

Moves made to limit defence campaign

CLAUSE FOUR: AN ISSUE FOR ALL WORKERS

FIRM support in the trades unions for Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution has led to a real fight against attempts to undermine the defence campaign by those meant to be leading it.

In the Manufacturing Science Finance (MSF) union there is outrage among the membership at moves by the general secretary, Roger Lyons, to support Labour leader Tony Blair's attempts to scrap the clause.

Lyons had persuaded an executive sub-committee to agree with Blair's position, and instruct the union's representative on Labour's national executive to vote for the changes at April's special party conference.

Overnight eight of the MSF's 15 regions organised a retraction of Lyons's pro-Blair statement. About five regions seem likely to support the demand for a recall conference before Labour's special conference. There are also calls for Lyons's resignation.

Officials from the Rail Maritime and Transport union and the Fire Brigades Union, as well as members of the public ser-

vice union, Unison, and the Transport and General Workers' Union, report very good support for the campaign in defence of Clause Four.

This is often the result of previous public sector fights against privatisation — a very real struggle for millions of working people.

And trades union councils and county associations report a high level of political debate in the movement on the issue of who controls industry and accountability — at the heart of the fight to maintain the principle of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange in Clause Four.

The extent of the support was

revealed at last Saturday's Defend Clause Four campaign steering committee meeting of more than 60 representatives, held in Manchester. But even here there were calls to 'win the middle ground'; others said 'it was more important to win the general election than to win on Clause Four'. One Labour activist said 'we must be very opportunist'.

Greater London Association of Trades Councils representative Peter Gibson drew attention at the meeting to the wording of Clause Four, which speaks of 'production, distribution and exchange'.

Without control of the banks and finance houses working people would have no control of their industries whoever owned them, Gibson said.

Attempts to give the officers of the campaign a free hand to organise tactics — suspected by many to be a cover for retreat — were withdrawn. Any proposals for new tactics or reorganisation will have to be referred to the full committee.

Ted Knight, the former leader of Lambeth council who

fought against rate-capping in the 1980s, raised issues of democracy in the campaign and said that the campaign should focus on the defence of Clause Four and nothing else. His call was aimed at those suggesting that Blair's changes should be addenda to the clause, rather than amendments. This was playing into Blair's hands, Knight said.

One delegate to last Saturday's meeting said it was better to win and be opportunist than to lose. This idea needs to be fought against as it weakens the campaign.

Some groupings in the Labour Party such as those around papers like 'Socialist Outlook' and 'Socialist Organiser', which call themselves Trotskyist, are concerned to limit the anti-Clause Four campaign to keeping the current Labour Party going at whatever cost.

These groups take this position at a time when the need to advance beyond 'trade union consciousness' — the limitation of workers' struggles to aims within the capitalist system and

its political boundary, the parliamentary social democracy of the Labour Party — is a life-and-death matter.

Pointing the movement towards only tactical gains at the Labour Party special conference, called to make the changes in the Labour Party's constitution, would kill any attempt to make the movement broader. Supporters of 'Outlook' and 'Organiser' want to impose the limitations of their own conceptions onto the movement. This must be fought tooth-and-nail.

It was similar notions that disoriented the movement against pit closures in 1992-93. The insistence then was that the struggle should be limited to support for the miners, rather than broadening it to include the fight against privatisation in other industries and public services.

Changes

'Outlook' is seeking to 'win the middle ground', by attempting to 'relate' to those members of the Labour Party who would agree to supporting changes in Clause Four if opposing them meant losing the general election.

'Outlook' wants to make 'tactical' changes, to bring the movement behind that section of the trade union bureaucracy aiming to patch up a deal with Blair.

These 'Outlook' sectarians were rabidly hostile to a proposal, made by the Leicester trades council representative at the campaign meeting, for a conference to discuss what sort of party the working class needs.

This is the real issue that divides the campaign. Those

who think the campaign should be restricted to the Labour Party, and not taken out into the working class, do not understand the real implications of what is happening to the working class and the party that has claimed to represent it for nearly a century.

The WRP strives to understand the movement from the standpoint of Marxism in order to reflect that movement and the changes in the class struggle.

It is only in this way that the real movement of the working class can be liberated from the prison of ideas that limit it to what the bureaucratic leaderships of the trades unions and the Labour Party say it can do.

■ The Tony Blair roadshow to scrap Clause Four kicked off in Gateshead with a hand-picked audience of more than 500 people.

A lot of people had been unsuccessful in their attempts to get into the meeting. Labour Party headquarters had told enquirers that 'we do not deal with those at your level'. Trades councils were refused tickets on the ground that they were not proper trade union organisations!

The Labour leadership in north-east England has traditionally been more right wing than in other parts of Britain. One of the few opponents to moves to scrap Clause Four at the Gateshead roadshow meeting told Workers Press that the overwhelming support there for Blair did not reflect the views of ordinary Labour Party members in the area. It was set up to make an impression for the TV cameras, he said.

The roadshows are rumoured to be costing £350,000.

Margaret Dewar 1901-1995

MARGARET DEWAR, a Trotskyist for more than 60 years, has died near Crawley, Sussex, aged 93. Born in Riga, Latvia, she witnessed the Russian Revolution and carried out underground work in Hitler's Germany. She became a member of the Socialist Workers Party and was active in the anti-poll-tax campaign. An obituary will appear next week.



The anti-pit closures fight in 1992-93 was disoriented and stopped from broadening into fight against sell-offs of other industries

Workers Press

Build international movement against fascism!

EVERY socialist, every internationalist and every anti-racist must shake themselves from their normal routine of life and work to ensure that a coming visit by Bosnian trades unionists is met with the biggest possible reception everywhere it goes.

This visit is an important step along the road of rebuilding the ability of the workers' movement to act in its own interest. The division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into ethnic ghettos by the last three years of terror — military bombardment, mass rape and hunger — organised by the Serbian extreme nationalists and supported by the Great Powers, has been met with complete silence by the organisations of the workers' movement.

The Bosnian resistance has made desperate pleas for help but not to the workers' movement, only to the United Nations, to world 'democracy' and European 'values'.

But the military resistance of the workers in Tuzla and the determined fight of Workers Aid for Bosnia, who have organised convoys of food to the Tuzla trades unions, has made a significant political change in the situation.

Workers in the Tuzla region survived a year-long blockade imposed by the nationalists and the UN. For nearly three years they have held up the nationalist advance. This resistance continually wrecks the various 'peace' plans — plans for the ethnic partition of Bosnia sponsored by the UN.

But even this workers' resistance in Tuzla region made no appeals for solidarity from its sisters and brothers outside Bosnia.

* * * * *

WITHOUT international working-class solidarity, Tuzla and multi-ethnic Bosnia face a terrible future. Not only do they face overwhelming odds in the military battle, they face a growing threat from their rear as the Bosnian government party — the SDA — succumbs to the Great Power pressure to accept partition.

The lack of a call to working people from Tuzla is hardly surprising given the fact that after three years of barbarism in Bosnia-Herzegovina the people there have not seen the workers of Europe lift even a little finger.

To the people of Tuzla the workers' movement had ceased to exist. Only the Workers Aid convoys and a few other similar convoys reached Tuzla from the working people of the rest of the world.

When the first Workers Aid lorries reached Tuzla after months of trying to break the blockade, the Tuzla workers thought that the lorries were sent by the official trade union movement. They were bitterly disappointed to find that Workers Aid was only a small group of people and that the material support they desperately needed was not just over the horizon. But every visit by Workers Aid convoys enabled a continuing discussion to take place on how to overcome the isolation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

* * * * *

THE forthcoming visit by Tuzla trades unionists comes from that discussion. The workers' movement of Tuzla region, who have held the front line solid, are now coming out of Tuzla to go on the political offensive — to build an international movement against fascism. They are turning from seeking allies in 'democracy' to the workers of Europe.

The Bosnian trades unionists from the Tuzla district committee will visit France and Britain between 22 February and 22 March.

The three person delegation — Serb, Croat and Muslim — will reflect Tuzla's defence of 'multi-multi' Bosnia (multi-ethnic, multi-cultural).

In October last year, the Tuzla district committee sent a letter to all workers' organisations asking them to help make it possible for the Tuzla delegation to come and explain their situation in the war. The letter called for the building of an international movement against fascism.

This letter is now getting a growing response from the labour movement in different countries. The delegation has been invited to France by the post and telecommunications union, SUD.

When the delegation arrives in Britain on 6 March they will speak in as many cities as time allows at meetings organised by trades councils and other labour movement bodies. They will also meet trade union officials, shop stewards committees, labour politicians and city councils.

Meetings will also be held with the ex-Yugoslav community in both countries.

■ Anyone who wants to help organise the Tuzla trade union tour should phone Workers Aid for Bosnia on 071-582 5462

Letters

Questions of Labour's consultation

THE Labour Party leadership is cynically attempting to bounce the party into ditching Clause Four of its constitution. The party machine at headquarters is working flat out in the propaganda battle.

Under the guise of consultation, every party member will receive a special Clause Four issue of 'Labour Party News', containing a questionnaire which members are asked to complete.

The questions are worded to ensure Blair gets the answers he wants. Question one asks: 'Do you agree that the current Clause Four does not set out Labour's actual values in a clear and concise manner? What is left out?'

Ordinary party members who have heard Labour leader Tony Blair and company going on about justice and freedom may well think: 'Wouldn't it be a good idea if . . .', and respond accordingly. Some may even feel a commitment to full employment should be included.

This is just what the leadership wants! Blair can still say: 'The results of our consultation exercise reveal that 95 per cent of members reject the current Clause Four.'

Branches have also been asked to discuss the document. But briefing notes to branch secretaries show they are expected to lead the debate in line with the leadership's wishes; a video has been sent to every branch secretary in the country, and it has been made clear that attempts to pass motions supporting Clause Four are to be prevented.

Furthermore, responses to the document can only be submitted on the questionnaire, so any branches passing such motions will have their resolutions ignored at Walworth Road — so much for Blair's concern for democracy!

The deadline for the return of questionnaires is 3 March. The final statement will be published by 15 March. How can the responses be processed in under two weeks? Could it possibly be that the final document has already been written?

Mike Rees
London W1

Poll-tax jailings and Labour values

THE EUROPEAN Commission of Human Rights has ruled against the British government. This means that the Tory government has to pay compensa-

tion (out of our taxes, not their party members' over-large bank accounts) for the wrongful jailing of people who could not afford to pay the poll tax.

Meanwhile Labour Party members are discussing their constitution and values. Can the Labour leaders engaged in this debate explain how socialist values are in conformity with the jailing of those who cannot pay a Tory tax?

Do they still justify their own actions in pressing for jailings up and down the country? How do they feel about Cherie Blair going to court to seek to keep a defaulter in jail?

Labour Party members are being asked to change their constitution to fit in with people who feel comfortable with such actions. All the talk about 'values' by the Labour leaders is exposed as a phoney. It is a cover for people who will do anything to defend the capitalist state and who are greedy to get to the trough the Tories have fed out of for years.

This question of poll-tax jailings says a lot about the plans for the Labour Party's future. It shows the way forward for a Blair government more clearly than the endless flannel he is capable of producing.

Geoff Barr
Exeter

Unfortunate mention for Gott

SIMON PIRANI (Letters, 28 January) says it is 'unfortunate' that Workers Press's first mention of Richard Gott since he resigned as the 'Guardian's' literary editor was a passing reference in Charlie Pottins's 'Inside left' column.

It was certainly unfortunate for Gott that after publishing in the 'Guardian' Ken Livingstone's 'review' accusing Trotskyists of working for MI5, he was exposed by the 'Spectator' as hob-nobbing with the KGB! Whatever the 'Spectator's' motives, it offered evidence to back its charges — something Livingstone has yet to do to back his own accusations.

Gott resigned, on 8 December, after admitting he'd concealed his contacts with the KGB from his editor. If Simon felt so strongly that we should 'defend Gott against this witch-hunt', why has he waited so long to take this up? Surely as a journalist he could have written something for Workers Press? Were National Union of Journalists members content to say the KGB was no 'worse than the CIA'? Remember, 'there's no such thing as a "free" lunch'?

Hinging his letter on a sentence in Charlie Pottins's column, then turning to John Spencer's letter in the 'Spectator', Simon confuses matters,

and seems confused. It's one thing to defend a journalist against the state, or right-wing papers, but Simon seems bent on defending Gott from left-wing criticism.

It was the KGB's predecessor, Stalin's GPU, which murdered Trotsky. But Simon says Gott was 'not an agent provocateur' for the KGB, but rather a fellow-traveller of Maoism . . . Doesn't he know the Maoists worship Stalin, and have republished long-discredited Stalinist hate-literature branding Trotskyists as 'agents'?

Suppose Livingstone did volunteer his 'review', as Simon suggests. Was the 'Guardian's' literary editor obliged to accept it? If Peter Fryer, who wrote the foreword to Harry Ratner's 'Reluctant Revolutionary', had sent in a review, would that have been printed?

If Gott had remained at his post do you think he would have published a sympathetic review (say by Simon Pirani) of Ngo Van's forthcoming 'Revolutionaries They Could Not Break', about Vietnamese Trotskyists? Will his successor?

In his haste to assume Gott's innocence, Simon attributes the worst motives to critics, saying John Spencer implied, for the 'Spectator's' readers' 'titillation', that Gott included the Livingstone review 'at the KGB's behest'.

The KGB has officially been disbanded. What John Spencer said was that Ken Livingstone attacked 'the KGB's traditional enemies' — i.e. the Trotskyists. What's wrong with that? It happens to be true. What's more, Livingstone used the Stalinists' traditional method.

Whether 'Spectator' readers were 'titillated' ('pleasantly excited', according to my dictionary) I've no idea. Should we have kept quiet about former WRP leader Gerry Healy's abuses for fear of amusing them?

Right-wing witch-hunts operate on ignorance, purveying the idea that all 'reds' are part of one conspiracy. Not exposing Stalinism's bloody record against its opponents on the left does not help that at all.

Colin Pendleton
London SW12

The witch has been smoked out

I WELCOME the exposure of Richard Gott's KGB links whatever the motives of those who smoked him out. He may quibble about the details, but Gott has admitted the substance of the 'Spectator's' charge. That doesn't seem to leave much room for Simon Pirani's defence campaign (Letters, 28 January).

Whether Gott or Livingstone initiated the review of the Lotz-Feldman book is neither here nor there. Gott told me himself he had commissioned the article because he felt the book should be widely publicised. He rejected my proposal for an article attacking the book's central theme, correctly summarised by Charlie Pottins, that 'members of the WRP who ousted their discredited former leader Gerry Healy were doing it for MI5'.

It was unscrupulous of Gott to let Livingstone pretend to review the book without revealing his contribution to it. A minor misrepresentation, to be sure, compared with years of pretending to be a 'free spirit' while covertly holidaying with the KGB. But a short-changing of the reader nonetheless.

Perhaps Pirani disagrees with my description of the Lotz-Feldman-Livingstone MI5 allegation as a 'nasty smear campaign'. Maybe he doesn't think that it is mischievous to spread the lie that Healy's opponents were agents (or dupes) of British military intelligence. Or perhaps he has come to the conclusion that the KGB was really the friend of Trotskyism all along.

Pirani may be satisfied that 'Gott was not an active agent provocateur' for the KGB, but rather a fellow-traveller of Maoism, but he only has Gott's word for it, for what that is worth.

I leave it to Pirani and Paul Foot to debate whether it's better to be a hanger-on of the KGB or the CIA. Intelligence agencies gather information and spread disinformation. On the basis that journalists are supposed to gather and pass on information, intelligence agencies are enemies of journalism, so any journalist in a Gott-style arrangement with an intelligence service is betraying his readers.

Simon Pirani takes exception to my having written to the 'loathesome' 'Spectator'. But my letters to the lovable old 'Guardian' after Gott's exposure ended up in Peter Preston's wastepaper basket. I can write to whoever I please. It's what I write not who I write to that counts.

A witch-hunt is an hysterical campaign to brand innocent women as witches. But it is common ground that Gott did sup with the devil. So he's a witch, not a victim of a witch-hunt. Only a few weeks before his exposure he was helping to smear Healy's opponents within the Trotskyist movement as agents of MI5.

Gott had no more evidence for the MI5 smear than Livingstone had, which is to say none at all. But it didn't stop him arrogantly dismissing my protests. It will take a lot more than Simon Pirani's letter to convince me that Gott is a cause worth fighting for.

John Spencer
London

Workers Press £3,000 Monthly Fund

IF YOU read this you will be very lucky. Last week, hundreds of our readers were denied the pleasure of receiving their copy of Workers Press because we quite simply ran out of money and couldn't afford the stamps to send them off. We desperately need our readers and supporters to rally around and send us money — this is no joking matter.

We have tried week by week to keep our readers informed of developments in the working-class movement in Britain and internationally. Just this week one subscriber asked us to 'keep up the good work' — and we've done our best to prepare this paper. And yet today (Tuesday), we had a phone call from our comrades in South Africa for help as well. What could we say?

Mike Cooke

Send money payable to 'Workers Press', PO Box

Coming soon

SATURDAY 11 FEBRUARY: Hounslow trades council anti-racist march and rally. Assemble 12.45pm, Thornbury Playing Fields, London Road, Isleworth, London. Details: J.R. Patrick 081-891 4482.

FRIDAY 3 MARCH: Tom Stratton Memorial Meeting. Tom was an activist and shop steward in UCATT and the AEEU, a member of the WRP, and of the Pensions movement. The meeting will speak about Tom's life and his struggles. To be held at Ruskin House, Croydon.

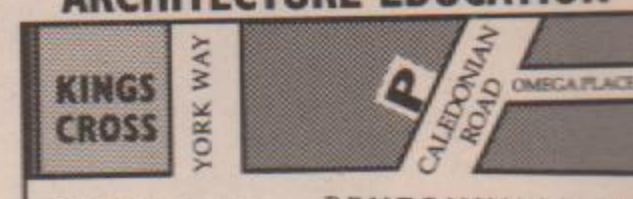
SATURDAY 27 MAY: African Liberation Day march. Theme: 'Not just charity but complete liberation'. Organised by the African Liberation Support Campaign. Assemble 1pm, Kennington Park, London SE11. Rally at Trafalgar Square. Details:



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Hypocrisy of campaign to release para

BY GEORGE ANGUS

PRIVATE Lee Clegg was found guilty of the murder of 18 year old Karen Reilly in 1993 and received the Tory imposed mandatory life sentence.

Confessions were not beaten out of him, evidence was not falsified against him, he did not kill in self defence.

There is now a massive campaign under way calling for the earliest possible release for Clegg.

The campaign is being led by the Tory press and Tory MPs are falling over themselves to join.

The campaigners have pointed out that Karen's father was an active member of the IRA until he was shot dead by the British army in 1976.

They seem to be implying that somehow Karen deserved to be murdered.

It has come to the attention of the 'The Times' that the Diplock courts are rather unfair, having as they do, no juries.

It has taken the paper's crack investigative team 22 years to uncover this astonishing fact.

Hypocrisy

Some of the remarks made by leading campaigners reveal the innovative use of logic and the blatant hypocrisy that surrounds the case. Lord Ackner has stated that 'It is clear that he (Clegg) acted without any evil or wicked motive'. This senseless assertion has to be viewed in the light of the actions of Clegg's cohorts after the killing, who were subsequently charged with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

A RUC man who accompanied Clegg's patrol gave evidence against him. The policeman denied that any soldier was struck by the stolen car. Mem-

bers of the patrol, he said, had concocted the story to justify the killings.

That stalwart defender of truth, Lady Olga Maitland, has said 'We want to make sure justice is seen to be done. . . But we have to make it abundantly clear that we are not opening up an avenue that Sinn Fein can use to lift terrorists out of jail.' Maitland is making it abundantly clear that this campaign is only concerned with opening an avenue that the Tories can use to lift their own terrorists out of jail.

Murder

The 'Evening Standard' said 'it is hard to see why he should have been prosecuted when only one other murder charge has been levelled in over 300 cases in which civilians — terrorist or bystander — have been killed by on-duty soldiers in Northern Ireland.'

On the contrary, it is hard to see how the other 300 charges were not brought.

The only other soldier found guilty of murdering a civilian in the north of Ireland since 1982, Private Ian Thain, was transferred to an English prison to be near his family and released after serving two years and three months of his life sentence.

Thain had shot dead a 22-year old man who, stripped to the waist on a hot August day, ran away from an altercation which had broken out with members of an army foot patrol.

Clegg belonged to the Parachute Regiment, the same regiment that murdered 13 civilians on Bloody Sunday. There were no prosecutions.

Home Secretary Michael Howard is considering bringing in a new, less serious, offence to cover murders committed by the police or the armed services. Surprise, surprise.

Unison members betrayed over pay

By STUART CARTER
Salford Mental Health
Unison branch secretary

LAST October, as reported in Workers Press (29 October 1994), NHS ancillary, administrative and clerical and professional and technical staff voted to reject their 1994-95 pay offers. These tied them to accepting local performance-related pay (PRP) schemes from April this year.

Unison's Health Service Group Executive (SGE) asked members only to vote against the offers if they were prepared to take industrial action. However the SGE did a complete U-turn once the consultation vote was completed. Against the wishes of the membership they decided by a vote of 14 to 11 to go to management and accept the offers. The promised ballot for industrial action was never held.

The only explanation members received was a one-paragraph letter to branch secretaries stating that the consultation

results did not show sufficient support for industrial action.

It was not until four weeks later, after many angry Unison branches complained to the SGE, that the voting figures were even published and an explanation given. In fact a clear majority (66 per cent) of ancillary staff voted to reject the offer.

This was the same majority as in 1993 when ancillary staff, who are the lowest-paid members, voted to reject a 1.5 per cent pay offer and take strike action. Their wishes were ignored then too.

The other votes to reject were 63.5 per cent of professional and technical staff and 52.6 per cent of administrative and clerical staff. The SGE claimed that these majorities were insufficient and that the turnout was low.

This argument reveals the lack of leadership and fight in the majority on the SGE. The consultation vote was the first stage of the fight against PRP, which involved explaining the issues to members and warning them of the dangers. Where this was done the vote to reject was as high as 95 per cent.

If the campaign had continued through a national strike ballot, more members would have become aware of the dangers and the majorities to take action would have increased.

Instead Unison leaders decided to throw in the towel immediately.

Bob Abberley, Unison's Head of Health, told the press in September 'Our feedback is that NHS staff are very angry . . . and are determined not to sign away their jobs to get decent pay rises as would happen if performance-related pay was introduced in the NHS.'

Two months later Abberley accepted the offers.

In doing so he signed away thousands of jobs because that

is how PRP schemes are financed. The Department of Health has made it clear that the cost of such schemes must be met from existing budgets at local level.

The other reason Abberley gave was that Unison membership records were not accurate enough to conduct a postal ballot that would comply with government legislation.

Again this argument reveals a complete unwillingness to put up a fight. A strike ballot should have motivated the union to get its records straight as a matter of urgency.

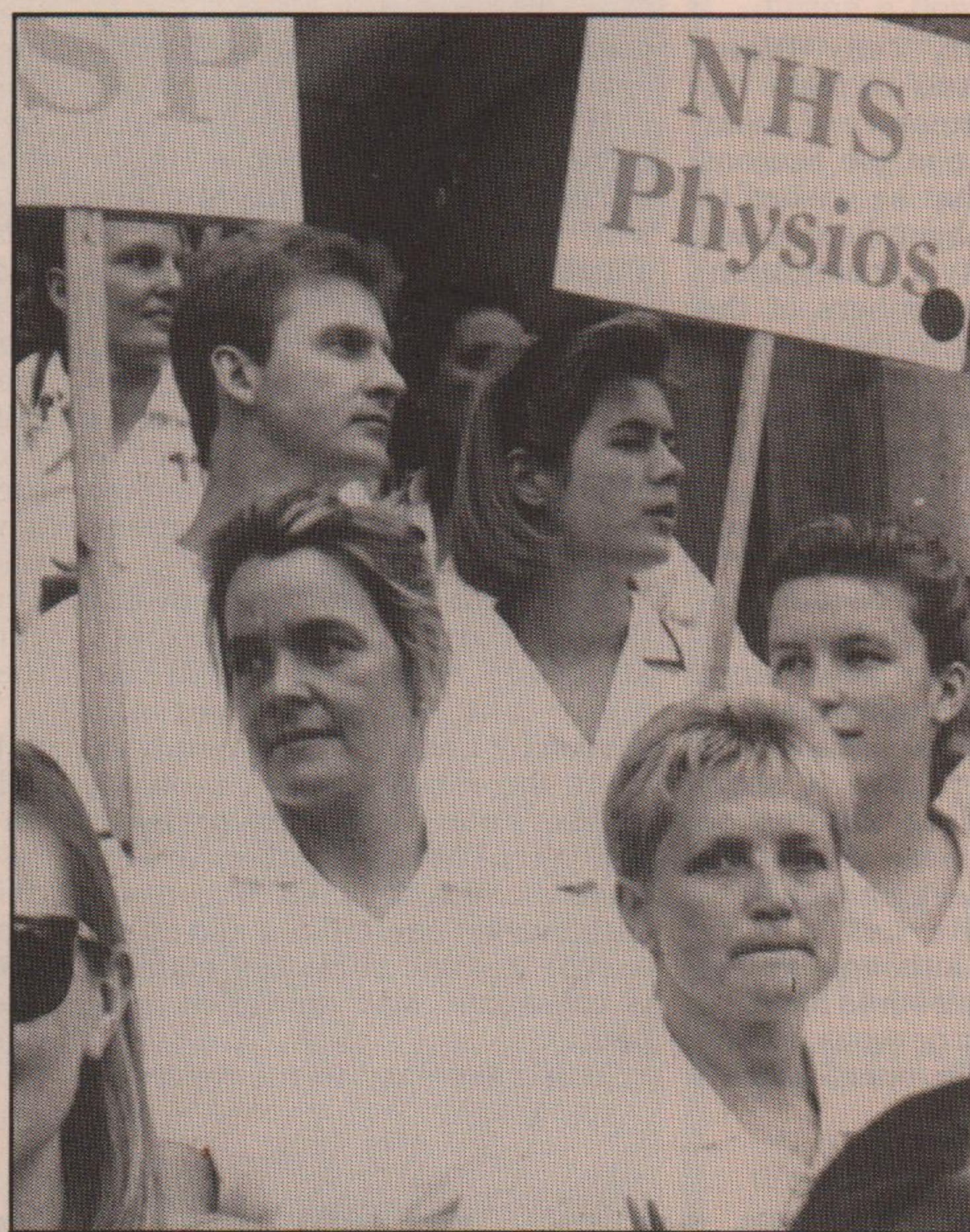
However this was not done. We can expect Unison leaders to use the same excuses next time they want to avoid a strike ballot.

Divide

There is no evidence that PRP schemes improve the performance of organisations, but the NHS management executive want to introduce them locally because they divide the workforce and weaken their collective strength and their trade unions.

Local PRP schemes are the first step towards the abolition of national agreements and negotiations. By accepting such schemes Unison's Health SGE have betrayed the members and gone against a union policy determined by national conference. Those on the SGE who voted to accept must be voted out at the earliest opportunity.

The whole issue is likely to come to a head at this year's Unison National Delegate Conference and Health Service Group Conference. In the meantime local branches will have to do their best to fend off NHS Trust Boards who will try to introduce PRP schemes from April onwards, telling staff that their union has accepted them in principle.



Despite NHS staff rejecting PRP, their union refuses to fight

Britain: overworked, underpaid

A REPORT on working hours published last week has confirmed that the average working week in Britain is the highest in Europe. For men the average is 45.4 hours and for women 39.7 hours. Average overtime working is now running at 10 hours per week.

The next highest figure was from Portugal, where it is only 41.3 hours per week.

Overtime, the report showed, is not confined to manual workers. Most overtime was worked by ambulance staff, rail and bus workers, bakery and confectionery process workers, and workers in the construction industry.

The vast increase in working hours is a clear sign that many employers are keen to extend their existing plant and production capacity, without further investment or recruitment, by extending the hours that people work.

The IDS report makes clear that despite persistent complaints about increased stress, not to mention inefficiency, caused by excessive working hours there is a determination by employers to step up the rate of exploitation of the workforce.

The effect on the health of those working longer hours has already been commented on by medical officers. One bus com-

pany in London now expects to sack at least 3 per cent of its drivers each year because they are no longer fit to drive. Yet all of those drivers had to pass a stiff medical before they could get the job.

Policy

The employers' policy of keeping hourly rates of pay down often forces people to work longer hours so as to get enough money to pay the bills.

Some Transport and General Workers' Union branches have responded putting motions down for the union's conference in July calling for a £7 per hour

legal minimum wage for a 36-hour week. This would produce a weekly basic wage of £252.

The motions point out that one effect of working longer hours is to enable employers to avoid taking on extra staff. So the more hours you work, the less chance there is of the unemployed getting work.

The refusal of the trade unions and the Labour Party to face up to the issue of a legal minimum wage and the excessive hours worked in Britain indicates their refusal to challenge the City of London and the CBI on the issue of 'who controls our working conditions'.

Community politics, Lambeth style

LAMBETH Council has turned liberal. This is no cosy liberalism, but a vicious brand of conservatism.

All parties voted for a cuts package on 24 January. Lambeth now faces an unprecedented cuts programme of between £24 million and £27 million.

Every service has been cash-limited. Education has been asked to cut almost £13 million. This could mean the end of all community education, including the youth service and adult education.

The capital programme could also be destroyed. There is insufficient money to pay for redundancies as well as major housing repairs! It is possible that tenants will face rent rises of up to £14 per week to pay for

severance and early retirement packages. The politicians are considering ending enhanced redundancy terms and asking staff to take wage cuts and unpaid holidays as well as cracking down on absences.

Threatened

The council is seeking changes to the existing redundancy scheme which offers the chance of redeployment to the 800 threatened staff. This 'managing workforce reductions' scheme is now considered too expensive.

Gross misconduct charges have been levelled at environmental services staff for mail-shooting clients to a well-tried campaign pattern. The Liberals are now the favoured, though the

education committee a decision to investigate leafleting and campaigning in community education.

Council action has halted some campaigns, as staff are now unsure of their role in supporting their union Unison against the cuts.

Liberal attention has also turned to the escalating lobbying of committees, (350 people lobbied the education committee in December, and 250 lobbied last week's policy committee). The vigour of lobbying has attracted cautions: parents, for instance, lobbying a meeting called to close nurseries could be cautioned.

Encouraged by years of attacks on trade unions, small-time managers and politicians

mount their own intimidatory campaigns. Employment law deals with individuals and not unions. Individuals are vulnerable. Managers also know that while unions are tied endlessly in disciplinary cases they care passionately about, their broader work suffers.

There is to be a day of action with a march through Brixton on 28 February, voted through a packed Unison branch meeting, and there will be strike ballots as compulsory redundancies threaten.

Lambeth staff face an extraordinary array of politicians competing to sack staff, destroy services and raise rents. There are now meetings of each service committee, as anger rises among the workers and the

Public meeting
Sylvia Pye National Appeal and Fighting Fund
to pay legal fees arising out of the eviction of Parkside Pit Camp
27 February, 7.30pm, Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7.
Nearest tube Finsbury Park

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Inside left

Götterdämmerung

FORMER 'Guardian' features editor Richard Gott, who resigned in December accused of links with the KGB, was an admirer of Cambodia's Pol Pot regime.

One of Gott's acquaintances has remarked: 'If the KGB was relying on people like Richard no wonder they lost the cold war.'

But on 6 September 1994, the Guardian carried a full-page review, by Labour MP Ken Livingstone, of the book 'Gerry Healy — Revolutionary Life' by Corinna Lotz and Paul Feldman. Without revealing he had contributed the preword to this book, Livingstone repeated accusations that members of the Workers Revolutionary Party who ousted their leader Gerry Healy in 1985 (on charges including sexual abuse and violence against members) were working for MI5.

When John Spencer, my former colleague on the WRP's then daily paper the 'News Line', telephoned the Guardian, Richard Gott agreed it was unusual to let someone 'review' a book to which they had contributed. But he said he had been worried that otherwise this important book might not receive due attention. So would he accept a reply? Spencer asked. 'Oh, it's not that important!', Gott replied.

Every week hundreds of books are published without rating even a two-line mention in the newspapers. Obviously editorial choice has to be exercised. It is rarely exercised in favour of Marxists.

ARTHUR RANSOME, the 'Guardian's' man in Red Petrograd in 1917, was a friend of Trotsky, but the 'Guardian' is no friend of Trotskyism. In 1964 Young Socialists organised a lobby of parliament by unemployed youth from all over Britain. The tabloids, mindful of working-class readers' feelings, avoided knocking the youth. That was left to the 'Guardian's' correspondent, a right-wing Labourite. 'Guardian' editorials advised Labour how to combat the Trotskyists in the youth movement.

In 1991, the 'Guardian's' Patrick Wintour inaugurated a press witch-hunt against left-wing councillors who opposed the Gulf war. In 1993, the 'Guardian' falsely claimed police were probing Lambeth council. Labour's Jack Straw leapt in, linking 'Trotskyism and corruption'. Workers were sacked, and the Tories reaped local election success.

When our comrades from southern Africa came to Britain in 1991 to expose torture and murder by the Stalinist-trained security organs of the African National Congress and the South West Africa People's Organisation, the good liberals from the 'Guardian' didn't want to know. But Gott did commission a eulogy of the late Gerry Healy (a 'Trotskyist!'), enabling Livingstone to smear the present WRP. To say he was attacking 'the KGB's traditional Trotskyist enemies' simply underlines the obvious.

In 1981, MI5 blocked Richard Gott's appointment as editor of the BBC's 'Listener' magazine. They have blacklisted many people, particularly WRP comrades. The right-wing 'Spectator' magazineouted Gott's KGB links after the 'Guardian's' exposure of Tory Healy and, more pertinently, the publication of 'Guardian' journalist Neumas Milne's book exposing MI5's operations against the National Union of Mineworkers.

We oppose all such attacks on workers' rights and organisations. But we won't allow the right-wing press to lump everyone on the left together, nor need we make a hero out of every Stalinist hack.

Charlie Pottins

What use will the Labour Party be to any of our people? asks Labour MEP

This article by KEN COATES, Labour MEP for Nottingham, on the Clause Four fight was published in the 'Daily Telegraph' on 13 January. Coates was one of the Labour MEPs who published in the 'Guardian' a statement in defence of this clause of Labour's constitution — much to the annoyance of the Labour leader (see Workers Press, 14 January). We reproduce the article here, in slightly edited form, to inform the campaign to defend Clause Four in the working class

LABOUR's leader, Tony Blair, came out to Brussels to meet the European parliamentary Labour Party (EPLP). One of the reasons for his visit was that he wished to explain his views about the revision of the Labour Party's constitution.

A majority of members of the EPLP are opposed to the leader's attempts to change Labour's constitution. They were opposed before he came to Brussels, and they are still opposed. Most of them are quite happy to have a discussion, aimed at agreeing a medium-term programme, and concerned to elaborate on the party's values. But they do not approve of an attempt to eliminate the socialist part of Labour's constitution.

The new leader gave a short introduction, adding nothing to what had already been said about his reasons for seeking constitutional change. He has a very pleasant manner, although on this occasion his winning smile looked a little strained, even nervous. But he came across as an open, bright,

young man, with simple faith in the evident common sense of his views.

However, even before he spoke, there was some evidence of the managerial quality of his minders, who had been kind enough to announce from Labour Party headquarters that nobody cared what MEPs said, because they were all 'nonentities'.

The Labour MEPs come from a very wide range of backgrounds. It would be difficult to find a grouping more representative of the present-day Labour Party.

And indeed, the present-day Labour Party itself is making it absolutely clear that the MEPs' views are almost universally shared by Labour Party members.

As the returns come in on the Clause Four vote, it is perfectly plain that Labour members are not at all anxious to make their peace with market capitalism, and do not accept that the pursuit of equality is consonant with unbridled competition.

It is very easy to misrepresent

Defence Clause

the disagreements which thus arise, and to attribute them to some kind of personal animus. But this would be quite wrong.

The truth is that there is a fundamental political disagreement between socialists: all socialists, any socialists, on the one hand, and the leader of the Labour Party, on the other. He is, quite simply, a liberal. He is sufficiently open and pleasant to give the impression that it would be quite easy to work with him on a variety of civil problems, although he would not be very radical about most of them.

But the frustration which is rising on the left arises from the fact that this young man has not the faintest idea of how socialists think, and does not begin to understand the mentality of the party which he has been elected to lead. It is certainly aggravated by the ruthless news management by the star cynics who filter his views across to the media.

This is perhaps the most fascinating puzzle in modern British politics. Maybe it is a sign of a terminal crisis in the Labour Party's evolution. This problem is quite stark. Global capitalism is more powerful than it has ever been, and its power is more concentrated in fewer major centres. It has, to a large extent, destroyed the effective economic powers of small

and medium-sized nation states.

This is why socialist parties find it very difficult to focus their actions for full employment, for instance. The individual states of Europe are not strong enough to determine effective alternative macroeconomic policies. It might have been possible to try to come to grips with this enormous difficulty. But Tony Blair's solution has been to imagine that the problem does not exist.

Nowhere in the drafts which have been circulated through the Labour Party does the word 'capitalism' feature.

Blair offers us pleasant phrases about equality and social justice. But he will put no robber barons in the dock. Indeed, he explained with great candour why he could make no consequent policy on anything until after he had been elected.

Uprooted

The conclusion which I drew from this was very sad. If the Labour Party can come under this kind of influence, what use will it be to any of our people?

Wherever I go in my constituency, I meet those who have been uprooted from work. I meet people driven to slave for poverty wages, or subsisting on the margins of life on minuscule benefits.

Prepare for split in Labour

MIKE COOKE comments on the article above by Ken Coates

WHY has Workers Press, the weekly paper of a revolutionary party, published this statement by the Labour MEP Ken Coates?

It is because it expresses from the 'inside' the crisis reached by reformism, not just in Britain, but throughout the world.

Even a Labour left such as Coates has had to admit that 'the individual states of Europe are not strong enough to determine effective alternative macro-economic policies' in the face of 'global capitalism'. And this capitalism has 'destroyed the effective economic powers of small and medium nation states'.

'This is why socialist parties find it very difficult to focus their actions for full employment,' says Coates.

Most surprising of all is the question 'what use will [the Labour Party] be to any of our people?'

For decades the Labour Party was united around the programme of 'full employment', the 'welfare state', and public spending, advocated by the bourgeois economist J.M. Keynes as a way of trying to overcome the contradictions of capitalism. Nationalisation was one of the weapons used in this.

Labour right-wingers, while using some 'socialist' rhetoric, were fairly clear that their job was to work on behalf of capitalism in the working class. The Labour left tended to take the rhetoric more

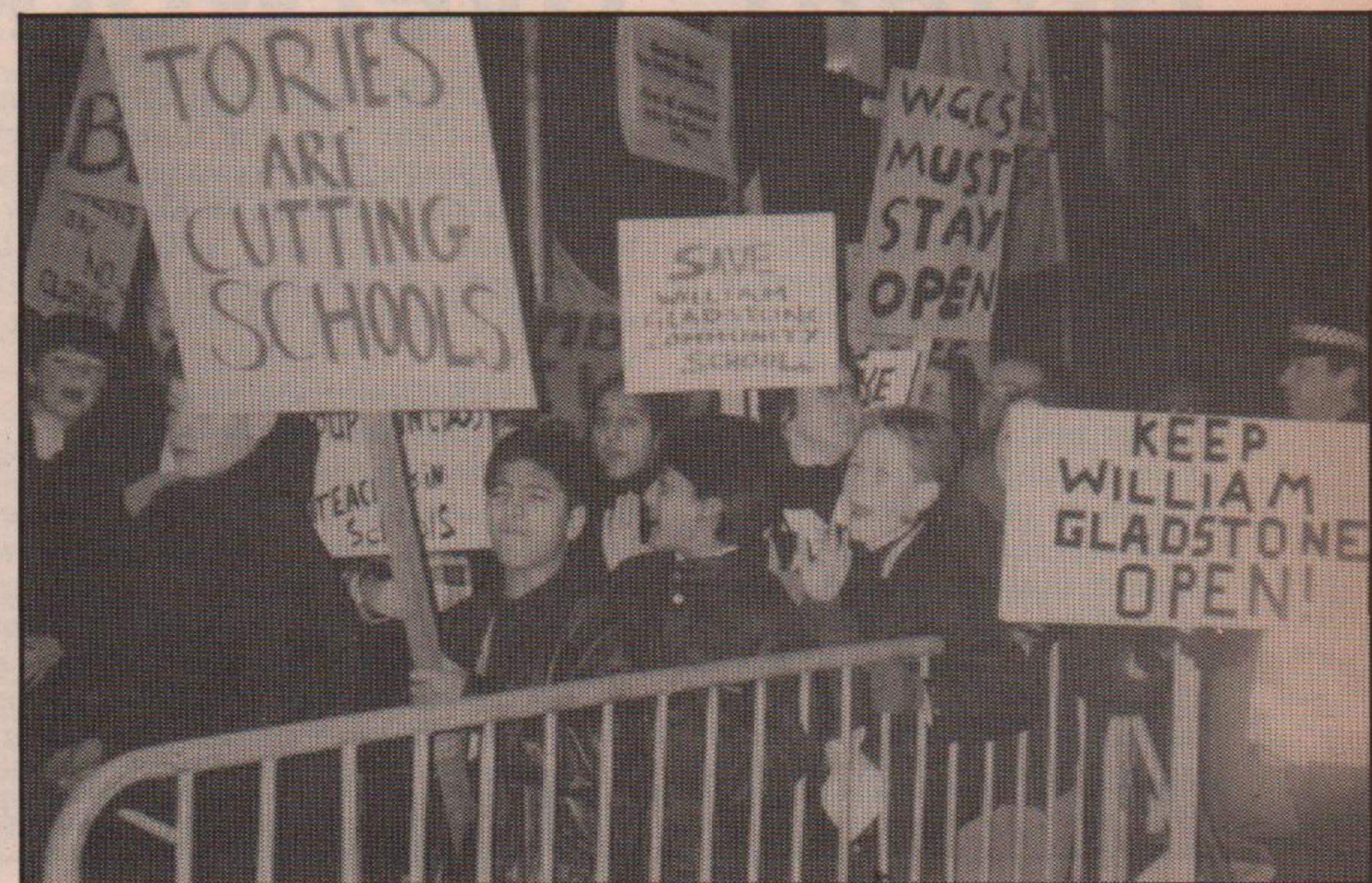
seriously, and hoped that the 'reforms' carried out would edge Britain towards 'socialism'.

Labour unity based on Keynesianism was always an illusion. It was one based on the temporary prosperity resulting from the 'long boom' of capitalist reconstruction after World War II (largely financed by the US as the biggest imperialist power) — which came after the wholesale destruction of the 1930s slump and the war. Some concessions to the working class were necessary in the form of health, education, and welfare services in the advanced capitalist countries.

'Macroeconomic policies' is Coates's code for Keynesianism. The Labour right explicitly abandoned Keynesianism during the Wilson-Callaghan governments in the 1970s when the City of London effectively went on strike and refused to fund the government's public-spending programme. In a famous speech at the 1976 Labour Party conference, Callaghan said:

'We used to think you could spend your way out of a recession, and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting government expenditure.'

'I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists, and in so far as it ever did exist, it only worked on each occasion since the war by injecting a bigger dose of inflation into the economy. And



Capitalism is now cutting back on concessions such as education spending

each time that happened the average level of unemployment has risen. Higher inflation followed by higher unemployment. That is the history of the last 20 years.'

But to a certain extent the Labour left has continued to cling to the conceptions of Keynesianism that a national economy could be revived by 'macroeconomic policies'.

It is only now that it is dawning on people such as Coates that what Callaghan said in 1976 was true. Coates certainly still has illusions that at some point the 'small and medium-sized nation states' could have 'effective economic power' against 'global capitalism'. But he now believes that capitalism has changed, having become 'more

powerful than it has ever been'.

In fact, global capitalism is now more crisis-ridden since the collapse of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. It has to take more open control of world and national economies. It can no longer afford to give any concessions, in the form of things such as social services, to the working class in the advanced capitalist countries at the expense of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples.

But despite this, Coates knows a crunch is coming in the Labour Party. As he says: 'The problem is quite stark.'

He feels the need to do 'something' 'if they steal the Labour Party away from us'. By 'us', he presumably means the member-

nd e 4

I encounter wholesale spoliation of the environment in the exploitation of its resources. Capitalism is with us every day of the week, and its effect is consistently evil.

To speak of equality in our sad mining villages is to mock everything that is holy.

Socialism certainly needs to be reinvented. Old-fashioned nationalisation will not be restored, any more than the monasteries, the patrimony of the poor in the Middle Ages.

But common ownership is more and more the necessary response to runaway private acquisitiveness, and the infinite destruction wrought by greed. It will advance through the democratisation of pension funds and similar forms, and through joint and common international action to match and pace the multinationals.

All this is very old hat, and Blair and his bright young acolytes will take great pleasure in pointing out that much of it has been said before.

But we must find ways of continuing to say it, if they steal the Labour Party away from us, and return it to the worship of the accomplished power.

Perhaps they will not be able to do this. It is difficult to believe that Labour cannot be better than this in 1995.

Party

ship, yet it can be argued that the membership never 'had' the Labour Party, rather the party had the members — as it was always controlled by the bureaucracy.

All the indications are that the Labour Party is moving towards a split. The labour movement as a whole must be prepared for this, both inside and outside the Labour Party. The alternative is to allow a situation where many Labour members just leave the party totally demoralised, either because of changes made to Clause Four, or because a Labour government has

All the indications are that the Labour Party is moving towards a split. The labour movement as a whole must be prepared for this, both inside and outside the Labour Party.

launched the attack it must carry out against the working class at the behest of capitalism.

But this preparation of the labour movement cannot be achieved by lecturing the thousands of Labour Party members and supporters about the need for socialist revolution. We must understand what has bound them to this rotten party.

Coates's article is part of helping us comprehend this process and how it is breaking up.



Attlee at Durham miners' gala in late 1940s after mines nationalised (top); World War II led to post-war boom not Keynesian policy (middle); and global capitalism is increasingly concentrated in centres such as Wall St (above)

Bronwen Handyside reports

Two nations

Don't fire until you see their woolly hats

I AM glad to see that British justice has not been thrown by all the hoo-ha with the press-led campaign to release Private Clegg, the British soldier jailed for shooting young joy-riders in the north of Ireland. It is still managing to pull off some fine performances.

Animal rights protester William Aldridge, aged 51, found himself in the dock last week, charged with tossing a woolly hat at a policeman during a demonstration, at Shoreham in Sussex, against the shipment of live calves.

Mr Aldridge owned up like a man, explaining to the reporters on the court-room steps after the case: 'Emotions were running high.

'I picked up a woollen hat I had spotted on the floor and threw it at a police officer's face in anger.'

He was given a one-year conditional discharge and made to pay £35 in court costs.

(His encounter with the British state was not quite as surreal as that of the Protestant deaf-mute arrested by the British army in 1974 on the Shankill Road in Belfast for shouting abuse.)

More on British justice

ON A darker note, what about the three working-class single mothers jailed for poll-tax arrears who were released on bail last week only through the heroic efforts of solicitor Richard Wise?

Joan Partington, aged 44, from Bolton in Lancashire has six children. The oldest are 17-year-old twins, both with severe health problems — one is waiting for a heart-bypass operation, and the other has behavioural difficulties. One of her other children has hydrocephalus.

Her husband was a part-time postman, on £70 a week. While she was living with him, magistrates ordered her to pay £5 a week towards her poll-tax arrears, or face jail.

When she split up with her husband, her only income was state benefits. She wrote to the court asking for her arrears payments to be deducted from her income support. She was summonsed to appear before the magistrates but could not attend because her son had an urgent medical appointment.

She continued to send £5 a week, but it was sent back, and a warrant was issued for her arrest last week. She failed to find anyone to look after her children for her 24-day prison sentence in the 24 hours she was given to sort out all her arrangements.

The other two women are a mother and daughter. Lynne Martin has four children, two under 12. Her daughter has three children aged five, three and eight weeks. Both women and several of the children have bad health, and live off income support and disability living allowance.

The women tried to borrow the money from a money-lender, and the younger woman considered turning to prostitution. She was

jailed for 14 days and her mother for 13 days.

Barbarism as a commodity

A READER has kindly sent me a little magazine, which arrived unsolicited through his letter-box. It can perhaps give us some insight into the philosophy of those who are presently running the world and jailing the likes of Joan Partington.

The publication is called 'Taipan-UK' and offers its readers untold riches and security if they will subscribe.

The front page gives a synopsis of the contents:

'An unstoppable wedge is about to be driven through the heart of Britain. It is a wedge of technology and culture that will divide this nation into two very different parts: the haves and have-nots . . . those who make the leap into the economy of the future and profit, and those who are left behind, trapped in dying areas and a dying economy . . .

'In one part, crime will spread. Homes will be boarded up. Gangs of fatherless young men and boys will roam the streets. People will live shorter, meaner, poorer lives. Property prices will fall . . . entire areas will be abandoned.

'Sounds like an inner-city ghetto? Think again. This may be your street 10 years from now. Because the same plague that has destroyed the inner cities is spreading to the suburbs.

'Meanwhile, just a few hours' drive from these living nightmares will be some of the finest environments ever created on the planet. These enclaves of peace and prosperity will be protected by geography and electronic fortifications. And they will benefit from the technological breakthroughs that will totally transform our economy and our lives.

'They will have no factories and no chimneys. But they will be the centres of the new economy . . . and the smart areas of the 21st century.'

Inside the magazine tells of the fantastic investment opportunities that lie in store for the top people:

'Government is in permanent decline as tax revenues dry up. Look for Britain's public services to collapse under their own weight . . . creating some spectacular investment opportunities as private firms take over where government has failed.

'Who would have forecast that such basic services as water, electricity and the telephones would have been sold off into the private sector — creating fortunes for investors who spotted the solid profits which such enduring services can earn in fair weather and foul?'

'Taipan-UK' says it will tell its subscribers how to profit from a future in which a few smart investors enjoy the utmost luxury at the expense of 'most Britons', who will live under conditions of barbarism. I would have more confidence in its predictive powers if millions were not already living as the magazine describes.

To quote the reader who sent 'Taipan-UK' to me: 'This is turning barbarism into a commodity to be bought and sold — and is a real symptom of the rottenness of the system.'

If you have any material for this column, please send it to me at Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

They came to London

PERSONAL COLUMN

TO MY regret, being away at the time, I missed the 'Peopling of London' exhibition at the Museum of London in the early part of last year.

Nor did I see, until a few days ago, the complementary book: 'The Peopling of London: Fifteen thousand years of settlement from overseas', edited by Nick Merriman (Museum of London, £9.95).

Having now read this book, I recommend it unreservedly. I know no other book of similar scope — no other book even remotely resembling it.

There's scarcely a page from which I didn't learn something, often something quite unexpected, about the cosmopolitan nature of London's population ever since the Romans founded Londinium, a settlement soon to be described by the first-century historian Tacitus as 'filled with traders and a celebrated centre of commerce'.

After invaluable introductory essays by Nick Merriman and Rozina Visram, there are 17 historical accounts of settler communities.

These range in scope from brief but informative introductions to 'Latin Americans in London', 'The Vietnamese in

counterparts (an interesting example of co-operation between Jew and Gentile, Englishman and alien), more than fifty tailoring trade unions were founded between 1872 and 1915. 'The majority of these unions were short-lived, weakened, as were their English counterparts, by the structure of local industry which was seasonal and small-scale, by the lack of full-time salaried officials and by the constantly refilling pool of unskilled labour.'

'In spite of this, in 1889 and again in 1912, the Jewish tailors of London staged successful strikes during which more than 10,000 workers fought for improved conditions and increased wages.'

There are references to anti-fascist activity in the 1930s and to more recent anti-racist activity (though I can't help feeling that the drawing of the fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley on page 21 is hugely and unnecessarily flattering).

Sword recalls that the first issue of 'Robotnik' ('The Worker'), organ of the Polish Socialist Party, was published in Mile

Scots language and national culture

GEORGE ANGUS looks at the retreat of the Scots language to its working-class bastions

THE Scots language is today considered by many people, both north and south of the border, to be a dialect of the Queen's English. But its roots, as one of the predominant group of languages spoken on mainland Britain, are both ancient and diverse.

Thanks to a great extent to the Scottish ruling class, modern Scots is now greatly Anglicised, and has been almost completely wiped out in many areas. Broad Scots is now only spoken in rural districts, although its influence is still strong in the large cities.

Scots initially was the language of lowland Scotland, akin to Middle English. It became the national standard (outside the semi-autonomous Highlands) in Scotland by about the beginning of the 11th century.

Scots was closely related to the language of the kingdom of Northumbria. But from about this time Scots developed along

its own path, separating from English, whose development was influenced by language spoken in Wessex, the most powerful English kingdom of the late 900s.

There were two main influences on the development of Scots. One came from the Low Countries, Scotland's main trading partners, and the other from the French, with whom the Scots had formed a military alliance, based on mutual antagonism towards the English.

There was a great deal of cultural cross-fertilisation as a result of the 'Auld Alliance'. St Andrew's university, founded in 1412, adopted the traditional curriculum of Paris, and Glasgow university, founded in 1451, was based on the St Andrew's model. Aberdeen university, founded in 1495, had as its first principal Hector Boece, a Scots historian who had been a professor at Montaigu college in Paris.

Scots literature at the beginning of the 15th century roughly followed the tradition of Chaucer, but towards the end of the century French influences began to reveal themselves in the work of writers who made use of French forms and vocabulary.

This influence was at work in Scots vernacular poetry, particularly in a tradition, whose origins were in the 16th century, that used with effect the six-line 'rime cone'. This was later much used by Rabbie Burns (1759-96).

Decline

The decline of Scots began with the Union of Parliaments in 1707, and with the haste of the Scottish ruling class to emulate their richer counterparts in the south.

Elocution teachers were much in vogue with the upper classes, in fact the 'Morning-side' accent is thought to be the dastardly work of a rogue Irish elocutionist in the early 19th century, illustrating that people

had little idea of what 'good' English was supposed to sound like.

By the end of the century Scots was almost exclusively the language of the working class. The status of Scots had changed from one of being a separate tongue to one of merely 'bad' English, or a dialect.

Those who caused the greatest damage to Scots culture and language were not the English, but Scotland's own ruling class. This is a fact that seems to have escaped the Scottish National Party, and one that raises the interesting question of who and what defines national culture.

In polite society Scots is regarded as uncouth and somewhat rude. All the better, for as Trotsky said: 'A revolution is always distinguished by impoliteness!' And as Burns succinctly put it:

*See yon Birkie ca'd a Laird,
That struts and stares an'
aw that
Though thousands worship
at his word
He's but a coof for aw that.*



Jayabehn Desai, one of the leaders of the 1977 Grunwick strike. An illustration from 'The Peopling of London'.

London', and the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities, to substantial and well-documented essays on Africans and Caribbeans (Peter Fraser); Americans (Richard Tames); Arabs (Camilla Fawzi El-Solh); Australians and New Zealanders (Rick Bouwman); Chinese (Anthony Shang); Germans (Panikos Panayi); Irish people (Seán Hutton); Italians (Lucio Sponza); the Jewish community (Anne Kershen); Poles (Keith Sword); Somalis (Shamis Hussein); South Asians (Rozina Visram); and Spaniards (Javier Pes).

According to Tames, the first American to set foot in London was the Native American princess Pocahontas, who arrived in 1616.

According to Hutton, an Irish tailor was the victim, in 1288, of the first recorded murder in Fleet Street — and in 1485 London had an Irish mayor.

Students of working-class history will find much here to catch and hold their attention.

Sponza tells us that anarchist and socialist refugees from Italy found sanctuary in London towards the end of the 19th century, but apparently 'did not become part of the Italian community proper, where political debate was absent'.

Kershen tells us that 'with the aid of Jewish socialists and anarchists and their English

End Road in 1893 by a group of exiles.

The present-day plight of migrant workers in the catering trade is highlighted in Rozina Visram's short account of the Latin American community in London.

Recruited to work for a particular employer in a particular job, such workers are highly insecure because employers control the issue of work permits; so these workers find it very hard to join a union or negotiate for better working conditions.

Anyone who undertakes the shamefully neglected task of organising migrant workers, or who seeks to forge political links with the members of any of these settler communities, should first of all read 'The Peopling of London'.

Two features that deserve special praise are the many illustrations — those in colour and the helpful section headed 'Finding Out More About London's Overseas Communities', which provides a detailed guide to libraries, archives, record offices and museums holding relevant material.

This book is solid, readable, reliable, and very welcome.

Peter Fryer

Edinburgh anger against Criminal Justice Act

BY HILARY HORROCKS

ABOUT 2,000 people demonstrated through central Edinburgh on 21 January against the Criminal Justice Act.

The march, which was backed by Edinburgh and District Trades Council and organised by the Coalition Against the Criminal Justice Act, was supported by hundreds of young people, including a group from the campaign against the extension of the M77 motorway through the Pollok estate in Glasgow.

Official trade union support was regrettably small, but many individual trades unionists attended.

The rally at the Scottish Office after the march heard speakers from the Union of Communication Workers and the public sector union, Unison.

They called for the power of the trade union movement to be harnessed to the campaign: the provisions of the Act were directed as much against organised workers as they were against motorway protestors, hunt saboteurs and ravers.

Francesca de Silva, from

Brightlingsea Against Live Exports, told demonstrators of the police brutality experienced in the previous week in her town by people protesting and attempting to blockade lorries carrying live animals for export.

Swearing

'Children and pregnant women were punched', she said. Demonstrators saw local farmer and prospective Tory candidate Richard Otley sitting in one of the lorries carrying the animals, swearing and acting

provocatively towards them.

The police, said de Silva, had used the Criminal Justice Act to turn back people travelling to join the protest at Brightlingsea. 'Most of us', she concluded, 'now believe it is a police state — we are under siege'.

George Silcott, brother of Winston Silcott, appealed for help to campaign for his brother's release and clear his name. He was the only speaker to draw attention to the record of Labour MPs, who abstained in votes on the Criminal Justice Bill.

Letter

More letters on p.2

Canadian race torturers in 'peace' force

THERE are international ramifications to the role of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) — equivalent to MI5 — in the formation of the white-supremacist organisation, the Heritage Front (Workers Press, 14 January).

Two years ago it was discovered (courtesy of a medical doctor in the military) that 2nd Airborne Unit of the Canadian armed forces was regularly torturing Somalis while on a 'peacekeeping' mission there. The report was substantiated by photographs and a videotape of members of the unit ritually torturing and eventually killing a young Somali.

Anti-racists noted at the time there was evidence of white supremacists in the unit. There was a trial and only one man was convicted — a young man who appears to be of black descent and who may not have been directly involved in the events. The scandal died down until a few weeks ago.

For some reason, members of the airborne unit seem to videotape themselves performing atrocities. A videotape of unit members bullying recruits at an initiation ceremony shows the recruits eating faeces (probably not unusual in itself!), and making a black recruit walk like a dog on his hands and knees with 'I love the KKK'

written in excrement on his back. This reopened the earlier complaints about the airborne unit.

The unit was due to go to Bosnia a few weeks later!

In any event, the new tapes again indicate there are white supremacists in the unit. The response of the Canadian government was to announce, on 24 January, that the unit was to be disbanded. But disbanding it actually means that the military is either going to form another parachute commando unit, or disperse paratroopers throughout other units of the military.

The point is that apart from another one of those endless 'commissions of inquiry', which result in a bit of wrist-slapping, the neo-Nazis will simply spread their filth into other units (where I assume some of them are already).

Collusion

This story is a further example of state collusion in the building of the neo-Nazi movement in Canada. As your article on 14 January said, Grant Bristow was a neo-Nazi who set up the Heritage Front, and was on the CSIS's payroll at the time.

But things are actually worse than this. He also tried,

along with Wolfgang Droege and another leading Nazi, to undermine the government of Dominica. Droege runs one of the world's largest German-language Nazi presses.

And, although the government denies it, Bristow worked as a security guard in the Canadian post office during a major strike, at a time when the Canadian Union of Postal Workers declared they were being spied on by CSIS.

It is known that CSIS did absolutely nothing about the Heritage Front while it was being formed except to pay Grant Bristow to form it. Grant Bristow then got hold of a list of anti-racists from CSIS and gave it to the neo-Nazis.

Since the autumn there have been attacks on anti-racists in Toronto. Organisers of Anti-Racist Action and the Toronto Coalition Against Racism have had threats on their phones and attacks on their homes.

I am involved in a party that is mostly engaged in workers' offensives against capitalism. The main area of my work centres around the fightback against the proposed reforms to our social security system, which will introduce the beginnings of US-style, poverty-level guaranteed annual income (GAI) and 'workfare' programmes.

This is in addition to an estimated \$18 billion cut in social security spending.

In Ontario, our organisation spent almost two years trying to build a challenge within the workers' movement to the anti-worker legislation of the New Democratic Party (NDP, equivalent to Labour Party) at provincial level. The NDP introduced a round of wage cuts that were 'negotiated' through sectoral bargaining.

Any articles in Workers Press about the workers' fightback against social security cuts, and against employers' restructuring of the workplace and the like, are of immediate interest to me. I have been trying to draw up a list of demands for workers to help shift the workers' struggle from the defensive to the offensive in these difficult times.

Other articles that would interest me include any on global restructuring and the local effects on other countries in the world, including their workers' fightbacks; the workers' movement in Britain; and the social movements and their relations (or lack of it) to workers' struggles. I belong to Socialist Action, a section of the Fourth International in Canada.

Comradely greetings
Ellen J. Ramsa
Vancouver, Canada

SIMON PIRANI

comments on recent Workers Press articles on the war in Chechnya and what the response of the working-class movement should be to the conflict

WHAT is the policy of Workers Press, and of the Workers International, towards the Russian war against Chechnya?

As a newspaper addressing the working class in Britain, the central attack of Workers Press should be on the tacit support for Yeltsin's war by Britain and other imperialist powers.

Our main slogan here in Britain should be 'stop British support for Yeltsin's war'. We should try to rouse British workers and their organisations to denounce the Tory government which — hoping to use Yeltsin as their policeman in the Caucasus — tut-tuts disapprovingly but says that genocide is an 'internal affair'.

Neither the editorial in Workers Press (7 January), the front-page article (28 January), nor the resolution of our public meeting (28 January) directly answered the question: what should the working class here in Britain do? We say, 'defend the Chechen people', but how?

The issue of the working-class movement's responsibility was mentioned in our picture caption (21 January). But it must be a matter of editorial policy.

Chechnya and national rights

rebuild the working-class movement. The dreadful reality of the former USSR is that only the development of that working-class movement can stop Yeltsin and other future dictators. But that movement is not yet developed. It needs to be developed with our support.

Imperialist interests in the Caucasus

LIKE the carve-up of Bosnia, the blitzing of the Chechen capital, Grozny, is part of the imposition of the 'new world order', as our resolution last week pointed out.

There are two aspects to this. Firstly the Russian bureaucracy and would-be bourgeoisie, terrified that their own country will be colonised and carved up by stronger powers, hope to establish themselves as a policing force for imperialism. The Western powers prefer to have the

(?) politburo — to develop these reserves. Other companies involved are Amoco, Pennzoil, Mcdermott, Ramco, Statoil and Turkish Petroleum.

This is the biggest commercial agreement of any kind signed in the former USSR, where Western investment has so far been negligible.

It is still not decided which way the oil will be piped westwards. There are three possible routes: through Turkey, through Georgia, or through northern Caucasus to Novorossisk, the Russian Black Sea port. The Russian government, which two weeks ago signed a deal with the Kazakhstan government to pipe Kazakh oil to Novorossisk, where it aims to establish a major oil terminal, is lobbying for the northern Caucasian route.

That goes through Grozny. And that makes independence for Chechnya out of the question.

Our resolution on the war, published last week, stated that 'The im-

perialist opposition to the war is foolishly optimistic. The opposition to the war comes from all sorts of disparate forces. Even many of Russia's ruling stratum oppose it, not on principle, but because of its incredibly incompetent execution.

Yes, there are working-class elements opposing the war — most obviously the movement of soldiers' mothers — but we should not delude ourselves that there is a powerful workers' movement against the war. There is not yet a powerful workers' movement of any kind — it is in the process of developing, and we play a vital role in that.

The best way we may immediately intervene is by linking our campaign against the war to very direct and practical support for the workers' movements.

Let us organise British women to link up with those soldiers' mothers. Let us raise support for the Kazakh, Russian and Ukrainian miners, for the

to guarantee any national rights by the time the USSR was formed in December 1922. Its administration was already firmly in the hands of Stalin and his clique.

In that very month, Lenin declared political war on Stalin and Dzerzhinsky on their denial of national rights in the Caucasus, but died before he could pursue it. Khristian Rakovsky led an attempt to reverse Stalin's policy at the 12th Communist Party congress in April 1923; its failure was one of the first serious defeats for the anti-Stalinist opposition.

But it was not only the growth of the Stalinist bureaucracy which made it impossible for the Bolsheviks to 'guarantee' the right to self-determination. Even before the USSR was formed, it was the Russian civil war and the imperialists' use of national bourgeoisies to try to undermine Bolshevik power.

The Bolsheviks never guaranteed the right to self-determination in the abstract. Certainly, their declaration, immediately after taking power, that the nations of the old Russian empire had the right of secession, gave a massive impetus to national movements.

But the Bolsheviks never hesitated to use military force against national governments that provided bridge-heads to the imperialist powers to join the attack on the Russian workers' state. In practice, it was the Bolshevik victory over the Whites and imperialists in the civil war that brought most

'The right to self-determination was always subordinated to the desperate struggle by the young workers' state for survival.'

of the republics under their control. The role of the local workers' movement was often, although not always, secondary.

In Georgia, the local soviets were dominated by the Mensheviks. They set up a government seen by the imperialists as a toe-hold against communism. The Bolsheviks saw it that way too, and put an end to it by military force.

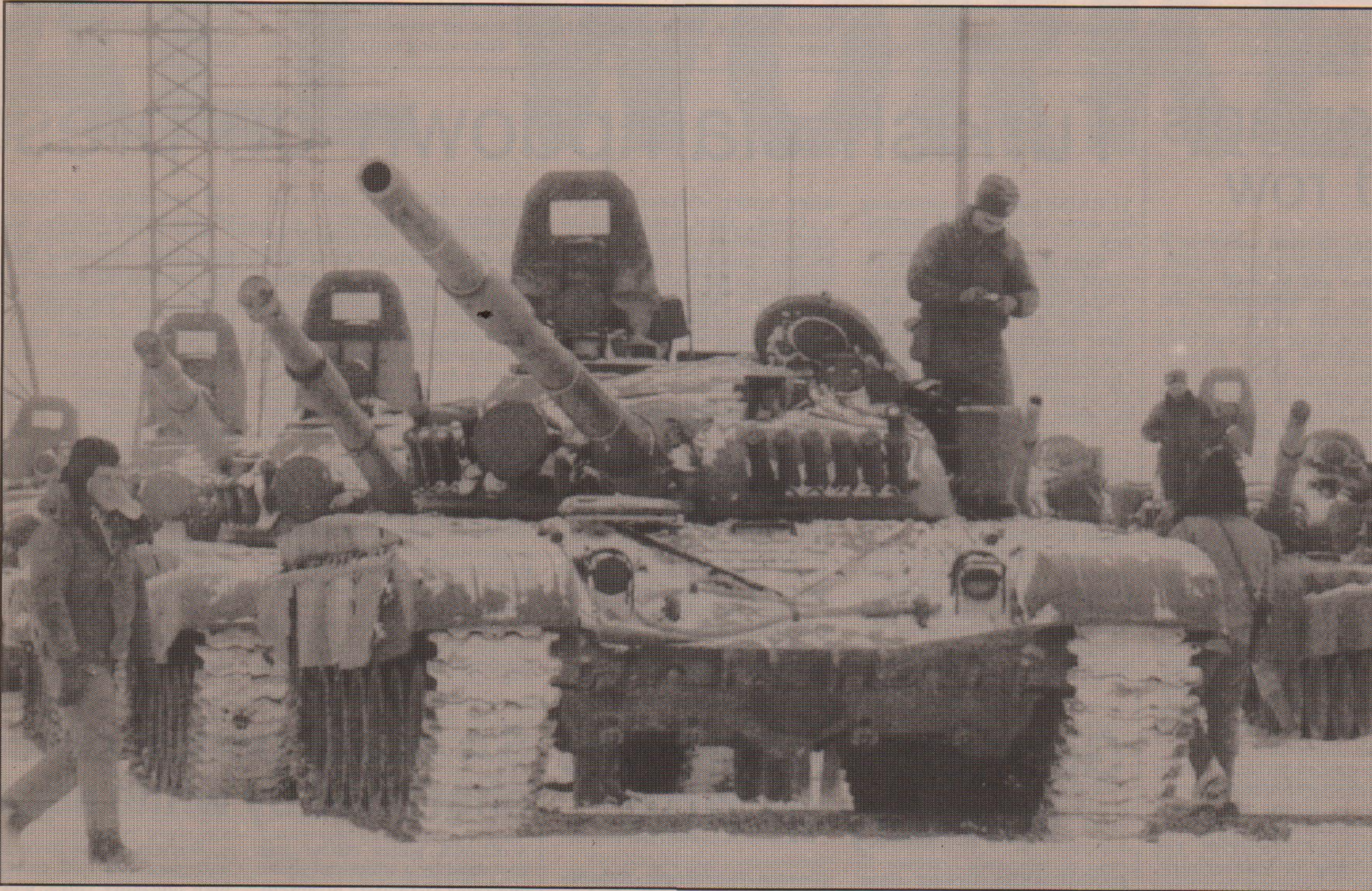
The right to self-determination was always subordinated to the desperate struggle by the young workers' state for survival. Furthermore, this right was seen by the Bolsheviks as conditioned by the desirability of their fundamental aim of bringing nations closer together.

As Trotsky wrote in his book which justified the invasion of Georgia, 'Between Red and White': 'It is self-evident that the principle of self-determination does not in any case supersede the unifying tendencies of socialist economic construction . . .

'To us, national self-determination has always appeared and will always appear an inevitable step towards the dictatorship of the working class — which, in accordance with the rules of revolutionary strategy, and in the process of civil war, develops strong centralist tendencies, acting as a counterpoise to national separation.'

It should be noted that, in the case of Chechnya and the other small nationalities of the North Caucasus, they were not granted the status of national republics, but only that of autonomous republics — the difference being that these regions, being considered economically unviable as independent nations, did not have even the theoretical right of separation in the USSR constitution.

Hopefully in Workers Press we will discuss the material conditions in which the question of national rights is raised today, clearly quite different from those in earlier times. This will strengthen our campaign in defence of Chechnya from Russian aggression.



Russian tanks at the border of Chechnya: working-class campaign against Yeltsin's war must be linked with new workers' organisations in east Europe

We must try to compel trades unions and other workers' organisations to denounce the war. Let us campaign throughout eastern Europe. Let us appeal to the North Sea oil workers — who work for the very multinational companies that will benefit from Yeltsin's bloody adventure — to join us.

In Workers Press we have raised the issue of the type of new party the working class needs. If, confronted by the war in Chechnya, we cannot indicate how the working class must act, our 'new' party will just be an empty slogan.

A campaign against Yeltsin's war should be linked with efforts to support the new workers' movements springing up in the former USSR: for example the miners of Kazakhstan, 100,000 of whom were reportedly on strike earlier this month over non-payment of their wages. The International Trade Union Solidarity Committee has already established firm links with some of the emerging workers' organisations. This should be built on.

Surely this is what we mean by the phrase we often repeat — the need to

Caucasus firmly under Russian control than to leave it open to the influence of Turkey, Iran and the larger Arab states.

Secondly there is the very specific matter of the oil under the Caspian sea. An economic analyst, John Howell, wrote in 'The Times' last month:

'The [Chechnya] conflict is not about past production and transportation [of oil], in which Chechnya played a nodal role. Much of that infrastructure has been idle for some time. It is about the potential of the region and the oilfields lying in the Caspian Sea to the east of Grozny, where the oil reserves are estimated at several billion barrels.'

The Caspian oil reserve is the third largest in the world, after those of Siberia and the Persian Gulf. It is mainly under the control of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

In September last year, a consortium led by our very 'own' British Petroleum signed contracts worth £5.2 billion with the Azerbaijan president, Heydar Galiev — formerly a colonel in the KGB and member of the 'Soviet'

imperialist powers must crush all independence movements in order to prepare the way for a restored capitalism on the backs of the pauperised working class. If Yeltsin does not succeed in this, more openly fascist politicians such as Zhirinovskiy will be called upon. It is only the opposition of the Russian workers to the war that delays the open embracing of Zhirinovskiy.'

In my opinion this is upside-down. Firstly, if we understand 'fascism' in the way Marxists have used it — roughly, to describe a mass, violent movement of declassed, impoverished people, mobilised to support an extreme form of capitalist dictatorship — Zhirinovskiy has no fascist movement behind him.

Tomorrow, maybe. Today, Yeltsin is being congratulated by Zhirinovskiy for implementing his own programme of a colonialist 'march to the south'. The immediate danger of dictatorship, I think, could come either from Yeltsin himself or from the army generals now in conflict with him.

Secondly, to believe that the way to dictatorship is blocked by working-

rank-and-file workers' organisations that have contacted us; tell them we are doing so because we believe that only the working class is capable of resisting dictatorship.

Let us work with our comrades in Moscow to expose the poisonous CIA-sponsored 'trades unionists'; let our Latin American comrades tell the Russian workers, from their own experience, what these people are all about.

The Caucasus

WE MUST try to make contact with workers' organisations in the Caucasus.

For this reason, and for our own political clarification, we need to say more about our attitude to the national question.

Our resolution states: 'The Bolsheviks were adamant in guaranteeing the right to self-determination to all the republics of the USSR. It was only with the usurpation of power by Stalin that this right was cruelly trampled on.'

In fact the Bolsheviks were unable

Whitehall helped send children to Auschwitz

LABOUR's Herbert Morrison, wartime home secretary, presided over a Whitehall committee that blocked the rescue of 1,000 Jewish orphans from Hitler's concentration camps.

In September 1942, the Vichy French government offered to hand over 1,000 youngsters aged between 4 and 14, whose parents it had deported to the Nazi camps. A ship could have been sent to take them.

The British government's delay and intransigence helped send the children to Auschwitz, Fred Barschak of the Board of Deputies of British Jews told a rally last weekend commemorating the Red Army's liberation of the Nazi death camp in January 1945.

'Why, after Winston Churchill stood in the Commons and announced that more than 4 million Jews had perished, did the Final Solution trundle on for another two-and-a-half years?' Barschak asked.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

In discussions between the Foreign Office and Home Office, some chaired by Herbert Morrison, officials asked how they could be sure the children were orphans. 'Do you expect the Germans to supply death certificates?' Morrison asked them.

A Home Office memorandum said it would be 'necessary to refuse to admit such children unless evidence is forthcoming that both parents have

perished'. Sir Alexander Cadogan, Foreign Office permanent under-secretary, argued Britain's allies might query the granting of visas to 'enemy aliens, however sound the motives'.

In fact, the offer by Vichy France to send the orphans had come after pressure from the US, which still had relations with Vichy.

Otto Schiff, a leader of the Jewish community, told the British government that not one child would be a charge on the public purse. 'I guarantee absolutely that Jewish and refugee community organisations will take these children,' he said.

Despite this, Morrison, whose wife was Jewish, appears to have accepted his civil servants' viewpoint, while blaming the public.

The right-wing Labourite

said he feared the children's arrival might 'stir up anti-Semitism, of which there is a fair amount just below the surface, and that would be bad for the country and the Jewish community.'

Refusal

On 7 December 1942, Otto Schiff reported to the Board of Deputies that he met with blanket refusal to take the children.

On 17 December, Sir Anthony Eden told the Commons that Germany 'was now carrying into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe'.

In January 1943, by which time the Germans had occupied Vichy France, the children followed their parents, on the

trains to Auschwitz.

The following year when Churchill, responding to Jewish calls, asked the RAF to bomb railway lines to the Nazi camp, Whitehall officials secretly blocked the order, claiming it 'would cost British lives and aircraft to no purpose... and Stalin covered up'.

■ STALIN did not want the Soviet people to know the full extent of Nazi mass murder and atrocities, according to Lieutenant-General Vasily Petrenko, who commanded the 107th infantry division which liberated Auschwitz.

The general, in London for last weekend's Auschwitz commemoration, said he knew from experiences in the Ukraine and Silesia that the German forces mistreated prisoners of war. 'But nothing had prepared us

for what we saw at Auschwitz,' he said. 'The Nazis used industrial methods to annihilate human beings. As well as the gas ovens and crematoria, we also saw and heard how people had been killed by medical experiments.'

After the war, though Petrenko was free to talk about what he had seen, the Soviet Union authorities did not want their people to know the full horrors.

'There was some anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and I am sure it had unfortunate consequences.'

'I can't say for certain that Stalin and his immediate entourage prohibited coverage of the worst atrocities, but it is a fact that the press and radio gave them little attention, and maybe anti-Semitism played a role.'

Sudan civil servants held in aid row

FOURTEEN civil servants and aid workers arrested in southern Sudan could face torture for opposing the Islamic dictatorship's misuse of funds for its discriminatory policies.

Five of those arrested worked for state ministries. Among those held are Christopher Gore, a former commissioner of the Juba area; Louis Gore, a town planner; agriculturalist Luke Subek; and Tobias Atede, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) aid relief co-ordinator.

There are reports that they showed reluctance to implement the distribution of land around Juba to northern Sudanese NGOs, which it is alleged make conversion to Islam a condition for receiving relief. In the Juba area, where the majority of the population is Christian, this is a highly political issue.

Political prisoners are held without charge or trial in Sudan under constitutional decree number two, passed on 30 June 1989. This established a state of emergency, and banned the 'showing of any political opposition by any means to the regime of the Revolution for National Salvation'.

The regime has sacked

thousands of civil servants it regards as politically suspect, and jailed and tortured trades unionists. In September last year, textile worker Abd-al Moneim Rahma, who had been victimised for union activity, was taken away by security forces. His body was later handed over to his family. His neck and arm had been broken, and kidneys damaged by beatings.

There are also reports that Mahamad Babikr, the former secretary-general of the Sudanese employees' union federation, has been tortured.

Prisoners arrested in Juba are reported to be tortured at a detention centre known as the 'White House'.

Waging war on rebels in the south, forcibly resettling people, and imposing its fanatical brand of Islam, the Sudanese regime is trying to restore links with the imperialist powers.

The wanted terrorist Carlos 'the Jackal' was handed over to France in return for French help in the war in the south. Now Sudan has invited the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, to pay an official visit. After a two-year gap, the Tory government has appointed a new ambassador to Khartoum, Alan Goulty.

Turkish clampdown on press

TURKISH police are continuing its wave of arrests of journalists.

Salih Guler, a 24-year-old reporter for the Kurdish paper 'Ozgur Ulke' ('Free Land'), was detained on 4 January when three plainclothes police officers raided the paper's office in Diyarbakir, the Kurdish capital, where he had been working for about six months.

He was handed over to the Gendarmerie Intelligence Headquarters (JITEM) in Diyarbakir. Salih is held incommunicado, and friends fear he could be tortured.

Two of 'Ozgur Ulke's' correspondents were detained in December. One of them, Erdogan Zamur, said: 'At the directorate of the anti-riot police [in Diyarbakir] I was tied to a door while handcuffed and beaten

after being stripped naked.

Later, they continued to apply various torture methods such as squeezing my testicles, stepping on my body after making me lie down on my back, hosing me with water. They were continuously asking about our contacts and sources of information.'

Detained

Turker Alp, public relations director for 'Ozgur Ulke' who was released in mid-December, said: 'After being detained I was taken to Kocaeli police headquarters. During interrogation there I was only asked questions about the newspaper.'

'First they blindfolded me and then suspended me on a hanger. While I was hanging, they gave electric shocks to my

genitals and fingers while continuously insulting me.

'They also threatened me with death, saying: "Either you take off to the mountains or flee abroad, or we will kill you."'

'Ozgur Ulke' was the target of co-ordinated bomb attacks which destroyed three of its premises in Ankara and Istanbul on the night of 3 December, killing one staff member and injuring 18 in addition to wrecking the newspaper's facilities.

Six of its correspondents and 11 people distributing and selling the newspaper have been murdered under circumstances suggesting the involvement of the security forces, and two staff journalists have 'disappeared'.

Melike Alp, a housewife and mother of three, was taken from her home on 30 December 1994

and committed to Diyarbakir central closed prison.

She is a member of the Diyarbakir branch of the Turkish Human Rights Association (HRA), and responsible for the publication of the Diyarbakir HRA's recent report on human rights violations, which has been banned.

On 4 January, in Istanbul police arrested over 30 alleged members of the outlawed Turkish Revolutionary Communist Party (TDKP), including representatives of the media workers' union.

On 8 January, in Diyarbakir plainclothes police raided the offices of the Turkish-Kurdish bilingual journal 'Denge Azadi' ('Free Voice'), confiscating papers and computer disks.

Two of the journal's staff have been detained.

Germany: reformers win day in PDS

REFORMERS Gregor Gysi, Hans Modrau and Lothar Bisky carried the day at the fourth annual conference of the Party of Democratic Socialists (PDS) last weekend. The PDS is the successor to the Socialist Unity Party, the heart of the Stalinist bureaucracy which ran east Germany until 1990.

The reformers won 82.7 per cent of the votes on a five-point programme against the Communist Platform faction led by 25-year-old Salira Wagenknecht.

Communist Platform refused to renounce its part in the

German Democratic Republic (east Germany), and called for the exclusion of 'anti-communists' from the PDS.

The victorious five-point programme says that Stalinist views are incompatible with party membership.

Point one states that the party is socialist and anti-capitalist. Other points include a rejection of chauvinism, racism and anti-Semitism, and calls for a pluralist society and an alliance with the SPD social-democrats and the Greens to defeat the conservative ruling Christian Democrat Party.

SA black police officer shot dead by white squad

A BLACK police officer was shot dead by a white riot squad on Friday 27 January in Soweto, South Africa.

Black police were on strike in the township when the killing took place. Several police stations shut down or operated a go-slow over the weekend in protest at the killing and to demand the removal of white officers.

Racism in the force, along with poor pay and conditions, high mortality rates, and mistrust of attempts to secure indemnity for crimes during the period of apartheid rule, form the background to the strike and the killing.

Despite an agreement to return to work, unrest continues within the police forces throughout South Africa.

Engineers strike against government controls

ENGINEERING workers in five states in western Germany went on strike last Monday as a warning to employers and against government controls.

New national-wage regulations are starting in every industry and there are signs of militancy among the 3.5 million engineering and electrical workers in the IG Metall union.

But an editorial in 'Die Welt' claimed that officials of the German trade union federation, the DGB, had assured the government that any strike wave would be isolated and contained.

The paper said the union leaders are prepared to limit wage militancy in order to protect workers' jobs.

Public meeting

Vietnam: revolutionaries against colonialism and Stalinism

Monday 6 March, 7pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube: Holborn)

Speaker: Ngo Van

A worker and a Trotskyist, Ngo Van was imprisoned in the 1930s by the French colonial regime and in the 1940s by the Vietminh. His book, 'Revolutionaries They Could Not Break: The Fight for the Fourth International in Indochina 1930-45', is being published by Index Books in March.

Meeting sponsored by Workers Press and Revolutionary History Enquiries: PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB. Phone: 071-582 8882.

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