

Welcome to Bosnian TU delegation

Public meetings Tuzla trade union delegation

7 March: Brighton. Bright-
helm Centre. 7.30pm.

8 March: Cambridge
(venue to be announced).

9 March: London. Con-
way Hall, Red Lion
Square. 7.30pm.

13 March: Leicester.
Secular Hall. Humber-
stone Gate. 7.30pm.

14 March: Manchester
Town Hall. 7pm.

15 March: Liverpool.
Transport and General
Workers' Union offices,
Islington. 7pm.

16-17 March: Scotland
(venues to be
announced).

20 March: Newcastle
(venue to be announced).

All meetings are organ-
ised by local trades
union organisations.

THREE Bosnian trade unionists were due to arrive in Britain this week to explain about the situation in their country, especially the struggle to defend their multi-cultural society against ethnic division.

Two members of the Tuzla District Trade Union Committee will be going on to France at the invitation of post and telecommunication workers.

The third, the Tuzla miners' union secretary, is visiting mining and former mining communities.

He is to meet National Union of Mineworkers' members and local Labour councillors.

The other delegates will return from France to Britain in about ten days.

From 6 March the whole delegation begins a tour around Britain, speaking at public meetings, shop stewards' committees, union national executives, the

TUC and the Scottish TUC.

The delegation has come from Bosnia to ask the trades unions to give practical solidarity by providing food and other essentials.

BY BOB MYERS
Secretary, Workers
Aid for Bosnia

Tuzla miners' appeal

Letter from the Tuzla Union Committee of the Tuzla coal-miners:

WE ARE very glad that our representative, Mr Resad Husagic, is coming to Great Britain to speak on behalf of 12,000 Tuzla miners about the situation in the mines and about the plight of our members in these days when aggression is still going on.

We live and work under very severe conditions. Due to the blockade and lack of financial resources we have not been able to maintain the mines properly during the 30 months of aggression against our country.

Production has been reduced enormously and both the mines and the miners are completely exhausted.

Unless we can get spare parts, raw materials and protective equipment the

mines will soon cease production completely.

Even when the miners manage to get food it is often of very poor quality and if the mines do cease production this will be the end for us and for everyone in the region. Although we live under war conditions, energy production is still the basis for life and for our defense.

In order to keep production going the miners need food and basic safety equipment such as overalls, gloves, boots, underwear, gas detection equipment (for methane, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, etc.) and for speed stream measurement. But the priority is certainly food, clothes, and then footwear.

During the visit Mr Husagic will also present the programme of the Women's Association of the Tuzla Miners.



Demonstrators were in St James's Square, London, to protest at the visit of Georgian president Edvard Shevardnadze, who is supporting Russia's war against the Chechens and whose regime is responsible for war against Abkhazians and for human rights abuses. Shevardnadze was meeting representatives of capitalism, including Lord Howe

Tom Stratton memorial meeting

3 March, 8pm

Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Rd,
Croydon

Tom was an activist and shop steward in
UCATT and the AEEU, a member of the WRP,
and of the pensions movement

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 Rd,
London N7.

Nearest tube Finsbury Park

Workers Press

Concern for the workers' movement

IT WOULD be very foolish and dangerous for the labour movement internationally — but particularly in Britain — to believe that the riots at the football match at the Lansdowne Road stadium in Dublin last week was not its concern.

The game between Ireland and England was abandoned after only 27 minutes when hundreds of the supporters of the English team tore up seats and threw pieces of metal and wood onto other spectators in lower tiers of the stand.

This led to a sustained bout of fighting with the Irish police who demonstrated that they were no slouches at meteing out indiscriminate violence.

But this riot had nothing to do with football. It was a fascist riot, carefully organised and planned by extreme right-wing organisations including Combat 18, the armed wing of the fascist British National Party.

Combat 18 is named after the first and eighth letters of the alphabet, A for Adolf and H for Hitler. The newspapers carried nauseating photographs of serried rows of English supporters, bedecked in Union Jacks and the flag of St George, giving the fascist salute during the playing of the British national anthem.

Among other calling cards left behind in the wreckage of Lansdowne Road were some from the National Alliance, a racist group in the United States which said: 'Earth's most endangered species: the white race; help preserve it.'

According to a spokesperson for 'Searchlight' the anti-fascist organisation which has infiltrated Combat 18, the leaders of the riot had meticulously planned every detail, from travelling several days before the match to avoid detection by Special Branch officers, to buying only a couple of tickets at a time so as not to arouse suspicion.

For several weeks leaflets had been handed out at football grounds across England calling for supporters to 'invade Dublin' and the forced abandonment of the match will be seen as a victory by the nazi organisation.

* * * * *

COMBAT 18 used to have strong links with elements in the leadership of the loyalist killer gangs in the north of Ireland, particularly the Ulster Defence Association. Many of these loyalist leaders are denying this connection as they look for positions in the new structures of rule being proposed under the 'peace process'.

But there were certainly many members of the loyalist gangs in the middle of the Dublin riot and the chant of 'No surrender to the IRA' showed that the fascists want to keep the links with the loyalists and their store of guns.

The fascists and their political organisations such as the BNP gain confidence from encounters like Dublin. They also give encouragement to the layers of lumpen youth whom the fascists pinpoint for recruitment and who find a sense of identity in the gang mentality and rabid nationalism of many football supporters.

The labour movement must take heed of the growing strength of Combat 18 and the fascist movement and the resources that are being put into the organisation of the lumpen elements.

This fascist fodder is the product of the capitalist system which in its deep and mortal crisis savagely attacks housing, education, health, and employment prospects and alienates millions of youth. Sections of the capitalist class at certain points have looked to and financed the fascist movement to protect it and to attack and destroy the worker's movement. They will do so again, when necessary.

* * * * *

THE Dublin riot, like the attacks on black and Asian people on the streets of British cities, are incidents which cannot be left to the capitalist state to eradicate.

Capitalism in its crisis also attacks and alienates sections of the middle class. And there are clear signs that some representatives of the ruling class are making approaches to them on the basis of their disillusionment in 'democracy'.

Lord Tebbit, the former Tory minister, leads the way in this. His speech to the Young Conservatives two weeks ago was a direct appeal from the right to the new radicalisation of many middle-class people involved in animal rights protests and who have come forcibly against the state in the demonstrations against the export of live calves.

His call for the animal rights activists to throw bottles and bricks at the Belgian police to show their disgust at the veal trade was an attempt to attract this confused collection of class forces into the same backward nationalism that is displayed at football grounds. Tebbit appealed to nationalist and racist sentiments by saying that the European Union was reducing Britons to the status of a subject race like black people in South Africa under apartheid.

A fascist movement in Britain will not develop into a force that can take on and destroy the workers' movement without the active involvement and support of large sections of the disillusioned middle class.

It is essential for the workers' movement to develop a positive programme that is able to mobilise tens of thousands to combat fascism and which will also appeal to and give a lead to the disillusioned sections of the middle class so they do not fall into the hands of these reactionary forces.

Letters

Mess on the front

I AM accused by James Todd (Letters, 18 February) of avoiding the arguments about how to build a Trotskyist party. Todd's letter merely serves to show what a terrible mess Workers Press is in, in its approach to the Labour Party question.

It is obvious to all revolutionaries and to all advanced workers that the Labour Party has nothing to do with socialism.

The storm in a teacup over Clause Four has not been 'forced' on Labour leader Tony Blair. Rather, it is a means to fragment revolutionaries and advanced workers and to regenerate the Labour Party in the interests of the bourgeoisie.

What Workers Press should be doing is building a united front in opposition to the popular front around Clause Four. Perhaps James Todd would like to explain to disbelieving advanced workers why he considers that the Defend Clause Four campaign, politically led by Labour left reformists — and obviously irremediably so — is not a popular front.

Jane Williams
London N4

On the terraces and the streets

SCUM, louts, hooligans, thugs, roared some of the headlines in the tabloids after the England/Ireland friendly football match in Dublin last week. So-called England fans had rioted soon after Ireland scored.

The 'quality' papers also had their say. Should next year's Euro '96 tournament be held in England, they asked. Some papers even offered rewards for identifying those responsible and some at least pointed out the involvement of neo-Nazi groups. Combat 18, the British

National Party, the National Front, and various right-wing football supporters' groups were all mentioned.

The Irish Football Association also thought that far-right groups were involved. Millwall chairman Reg Burr thought that far-right football fans were organised nationally. A Euro-MP said they might be organised internationally.

Every newstalk radio programme spent many hours debating the question. ID cards and imprisonment were all suggested as solutions. News reporters and sports presenters all had something to say.

'Perhaps this time there will be radical measures,' was all one learned sociology professor could come up with.

Terry Venables, the England manager, and Jack Charlton, the Ireland manager, both said it was 'terrible' and a 'night of shame'. The FA's Graham Kelly said he wanted the culprits identified and out of football — but where to?

It is the same fascists that have to be confronted, whether on the terraces or on the streets.

Prime Minister John Major said that the riot was caused by a thuggish minority, etc., and that everything would be done to bring them to justice. Opposition leader Tony Blair had nothing to say except that he agreed with the prime minister.

Blair and his supporters have plenty to say about their campaign to get rid of Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution. Why had Blair nothing to say about the fascists and the riot they caused in Dublin?

The question of fascism in football is no different from fascism on the streets — and the answer is a political one.

The nearest I came across to an understanding of the problem was from Tottenham player Jurgen Klinsmann, who said: 'It's not only a problem of football — it is a problem of society.'

Fascism will only be beaten by mass action and the strength of the working class rising up to defeat capitalism and all that it stands for.

But first of all it must build a new leadership that will say

something about these questions. The football riot in Dublin will be talked about for days on end by workers — these questions have to be addressed by the WRP. Blair and the Labour Party have nothing to say.

Alan Clark
London SE2

Preposterous reactionary

ALAS, Sir Nicholas Fairbairn, Tory MP for Perth and Kinross, is dead, at last.

Described by many commentators as a colourful character, and by Sir Michael Hirst, chairman of the Scottish Conservatives, as 'passionate in seeking justice and fairness for everyone', the fearless and crusading Fairbairn spent much of his political career denouncing ethnic minorities, women, homosexuality, social security scroungers, do-gooders in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and other 'formidable' right-wing favourites.

Fairbairn, frequently sober, fittingly began his career at the Scottish Criminal Bar where, to his credit, he became a defence lawyer of some repute.

As a result of his experience in the courts of the grim conditions of workers in Scotland, Fairbairn quickly came to the enlightened conclusion that condoms were the answer.

He took a similar view over famines in Africa and Bangladesh and journalists were fond of Fairbairn's quotable quotes — in between refreshments Fairbairn would quip typically 'it may sound harsh but starving people don't breed easily'.

Upon his arrival at the Palace of Westminster he quickly fell behind Thatcher and as a reward joined her government as solicitor-general for Scotland, from which he was forced to resign because of his grossly insensitive handling of a particularly brutal rape case.

Always ready to go against perceived wisdom — he considered himself to be a modern

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renaissance man, painter, wit, raconteur, dress designer and free thinker — he soon became detached from political reality at Westminster, and from reality in general.

Fairbairn's preposterous reactionary views and his highly individual dress sense, as well as his 'colourful' private life, earned him the deserved reputation of foremost buffoon in British politics.

It was a source of wonder to many that Fairbairn continued to be elected as MP for Perth and Kinross — he swept to power in 1974 with a landslide majority of 53 votes — a fact that speaks volumes about the competition.

In an article in last Monday's 'The Times', under the intriguing heading 'Hepatitis case hides the mystery of the liver', the cause of Fairbairn's demise is carefully not attributed to drinking 16 units of alcohol a day.

But for all his faults this execrable, ludicrous and fascist individual achieved much for every political party in Britain, except his own, and truthfully commended his would-be successor, John Godfrey, a London-based banker aged 31, as an 'unelectable clone'.

George Angus
London W1

All in the cause

CLIFF SLAUGHTER (Letters, 18 February) calls me out on the issue that particularly concerns him in the recent Richard Gott correspondence. Should Workers Press have taken a stand in defence of Gott? No.

My own concern was to further a cause I first promoted some years ago — to support Workers Press in making its letters page a lively, open forum for all the paper's readers.

I agree with the implication of Cliff Slaughter's conclusion — that the continuation of this correspondence is unlikely to contribute to that cause.

Terry Brotherstone
Edinburgh

Workers Press £3,000 Monthly Fund

THE Workers Revolutionary Party faces big financial responsibilities with the coming conferences and the fight to launch a new workers' party that will unite the various leaderships coming forward to represent the true interests of the working-class movement.

The Workers International has taken a big step forward in the reconstruction of the Fourth International with the forming of a liaison committee with the Workers International League (LIT-CI) (see report back page).

Workers Press will play a big part in the work ahead and we appeal to all our supporters and members to help bring in the resources we need.

It's not going to be easy. I was encouraged by all those who promised at the WRP's recent congress to contribute more to Workers Press, but if we are to maintain our production we are going to need a more regular supply of money. This money must come out of the political work that is to be carried out. Those we have begun joint work with give us confidence that we can take on the task of building a new workers' party.

Confidence is needed between us and new readers and those contacted during this work. We are pleased when this happens but it often this needs patient and consistent work so that trust can build up.

WRP members, Workers Press readers and supporters all have a role and responsi-

bility in this. New contacts become new resources for the movement to build the revolutionary leadership needed in the working class to defeat the destructive work of world capitalism and those who support it from within the labour movement.

This paper must become the centre where the discussion takes place of how to carry this out in reality on a weekly basis. So let us all carry out our resolution to build the revolutionary movement by taking part in the political work necessary to 'bring together all those in the leadership of the struggles of the working class'.

Mike Cooke
Send money to 'Workers Press', PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

COMING SOON

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, 23 Coombe Road, Croydon.

MONDAY 6 MARCH: Public meeting on 'Vietnam: revolutionaries against colonialism and Stalinism'. Speaker: Ngo Van, a worker and Trotskyist who was imprisoned in the 1930s by the French colonial regime and in the 1940s by the Vietminh. Organised by WRP and 'Revolutionary History'. 7pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., London WC1 (tube: Holborn).

SATURDAY 27 MAY: African Liberation Day march, 'Not just charity but complete liberation'. Organised by the African Liberation Support Campaign. 1pm, Kennington Park, London SE11. Rally at Trafalgar Sq. Details: 071-924 9033.



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'KGB' smear is attack on labour movement

BY CHARLIE POTTINS



Michael Foot

FORMER Labour Party leader Michael Foot has angrily condemned attempts to smear him as a KGB 'agent of influence', aired in Rupert Murdoch's 'Sunday Times'. The story smacked of 'a wretched revival of McCarthyite witch-hunts', 81-year-old Foot said last week.

Based on claims by former KGB agent turned MI6 man Oleg Gordievsky, whose memoirs it is to serialise, the 'Sunday Times' front-page story on 19 February was headed 'KGB: Michael Foot was our agent'. It named Foot as among 'the top 10 British targets' of the KGB, and claimed the Russians passed him money for the weekly 'Tribune', which he used to edit.

Rubbish

But on BBC Radio 4's 'World This Weekend', 'Sunday Times' editor John Witherow admitted the claims might be 'utter rubbish', and said he personally didn't believe Foot had been an agent.

In Moscow former KGB agent Viktor Kubeykin said he had been misquoted in the 'Sunday Times' article, and Gordievsky's former superior Mikhail Lyubimov said the alle-

comment were the late Lord Fenner Brockway and Bob Edwards, both of whom were in the Independent Labour Party in the 1930s and opposed the KGB's predecessor the GPU when it was murdering socialists and anarchists in Spain.

Whatever his political shortcomings from our point of view as Marxists, Michael Foot has never been a Stalinist fellow-traveller. He recently upset many fake lefts and Stalinists, as well as the Tory government, by his forthright support for the Bosnian people against Serb nationalist aggression and British-United Nations treachery.

Splits

Coming as the government was rent by open splits over Europe, Ulster and immigration, and the Conservative Party had just lost its deposit in the Islwyn by-election, the 'Sunday Times' story had all the marks of a Tory stunt aimed against the labour movement.

On the eve of the April 1992 general election the 'Sunday Times' billboards announced 'Official - Kinnock's Kremlin connection', for a front-page article by ex-BBC man turned spy-fiction author Tim Sebastian. The story itself was a bit of a damp squib, consisting of dull reports of Russian ambassador Viktor Popov's discussions with

the Labour leader - the kind of contacts any ambassador would have with the leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

'Guardian' literary editor Richard Gott resigned in December after a story in the right-wing 'Spectator' magazine, also based on information from Gordievsky, alleged that he had been regarded as an 'agent of influence'.

Gott admitted to accepting meals and travel paid for by the KGB, and said he had discussed his contacts with MI5, though apparently not with colleagues or his editor. The 'Sunday Times' has acknowledged that 'KGB men operating in London inflated the importance and the intimacy of contacts they had made to impress their bosses'.

The 'Spectator' and the Tory tabloids tried to smear all 'the left' by association with Gott, though the latter's support for Cambodian dictator Pol Pot and Peru's Maoist Sendero Luminoso guerrillas had hardly endeared him to middle-class radicals, let alone the workers' movement.

Most people assumed Gott was just an easy if insignificant target. The attack was really aimed at the 'Guardian's' exposure of Tory sleaze, and more important, industrial correspondent Seumas Milne's probe into MI5's conspiracy against the National Union of

Mineworkers. The current interest in 'KGB gold' stories is quite likely being guided by people in the British security services - who did far more to subvert and destabilise British politics in the 1970s than their rivals in the KGB!

Interested as some of them are in the outcome of the Tory split, the MI5 and MI6 men are more professionally concerned with attacking, not just Labour, but more especially, socialists and trade union militants.

With working-class struggle resurgent, and the Tories in deep trouble, the ruling class

isn't sure that Blair can save the day.

We must expect the enemy's 'dirty tricks' departments to be working flat out against us. The answer is vigilance, and willingness to fight every issue out in the open, where the working class can see and judge who the enemies are.

■ Wednesday 8 March. 'The Secret State'. Camden Trades Council, Memorial Lecture. Speakers: Seumas Milne, Arthur Scargill. 7 p.m. London Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square, London NW1.

Nurses to get even?

GROWING anger among nurses and midwives at the government's public-sector pay award has caused the right-wing Royal College of Nursing to review its no-strike policy.

The government pay policy means that many nurses and midwives could get just 1 per cent, which lags behind inflation on any measure.

The public service union Unison, the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Nursing have all rejected the government's deal.

The NHS staff could get another 2 per cent from local deals, but where funds are already scarce the temptation for hospital managers will be to stick to the minimum. Top managers will no doubt get 'performance-related' bonuses for keeping to spending targets!

Nurses' unions are to start a

campaign to embarrass MPs in 'skinflint' districts where hospitals stick rigidly to the minimum rise.

While RCN nurses are reported not to be keen to strike, widespread refusal to work unpaid overtime seems likely. Such work currently saves the health service around £180 million a year.

Local bargaining will also erode terms and conditions. Maternity and sick leave are threatened and shift patterns look set to get worse. Many NHS trusts are seeking to scrap unsocial hours payments for night shifts and to force all nurses to do them on a rota basis.

Unsurprisingly, health secretary Virginia Bottomley declined an invitation last Monday from West Middlesex nurses to go and see what their pay and conditions were like.

Breakthrough/down on college contracts

FROM OUR FURTHER EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

A BALLOT last week at Bexley College, south east London, accepted a new local collective agreement for lecturers by a massive majority.

It could mark a new stage in the long-running dispute between the lecturers' union NATFHE and the Tory government's quango for further education - as in 'we' have no responsibility for teachers' pay and conditions, that is the responsibility of . . . the College Employers' Forum (CEF).

Bexley is one of the few colleges not affiliated to the CEF.

The vote though decisive, was reluctant. A spokesperson said 'members do not think they can give any more away'. The local agreement sets a maximum 24 hours teaching in any one week - effectively an increase of one-and-a-half hours a week for those on the national 'Silver Book' conditions of service. But it does offer a reduction for those who have been appointed in the last 18 months under new contracts.

On the Silver Book system most staff teach an average of 21 hours a week. The new local agreement also meant a pay rise, consolidated into salary, of between £1,000 and £1,800.

Although the agreement contained a threat - as in any

change of conditions in education - that part-time teachers and those on short-term contracts might be made redundant, NATFHE is pledged to fight against redundancies.

The ballot was completed on Thursday 16 February. The following day, the college principal called in NATFHE negotiators and demanded an increase in the academic year from 38 to 44 weeks - a large increase in annual teaching hours.

The principal refused to include in the deal any staff not appointed on the Silver Book conditions. He also refused back pay - the deal was to run from September 1994. The negotiators told the principal that his

actions showed a lack of integrity.

Bexley NATFHE now has to consider whether to take strike action against management.

■ The non-TUC affiliated teachers' union, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), has asked the arbitration service ACAS to help it secure a modified 'new contract'. The ATL has many members in Sixth-Form colleges but few in further education.

The CEF says that the ATL has agreed its minimum 37 hours a week contract. This is denied by the union. NATFHE has issued a statement saying that its talks with the CEF have broken down.

'I am not intimidated' says nazis' fire target

FRIENDS of a Kent family whose home was firebombed by neo-Nazis are raising funds to help them repair their house and continue the fight against racism and fascism.

The Emersons' home was attacked at about 2.30am on a January morning while the family were asleep upstairs. Police are reportedly treating the arson as attempted murder. Mother of two Jill Emerson says she will continue to stand up to the Nazis. 'I am not intimidated,' she said.

Gill is a socialist whose past campaigns have included supporting the miners, and opposing hospital closures. She was victimised by Gravesend council after she criticised Labour councillors during the 1989 local government strike, and spent time in jail for poll-tax resistance.

In April 1993, anti-fascist campaigners in Kent approached police with information about neo-Nazi racist activity in the Medway towns, and threats of violence. Nothing appears to have been done. Gravesend council passed a joint Labour-Tory resolution 'deploring the circulation of li-

terature from both ends of the political spectrum'.

Three people were arrested over an anti-Nazi leaflet accusing the police of protecting John Cato, a notorious right-wing extremist who has since left the area. Gravesend magistrates dismissed the case and awarded costs against the police. But meanwhile a fascist publication called 'Target' had published the home addresses and tele-

Fighting after fascists sentenced

FIGHTING broke out outside a Nottingham court after 12 neo-Nazi skinheads were jailed for their part in last year's attack on a city centre bookshop.

Stephen Bradley, 24, from Coatbridge in Lanarkshire, was sentenced to three years imprisonment for violent disorder. Eleven others received two-month sentences for threatening behaviour.

The court heard how a gang had gone into Mushroom Books on a Saturday afternoon, 15 January 1994, assaulting staff and customers, and wrecking displays, while others stood outside chanting racist slogans. The fascists had earlier

phone numbers of the anti-racists, with a suggestion that they might be 'visited'.

A spate of threatening phone calls and letters began. Gill Emerson received a letter addressing her as a 'White Race Traitor' with the message 'BNP says burn in hell'. (British National Party spokesman Michael Newland denies his group was involved in the attack).

gathered at a Derbyshire pub, intending to travel to a Nazi rock concert which was cancelled. Mushroom specialises in left-wing, Green and ethnic minority literature.

Forensic evidence on the premises established that Bradley had been in the shop. The others accused pleaded guilty to the lesser offence of threatening behaviour, and got light sentences.

Trouble erupted in the street outside after the trial ended on Friday 17 February. One of the neo-Nazi supporters was chased into a car park and reportedly assaulted. A Nottingham man is facing charges.

A letter headed 'Fire Warning' and signed 'Soldiers of the White Revolution' threatened an attack at 3am one winter morning. It ended 'Sleep well, we look forward to seeing you in the morgue'.

On Thursday 19 January, at about 2.30am, the Emersons were woken by smoke alarms, and found their hall full of smoke and flames.

They managed to put out the blaze with buckets of water, and neither they nor their two children were hurt.

It appears the attackers had squirted flammable liquid through the letterbox and thrown in a lighted match. The initials 'C18' had been sprayed on the wall outside.

C18 stands for Combat 18, the secret outfit in whose name neo-Nazis have carried out a number of violent attacks and terror campaigns.

It takes its name from the first and eighth letters of the alphabet - the initials of Adolf Hitler.

Anyone wanting to help those defying these Nazi terrorists in Kent write c/o Kent Anti-Fascist Action Committee, PO Box 88, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1AU.

Chancellor's fantasy

CHANCELLOR Kenneth Clarke is to match 'Fantasy League Football' with his own brand-new fantasy rate of inflation.

Not only will the fantasy rate make the government look better in the run-up to the general election, it will be used to cap pay demands to 'not more than the rate of inflation'.

The fantasy rate, known officially as RPI(Y), is currently at 1.7 per cent. Meanwhile, in the real world, with its inconvenient increases in VAT, etc., the rate of inflation is around 3 per cent (the Tax and Price Index is 3.9 per cent, the Retail Price Index is 3.3 per cent and RPI(X) is 2.8 per cent).

In fact, RPI(X) was a previous attempt at a fantasy rate. It excludes mortgage rates, and was brought in at the point when the bottom fell out of the property market and mortgage rates went through the roof.

The TPI was a favourite when there were tax cuts in the 1980s, but has now fallen from grace to such an extent that it will 'only be published in the RPI Business Monitor (MM23)'.

RPI(Y) excludes 'mortgage interest payments and indirect taxes' - most helpful when you've just slapped VAT on fuel and increased duties on booze, petrol and fags. Indirect taxes

are the ones that hit everyone - especially the poor - and are preferred by the rich to income tax.

And to go with the the fantasy rate there is a new fantasy goal. The 'target rate' of inflation is to be changed from 1-4 per cent to 0-3 per cent. Isn't that better, I hear you ask?

Well, the government is already committed to getting inflation down to the lower half of the existing range, that is, to 1-2.5 per cent.

So what Clarke and co. have done is give themselves an extra 0.5 of a per cent to play with. And if Clarke decides to raise more indirect taxes they won't show at all and he'll still be 'on target'.

Pat Bliss

WORKER PRESS learns with regret of the death on Sunday 19 February of Pat Bliss, a member of East London branch of the WRP and a long-standing member of the Trotskyist movement. We extend our condolences to his wife Joan and his two sons Kevin and Barry.

The funeral will take place on Monday 27 February at 12 noon, at the City of London Cemetary, Aldersbrook Road, Wanstead Flats, London E12.

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Please send me information about the WRP

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Inside left

No milk and honey

HUNDREDS of Thai and Romanian workers demonstrated at a construction site in Tel Aviv recently, demanding two months' back-pay owed to them by an Israeli contractor that had gone bankrupt. Each worker was owed thousands of dollars in unpaid wages, but a lawyer for the firm said they could only expect a few hundred apiece. Migrant workers are regularly being ripped off in the 'land of milk and honey', reports the latest issue of 'International Trade Unionist Bulletin' (published by the International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign, ITUSC).

Because the Israeli government has been closing the door on Palestinians, firms have ranged far afield looking for labour to exploit. The rights group Kav la'Oved Workers' Hotline says some employers deliberately keep migrant workers' pay months in arrears, sack them, then tell police they're 'illegally' in the country.

With reports from South Africa and Indonesia, and letters from trades unionists from Tatarstan in the Russian federation, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine's Donbass mining region, the 'International Trade Unionist Bulletin' shows the worldwide struggle of working people, and how much we have in common. For more details, write to the ITUSC, PO Box 12, Barking, IG 11.

Tea with spies

PART from a burly Russian who bought the Young Socialist paper 'Keep Left' from me once outside a Labour Party conference, the only agent I've ever known was a landlady in Harlesden who held Tupperware parties. But amid recent nonsense from the right-wing press, how refreshing to read 'Gottsha! Or: my tea with M15' by Amanda Sebestyen in 'Casablanca' magazine's winter 'Spook Special'. Back in the late 1960s, when her friends were at the front of Vietnam war demonstrations 'getting their faces clubbed', and she was at the back worrying about my eye shadow, Sebestyen says a family acquaintance suggested she might like to work for the government, reporting what young people like herself were doing. They seemed especially interested in David Widgery for some reason (Widgery, who became a popular East End MP and fighter for the poor, died last year).

Encouraged by left-wing friends to go along and find out more, Sebestyen was taken to tea at the Peter Jones store in London's smart Sloane Square, and introduced to a senior spook who had served in Yugoslavia during the war. She decided she wanted nothing to do with these scary characters.

I don't suppose they'll be too pleased with her now. Nice to know a journalist who'd rather expose such creepy-crawlies than join them.

Big names

THE letter in the 'Guardian' (15 February) and the leaflet put out in the name of Anti-Racist Alliance called on people to 'join us' in demonstrating against Italian fascist leader Gianfranco Fini. It was signed by Labour Euro-MPs and a core of well-known trade union leaders.

Labour MEP Glyn Ford was there, and Jeremy Corbyn came over from the Commons. But I didn't spot any of the 'big names'. Just as well we weren't there for photographs. I liked the slogan some young people, including Italians, were chanting — 'Fini, Fini, Fini — you'll end up like Mussolini!'

Charlie Pottins

Nationalisation Clause 4 and workers' control

CLEMENT ATTLEE's 1945-51 Labour government first nationalised the majority of the industries now privatised by the Tories.

Leaving aside the nationalisation of the Bank of England in 1946, which was almost entirely formal (the Bank had for long been the instrument of government policy), the major nationalisations during this period were: coal (1946), electricity (1947), transport (1947), gas (1948), and iron and steel (1949).

British capitalism had emerged from the war in a severe crisis. Many of its foreign assets had been liquidated to pay for the war; it was forced to accept US domination in the post-war world, reflected in the terms imposed by the US for continuing its loans to the British ruling class.

This decline was reflected especially in those staple industries which for much of the 19th century had been the backbone of the economy: coal mining, railways, and iron and steel. By the end of World War II these three industries were in a parlous state. Virtually no investment had taken place in the inter-war years; in terms of technique they had fallen way behind better-equipped and better-organised rivals in Europe and North America.

During the war itself the government had been forced to take operational control of the coal industry and the mainline rail system. By

As part of the debate on Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution, GEOFF PILLING says renationalisation should not be on the same basis as the post-war nationalisations

the end of the war, on the basis of numbers employed, 60 per cent of electricity supply was under public control and local authorities had the power to take over privately owned suppliers, subject to the payment of compensation.

At the same time there was a powerful anti-capitalist sentiment in the working class, especially among the troops returning from the war. This mood was reflected in Labour's huge electoral majority in 1945, one of the biggest won by a party in peacetime. But this Labour government was a capitalist one. It was dominated by those who were tied by a thousand threads to the ruling class.

Loyal servants

LABOUR's leaders had served loyally in the wartime coalition with Churchill and the open representatives of the ruling class. If these leaders responded to the mood in the working class, if they gave some concessions to the working class, they did so only to defend the interests of capitalism against the working class.

Among important sections of

workers there was a demand for a fundamental change in the conditions of work. This was especially so among miners and railway workers. These workers had long demanded the nationalisation of their industries, and there had long been a strong feeling that they should be brought under workers' control.

It was under these conditions that the Labour government carried through its nationalisation measures.

■ On the one hand, the nationalisation of those industries, which guaranteed the infrastructure for the rest of the economy — fuel and transport in particular — met with little real opposition from big business and the city.

There was widespread recognition that private capital was both unable and unwilling to provide the money to revive these industries and services. In fact, in the case of the railways, they were in a state of almost total collapse, with virtually no usable rolling-stock.

The lack of opposition was also hardly surprising given the financial terms on which the industries were nationalised by the Labour

government. The ex-owners were lavishly compensated for what in many cases were largely worthless assets.

Big compensation

THE owners of the coal industry pocketed almost £400 million, and compensation payments for the transport industry (rail, canals and road haulage) comfortably topped the billion mark.

In many cases the money paid out was invested in more profitable, expanding sectors of the economy. In other cases, those receiving compensation from the government lent it back to the same government to provide the funds needed to rebuild these run-down industries.

The contrast between the conditions under which these industries were nationalised and those under which they were later privatised could not be clearer. After 1945 sums way in excess of their real value were paid out to nationalise the industries; in the 1980s and 1990s the industries were sold off at knock-down prices, often to the same capitalist interests who had been so generously compensated four decades previously.

Many who had supported the nationalisation of the basic industries after 1945 had seen this as a step along the road to socialism. They were to be bitterly disappointed.



Hetton Lyons lodge in 1951 (left) and protesters marching in defence of the coal industry in 1992 (right): many who supported nationalisation as a step

on, and troll



The NHS was, with nationalisation, part of Labour's 1945 programme

■ The industries were run along strictly capitalist lines. They were obliged to 'break even', that is to charge prices set by 'the market'.

■ In the main they were run by boards that in practice were almost indistinguishable from those of capitalist enterprises. Indeed many of the managers of the old industries remained in place, with the workers given token and worthless 'consultative' rights.

In the case of the steel industry, where there was considerable opposition to its nationalisation from the capitalist class, when the Labour government nationalised it the old firms were left completely intact, making their denationalisation (by the Tory government that came to office in 1951) the simplest of matters.

But along with some of the road haulage industry, steel was the only industry denationalised by the Tories after 1951. This was a measure of the nature of the sort of nationalisations carried out by the Labour government.

■ To make matters even worse, the industries were placed under severe disadvantages. Thus the railways were obliged to act as common carrier, that is in practice to carry all the bulky, unprofitable loads.

In similar manner, the National Coal Board was legally prevented from producing its own mining machinery, this lucrative activity

being left in private hands.

This did not prevent the board from running a highly successful research and development division that brought much mining equipment to prototype stage, only to hand over the results of its work to private firms to exploit.

■ The Labour government

'After 1945 sums way in excess of their real value were paid out to nationalise the industries; in the 1980s and 1990s the industries were sold off at knock-down prices'

cynically appealed to workers in the nationalised industries to restrain their wage claims to help 'the fight against inflation'.

■ Far from leading to 'economic planning' as many who supported the nationalisation measures had hoped, coal, rail and transport were actually used to try and stabilise the capitalist system as a whole.

Thus when inflationary pressures built up, the nationalised industries were forced to cut back on their investment projects, on occasions even on some half-completed ones. In times of threatening slump, these same industries were obliged to invest, whether this made good sense or not.

When Workers Press calls for a fight to defend Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution we are not advocating the sort of nationalisations carried out by the Attlee government after 1945. The nationalisation of the 'commanding heights' of the capitalist economy will be a blow against the ruling class and a step along the road to socialism only if it is part of the raising of the consciousness of the working class.

That is why those leading the fight to defend Clause Four must seek to draw into the struggle the widest layers of working people. The campaign must not simply defend a clause in the constitution of the Labour Party, but rather demand that the next Labour government renationalise, without compensation, those industries privatised by the Tories.

Those who work in these industries, as well as those who rely on their services, must unite in committees that will lay the basis for running them in the interest not of the City sharks, but of the working class.

Bronwen Handyside reports

Two nations

Twice as unequal

AMID the increasing inequality in Britain between rich and poor, other age-old inequalities are also flourishing.

British women's monthly earnings for non-manual jobs are 58 per cent of their male counterparts, according to the latest 'Bulletin on Women and Employment in the European Union', published by the European Commission.

The 'me too' factor

ON A similar note, research published last week by Dr Tuvia Merlamed, a psychologist at the University of Lancashire, said that sex discrimination accounted for 60 per cent of the wage gap between men and women, and the old-boy network accounted for much of the rest.

The women's lobby in the Labour Party is seeking a solution to such problems — in particular women's lack of representation in their party's leadership — through Emily's List, a group which campaigns for the election of more women MPs by pushing for women-only short-lists for parliamentary candidates.

I am sure Emily's List would advocate the same method in dealing with the problem of selecting women for the judiciary — whose members are also picked, in time-honoured fashion, through the old-boy network.

But such manoeuvres arise mainly from the careerist ambitions of a section of the middle class that has been excluded from the full privileges of its class.

While it is undeniable that women in all social classes suffer discrimination relative to the men of their class, that discrimination is secondary to the primary division between workers and capitalists.

The crucial factor for a workers' party must be that its leaders fight for the interests of the working class as a whole — not for themselves, or for any particular section of that class.

It must be pretty clear to most of us by now that the fact that you are a woman does not mean you will fight even for the interests of the women of the working class — let alone the working class as a whole. Thank you Lady Thatcher, and the two black women Labour councillors in Brent who crossed the floor to hand control of the council to the Tories in 1992 — and many others.

In any case, the Labour Party is backing away even from its feeble proposals for reform. At the last election, Labour's policy was for a Ministry for Women, headed by a Cabinet minister, which would monitor every other government department and draft its own laws to put through parliament.

Clare Short MP, shadow women's minister, is now advocating only that the Tories' 'Sex Equality Branch', recently set up within the employment department, should be retained, and the Cabinet minister's title be changed to 'Secretary of State for Employment and Women'.

According to the 'Observer' (19 February) she 'has taken care to produce a plan which will cause the minimum of disruption and cost'. You bet.

Labour's attempts to win more places for women in the areas in

which they actually hold office — local councils — have been even less successful. A consultation paper on how to get more women onto councils and into positions of influence has in theory been circulated to every group of Labour councillors, but according to the 'Observer' many Labour women councillors said they did not even know of its existence. This may offer some clues on what attitudes will be if Labour wins the next election.

Along with the excess baggage of Clause Four of its constitution, links with the trades unions, defence of public services, etc., the new-model Labour Party is jettisoning even its efforts to enable middle-class women to reap the benefits that middle-class men are born to.

I fear the spectacle of Cherie Blair's fixing a maniacally adoring gaze on her husband's face on every public occasion does not augur well for the female members of Bambi's party.

Let them eat mangels

FIGHTING a valiant rear-guard action, the Tory government denied last week the claim by the Rowntree Foundation that inequality in Britain has reached near-record levels.

Rottweiler Peter Lilley, social-security secretary, asserted in a Commons debate: 'The simple fact is that since 1979 the vast majority have got significantly better off.' The reason why the statistics do not reflect this, is because the self-employed 'can control the reporting of their incomes'.

The widening gap in life-expectancy between the poor and the rich in places such as Glasgow — ten years for men and seven years for women — is thus a figment of everybody's imagination.

Toby Jessel, Tory MP for Twickenham, leapt into the fray with a robust proposal to thrust the poor out onto allotments to feed themselves.

'They sit in front of the television for hours and hours on end... not growing their own vegetables when they could do so easily and cheaply,' he said.

On the streets

SOCIAL-SECURITY department staff are refusing, at a rate of about 1,000 a week, benefits to 16- and 17-year-olds who have left home, because of the government's campaign to cut the costs of the welfare state.

When Employment Secretary Michael Portillo was at the Treasury, he insisted on clamping down on claims. In nine months the refusal rate rose from 228 to 476 a week.

Because of their age, these young people are not entitled to benefits.

A recent survey by CHAR, a campaigning group for the single homeless, has found that 40 per cent of these young people have been forced to leave home as a result of sexual abuse, and 60 per cent because of physical abuse.

Most have had to leave because of family poverty and breakdown. When they are refused hardship payments, they have either to return home, or sleep on the streets.

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



on the road to socialism were to be bitterly disappointed

Breaking down the barriers

FOR us the new workers' party is as yet only a gleam of hope on the far horizon. For the capitalist class and the Labour Party misleaders it's merely a cloud no bigger than a human hand.

There's a long way to go, and a lot of work to be done, before the idea first put forward in Workers Press almost two years ago (on 22 May 1993) becomes a living reality.

But what in 1993 was still in the realm of abstract possibility has in 1995 become a concrete possibility, one that more and more clearly corresponds to the urgent needs of our times. As John Rees's letter last week pointed out, increasing numbers of 'ordinary working-class people... want to know how we can survive, who will lead us out of the social crisis'.

He added: '[P]ut simply, people agree with us, so let's build a party with them by breaking down the barriers created by sectarianism.'

ONE of those sectarian barriers, it seems to me, is the persistent notion that capitalism will be overthrown, and the socialist revolution accomplished, not by the working class as a whole but by an élite organisation within it: 'the' party.

And how it lingers, this pernicious idea!

It was fostered for years by Stalinism, which was hostile to the creative initiative and capacity for self-organisation of precisely those 'ordinary working-class people' to whom John Rees refers.

'The party' could and would do the job. In practice all the decisions were taken by a handful of top bureaucrats; the rank and file were expected to obey orders and were actively discouraged from thinking for themselves.

As for the workers, the Stalinists viewed them with contempt — a contempt that quickly changed to alarm when, as in Hungary in 1956, they took matters into their own hands and elected their own workers' councils.

'Substitutionism' was also to be found deeply entrenched within the Trotskyist movement. It survives today in most of those myriad small groups each of which preens itself on being, potentially at least, 'the party'.

The Workers Revolutionary Party, to its great credit, has shed such delusions of grandeur. It is working to bring together all those who are leading the struggles of the working class, for these are the forces from whom the new party will in the fullness of time emerge.

Right at the beginning of the Rules of the First International, founded in 1864, Marx put those historic words: 'The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the workers themselves.'

It's high time we took those words to heart. They should be emblazoned on the banner of the new workers' party from the day of its birth.

And, by the way, those who write letters to Workers Press advocating that we all wash our hands of the Clause Four debate within the Labour Party might profitably ponder something that Marx and Engels wrote in 1848:

'The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.'

ONE OF the most impenetrable

PERSONAL COLUMN

of those barriers created by sectarianism is the one dividing us from young people. This has been discussed on and off for years in Workers Press and elsewhere, but the barrier stays as firm and forbidding as ever.

This is not of course merely a problem for revolutionaries. The entire labour movement is regarded by almost all young people as a dinosaur that has no relevance whatever to their lives.

The new workers' party won't get off the ground unless it cracks this problem.

Here is an entire generation callously written off by capitalism, condemned to a half-life of no jobs, no prospects, and no hope. A great many young people haven't even got a roof over their heads. And those under 18 can no longer claim benefits.

Here, it might be thought, is a natural constituency for the new working-class party. All we have to do is take our message to them and they will flock gratefully to our banner.

Not a bit of it! Most young people have turned their backs on politics, which they regard with deep suspicion and distaste — and not without cause.

The new party should take care to speak to the young in language they can understand. It should at all costs avoid lecturing (in the bad sense) and haranguing and laying down the law.

It should take its courage in both hands and organise meetings and other events in a new way, daring to abandon the time-honoured division between 'platform' (the wise ones up there, often symbolically placed a foot or two higher) and 'audience' (the lowly ones in the body of the hall).

It should realise that for young people nowadays music is a prime means of communication, and that given the right circumstances a song could easily become a more potent instrument of political mobilisation than the most rousing of leaflets or orations. (And indeed, why should the devil have all the good tunes?)

THERE'S yet another sectarian barrier that's seldom even thought about: the barrier that divides all too many British revolutionaries from another of their natural constituencies, the settler communities here in Britain.

The new workers' party will be merely paying lip-service to internationalism if it doesn't reach out to these communities, not in a spirit of 'we will lead you' but in a spirit of 'we will fight alongside you'.

Working-class internationalism, like charity, begins at home. No party that doesn't publicly identify with the Asian women in Britain who are terrified to go out of their front doors lest they be set upon by racist thugs, or with the Latin Americans, many here illegally, who are inhumanly exploited in the service industries and the all-night sweatshops — no such party can call itself internationalist.

BREAKING down these and many other barriers created by sectarianism will take much time and effort. The new party will not be built in a day, or without gigantic problems.

As John Rees said, its birth will be both painful and exhilarating. But that birth will signal the dawn of a new day of hope for us all.

Peter Fryer

Film review

Satanic monsters munch

Neil Jordan's film 'Interview with the Vampire' is hokum that updates enduring latent fears, writes TOM OWEN

SOME fictional creations for a number of reasons have entered the popular imagination. For example, the statue of the philosophising Hamlet with a skull in his hand reminds us of the morbid predicament of the man who could not make up his mind — as if he were an actual historic figure.

But it does not have to be a Shakespeare to achieve such mythic resonance. A handful of 19th-century writers generally regarded to be outside the literary 'canon', and in some ways eccentric, minor or even inferior, have provided us with either popular literary types, such as the private detective (Edgar Allan Poe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle), or archetypal symbols of modern unease and anxiety.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Bram Stoker's Dracula and R.L. Stevenson's Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde have entered contemporary language as metaphors for monstrosity, exploitation and 'split personality' respectively.

These fictitious characters have their antecedents mainly in the Romantic and Gothic literature of the early 19th century and sometimes in folk-tale and myth. They have also generated a line of literary and, more importantly, film successors.

Fears

Film has been able to recast these monstrous creations to play on the latent fears — usually of the middle classes — in successive political and social circumstances from the last days of the German Weimar republic and depression-ridden America in the 1930s, to cold-war Europe, and now post-Stalinist countries and advanced capitalist countries.

In the last four years we have seen lavish productions of the Frankenstein and Dracula legends — Francis Ford Coppola's 'Dracula', Kenneth Branagh's 'Frankenstein' and now Neil Jordan's adaptation of Anne Rice's 'Interview with the Vampire'.

Box-office considerations apart, why should these films appear now? Are they a testimony to the durability and adaptability of the original

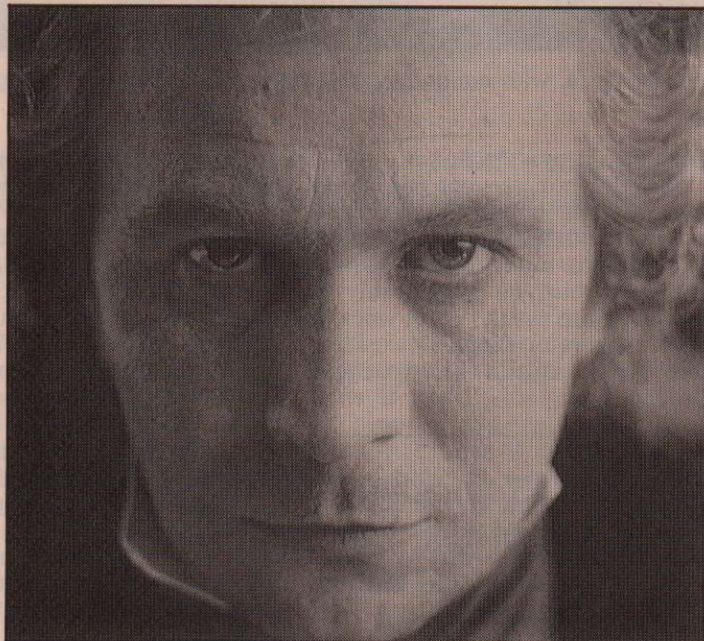
creations, or an indication of the lack of creative imagination of these film-makers, their failure to create a resonant contemporary narrative? Or is it a decadent end-of-the-century indulgence of a smart set?

Certainly all of them update the latent psychic and social preoccupations of the originals. Coppola's transformation of Stoker's eastern European Anti-

a version of the Rolling Stones's 'Sympathy with the Devil'.

The main problem with this genre is that whilst it is still available for some serious motifs in the popular psyche, it is also clichéd and furthermore embarrassed by popular scepticism and comic caricature.

This was brought home to me at the cinema by an advert preceding the main film where a



Gary Oldman: Dracula in Coppola's film

Christ into an invisible urban pestilence with a saintly and seductive demeanour corrupting the blood of the West exploits the terrors of AIDS and HIV infection.

Neil Jordan's adaptation of the Rice novel gives a homoerotic twist to the vampiric seductions which are driven by a promiscuous necessity. But the vampires are immortal, they can walk and munch their way through any plague-ridden ghetto and get away with it.

Jordan's claim to originality is that his viewpoint is that of the vampire — albeit a particularly liberal and conscience-stricken one. This is underscored by the final rendering of

vampire was distracted from a feast on the neck of a sleeping beauty by a packet of Kellogg's 'Crunchy Nut Cornflakes', which were obviously more appetising than the traditional red-meat product.

I get the feeling that Jordan is aware of this discrepancy, in so far as his version of Rice's rather dark modern Gothic work is given lashings of macabre humour as a sauce to some of its literary pretensions.

The film opens rather ponderously with all the melodrama of vampiric initiation and cultic rebirth. But the seducing initiator, played by Tom Cruise, is not an eastern European Nosferatu, but a Parisian-style

dandy, an idler from the gilded culture of the southern US. Jordan's script early on evokes the 19th-century French school of Decadents — the 'cursed poets' — in its toying with ideas of Cruise's Satanlike status because he kills indiscriminately.

After the 'conversion' of a grieving plantation owner, who initially prefers a diet of rats' blood, and a disturbingly unpleasant seduction of an eight-year-old girl into the brotherhood of the night, the film takes off into the realms of parody and high black farce.

The male parents of this immortal 'naughty girl' struggle to give her an aristocratic education but have to constantly rebuke her for sucking the life-blood out of music tutors, governesses, and servants or for hiding corpses under her collection of dolls.

Grotesques

The narrative setting moves on through New Orleans to Paris and its underworld population of grotesques, lumpens and vampire colonies. The high farce is now dropped for perverse spectacle, violence and sentimentalism. The central figure survives on the one hand because he learns to shed his sentimental attachment to humans, and on the other because he is privileged in being relatively 'modern' — for a vampire that is.

The film ends in contemporary San Francisco with the revived Tom Cruise figure, who had previously been buried undead, listening to the vampire interview in the car of an unfortunate journalist, muttering that he had heard all this liberal crappy soul-searching for over 400 years.

It is possible that, unwittingly, Jordan has done us a favour in exhausting the last remaining seam of this vein of writing, if not of film. The fact that this film has so many moodswings, and appears so uncertain of its direction, indicates that its material and maybe its inspiration are insufficient for Jordan's talents.

After all, despite the titillation and stylish hokum, all that you get from vampire movies is a pain in the neck!

Letter

Non-crisis of British capitalism

GEOFF PILLING has produced an interesting explanation for the current attacks on the welfare state (Workers Press, 21 January).

Pilling places their origins in the collapse of the post-war role of the United States and what had been its domination of the international monetary system enshrined in the Bretton Woods agreement.

This had enabled Keynesian policies of welfare expenditure to be expanded into the 1970s, with the US playing the role of world banker. Since then, we have seen the development of a new financial orthodoxy designed to control those public expenditure programmes, since control of interest rates and managed currency stability, along with deregulation and free trade areas, are deemed to be the key, by their advocates, to securing greater economic growth.

I do not disagree with the thrust of these arguments. In fact, it is refreshing to see such a useful overall approach. What I take issue with is the reference to the 'crisis' of British capitalism since the war, and the 'glob-

al crisis where no further concessions can be made to the working class'.

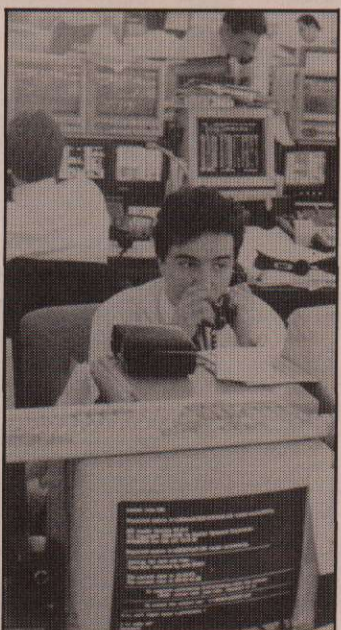
As I understand the argument, Britain's crisis has been on the cards for decades, and, following the death-throes of the Tory party over Europe, the current meanderings of Labour politicians through the morass of so-called 'new values' will do nothing to rescue Britain from its crisis. This largely because there is a much broader global crisis.

The trouble is I cannot see how either of these is a 'crisis'. It is a word used a lot in order to understand how capitalism has developed and who pays for it, and because Marxism is action oriented.

Looming

However, the word 'crisis' to me means something fairly apocalyptic, looming, final, unresolvable. I think that applying the word to what has happened in Britain, or the world for that matter, underestimates the ability of capitalism to adapt to forces of change.

I see no crisis in the huge institutions that manage the banking and investment system. They have flourished, and the top groups of bankers have made fortunes. Following the collapse of the Sterling Area after World War II, they built firstly on the rise of the Euro-



No crisis: financial institutions have flourished post-war

markets, then on pension funds, and now also on the currency markets and a whole raft of quaint, new financial 'instruments'.

Of course, a lot of banks and brokers have merged or been taken over, jobs have been lost in the cycles of boom and bust in banking, but that does not make it a crisis.

British manufacturing industry has declined significant-

ly over the post-war years, and that has certainly involved lots of little, and not so little, 'crises' for individual companies and their workers, but that does not put British industry, or British capitalism, necessarily in crisis.

Being reduced in size is not a crisis. The structure still exists, it is just smaller. We surely cannot transfer what are genuinely personal or company 'crises', to a crisis of the larger system. The real issue is who pays for all these adjustments. We should argue that crises for people and communities will be continually imposed, because the system works like that, not because it is in crisis.

I do not mean this to sound defeatist, and I am certainly not a believer in 'things have got to get worse before they get better'. On the contrary, the larger system gets into crisis only if the people who pay for its adjustments put it there. I do not believe that there is a self-destruct mechanism within capitalism unless action is taken by those being destroyed.

Needless to say in passing, proposed changes to Clause Four show a contempt for the people who really have to pay for all this, heralding 'opportunity' and even 'economic growth' as core values. Are these 'values'?

Richard Minns
London SE5

More letters, p.2

Chance for a real step forward

The main decision at the WRP's congress on 10-11 February was that the party was now to strive for the formation of a new workers' party. We publish here an extract from the written report submitted to the congress by WRP secretary CLIFF SLAUGHTER

THE RESOLUTION before the congress calls for a series of definite prepared steps culminating in a conference at which we in the WRP join with others in forming a new political organisation.

In a preliminary way, oversimplified, I will summarise the case which the resolution is making. The Stalinist bureaucracy, the main counter-revolutionary force for over 60 years in the world working-class movement, collapsed at the end of the 1980s. This collapse has inevitably started a process of political differentiation in which forces can be won in a struggle for Marxism.

This means there is a chance for a real step forward towards the main immediate aim: the achievement of a party of the working class able to lead and unite the working class's separate and temporary struggles. It is a chance which must not be missed.

Rebuild internationalism

I WILL return to this theme several times throughout this report. Such a party will be built only in and through the fight to reconstruct the internationalism of the working-class movement, and to reconstruct the Fourth International [the world party of socialist revolution founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky in opposition to Stalinism].

And we can have a clearer view of what that means because we have, after throwing out the corrupt leaders of our movement in 1985, fought our way through to an understanding of certain things:

(a) our WRP crisis and split was part of the crisis of the Fourth International, and could be resolved only in the fight to resolve that crisis of the Fourth International; and,

(b) the reconstruction of the Fourth International, the resolution of its crisis, must be part of the necessary reconstruction of the working-class movement as a whole (that is the way in which, today, we understand that the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary working-class leadership).

The formation of a new political organisation of the vanguard of the working class in Britain is the next stage in the reconstruction of the working-class movement here, and it is in and through this that we take the next step in the reconstruction of the Fourth International — the task for which the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International was founded in Budapest in 1990.

(The Workers International is not the reconstructed Fourth International; it is the organisation through which we fight to bring together those who reconstruct the Fourth International — as they fight to reconstruct the internationalism of the workers' movement.)

Are there new forces? Are we part of them? In the course of our work since 1990 — roughly the same period as that of the final stage of disintegration of Stalinism — our work along the line of 'reconstruct the Fourth International in and through the reconstruction of the working-class movement' has produced experiences and contacts which now demand that we draw conclusions in practice, in organisation.

From them and with them it is possible and necessary to organise into a political organisation which fights to become the party of the working class in Britain.

(I use the word 'political organisation' and hesitate to say 'party' because we have to consider the name

of a new organisation.

In the fundamental sense of bringing together the vanguard of the working class and basing itself on Marxism and taking responsibility for the struggle of the class as a class, the WRP, and the new organisation if it is formed, is a party. However, everyone knows that it is in just as important a sense a sort of 'proto-party', the essential nucleus of a party which has to be organised in all the most important sections of the working class.

I share the opinion of many comrades that the change of name from Socialist Labour League to Workers Revolutionary Party in 1974 did not

authoritarian young workers and students who are leaderless, ignored by and alienated from the workers' movement, often contemptuous of the 'left groups' and given no class direction.

■ In the many action committees, anti-state groups and social movements which have come around the Community and Union Action Campaign.

■ With those who are attracted to the fight for Marxist theory through the 'Future of Marxism' conference and the proposal for a new journal.

■ With those in the Labour Party and the various offshoots of the Communist Party who are in opposition

despite much progress on this score, we have not yet with sufficient work and aggressiveness differentiated ourselves, in their perception, from the many left sects, some of them calling themselves Trotskyists, and known as 'the groups'.

These new forces — we shall see them at the conference we will organise on 'The Future of Marxism' in April, in our work with those fighting against imperialism in Africa and Asia, in the fight in the Labour Party and the trades unions, against unemployment, and against racism and fascism, and in Workers Aid for Bosnia.

Qualitative change

THEY are the product of new experiences, of the qualitative change represented by Stalinism's collapse, of the way in which that collapse and all its consequences have made it possible for comrades to come out of the long nightmare and reflect anew on their experiences.

It is no longer midnight in the century! It is from this change that the forces for a new party are coming forward. We in the WRP have to count ourselves among these forces, in the sense that the 1985 expulsion of the party's then leader Healy and others was part of the same process of driving off the incubus of Stalinism and its all-pervading pressure.

Finally, and again a theme central to this whole report, those who are fighting to overcome the decades of Stalinist destruction are thrust into great struggles arising from the insoluble contradictions of capitalism's historical crisis, which can be grasped and acted upon only with the theory and programme of the permanent revolution.

'There is a chance for a real step forward towards the main immediate aim: the achievement of a party of the working class able to lead and unite the working class's separate and temporary struggles. It is a chance which must not be missed.'

mean that we became any more significantly a party of the working class. And so I think that if we drop the name WRP and adopt a different name, not with 'party' in it, then those who object that that would be a retreat are living in a fantasy world.)

The spheres of our work where we have gained a position in which we can attract into one political organisation the leading comrades are:

■ In Workers Aid for Bosnia and the fight for solidarity with the working class of Bosnia and ex-Yugoslavia.

■ Among the unemployed and their organisations.

■ Among the anti-racist and anti-

but as yet do not know where to go.

■ With the many workers from abroad now living in Britain, particularly in London — political refugees, asylum-seekers, foreign workers often with no rights and no protection.

■ The forces, especially young people, who can be won through an offensive against the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Outlook, Militant, etc.

I don't think these are simply a broader periphery resulting from a quantitative expansion of our work. (Furthermore we must confront the inescapable fact that they do not join the WRP. One reason for that is that,

German reunification brings a high cost

BY BOB ARCHER

A POLITICAL storm has broken out in Germany over the cost of supporting the 'new federal states' in the former east Germany.

Weekly magazine 'Der Spiegel' estimates that 65 billion Deutschmarks (£27 billion) have 'seeped into the sand' in the east since reunification.

This is money that has been collected as taxes in the western part of the country.

Thirty-five thousand west Germans have also been sent to create a state apparatus there in place of the old Stalinist regime run by the Socialist Unity Party (SED).

Total public funds transferred from west to east since reunification is set to rise to DM200bn this year; private investment should reach DM54bn.

The proportion between the two is itself a decisive comment on the role of private enterprise in today's capitalism.

Neo-Nazi violence grows in eastern provinces

ABOUT 300 anti-Nazis demonstrated in Haldensleben, Saxony-Anhalt, in eastern Germany, against neo-Nazi violence on 18 February.

Extreme right-wingers had brutally assaulted 'autonomous' young people there the previous Monday. They had attacked the house

Without the west German state, eastern Germany would be in the same desperate situation as the former USSR, Poland and all the rest.

The government's budget is in balance, the Deutschmark is stable and unemployment is lower than expected. All other economic indicators are terrible.

Catastrophic

Retail trade is catastrophic, which is why there was the recent undignified squabble between Bennetton and their retailers. The stock exchange has performed dimly and property prices have been so low that there has been at least one spectacular bankruptcy.

The dispute crosses party lines. Conservative Christian Democratic Union politicians in the east defend themselves as best as they can against party colleagues in the west who rant about waste and featherbedding.

A lot of money, it is claimed,

where these young people live, battering one of them about the head with a baseball bat.

The youth was rushed to hospital with a fractured skull. Six of his attackers were arrested. Saxony-Anhalt is one of the 'new federal states' carved out of the former German Democratic Republic.

has been spent recklessly on unnecessary infrastructure development in the east. Newspapers carry photographs of industrial estates replete with service roads, water and sewerage systems, and street lighting, but not a single factory.

This is set down next to reports from towns in the west which have waited for years for a sewage plant.

A lot of the blame is put down to simple confusion in a stormy process of structural change.

'Instant' unification overwhelmed the movement against the Stalinist regime which had toppled the regime of long-time leader Erich Honecker. Since then the leaders of the reform movement have mainly taken a back-seat as technocrats from the west rode in on a golden stream.

Now the strain is beginning to tell. This may well mean renewed militancy in the united working-class movement, strengthened by the difficult experience bound up with the collapse of Stalinism.

On the same day in nearby Hoyerswerda police broke up a rally of 37 right-wingers, some of them in paramilitary uniform, at the town cemetery.

They were commemorating the death of a right-winger in a car accident two years ago. The local authorities had banned the demonstration.

Fighting talk from trade union

TWO THOUSAND representatives of Bavarian engineering workers met last week to make last-minute preparations for a strike ballot.

Engineering and metalworkers all over Germany, all organised in the giant IG Metall union, are negotiating a new contract for wages and conditions.

Under German employment law such contracts are settled periodically for entire industries in negotiations between unions, the employers and the government.

In Bavaria, 165,000 workers in 600 firms are to be balloted.

The union is demanding a 6 per cent wage increase.

The German system of wage negotiation avoids local 'wild-cat' strikes but can lead to big and bitter conflicts.

The last major engineering strike in Bavaria, for example, was in 1954 and lasted 18 days before it crumbled.

Lost

IG Metall leader Josef Brunner told the shop stewards, meeting in Munich, that the union had never once lost a strike ballot.

'A defeat [in the ballot] would be the end of this round of wage negotiations and perhaps the end for decades to come,' he said.

'Losing a ballot means crawling on your backside.'

Nevertheless, the union must obtain 75 per cent of the votes to win the ballot.

The employers' federation is screaming that a strike now would 'annihilate' jobs, not just



IG Metall members protesting earlier this month

because of increasing costs but because it would lose German firms their share of world markets.

Germany's Social Democratic Party economics expert, Uwe Jens, called the engineers' dispute 'a totally superfluous labour struggle'.

Federal employment minister Norbert Blum, of the conservative Christian Democratic Union, himself a long-standing member of IG Metall, warned trades unionists against destroying 'the green shoots of economic recovery'.

Only two weeks ago, influential conservative newspapers such as 'Die Welt' were anticipating that the leaders of Germany's trade union federation, the DGB, would be able to keep strikes divided and localised.

Now the paper is warning that it could be impossible for union chiefs to confine the ac-

tion to Bavaria. Brunner's fighting words in Munich should be judged against this background.

Despite talk of economic recovery, many Germans are hurting badly from the costs of reunification and the situation arising from it.

Behind IG Metall stand other unions such as the white-collar Deutsche Angestellten Gewerkschaft (DAG), which is demanding that wages in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) should be brought up to west German levels in stages.

It also wants the 40-hour week in insurance firms cut to 38 hours, and in banking to 39 hours.

The catering trade union, the NGG, is to demand a 35-hour week in western Germany and a definite improvement on the 40-hour week in the former GDR.

Kurdish trade union leader kidnapped

FRIENDS and family fear for the life of a Kurdish trade unionist who has been abducted from outside his house in Batman, south-east Turkey. Osman Kundes, a father of six, is president of the Municipality Workers' Union's (Belediye-Is Sendikasi) branch in Batman.

At 4.30pm on 6 February he came home from his office in his trade union car. Osman's 16-year-old son, who had gone outside to greet him, witnessed two men aged between 20 and 25 approach his father and ask him to come with them on some urgent business.

Osman Kundes told them he was hungry and would prefer to talk after the evening meal or the following day, but they insisted that it was urgent.

Osman asked his son to come with them. The son went to get his coat, but minutes later, when he came back out, his father and the men had gone. An eye-witness later said she saw Osman sitting in the front passenger seat of his trade union car, while one of the men drove and the other sat in the back. A second car was following.

The trade union car was found abandoned the following day about 70 kilometres away on the road between Batman and Kozluk. The family has asked the authorities for information about Osman's whereabouts but have so far been unsuccessful.

Some 14,000 people have been killed in the past decade of war between Turkish government forces and Kurdish guerrillas. A state of emergency is in force in ten provinces, including Batman.

Police operations against Kurdish activists are being carried out all over Turkey. Last year there were more than 50 reported 'disappearances', and more than 400 people were killed in unclarified circumstances.

In most cases the victims were shot by unidentified assailants in the streets of cities in the south-east such as Batman, where a member of parliament was shot in 1993. Relatives believe they have been killed by agents of the state.

Eight people became victims of unclarified murders in Batman in January 1995. In February 1993, a cross-party parliamentary commission was established to investigate these 'murders by unknown persons'.

But two years later, with the total death toll having risen to well over 1,200, the commission has still not submitted a final report or proposed any concrete measures to put a halt to the murders.

South African workers face new crackdown

SOUTH AFRICAN workers face war from the state led by President Nelson Mandela.

In a speech to open the second session of the country's new parliament, Mandela promised a crackdown on crime, corruption and industrial anarchy. By industrial anarchy he means strikes.

BY MIKE COOKE

Striking workers have already faced police dogs and brutality under Mandela's government; this will be intensified in his 'battle against the forces of anarchy and chaos'.

'Let no one say they have not been warned,' he said.

On the other hand, he emphasised his commitment to fiscal discipline, reducing the budget deficit and cutting the

state's share of the national income. This means 'austerity' for the vast majority of the people of South Africa.

Demands

'The government simply does not have the money to meet the demands that are being advanced,' he said. 'Mass action of any kind will not create resources that the government does not have.'

He condemned the 'wrong notion that the government has

a big bag of money'.

Opinion polls show growing dissatisfaction with the government.

Ironically, most dissatisfaction was registered among groups that support the African National Congress and its leader Mandela.

Dissatisfied

The least dissatisfied group tend to be supporters of Inkatha or the former ruling party under apartheid, the National Party

New committee takes forward work for Fourth International

A BIG STEP forward in the task of reconstructing the Fourth International was taken at a meeting in London on 13-14 February between the Workers International League (LIT-CI) and the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International (WI-RFI).

The two organisations formed an international liaison committee with a 21-point declaration which will be published simultaneously in the newspapers of the different sections of the two organisations. This declaration will be published in next week's Workers Press in a four-page supplement.

At the meeting were members of the LIT-CI from Brazil, Spain, France and Britain and members of the WIRFI from Hungary and Britain. All had attended the Workers Revolutionary Party's congress the previous weekend.

Both organisations are fully committed to Workers Aid for Bosnia. It was on the basis of this (and other) common work and a convergence of analysis, and

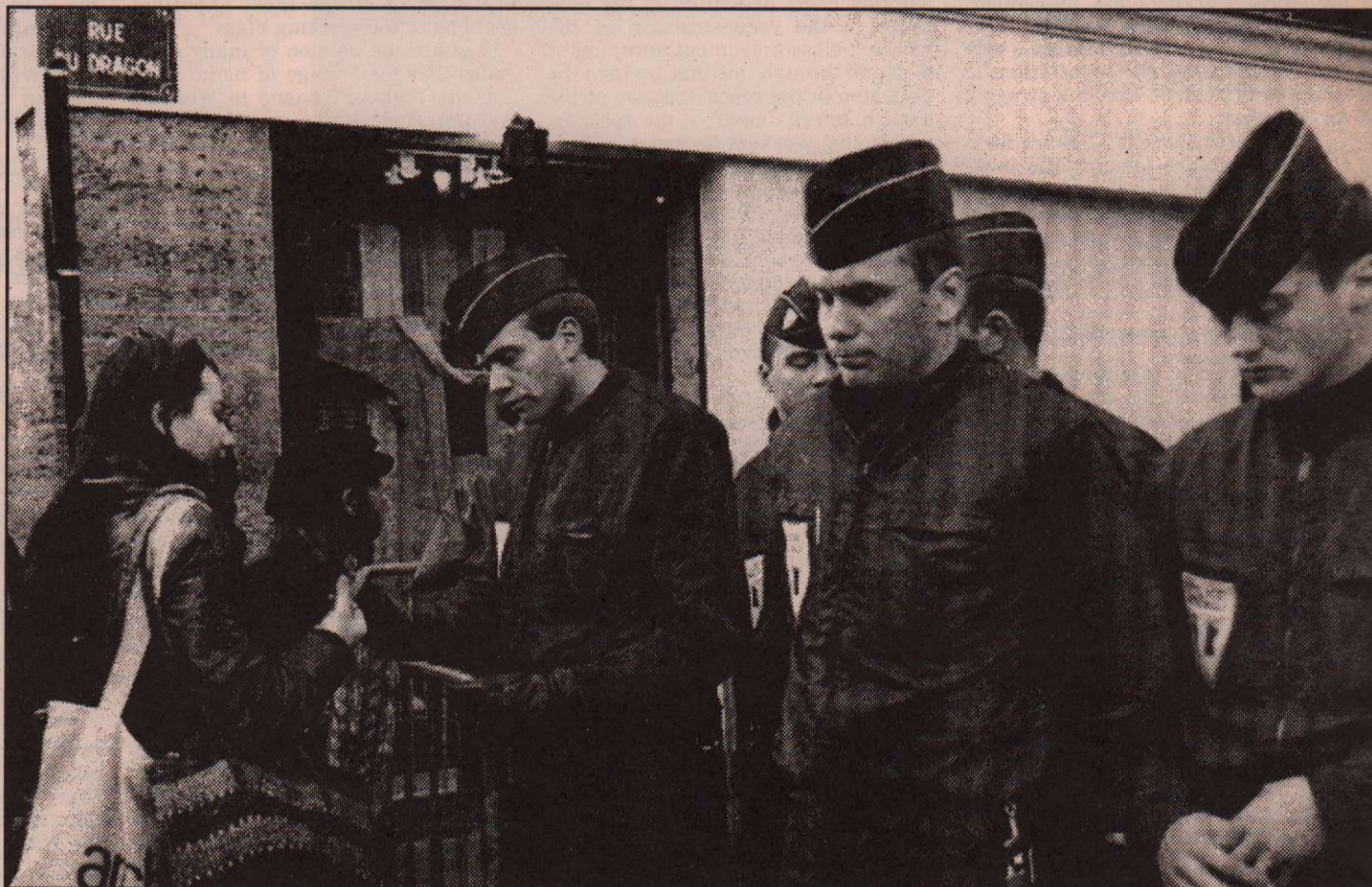
conclusions about the nature of the societies emerging from the collapse of Stalinism, that they were able to renew at a higher level the political collaboration which they attempted in 1987.

The liaison committee now unites the two organisations in the preparation of the Future of Marxism conference which will be held in the autumn. A preliminary one-day meeting will be held in London during April.

The next meeting of the liaison committee will be held in London on 27 March. It will discuss the situation and problems of refugees and immigrant workers. The committee is already in fraternal discussions and common actions with organisations of these workers.

The meeting gave full support to the International Trade Union Support Committee's initiative for an international conference of mineworkers centred on solidarity with the miners of Tuzla, Bosnia.

■ See page 7.



LED by the ex-Bishop of Evreux, Jaques Gaillot, and the singer Jaques Higelin, campaigners for the homeless attempted last month to occupy empty property in Paris.

They aimed to enter premises in the Rue du Dragon adjoining a building taken over by squatters. The hope was to set up a 'solidarity space' to provide medical and other services for the squatters.

But the local authority sent riot police to stop the occupation on the pretext that the premises were 'unsafe'.

Campaigners were not even let in when they offered to render the building safe! French housing campaigners point out that very few local councils are using emergency powers to requisition empty properties and turn them over to the homeless.

Meanwhile, the squatters in the Rue du Dragon are wondering whether the riot squad will call on them, too.

Picture: Campaigners confront the CRS riot squad in the Rue du Dragon. Picture from Lutte Ouvriere.

Right-wing terror in East Timor

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

INDONESIAN military commanders appear to have resorted to new terror methods in East Timor. Gangs of hooded thugs are terrorising people in Dili, the capital, apparently with the connivance of the military.

The gangs have attacked houses, intimidated residents and abducted 29 people. Reports indicate that the gangs, which are being referred to as 'Ninja' gangs, began operating about 7 February.

Stoning

They have been roaming the streets at night, stoning and burning houses and attacking local people. They seem to be targeting opponents of Indonesian rule.

The army has denied any links with the gangs, claiming they are East Timorese nationalists. But a spokesperson for the military said it does not intend to take any action against the gangs at this stage.

Witnesses have reported that the military has been observing the attacks, but taking no action, although East Timor's

police chief, Andreas Sugianto, has said that at least one suspected gang member was arrested on 9 February.

Since November 1994, the level of unrest in East Timor has increased dramatically. Indonesian occupation forces have responded with arbitrary arrests, torture, and killings.

Troops and secret police patrolled Dili in strength all through the Christmas period. A pro-Indonesian youth organisation was able to attack a newspaper office and beat up the editor, with impunity.

Early in the new year troops opened fire on demonstrators near Baucau army headquarters.

On 9 January, as talks on the future of East Timor opened at the UN in Geneva, there were demonstrations in Dili and at the university demanding self-determination and the release of jailed resistance leader Xanana Gusmao.

Armed

Army reinforcements moved into East Timor from the west of the island and by sea. On 12 January, the armed forces announced that they had killed six guerrillas in a military confrontation. It appears the six

were innocent villagers, two of them village heads, executed in reprisal after three soldiers were killed in a clash with guerrillas. The military in East Timor is continuing to deny that the six were civilians, but the Indonesian government has acknowledged that soldiers involved in the incident might face a court martial.

A report released by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary

executions concluded that Indonesian forces were responsible for killings during the November 1991 Santa Cruz massacre in Dili. It also criticised the Indonesian government for failing to satisfactorily investigate the fate of those killed and 'disappeared' as a result of the massacre.

The Indonesian government has stated that it does not accept the report's conclusions and recommendations.

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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