I've spent in prison — nine months. If I wasn't genuinely persecuted I

months suffering here. 'Bogus' asylum seekers don't stay this long. They would go as soon as they felt too much time was being wasted.

My prayer to God is that the immigration department doesn't deport me now, even if they're not going to give me asylum. It could be very dangerous for me to go back to Nigeria now considering how I fled. I know I'm no Abiola [the elected Nigerian president jailed by the military ruler General Sani Abacha]... but people like me are the real target for elimination by the military government.

However, my case is now before the High Court for a judicial review. The hearing will resume on 23 February to see if there are grounds for review....

I will be ever grateful for all the support I've had, especially

created awareness on the human rights abuses in our country through my case. At least many people have now come to know that the common man in Nigeria is oppressed.

So many MPs and MEPs are aware of my plight. I am not the only victim of the military dictatorship in Nigeria. I pray that others will benefit from the effect of my case, even if I don't get through.

My brother, keep up your good work... I believe that God is for us. I'll go now and would love to hear from you again.

Best wishes,
Frank (Davies) Daboh
(prison ref: TB8562), D-Wing,
HMP Rochester, Kent, ME1 3QS.

■ Please write to Frank and make appeals to MPs, etc., before his High Court review in

THE headline to Tony O'Brien's article (Workers Press 16 December 1995) is 'Frensham Road "Picket" is a fraud'. He's a fraud. A truer reflection of the situation would be a headline such as: 'Question: When is a picket not a picket? Answer: When Tony O'Brien and Workers Press say so!'

A sub heading is: 'Main principle — Jobs and union organisation'. What he neglects to tell the readers is that he has not successfully defended one of the many hundreds of Southwark DLO building workers' jobs allowed to go in recent years.

You cannot defend trade union organisation if you don't use the tactics necessary to do this. As a result, eventually there are no troops left to defend it! What of the time-honoured high principle of not crossing a picket line?

Of course this is what you can expect from a convenor steward who writes 'a further mass meeting agreed that in the case of the two workers who did not want to transfer, their right to take that decision must be recognised, but they would be dismissing themselves from their employment'.

We all know workers have a right to and sometimes unfortunately do vote against supporting sacked and victimised fellow workers.

But for a convenor to pretend to uphold the right to refuse a transfer to another employer and then try to disguise the sacking with the nonsensical employers' gibberish of 'dismissing themselves', is a new low in two-faced, back-stabbing, yellow-livered trade unionism. We also very much doubt the workers actually decided the two had sacked themselves!

Again, what can you expect from a convenor who actually boasts 'We — the DLO Shop Stewards Committee — led the workers across their "picket line"'. In fact the only steward we saw misleading the workers across by arguing, forcing and even bullying others was O'Brien.

He mentions the 79 per cent [vote for] strike action but doesn't make clear it was against TUPE. He most certainly doesn't mention why the vote was not implemented and the fact it was sabotaged by him and D. Hehir, the full-time UCATT regional organiser involved.

Why no mention of the fact that he, Hehir and J. Ruse (TGWU/EPIU) official, went along with Southwark council, dropping Terry and Johnny's grievance procedures against being transferred to Botes?

Nonsense

This was completely contrary to union/management procedures. No mention of the utter nonsense that Botes would deal with the grievance procedures — against a transfer to them!

The discarding of their grievances was the key and central

issue for the dispute. Southwark council was advertising for building workers at the same time as sackings and reluctant transfers.

Botes stated in an official meeting that they did not recognise unions, shop stewards or safety representatives. Private building contractors have been known to deal physically with 'awkward' workers and trade unionists.

The two sacked workers gave Southwark council a week to reinstate their grievance procedures or they would be forced to take action in pursuit of this.

Ignored

The picket on 13 November was mounted only after the council totally ignored this ultimatum. It was called by Terry and Johnny. They asked the Building Worker Group for support. We gave this wholeheartedly.

An inter-union and community-based support group was set up. Among these were Southwark council tenants! There was and is support from some UCATT branches and those of other unions and from the Colin Roach Centre [Hackney-based trade union support centre].

Terry and Johnny were promised a mass meeting on 14 November. They would be present and a decision taken on their situation. The picket was therefore lifted on 13 November. No mass meeting took place. After a week the picket was reinstated to try to force the council's hand.

There was considerable sympathy for Johnny and Terry. Again O'Brien misled the building workers over the picket line.

The section of O'Brien's article we find most offensive is that he is clearly behind moves to have three of us in UCATT charged and disciplined.

In our 21-year history the last and only organisations ever to charge us with picketing were the British state and Laings backed by the Building Employers' Confederation. A High Court injunction was served on five UCATT members in Building Worker using anti-union laws.

These were meant to remove the democratic rights and freedoms to picket and meet and speak with other workers during the course and in furtherance of an industrial dispute.

We were prepared to go to jail to defend these freedoms but thankfully did not as thousands of workers would have gone on strike and picketed all over the place. We successfully defied that injunction — these laws. In fact we stepped up our picketing!

We would be surprised if such a reactionary move as O'Brien's was supported by UCATT. But not amazed or shocked as we've been a very serious thorn in the side of the UCATT bureaucracy for all the years of our existence.

They may well try to use this to try to curtail our activities or even expel us from the union.

There would be serious resistance to this.

We also assure O'Brien and all, there is no way we will give up our right to picket you UCATT, any other union body or the British state and employers. We would call for the support of all rank-and-file UCATT members and of other trade unions and working-class people we could reach to support us if such as this happened. Ceaselessly campaign!

We also remind O'Brien. During the 'Laings Lock Out' he and about 30-40 Southwark DLO workers came on to our picket at the massive Laings' Hays Wharf site in London. We didn't work on the site we were picketing.

There was a trade union organisation, mainly UCATT and TGWU, with a shop stewards' committee on the site. O'Brien never felt it was necessary to get their permission or authority to picket the site. To be fair neither did the Hays Wharf stewards!

Contrary to the nonsense that the Frensham Road picket was against decisions of the workforce, since the picket was mounted on 13 November, O'Brien continually refused to call a mass meeting of all the DLO building workers.

Thus the workers were denied the right to collectively decide on anything, let alone picketing, till such a mass meeting was held.

Decision

He mentions that the London and South East regional council of UCATT would not take a decision until they had heard from him and his stewards. He attended the 11 December meeting of the regional council as did Johnny Jones. We lobbied it.

UCATT was being threatened with a high court injunction by Southwark council if they didn't get the picket lifted in ten days' time. No doubt this was intended to frighten UCATT into completely supporting the council and O'Brien. It had the opposite effect!

The regional council voted for a mass meeting with Johnny and Terry present throughout and that Southwark council should reinstate the grievance procedures. They also called for the picket to be lifted.

The subsequent mass meeting of 20 December voted for reinstatement of the grievance procedures. The sympathy shown to Terry and Johnny on the picket lines had been translated into votes. This is why O'Brien was so afraid of a mass meeting.

After the meeting a letter was sent by J. Rouse of TGWU/EPIU requesting Southwark council to reinstate the grievance procedures. So now the TGWU and UCATT officially back this.

All await developments from the council. It's their decision whether this struggle continues or not. Without the picket nothing would have been achieved, except the sack with no hope for Terry and Johnny.

International Trade Unionist Bulletin

COPIES of the latest International Trade Unionist Bulletin are now available. Because of technical reasons it has not been possible until now to produce the journal on a regular basis. But this issue has been well worth waiting for.

It carries the latest news from the Liverpool dockers' strike and highlights the great international support that the 500 sacked port workers have received throughout the world.

Articles and reports cover trade union struggles in Pakistan, where prominent trade union leaders have been assassinated, including a 12-year old boy, Iqbal Masih, after he took up a campaign against child labour; the sacking of several thousand Nigerian dockers; and, the year-long fight of

The fight of Bangladeshi garment workers for the right to a day's holiday a week is highlighted. It has led to the sacking of 500, the killing of three protesters and the rape of five women workers. There are further reports including pieces on the struggles of Canadian workers against government cut-backs and about the fight of workers in Thailand who produce toys.

There is something of interest for every active trade unionist. To get your copy send £5 for 12 issues to ITUSC, PO Box 18, Epsom KT18 7YR, Britain. For a trial send 55p for the new issue.

The Bulletin tell us that news and articles are always welcome from anywhere in the world. Let the editor have your contributions at the above

BOSNIA: Why the Brits weren't trusted US intelligence bugged SAS

DISTRUST among NATO allies in Bosnia was such that US intelligence intercepted signals between Britain's General Sir Michael Rose, the UN Protection Force commander, and SAS special forces units.

General Rose, insisting in line with Tory government policy that the UN force 'cannot be used to alter the military balance in a civil war', had told the Americans that air strikes could not be launched to defend so-called 'safe areas'.

As advancing Serb Chetnik forces bombarded Bihac late in 1994, SAS units acting as forward air controllers could identify the Serb artillery positions. According to Guardian reporter Ed Vulliamy, who says he has seen US intelligence transcripts, General Rose signalled the SAS men: **Hold off, do not identify the targets.**

NATO's rules of engagement at the time meant NATO pilots flew back and forth, unable to attack anything.

Rose's fear was always said to be that Serb forces would take reprisals by attacking UNPROFOR troops on the ground. This was also the line of the British government, jibing at the US reluctance to commit their ground forces.

But it also led Bosnian civilians to comment wryly that they must look after their 'protectors'. In November 1994, French troops withdrew from Bihac, leaving a virtually unarmed Bangladeshi unit that even had to be fed by locals — themselves suffering after 30 months of siege.

As Serb jets made a mockery of the 'no-fly zone', attacking Bihac with napalm and cluster-bombs, NATO was ordered to hit the Serb airbase at Udubina in the Krajina.

Runways

The French UN commander in Zagreb, General Bertrand de Lapresle, insisted they only hit runways, not Serb planes. The damage was soon repaired.

On 23 November, told Serb positions overlooking Bihac would be hit, the Serb nationalist leader Radovan Karadzic replied that his forces were now on Drebelac, inside the 'safe area'.

General Rose rushed to Pale for talks with Karadzic, then on

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

to Zagreb, where he agreed to air strikes. The British government feared Croat forces might otherwise intervene.

The US was now receiving worrying intelligence, though. UN monitors checking transport from Serbia were letting supplies for Krajina through, allegedly on instructions from Lord Owen. It was reported that Serbian forces had deployed SAM missiles supplied by Russia. General Rose shelved the air-strike request and started negotiating a ceasefire.

Tanks

On 25 November the US ambassador in Sarajevo, Victor Jakovec, saw General Rose about reports that Serb tanks were heading for the centre of Bihac. The British general said there was little the UN could do about it.

Jakovec contacted the US State Department, and America's UN ambassador Madeleine Albright spoke to UN peace-keeping head Kofi Annan. He told General Rose the Americans wanted air strikes.

The following night NATO planes took off from the US base at Aviano, Italy, flying over Bihac, under orders to give close air support, but in reality doing nothing.

'For General Rose's command there was only one way to stop the bombing; they would have to tell the SAS scouts not to identify the target for Nato to bomb. The rules of engagement were clear: no target, no bombs.'

'The American intelligence sources now allege that this is what the UNPROFOR command did. It was a careful decision and a controversial one; by the end of the weekend Serb tanks were blasting their way through the suburbs of Bihac' ('How the CIA intercepted SAS signals', Ed Vulliamy, Guardian, 29 January).

Was General Rose only con-

cerned to protect his troops, or was it the British government's aim, while pretending it was even-handed, to protect the Chetniks?

Rose had already threatened air strikes against the Bosnian forces trying to relieve Sarajevo, and yet in October, when British troops escorting convoys to Gorazde asked for back-up against Serb attack, they were denied it.

Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind personally commended this decision (see Workers Press, 29 October 1994).

'Don't fuck with us, Mike', Serb nationalist political adviser Jovan Zametica had warned when General Rose came to Pale. As John Zametica, London academic and 'Balkan expert', he had lectured British Army officers aplenty on training courses.

Chetnik leaders were ebullient over advice from right-wing Tory Sir Alfred Sherman.

They knew Jovan Gvozdenovic, alias 'John Kennedy' was in touch with Tory MP Henry Bellingham, Malcolm Rifkind's parliamentary secretary.

Rifkind's adviser (now with Michael Portillo), David Hart, the sinister figure who co-ordinated Thatcher's war against the miners, had advocated full British backing to the Serb nationalists.

Assault

A month before the assault on Bihac, French UN troops had opened fire on Bosnian positions on Mt Igman. Foreign Minister Alain Juppé (now the French prime minister!), who had visited Belgrade with Britain's Douglas Hurd, said a divided Bosnia was

inevitable; the 'Bosnian Serbs' might give up claims on Sarajevo 'in exchange for the enclaves in eastern Bosnia' (*Figaro*, 17 October 1994).

The medical aid charity Médecins sans Frontières reported the cord was being tightened every day around these enclaves — Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica — and accused the UN of playing the Serb aggressors' game (*Liberation*, 20 October).

The Chetnik leaders may have felt confident they understood British — and French — policy better than a mere ex-SAS officer like General Rose did. After talking to them, and his superiors in Whitehall, Rose got the message.

On 23 January last year he told BBC Panorama: 'Yes, practically every house in Gorazde has been damaged, but most of the damage to Gorazde was done in the fight-

ing that had taken place here two years before when the Bosnian government forces drove the Serbs from this town...'

He said the UN hadn't been able to do anything about Bihac.

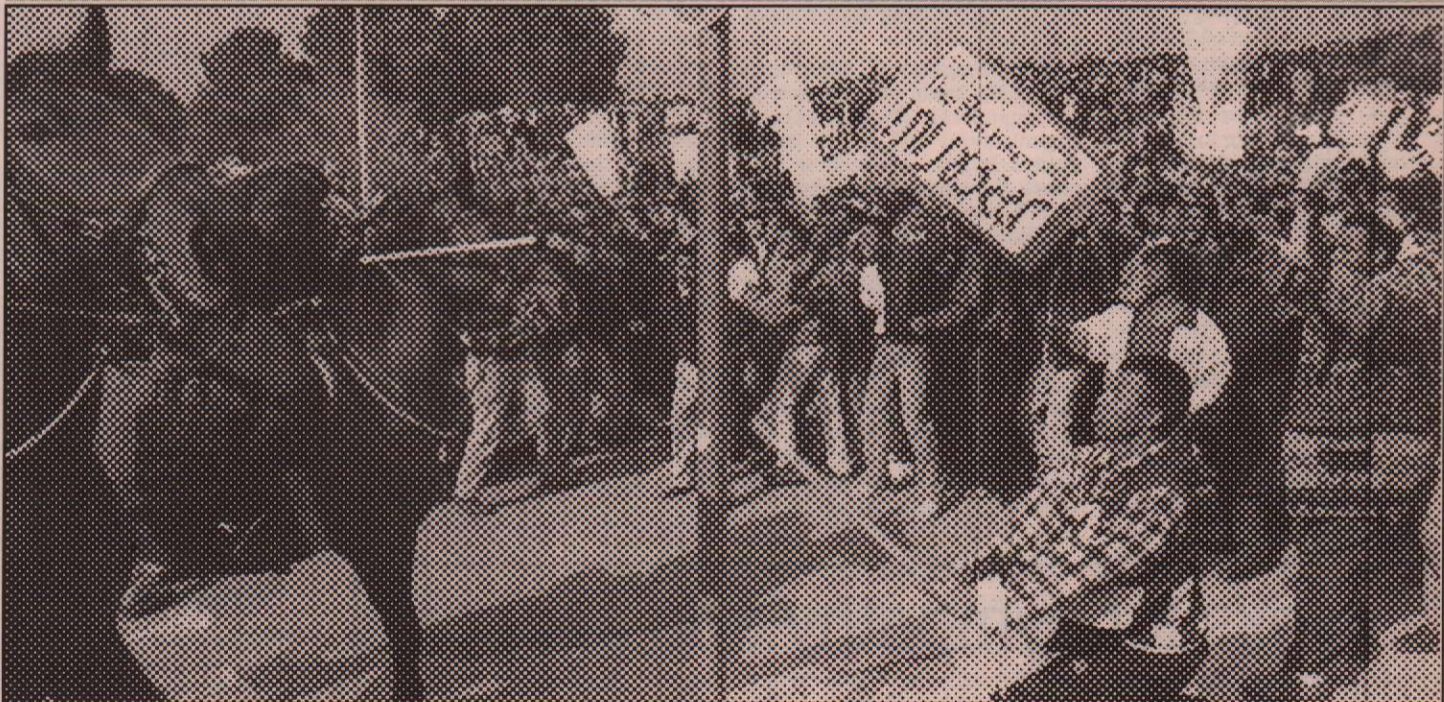
Shelling

'Bihac was a four-sided war and it was difficult to tell who did the shelling' (*The Times*, 26 January).

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said NATO unity was more important than Bosnia.

According to Ed Vulliamy, President Clinton decided to publicly appease Britain and France, while CIA and retired US military officers assisted the Croat army, and arranged an air drop of badly-needed radar equipment and anti-tank weapons to the Bosnian army.

Blood-racism battle in Jerusalem



Protest against the Israeli blood transfusion service's throwing away of Ethiopian Jewish blood

BY DAVID DORFMAN

ISRAELI riot police used rubber bullets, percussion grenades, tear gas and water cannon in a battle last weekend against thousands of Ethiopian Jews demonstrating over official racism.

The demonstrators marched on the prime minister's office after a newspaper revealed that blood donated by Ethiopians was routinely thrown away, because of supposed fears of the HIV virus.

Reporters said it was the biggest clash since the Palestinian Intifada. Fighting lasted several hours, with mounted police charging demonstrators,

and police and ambulance sirens wailing through the city.

'This is like Germany, not Israel', shouted demonstrators. 'Apartheid in Israel' said some placards, and 'Enough of racism!' The Ethiopians demanded the resignation of Health Minister Ephraim Sneh. 'We cannot have racists serving in top posts in Israel... telling us we smell,' said Addisu Messele.

Worst

There are about 60,000 Ethiopian Jews in Israel, most of them airlifted in two big operations in 1984 and 1991. While their 'rescue' from war and famine in Ethiopia was well-publicised,

what happened to them subsequently was not.

They are welcome to serve in the Israeli army, but have been discriminated against in employment, housing, and worst of all, by the religious authorities who decreed that they weren't really Jews.

While prejudice from reactionary clerics might be expected, Health Minister Sneh, son of a former Communist party leader, represents the secular wing of Zionism.

Backed by blood transfusion service officials, he claimed the decision to destroy all blood donated by Ethiopians was justified because 500 of them had been found to carry the HIV virus, 50

times the number among the general population.

Since all donors are presumably tested before their blood is used, Sneh's argument looks like a poney rationalisation. It is no more logical than the rabbis' ruling that Ethiopian Jews hadn't been circumcised correctly, whereas they accepted Russian Jews who weren't circumcised at all (but were white, of course).

Labour Prime Minister Shimon Peres tried to defuse last Sunday's protest by meeting an Ethiopian Jews' delegation. He apologised, claiming the government had not known about the blood's disposal, and praised the Ethiopian Jews' contribution to society.

Workers Press

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